

# Shakespeare Tercentenary: 1616-1916

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Charles  
Fechter as  
Hamlet

Edmund  
Kean as  
Richard III

### SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY A GROWTH

**He Worked His Way Through Experiment and Error Until He Had Learned His Art, and Never Ceased His Experimentation**

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES

By Martin W. Sampson,

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AT once the reader's mind and heart leap to a conception, a mood, that comes in large part from two plays, with potent influences from certain other plays—a mood in which perfect charm mixes with perfect sanity, and which reveals Shakespeare's genius in early and in ripening maturity. Mind and heart linger in fascination over shadowy, beautiful romance, rather than over sharply defined romantic incidents; over memory of wit rather than over recollections of witty sayings; a veil interposes between us and this working-day world, and we are in an atmosphere where the things we see are instinct with beauty. Our vision, baseless fabric though it be, is lovely to us, and natural, since we are, indeed, such stuff as dreams are made on; and the magic we fancy we see is somehow akin to the deeper reality of our souls. The two plays that have best created the spell are "Twelfth Night" and "As You Like It." Trace back the gayety, tender or bolterous, that the term Shakespeare's comedy evokes, trace back the all but undefinable atmosphere of romance, and you will find yourself listening again to Viola's "I am all the daughters of my father's house," to Sir Toby's "Oh, knight, thou lackest a cup of canary," and breathing again with Rosalind and Orlando the enchanted and enchanting air of the forest of Arden.

Not that these two plays alone make up the charm. As the mood lightens the railery of Beatrice and Benedick falls upon our almost envious ears—envy that such retorts are beyond us; as the mood deepens we share the sorrow of Imogen and of Hermione, and partake of the serene wisdom of Prospero. I mean only that were all the other comedies lost Shakespeare's comedy would not be lost to us, and that Shakespeare, the comic playwright, would appear to us still as the master in the vein that he has made his own.

There is a great range in quality in the comedies, as there is in the tragedies. Shakespeare is not really human to us until we recognize that patent fact. Moreover, he does not suffer by this self-comparison. To realize that the Falstaff of the "Merry Wives" is less than the immortal figure in "Henry IV" is not to reduce the portly rascal to a heavy-weight intriguer; it is rather to realize the better that the companion of Prince Hal is a portrait by a sheer genius.

It is curious, indeed, that one must make these semi-apologies. One should not need to explain why one regards a writer as a writer, a man as a man. But such a hallowed tradition has been fostered by devotees that the object of the worship is sometimes in danger of losing more in simple congeniality than he gains in rapt adoration. In one point, especially, the mere matter of growth, many lovers of the poet overlook the natural difference between a beginner, a journeyman, and the skilled master of his craft. And yet nothing is more certain than that Shakespeare did not greet the world of letters as an author full grown. He worked his way through experiment, through error, through varying media of expression, until he had learned his art. Indeed, one may easily go a step further and say that this artist never ceased his experimentation. He worked at a form until he had mastered it, used it once or twice again in more than ample command of its possibilities, and then turned to still another form and made that, too, his own. Perhaps more in comedy than in history or tragedy (to continue the time-worn distinction) his artistic development is demonstrable, for it was a form he worked with from the beginning until the end of his career.

Let us deal briefly with the comedies in approximately chronological order, without raising the issues dear to the heart of Shakespearean editors, of dates of performances and publication, of variant readings, of sources, of disputed influences, or even of authorship itself, save in so far as these things may determine dramatic values. Let us consider the plays as plays, and not, so far as we may, their essential dramatic virtues, remembering, of course, that the full discussion of the least of the dramas would soon pass the limits of this essay.

"Love's Labour's Lost" is a verbal comedy built around a simple situation of farcical possibilities—a court of men where no women may enter; but where women do enter, to the men's confusion and happiness. It is overlong, especially the drawn-out fifth act, but it abounds in wit and word play, in pleasant contrast of personalities, and in amiable satire of fashionable follies and of literary conceits. Its main interest is in dialogue, but it has one brilliant scene, a complete whirligig of irony, where one man after another hears his fellow confess the faults of which he himself is guilty. When one has characterized it as a somewhat more voluminous and much more eloquent carrying on of Lily's comic method, one has attributed to it its chief virtues of lucidity, cleanliness, and neatness.

