

**ALL'S WELL,
THAT ENDS WELL**

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All's Well, that Ends Well by W. G. Boswell-Stone & William Shakespeare

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W. G. BOSWELL-STONE & WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Shakespeare, William

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ENDS WELL**

EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION
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All's Well, that Ends Well

INTRODUCTION

DATE

THERE is no external evidence that will enable us to ascertain the date of composition of *All's Well, that Ends Well* within positive limits: in the well-known list of Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* of 1598 there is mention of a play called 'Love's Labour's Won,' and there are passages in *All's Well* which, as well as the general theme of the play, support the conclusion that it is possibly the one referred to. Various critics at different times have tried to identify 'Love's Labour's Won' with the *Taming of the Shrew*, the *Tempest* and *Much Ado about Nothing* respectively: but there are grave objections to each of these, and it is now generally admitted that either 'Love's Labour's Won' has been lost, or that it was the original title of the present play. If the latter alternative is taken, we should be able to assume not only that the play was written before 1598, but also that it followed *Love's Labour's Lost* at no very great interval.

On examining the question by the light of internal evidence fresh difficulties present themselves: for, while in some places there are long passages of rhyme in which the thoughts are of the simplest, and where the characters are allowed to express the most practical ideas by 'three-piled hyperboles,' the majority of the play is written in a style that incontestably proves that Shakespeare composed it at a time when he had left such puerilities far behind him. It has therefore been conjectured with comparative certainty, that the play as we have it represents a remodelling of an earlier one, which was probably treated in a distinctly comedy spirit, and may well have borne the title 'Love's Labour's Won,' and that the rhymed passages are

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remains of this early version which have been retained for dramatic purposes. The similarity of the subject to that of *Measure for Measure*, and the number of parallels that might be drawn from this play with *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, as well as the metrical evidence, the humour, and the prose style favour the supposition that 1602 was the probable date of composition.

TEXT

There was no quarto edition of this play, and it first appeared in the Folio edition of 1623. It is one of the worst printed in the volume, and the emendator has had the fullest scope for his powers; and this opportunity has been eagerly taken advantage of.

SOURCE

The primary source of *All's Well* is the ninth novel of the third book of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. An English version of this had appeared in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, and to this, no doubt, Shakespeare was directly indebted. The story in Paynter deals with the history of the love of Giletta for the young and handsome Beltramo. She proceeds to Paris and cures the king; and as a reward is allowed choice of husband. Needless to say she selects Beltramo, who immediately deserts her for the wars between Florence and Sienna. He leaves her a letter saying he will not acknowledge her as his wife till she has a son by him and has obtained his ring. She follows him to Florence, and by the help of an honest lady whom he has importuned in love, manages to fulfil both conditions. After the birth of two sons she proceeds to the count's abode, where he is holding a great feast, and is accepted as his beloved wife. This, then, is the crude story which formed the base of *All's Well*. Shakespeare, however, has, as usual, given free play to his invention. Thus the whole of the development of the story is entirely different: in the story the lady simply presents herself to her husband and all is ended, while in the play the catastrophe is brought about by a series of dramatic and moving scenes. Parolles, the clown, and the Countess Lafew are independent

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creations of the poet. In the story, in fact, all the characters are mere wax figures.

THE CHARACTERS, ETC., OF *ALL'S WELL*

Parolles is a masterly sketch of the affected courtier, vicious in his tastes, and a cowardly braggart with sufficient craft to pass among the more simple of the frequenters of the court as a valiant soldier and a wit. His exposure recalls an incident in Nash's *Jack Wilton*; but the two portraits are so entirely different that it would be absolutely unwarrantable to suggest that either author was indebted to the other. His existence is thoroughly justified by the intrinsic excellence of the conception, but he is also used by Shakespeare to exemplify the fickle and unmaturing judgment of Bertram, and to modify, by the influence that his personality exerts, the responsibility of the hero. Bertram himself, it must be confessed, however, can hardly be defended. Shakespeare insists on his courage and bravery, which is not done in the novel: the influence of Parolles is mentioned by Lafeu, but this trait is not strongly developed. His first speech in the fifth act exerts some small claims on the sympathy of the reader; but this is speedily dispelled by his unmanly conduct in the remainder of the scene.

The king is a perfect little character-sketch: strongly and easily moved both to sympathy and anger, he is, in his own words, 'not a day of season, for thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail in me at once.'

