

SHAKSPEREAN STATISTICS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649199815

Shakspearean statistics by H. T. Hall

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Cover @ 2017

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H. T. HALL

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STATISTICS**

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BY

H. T. HALL.

"Shall we not believe books in print."
Beaumont and Fletcher's "The Night Walker,"
A. III. s. 4.

CAMBRIDGE:

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR BY H. WALLIS,
BOOKSELLER, SIDNEY STREET.

1865.

Price, Sixpence.

SHAKSPEREAN STATISTICS.

THESE statistics have been chiefly derived from the article *Shakspeare*, to be found in Bohn's edition of *Lowndes' Bibliographer's Manual*, from Halliwell and Wilson's *Shaksperianas*, and from an article which appeared in the *Athenæum* during the year 1864. They have been compiled, not to serve the purpose of the book-hunter, for the monetary value of none of the books are given, but they have been compiled for the use of the general reader, to show, by the number of editions, the immense popularity of Shakspeare's writings. But few persons are aware of the numerous editions which have been published, the number of works written upon Shakspeare, and the extent and variety of languages in which his works have been translated. The following statistics will give the desired information upon each and all of these points; the number of editions being brought down to the close of the year 1864, and the numerous works published during that year have been added to the number of *Shaksperiana*.

No fairer way can be devised of judging of an author's popularity, than by taking the number of editions which have been published of his works, and the works which have appeared, seeking critically to explain and illustrate the meaning of his writings. If this test is

applied to Shakspeare, we shall find him above all other authors. Supreme amongst human kind stands the Titan of Stratford. Not only in his own country, but in almost all European languages, and even in some of the Eastern have a part of his works been translated.

The notion that Shakspeare was not highly esteemed by his contemporaries, and that his works were not popular, has happily, long been an exploded one. There was no dramatic writer of his time that in any way approached his popularity; no other writer's works were to be so frequently seen upon the stage as those of Shakspeare. He appears to have been in his own period the "be all and the end all," the "one bright particular star," the "observed of all observers," the "glass of fashion," in fact, a Colossus bestriding this "narrow world" of ours.

During his life seventeen of his plays were published, some of them running through several editions. His poems of *Venus and Adonis*, the *Sonnets*, the *Rape of Lucrece*, and the *Passionate Pilgrim* met with the same results. So early as 1591, he is alluded to by Edmund Spenser, in his poem of *The Tears of the Muses*, in the lines

* "And he, the man whom Nature's self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly counter, under mimic shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late;
With whom all joy and pleasant merriment
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent."

In 1592, he is alluded to in Robert Greene's pamphlet, *A Groat's worth of wit, bought with a million of repentance*. It is addressed to Marlowe, Lodge and Peele, three of his old acquaintances. "Base minded men,

all three of you, if by my misery yee bee not warned; for unto none of you (like me) sought these burs to cleave; those puppets (I meane) that spake from their mouths, those anticks garnished in our colours. Is it not strange that I to whom they have all been beholding; is it not like that you to whom they all have been beholding, shall (were yee in that case that I am now) be both of them at once forsaken? Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygres heart wrapt in a player's hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceyte the only *Shake-scene* in a country." The apology of Chettle, who edited the posthumous works of Greene, in which this spiteful effusion was contained, serves to show the popularity of Shakspere. He says, in his preface to the *Kind Heart's Dream*, "how I have, all the time of my conversing in printing, hindered the bitter envying against schollers, it hath been well knowne; and how in that I dealt I can sufficiently proove. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be: the other whome at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had for that, as I have moderated the heate of living writers, and might have used my own discretion, especially in such a case, the author being dead. That I did not, I am as sorry as if the originall fault had been my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanour no less civill than he excellent in the qualitie he professes; Besides divers of worship have reported his uprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty and his facetious grace in writting that approves his art."

In 1594, Spenser again alludes to him in his poem *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, under the feigned name of Aëtion:—

“And there, though last, not least, is Aëtion—
A gentler shepherd may nowhere be found,
Whose music, full of high thought's invention,
Doth like himself heroically sound.”

In the same year, John Marston, the dramatist, alludes to Shakspeare in the tenth satire of the *Scourge of Villany*,

“Lucens, what's play'd to night? I faith, now I know,
I see thy lips aboach, from whence doth flow
Nought but pure 'Juliet and Romeo.'”

In 1598, the most important allusion to the position of Shakspeare among his contemporaries, is found in Mere's *Palladis Tamia*, or *Wit's Treasury*, being the second part of *Wit's Commonwealth*. “As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras; so the sweet wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare, witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, &c.

“As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakspeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love's Labour Lost*, his *Love's Labour Wonne*, his *Milsummer's Night Dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; for Tragedy, his *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, *Henry IV.*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

“As Epus Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue, if they would speak Latin: so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakspeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speake English,” folios 281, 282.

The estimation he was held in, is still further shown in the *Dedication*, and the address to the variety of readers, written by his fellow-players Heminge and Condell, published in the first folio. The commendatory verses therein contained also strengthen this view. The verses are written by J. M. Leonard Digges, Hugh Holland, and "O rare Ben Jonson," the latter thus singing,

"Soule of the age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage,
Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to showe,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe."

In 1632, the year of the publication of the second folio, John Milton, dedicated a sonnet (published in the folio) to the memory of that admirable dramatic poet, William Shakspeare; and in 1645, in his *L'Allegro*, he paid him another tribute in the words

"Then to the well-trod stage anon
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

In 1633, was published the celebrated *Histiro-Matrix, the Player's Scourge*, by William Prynne. In this volume there is a direct allusion to Shakspeare's collected Works and to their popularity, for Prynne says in his address to the Christian reader, "Some play-books since I first undertook this subject are grown from quarto into folio, which yet bear so good a price and sale, that I cannot but with grief relate it, they are now printed in far better paper than most octavo or quarto bibles, which hardly find such vent as they." The two folios at that time published, viz.: the first and second, were the only dramatic folios then extant, and there can be no question that the allusion is more particularly made to the second folio.

In 1642 the theatres were closed by the order of the Puritans, who, unfortunately in their blind zeal and fanaticism, attacked that which was good as well as that which was bad. During the period of the Commonwealth the players only played by stealth, all attempts of a public nature being rigidly suppressed. In 1659 the theatres were again opened, and in the year 1660 there were three companies playing in London, viz.: the Red Bull, Killigrew's, and Davenant's. By these companies fifteen of Shakspeare's plays were represented, a proof of the author's enduring popularity. The list embraces, *Henry IV.*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Pericles*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry VIII.*, *Twelfth Night*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry V.* and a *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In 1668 appeared John Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, in which Dryden puts Shakspeare above all modern poets, and perhaps some ancient, as possessing "the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not labouriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it." In 1675, Edward Phillips, nephew of the poet Milton, published his *Theatre Poetarum*, and among his criticisms upon the dramatic writers, he thus speaks of William Shakspeare, "the glory of the English stage; whose nativity at Stratford-upon-Avon is the highest honour that town can boast of; from an actor of tragedies and comedies, he became a maker, and such a maker, that though some others may pretend to a more exact decorum and economy, especially in tragedy, never any expressed a more lofty and tragic height, never any represented nature more purely to the life; and where the polishments of art are most wanting,