"The Comedy of Errors" is a sheer farce on the perennial themes of mistaken identity. For a model the young playwright has left the English Lily and has turned to the Latin Plautus. In farce one does not look for a faithful portrayal of the ordinary incidents of life; he awaits the unusual, the preposterous, it may be, but he does expect a lifelike tone and that kind of whimsical logic that is consistent with the accepted premises. Peculiarly is this play one to see rather than to read. Incident hurries upon incident, the action is quick and decisive, the situations vivid and

intelligible at a glance, and the hearty laugh follows again and again as the puzzled Dromios confuse their puzzled masters. A touch of seriousness and of pathos at the beginning and the end humanizes the fun, while the fun takes off the edge of the seriousness. Even at the outset of his career the dramatist has learned the value of mingling grave and gay.

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is Shakespeare's first essay in romantic comedy, and now he has apparently set himself to acquire the fresh, human note of Greene. This is a play of story, a play of people showing their deeper emotions along with their wit and their gentleness. The first of Shakespeare's memorable clowns, Launce, appears; the first of his romantic heroes, Valentine; the first of his lovely and lovable women, Julia and Sylvia. The technique is not so assured as in the preceding farce; it is somewhat slow in getting under way, and the dénouement is so literary as to be in part false to life. In order to bring about his conclusion, the author places his hero in such a dilemma that the ardent friend and devoted lover must choose between his friend or his well-won lady. He



chooses the prior loyalty, and proffers his betrothed to Proteus the unworthy. This is an old hypothetical situation, and when Shakespeare breathes the breath of life into it, instead of becoming real it becomes fanciful; as wrong solutions will when they are tried on wholesome people.

But it all comes right in the end, and our only wonder is that the play should not have kept the stage. The wonder is dispelled when we reflect that in this play Shakespeare has simply paid the price for doing the same thing better afterward. Had Shakespeare never let us see Viola woo the Countess for the Duke she loved herself, or Portia skimming over the list of her suitors, or Beatrice teasing Benedick, or Rosalind disguised as a boy and setting off for better fortunes; had he never developed later with the richness of his power the scenes he sketches here, this play would mean to us delightful romance. It means that, anyway, but the still better plays mean it still more. And so this charming venture is but a prelude.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Shakespeare gives his fancy free rein. An entrancing world of fairies swims into our ken, and we see the most delicate side of the author's romantic vision. Titania, Oberon, Puck, remain household words since touched into life at the poet's impulse. There were fairies before Shakespeare; after Shakespeare we think of fairies in his terms. Here, too, the playwright is trying his hand at combining plots: four groups of personages are brought into action, the fairies, the lovers, the artisans, and the court. There is not as yet the close binding of one plot to another that we find in "The Merchant of Venice," but the relationships are kept clear and each group has something definite to do with at least two other groups. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the play is that it has fixed fast something volatile and lifted the naïve supernatural into the realm of the artistic. If a man can do what the playwright attempted here, he has a technique ready for almost anything. And remember that at the same period this young man of 30 had written "Romeo and Juliet."

The technique begins to count greatly in "The Merchant of Venice." Stories of unlike quality are woven together with a skill so obvious that it needs no praise. Characters are drawn with masterful certainty. Moods are balanced, naturally and artfully at the same time. The action moves straight forward, with that necessary acceleration and retarding of speed which makes it possible for a spectator to



Ellen Terry as Portia

"I will be recorded for a precedent, And many an error by the same example Will rush into the state; it cannot be."  
Cobbett & Co. Wendell Collection

measure the significance both of incident and of situation.