The Countess Lafeu is perhaps the most delightful of all Shakespeare's old ladies; and her presence imbues every scene in which she appears with grace and poetry.

Helena, however, is the crowning beauty of the play. The wonderful spirit with which she sets about her task, first of winning and then of reclaiming her love, makes her one of the most attractive of heroines. The extraordinary interest of the creation lies, perhaps, in the skill with which the author, when putting her in the most trying of situations, has averted anything that might form a blur on the modesty and grace of her personality. Beautiful as the play is from a poetical standpoint, it is when considered from a dramatic point of view, wofully

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deficient. There is a conspicuous lack of unity about the whole; the relation of the Countess and Lafeu, striking and charming as the former's characterisation is, to the plot is infinitesimal.

The conclusion, too, is unsatisfactory, for the reader feels that the real problem is only now to begin. These weaknesses, combined with the unpleasantness of the general theme, amply account for the comparative neglect that *All's Well* has suffered among Shakespeare's plays.

[Not in F.]

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

The References are to First Speeches in each Scene. The Scenes in which a Name appears is given.

- KING** of France, I.ii.1, p. 12; II.ii.1, p. 21; iii.44, p. 30; V.iii.1, p. 79.
- DUKE** of Florence, III.ii.1, p. 42; iii.1, p. 47.
- BERTRAM**, Count of Rossillion, I.1.3, p. 5; ii.23, p. 18; II.1.27, p. 22; iii.9, p. 29; v.3, p. 39; III.iii.3, p. 48; vi.6, p. 53; IV.ii.1, p. 61; iii.80, p. 65; V.iii.36, p. 80: *as a Name*, III.v. p. 52.
- LAFEW**, an old Lord, I.1.6, p. 5; III.1.60, p. 23; iii.1, p. 29; v.1, p. 39; IV.v.1, p. 73; V.ii.27, p. 78; iii.11, p. 79.
- Captain PARROLLES**, a cowardly bragging knave, a follower of **BERTRAM**, I.1.100, p. 8; II.1.25, p. 21; iii.7, p. 29; iv.13, p. 38; v.15, p. 40; III.vi.40, p. 56; IV.1.24, p. 52; iii.113, p. 66; V.ii.1, p. 77; iii.237, p. 87: *as a Name*, I.ii. p. 12; III.ii. p. 47; v. p. 52.
- A Page**, I.1.174, p. 10; and **a Messenger**, IV.iii.72, p. 65: Servants to **BERTRAM**.
- RYNALDO**, a Steward, I.iii.3, p. 13; III.iv.4, p. 48.
- LAUNTON**, a Clown, 'a shrewd knave and an unknave', I.iii.12, p. 14; II.ii.3, p. 27; iv.2, p. 38; III.ii.3, p. 43; IV.v.14, p. 73; V.ii.6, p. 77. } Servants to the **COUNT-TESS** of Rossillion.
- Lord G. (or DUMAINE)**, a French Lord, afterwards a Captain in the Florentine army, I.ii.3, p. 12; II.1.5, p. 21; III.1.4, p. 43; vi.3, p. 53; IV.iii.1, p. 62.
- Lord E.**, his brother, also a Captain in the Florentine army, I.ii.15, p. 11; II.1.25, p. 22; III.1.9, p. 43; vi.1, p. 53; IV.1.1, p. 58; iii.2, p. 63.
- Both Lords speak at II.1.22, p. 21.
- French K.**, III.ii.44, p. 45; and **French G.**, III.ii.52, p. 45; two French Gentlemen, Messengers to the Court of Florence.
- Four young French Lords**, 'Noble Bachelors', offered by the **KING** to **HELENAS** 'franke election'; 1st Lord, II.iii.75, p. 31; 2nd Lord, 82, p. 31; 4th Lord, 96, p. 32.
- The four young French Lords speak at the same time, II.iii.63, p. 32.
- A gentle Intriguer** (called also a Gentleman), V.1.9, p. 78; iii.120, p. 83.
- 1st Soldier**, the Interpreter of 'Chaugh language' to **PARROLLES**, IV.1.7, p. 58; iii.112, p. 66; **2nd Soldier**, IV.1.89, p. 60.
- All Soldiers speak at IV.1.63, p. 59.
- COUNTESS** of Rossillion, mother to **BERTRAM**, I.1.1, p. 5; iii.1, p. 13; II.ii.1, p. 27; III.ii.1, p. 43; iv.1, p. 48; IV.v.7, p. 73; V.ii.4, p. 79.
- HELENA (or HELLEN)**, daughter of the Physician **GERARD de MARBON**, brought up by the **COUNTESS**; *in love with BERTRAM*, I.1.47, p. 6; iii.127, p. 17; II.1.101, p. 24; iii.55, p. 31; iv.1, p. 38; v.54, p. 41; III.ii.45, p. 45; v.32, p. 50; vi.1, p. 56; IV.1.1, p. 72; V.1.1, p. 76; iii.302, p. 89.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

