

**THE OLD TAMING OF A SHREW, UPON
WHICH SHAKESPEARE FOUNDED HIS
COMEDY, REPRINTED
FROM THE EDITION 1594, AND
COLLATED WITH THE SUBSEQUENT
EDITIONS OF 1596 AND 1607**

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EDITED BY

THOMAS AMYOT, ESQ.,

F.R.S., TREAS. S.A.



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INTRODUCTION.

Having undertaken, with the concurrence of the Council of the Shakespeare Society, to prepare for the press a reprint of the old Play of "The Taming of a Shrew," on which Shakespeare founded his lively and popular Comedy of "The Taming of *the* Shrew," my desire has been to give, with scrupulous accuracy, the texts of the three earliest editions, published in 1594, 1596, and 1607. As these are all of the greatest rarity, there being but one copy known to be preserved of the first and second, and only three copies of the last of these editions, it seems desirable that a concise notice of each should be given, adverting to the circumstances which placed them in my hands.

The unique copy of the first edition, with the date of 1594, is the property of the Duke of Devonshire, for whom it was purchased at the sale of Mr. Heber's library in 1834, at no less a price than £97. Great as was its pecuniary and intrinsic value, increased no doubt

by its extraordinarily fine condition, his Grace most obligingly permitted it to remain in my hands for an indefinite period, in order that it might be transcribed for the press, and collated with the proof-sheets. To this favour his Grace added a further obligation, in allowing a fac-simile of the original title-page to be made on stone, which has been performed with the greatest care and fidelity by Mr. Netherclift. The head and tail-pieces have also been faithfully copied from accurate tracings, and executed on wood.

For the use of the copy of the second edition, printed in 1596, also unique, a debt of obligation is justly due to Lord Francis Egerton, in whose rich dramatic library it had long been deposited. His lordship most liberally and kindly permitted it to be used for the purpose of collating its text with those of the editions of 1594 and 1607. For the loan of the edition of 1607, thanks must again be rendered to the Duke of Devonshire, who became possessed of it in one of the very numerous volumes of Old Plays collected by the late distinguished ornament of the stage, John Philip Kemble, the whole assemblage, with many subsequent and most important additions, being now in his Grace's library. It appears that Pope had seen the copy of the edition of 1594: before that of 1607 passed into the hands of Mr. Kemble, it was the property of George Steevens, who, in 1779, reprinted it in his collection of "Six Old Plays," on which Shakespeare had founded six. After Steevens's death the copy produced £20 at the sale of his library in 1800, it being then erroneously stated in the catalogue to be the *first* edition.

Of the use which Shakespeare, in his "Taming of *the Shrew*," made of this play, as well as of its "Induction," it is not necessary to advert at any length. The texts, both of the old plays and of the "Induction," are but faint outlines, which by his hands were embodied and enriched. To him, indeed, with reference to this and to many others of his plays, may be justly applied the praise which Johnson bestowed on Goldsmith, in his well-known epitaph, "*Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.*" Conjectures would now be hopeless as to the name of the author of the old play: all that is at present known on this subject will be found in Mr. Collier's Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedy, in his recent and valuable edition of the Works of Shakespeare.¹ The silence of Meres in 1598 seems conclusively to prove that "The Taming of *the Shrew*" was not then in existence. On the other hand, as Mr. Collier mentions, "The Taming of *a Shrew*" was spoken of by Sir John Harington, in 1596, and had been several times entered on the Registers of the Stationers' Company, the first entry bearing date on the 2nd of May, 1594, just prior to the appearance of the edition from which the following reprint has been made. There can hardly be a reasonable doubt of the disappearance of the old play from the stage, after Shakespeare's had been acted and printed. That the latter became a popular performance seems equally certain; yet, so far as the records of the stage are to be relied on, it had not been acted from the restoration of the stage in 1660, till the present year, 1844. So far, in-

¹ Shakespeare's Works, published by Whittaker and Co., vol. iii., page 103.

deed, as the plot relates to Katherine and Petruchio, the afterpiece bearing that title, adapted to the stage by Garrick, and placed on it by him at Drury Lane in 1754, served as an amusing substitute for Shakespeare's Comedy during ninety years, the two principal characters, male and female, being always coveted by popular and distinguished performers. An attempt was however made, in 1828, at Drury Lane Theatre, to restore the double plots to the stage in the form of an Opera, written by Reynolds: it was played but four nights; and it remained for the present lessee of the Haymarket Theatre to bring before the public, in March last, Shakespeare's Comedy with its genuine text. A very valuable member of the Council of the Shakespeare Society, Mr. Planché, was principally instrumental in this revival, in the form in which it was conceived to have been exhibited at the Globe or Blackfriars' Theatre in the lifetime of its author. The scene was not changed during the whole performance, and the characters in the "Induction," the Lord, his Page, and Christopher Sly, remained on the stage as audience. The play proved successful, and, being frequently repeated, was understood to have remunerated the lessee for his novel undertaking.

At the suggestion of my friend Mr. Collier, our Director, to whom, indeed, my obligations are due for some of the information I have already given, I now thank him for suggesting, as an Appendix, the republication of an old humorous poem, long considered to be connected with the principal plot of Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," to which, in general points, it certainly has a strong resemblance. The quaint title it