Two points, neither of which would have disturbed an Elizabethan audience, may affect our appreciation of the play. The first is the quibble regarding the pound of flesh, no more, no less, and no drop of Christian blood to be shed—a turning point of the drama, vivid, but more apparent than real; since without it Shylock's first step toward Antonio, knife in hand, would have constituted a direct or indirect attempt on the life of a citizen, punishable precisely as Shylock is punished. The present-day interest lies here: if the play is run off rapidly as a romantic and somewhat remote comedy, the spectator accepts the moment without cavilling; but if by elaborate and realistic presentation we have been convinced of the reality of preceding moments and of the naturalness of the characters and the issues, then at this point the subtlety obtrudes. The more the play resembles life the less this solution seems real. When Portia is perfectly acted, as Ellen Terry used to portray her, it seems almost incredible that the woman who can plead so tenderly for mercy and argue so sanely for justice should stoop to this ancient Oriental device.

The second point touches the conception of Shylock. How "human" Shakespeare meant him to be we can only conjecture, but certainly the more he is humanized and made to suffer a sort of martyrdom the more the spectator's sense of ethereal values is disturbed. A man must be a bit of an anti-Semite if in the usual performance of today he feels that Shylock is fairly treated. Moreover, it is to be noted that while the modern conception of Shylock raises him from melodramatic villain to tragic hero, at the same time it irresistibly pulls down the moral character of the friends of Antonio in the trial scene. Since Elizabethan days we have gained an ill-used and desolate old man and have lost one or two gentlemen! These things are not Shakespeare's fault; the whirligig of time has merely brought certain reverses.

In "The Taming of the Shrew" we revert to farce, not the less farce for including a perhaps too antique principle. Here we have character with less shading, action with sharper emphasis. Even if played but pretty well, the play goes; if played superlatively well (memories of Ada Rehan!) it goes with a rush. That is to say, the scenes with Katherine and Petruchio do; the Bianca scenes move much more slowly, and the scenes of Lucentio and Tranio, involving the confusion between master and man, seem to me, frankly,

little more than a drag on the action. We have here, I think, an obvious example of the Elizabethan five-act obsession. The presumed necessity of five acts is no hindrance to the great tragedies, but it operates unfortunately at times with the lesser plays. Above all, it prevented the Elizabethans from giving us little masterpieces in brief and perfect single acts, not to speak of two and three act plays. Here, if ever, in "The Taming" we have a natural three-act subject, whose parts, I should say, are the encounter, the struggle, the mastery. When a subject will not last out five acts it has to be padded. Sometimes superimposed material may be made to seem structural, but not always.

If you cannot count "Henry IV" among the comedies, still less can you discuss the comedies and ignore it. "Hamlet" with Hamlet left out is hardly a greater approximation to a vacuum than is Shakespearean comedy without Falstaff. If there be one character that denotes Shakespeare's creative power, here is the man. It is not character modified to the service of a plot, it is character as it is, personality itself. Only to the masters of portrait painting, Velasquez, Rembrandt, can you go for a parallel. The man stands out before you vibrant with life. Structurally he may serve but to enhance the stern and warlike issues among which he light-heartedly moves; actually he lifts the whole play up to the level of the permanently memorable; Falstaff will live as long as Shakespeare. Even to speak thus seriously about a mirth-provoking personage is to indicate the compelling power of Shakespeare's genial vision and execution. A character may be so astonishingly endowed with irresistible humor as to draw the listener's thoughts from the manifestation to the amazing competence of endowment behind it. When Shakespeare created Falstaff he must have felt the splendor of his own dramatic power.

Whether or not "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was written at the command of Queen Elizabeth, desirous of seeing Falstaff in love, is beyond the present power of scholarship to determine. It is of little consequence; the story is good enough to be true, and there is no evidence against it. If true, the great Queen had her wish, and we have ours, and in addition we have the satisfaction of seeing Shakespeare handle, for one contemporary English life with admirably differentiated characters. It may easily be urged that this Falstaff is not the wonderful personality of the historical play. What matter? We see him through the light of "Henry IV." There he controlled the situation; here the situa-

Merry Wives of Windsor

Anne, I pray you, Sir, walk in.  
Flender. I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised my shin 't'other day --- and I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since.