An old Widow of Florence, III.v.3, p. 49; vii.4, p. 56; IV.iv.14, p. 73; V.i.24, p. 77; III.161, p. 84.

DIANA, daughter to the Widow, 'darlous'd from the ancient Caplet', III.v.3, p. 49; IV.ii.2, p. 61; iv.26, p. 73; V.iii.157, p. 84; as a *Mute*, V.i. p. 76.

MARIANA, a neighbour and friend of the Widow, III.v.9, p. 50.

VIOLENTA, (?) daughter to **MARIANA**, speaks together with **MARIANA** at III.v.28, p. 53.

Mutes: *Divers young French Lords, going to the Florentine wars*, II.i. p. 21; *3rd young French Lord, offered to Helena*, II.ii. p. 32. **ANTHONIO** and **ESCALUS**, sons to the Duke of Florence, III.v. p. 52; *Lords, Attendants, Soldiers, Servants, French and Florentine*.

The Scenes supposed. **Roussillon**: *The Counts palace*, I.i. pp. 5-11; III. pp. 12-20; II.ii. pp. 27-29; III.ii. pp. 43-47; iv. pp. 48, 49; IV.v. pp. 73-76; V.ii. pp. 79-80. **Paris**: *The Kings palace*, I.ii. pp. 12-13; II.i. pp. 21-27; III. pp. 29-37; iv. pp. 38, 39; v. pp. 39-42. **Florence**: *The Dukes palace*, III.i. pp. 42, 43; *Before the Dukes palace*, III.ii. pp. 47, 48; *Without the walls*, III.v. pp. 49-53; *The Florentine camp*, III.vi. pp. 53-56; IV.iii. pp. 63-72; *Without the camp*, IV.i. pp. 58-60; *The Widows house*, III.vii. pp. 56, 57; IV.ii. pp. 61-63; iv. pp. 72, 73. **Marseilles**: *A street*, V.i. pp. 76, 77.

*The Time of the Play*¹ covers about three months. *11 Days are represented on the Stage, divided by 6 Interims. We arrange them thus*: Day 1, I.i. pp. 5-11. *Interim*. Day 2, I.ii.iii. pp. 12-20. *Interim*. Day 3, II.i.ii. pp. 21-29. *Interim of two days*.² Day 4, II.iii.—v. pp. 29-42. *Interim*. Day 5, III.i.ii. pp. 42-47. Day 6, III.iii.iv. pp. 47-49. *Interim of 'some two months'*.³ Day 7, III.v. pp. 49-53. Day 8, III.vi.vii; IV.i.ii.iii. to i. 78, pp. 53-65. Day 9,⁴ IV.iii. from i. 79 to iv. pp. 65-72. *Interim*. Day 10, IV.v.; V.i. pp. 73-77. Day 11, V.ii.iii. pp. 77-90.

¹ We follow Mr. P. A. Daniel's Time-Analysis, in the *New SA. Soc. Trans.*, 1877-79, pp. 165-173.

² On Day 3, Helena hopes to cure the King in two days' space. See II.i. 162-169, p. 26. The cure has been effected when the King enters in II.ii. (Day 4).

³ In IV.iii.45, p. 64 (Day 8) Lord G. says that Helena had fled from Roussillon 'some two months since'.

⁴ Cp. IV.iii.28-30, p. 64, and IV.iii.79, p. 65.

NOTICE

In the Text, black type (Clarendon or *Sans-serif*) is used for all emendations and insertions.

F means the First Folio of 1623. F₂ the Second Folio of 1632 (whose emendations are not treated as Shakspeare's).

¶ in the Text, means that the speaker turns and speaks to a fresh person.

Words having now a different stress to the Elizabethan, are generally accented, for the reader's convenience, as 'exile,' &c. When -ed final is pronounced as a separate syllable, the e is printed e.