Painted by C. R. Leslie.

As You Like It  
Audrey, Well, I am not fair, and therefore I pray the gods make me honest.

Painted by John Pettie

tion controls him. We laughed with him, now we laugh at him. Since we have the earlier play, we need not at present stop to wonder what conception we might have of the burly rogue had he appeared in this play alone.

"Much Ado About Nothing" offers the unusual spectacle of a main plot crowded into the background by two sub-plots. The radiant wit of Beatrice and Benedick, the radiant stupidity of Dogberry and Verges, make us half forget the joys and woes of Claudio and Hero. That this was not Shakespeare's original intention is fairly certain, for the play bears unmistakable evidence of remodeling. Apparently Don Pedro's intercession in behalf of Claudio, incorrectly reported to Don John, the villain, was to have been made a much more important element in the plot than it is now. Claudio's own distressed doubt of his spokesman would not have been so tamely resolved, and Leonato's vision of a Prince for a son-in-law would not have been dispelled without a single word of comment from him or of objection from his daughter. There is enough suppressed complication to furnish forth an excellent plot of cross-purposes. But, again, what matter? Here we have Shakespeare in his happiest vein. That is enough for any play.

I have already commented on the pervading charm of "As You Like It" and "Twelfth Night." Shakespeare is now working with consummate mastery of his form. The faerie magic that he used in "Midsummer Night's Dream" he now brings down to earth, and makes Arden as entrancing as the realm of Oberon. Orlando and Rosalind are characters no more perfectly drawn than is the plot their creator gives them to move in. The wholesome tone of "As You Like It" not even the wonderful melancholy Jaques can mar, bitter as he would relish being counted the sudden conversions of the wicked brother, Oliver, and of the usurping Duke give us a moment's half-cynical pause, and then we forget to question things that after all accord with the irresistible happiness of the play.

To "Twelfth Night" I would give the palm of Shakespearean comedy. It has not all the essential poetry of "As You Like It," but it has poetry of the finest romantic order. It has abounding gayety, bolstered fun, swift movement, and a more varied appeal than has its only rival. One may perhaps say that Shakespeare "let himself go" more freely here, and found in utter absence of restraint complete realization of his comic powers in all their ways of working. To get into one play Viola, Maria, Malvolio, and Sir Toby Belch is to reach the summit of comedy.

Here, save for "The Tempest" and that rare revival of youthful light-heartedness in the latter part of "Winter's Tale," Shakespeare's comedy really ends. The other plays that go under the name of comedy, while they have many moments of the true species, properly belong to that large and undefined genus of "serious drama," for which the term comedy is too light and the term tragedy impossible. "Troilus and Cressida," "All's Well That Ends Well," "Measure for Measure," "Pericles," and "Cymbeline" are variously tragic-comedy, romance, adventure, intrigue, what you will. The qualities are clear, the label vague. It is only necessary to say that where Shakespeare's hand is

present excellence of one kind or another is present, too, and that in this group of dramas, some of which are often ignored, is to be found the master's unmistakable sign manual.

"The Tempest" reveals two great virtues, a noble diction and an astonishing character creation, Caliban. Structurally, it is a little thin, though wholly adequate. The slackening of action that was necessary to bring it through the full five acts is compensated for by its surpassing poetry. If Ferdinand and Miranda do not move us as deeply as Romeo and Juliet, we have a recompense in perceiving that thus from his finally attained Olympian height Shakespeare saw youthful, first love in something like its real proportions, beautiful but slight, true but not world-compelling.

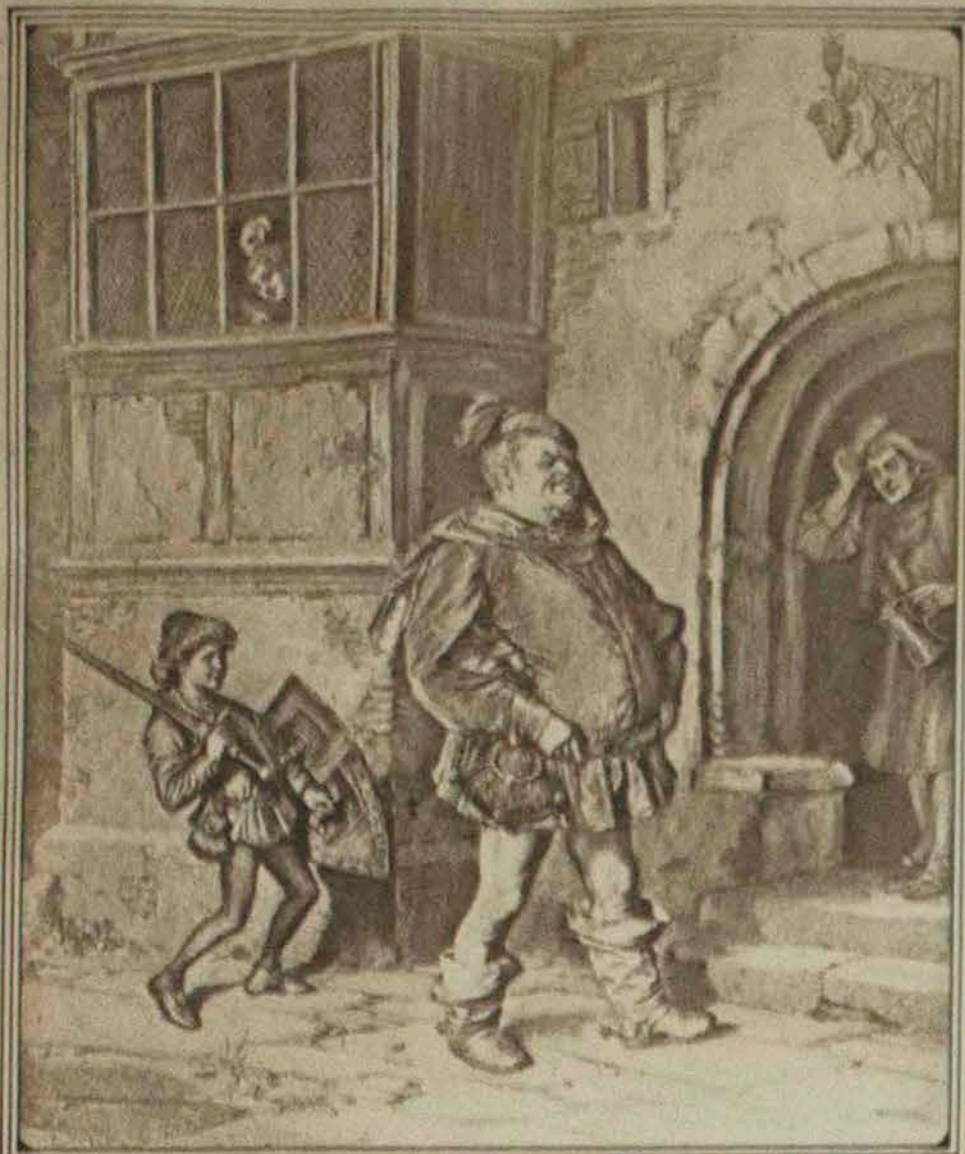
But in the last two acts of "The Winter's Tale" Shakespeare renews his early profession of faith. Florisel and Perdita (the very names are a romance) are the embodiment of ideal young romantic love, with perils close, but with the fairy godmother Fortune near at hand. And the rogue Autolycus proves to us that the master could still throw off a sketch as surely demonstrative of superb draughtsmanship as the more elaborate compositions of another day.

And now, to realize more distinctly the deep import of this celebration of the Shakespeare Tercentenary, imagine yourself seated in any one of the numerous theatres within a minimum taxicab fare from Times Square, witnessing some popular comedy whose success has been proclaimed broadcast over the country, whose scenes and furnishings are scrupulously attributed to their makers and inventors; whose very hats and gowns are punctiliously credited to milliners and dressmakers of note and price; whose actors and actresses have looked at you from the pages of many comment on the actor's favorite Summer sport, the author's pet breed of dog, and whose author, interviewed, has candidly told the public his sympathies, has candidly and how to write a drama, (which usually means how he wrote his present play.) Then on top of this, suddenly imagine that in three centuries from now the whole English-speaking world will be talking of this 1916 author, studying with care his drama you are now watching, holding celebrations to commemorate the glory he has bestowed upon the race, and reading in important daily papers articles written in the man's praise. It seems incredible. That is what we are doing today for an Elizabethan of whom three centuries ago London talked; when the watermen on the Thames were the only conveyers to the theatre, when the stage appointments were scant, and there were no signed photographs to add to your collection and no impressionable youth fell in love with actresses, for there were no actresses—with or without views on pet dogs or battle-ships or cosmetics. Well, imagine that three more centuries from today our descendants may be rendering praise to one Shakespeare. It seems credible.

Between this thing incredible and this thing credible there is a great space fixed. Therein shows the superlative genius of William Shakespeare.

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# FALSTAFF STILL BESET BY MEN IN BUCKRAM



Falstaff and his Page. 2 Henry IV, Act I, Scene II. I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one.



George Cruikshank's drawing of the fight at Gadshill—Prince Hal and Poins routing Falstaff's gang. 2 Henry IV, Act II, Scene 2.



Cruikshank's drawing of Falstaff giving his account of the Gadshill fight. If I fought not with fifty of them, I am a bunch of radish—I took all their seven points on my target, thus.

## But Now He Finds Valiant Defenders Who Take All the Enemy's Seven Points on Their Targets, Thus

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES  
By Frank Wadleigh Chandler,  
Professor and Dean in the University of Cincinnati

OF all the comic characters of literature, Falstaff is the most vital. Compared with him, the folk of Aristophanes are mere grotesques, those of Plautus and Terence are conventional abstractions, and those of medieval fiction and drama are clowns or simpletons, devils or giants, farcically amusing but unreal. Falstaff, however, is what Hazlitt calls him—"the most substantial comic character ever invented." He unites the qualities of Greek satyr, Roman parasite and braggart soldier, Rabelaisian buffoon, Spanish gracioso, and English jester. He is each of these and more than all. He is the quintessence of a thousand jolly wits, toppers, liars, thieves, gross gallants, and comic soldiers, rounded into one graceless, lovable, immortal rogue. A being so rarely compounded of elements so various could never have existed, yet he lives on Shakespeare's pages forever, and we recognize in the world of men about us reflections of certain facets of his manifold nature. "I hold a perfect comedy to be the perfection of human composition," said Horace Walpole; "and I firmly believe that fifty 'Iliads' and 'Aeneids' could be written sooner than such a character as Falstaffs."

Shakespeare was in his middle thirties when Falstaff sprang full grown from his fecund brain. In a popular chronicle play called "The Famous Victories of Henry V," the dramatist, searching for historical material, found certain scenes of rough comedy that seemed to promise well. These he proceeded to develop out of all resemblance to their original. In the first part of "Henry IV," composed presumably in 1597, Falstaff shows at his very best as a jovial rogue of rare spirit, ripe in years but youthful at heart, one of the wicked, no doubt, but so merry in his shifts as to disarm moral reprehension. His Gadshill robbery, which turns into a practical jest for Prince Hal's delight; his enacting with the Prince the scene when the King will rate Hal on the morrow for idling; his misconduct in raising his beggary troop, and his pranks on Shrewsbury field are matters of the rarest mirth.

In the second part of "Henry IV," written within a year, the scenes of low life are grosser, and Falstaff and his companions are more depraved. Less genial in wit, he is also less successful. "Men of all sorts take a pride to ride at me," he complains; and when his Doll bids him patch up his body for Heaven, he sighs, "I am old, I am old." But if he be refused credit by tradesmen, threatened with a suit by Dame Quickly, and rated by the Lord Chief Justice, he is still a rascal of spirit. He limps with the gout, yet "A good wit will make use of anything;" and he "will turn diseases to commodity." He rejoices in the bribes of those who would escape military service; wheedles a thousand pounds out of Justice Shallow, and chances in battle to capture without a struggle "a furious knight." But the Prince, his boon comrade of the first part, sees little of him, and on coming to the throne, rises to his kindly dignity by turning away Falstaff and his crew.

In "Henry V," Falstaff's death is vividly described by Dame Quickly. His heart was killed by the King's rebuff. In dying, his mind mercifully wandered from the cause of his grief, and "he made as fine an end as any Christom child" babbling of green fields. Though this passage, penned probably in 1599, bade a few months to the knight's career, within a few months at most Shakespeare had revived him to figure as the laughing stock of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," a domestic comedy, written, according to later tradition, at the request of Queen Elizabeth, who wished to see Falstaff in love.

It might be supposed that a character so little serious as Falstaff and so well-liked would escape the fate of becoming a bone of contention for the critics. Such, however, has not been the case. Falstaff, who was regarded chiefly as a merry liar, braggart, and buffoon until well into the eighteenth century, has found apologists to exalt him above reproach ever since the appearance, in 1777, of Maurice Morgann's "Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff." Critics of repute have differed concerning him, not only in such minor matters as his malice and wit, but also in matters more essential. As to the minor dif-

ferences, Coleridge notes "the perpetual contrast of labor in Falstaff to produce wit, with the ease with which Prince Henry parries his shafts." Professor Raleigh, on the contrary, is impressed by the superiority of Falstaff's wit to that of the Prince. "It is the measure of the Prince's inferiority that to him Falstaff seems 'rather ludicrous than witty,' even while all the wit that passes current is being issued from Falstaff's mouth, and stamped with the mark of his sovereignty." In similar fashion, Dr. Johnson speaks of Falstaff as "at once obnoxious and malignant," whereas Hazlitt declares that he is "without malice or hypocrisy," and Brandes that "he seems unoffensively amiable whatever he may choose to do."

In matters of greater importance the critics have differed still more widely. Their contentions have centered about four questions. Is Falstaff a coward? Is he a conscious humorist? Is his rejection by the newly crowned King a blot on the play? And is his portrayal in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" a dreadful mistake? With regard to the last question, Professor Raleigh laments that Falstaff should have been brought low to figure as the butt of citizens and their romping wives. "The chambering and wantonness of amorous intrigue suits ill with his inimitable pride of spirit," says Raleigh, who assumes a pride in him rather difficult to detect, and forgets Falstaff's relations with Doll, Ursula, and Dame Quickly. "Worst of all, he is afraid of the fairies," being in this respect more timorous than Bottom the Weaver.

Dowden would exculpate Shakespeare from the charge of voluntarily degrading "his inimitable jester into the flouting-stock of a bourgeois fabliau," but only in view of the Queen's command. "That Shakespeare should throw himself with spirit into his task was a crime for which he earns our forgiveness by its successful issue," Professor Bradley, however, cannot forgive Shakespeare for "The Merry Wives." "It was no more possible for Shakespeare to show his Falstaff in love than to turn twice two into five," says Bradley; yet "he could represent this knight assailing for financial purposes the virtue of two matrons, and in the event baffled, duped, treated like dirty linen, beaten, burnt, pricked, mocked, insulted, and, worst of all, repentant and didactic. It is horrible!"

The Germans, bound to find a philosophic motive in Shakespeare's every move, have defended "The Merry Wives." Thus Gervinus holds that the poet purposed to show here that "honesty is a natural overmatch for studied cunning," and that self-seeking craft is likely to be "hoist with its own petard." "An egoist like Falstaff," says Gervinus, "can suffer no severer defeat than from the honesty which he believes not, and from the simplicity which he esteems not." Professor Saintsbury, on the other hand, reflects that "it seems to be lost labor and idle sentimentality to lament the decadence and defeat of Falstaff. Men are generally decadent and frequently defeated, when dealing with women in such circumstances, and Falstaff's overthrow does not make him fall very hard after all." As for M. Jusseland, he regards Falstaff as even improved in "The Merry Wives." Falstaff, he writes, is here "at his very best, more needy, more unscrupulous, fatter, untidier, and more comical, too; as prompt at repartee, as inexhaustible, and of a good humor, as communicative as ever." So the critics box the compass on the Falstaff of "The Merry Wives," passing from reprobation to approbation.

With regard to the question of Falstaff's rejection by Henry V., his former jestmate, similar divergence of opinion may be observed. Most critics regard this rejection as inevitable in the dramatist's design and in the nature of the relations between the two characters who are essentially different, although superficially alike in their common love of fun. Hal, according to Professor Schelling, deprived of woman's society in the court, seeks for light and sustenance beyond its precincts. "It was the love of freedom, the seat of adventure, an intellectual appreciation of the fascinations of Falstaff, not moral depravity, which drew such a nature temporarily into the vortex of a reckless life. Henry,



Cruikshank's drawing entitled, "Sir John Falstaff by his extraordinary powers of persuasion not only induces Mrs. Quickly to withdraw her action, but also to lend him more money!" 2 Henry IV, Act II, Scene 1.

to whom Falstaff owes a thousand pounds, Falstaff, according to this theory, suddenly rises superior to an unexpected situation, precisely as he has often done before. It must be borne in mind, however, that if his remark be one of humorous self-sufficiency, nevertheless he succumbs to his grief ere long, and dies broken hearted, unable, despite his buoyant wit, to weather the sale of royal disfavor.

In the explanation just cited, Rötcher would make Falstaff a conscious humorist to the last, whereas other critics would make him unconsciously humorous or pathetic. The question as to Falstaff's character in general has often been debated. Hazlitt notes his "absolute self-possession and mastery presence of mind," and the fact that he is a rogue "as much to amuse others as to gratify himself." Coleridge speaks of "the consciousness and intentionality" of his wit, and thinks that he fastened himself on Hal "to prove how much his influence on an half-appeared would exceed that of a statesman."

Professor Courthope, on the contrary, finds Falstaff amusing chiefly because he is self-deceived. "His cowardice is absolutely transparent, yet he is content with

ingly comic as a result of his inability to comprehend the higher motives of men, as when he extols sack as the source of all wit and valor or misconceives his relations with Henry at the latter's coronation. "I am Fortune's steward!" he cries: "I know the young King is sick for me. Let us take any man's horses, the laws of England are at my commandment." For the most part, however, Falstaff resembles other famous rogues of the picaresque family in laughing at himself in his shifts. It is the rollicking spirit in which these shifts are undertaken and "his easy escapes and sallies of levity," as Johnson called them, that make him lovable. Furthermore, the best refutation of those who deny intentional humor to Falstaff is his own reflection, when observing the shortcomings of Shallow, that he will find matter in them to keep Prince Henry in laughter for four terms, and that upon this theme he will coin many a "jest with a sad brow."

The last major point of dispute concerning Falstaff is the question of his cowardice. No one appears to have doubted that cowardice was at least an ingredient of Falstaff's personality until Maurice Morgann undertook to prove the contrary in 1777. Cowardice seemed to Morgann a trait little likely to stir sympathy or laughter, and having argued the matter with a friend, he accepted his adversary's challenge to prove Falstaff's courage in writing. This task he performed in the spirit of an amateur practicing criticism for rational pleasure. He says of his long "Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff" that "The real object is exercise, and the delight which a rich, beautiful, picturesque, and perhaps unknown country may excite from every side." He admits that his work is a playful experiment, yet he says, "Shakespeare deserves to be considered in detail—a task hitherto unattempted."

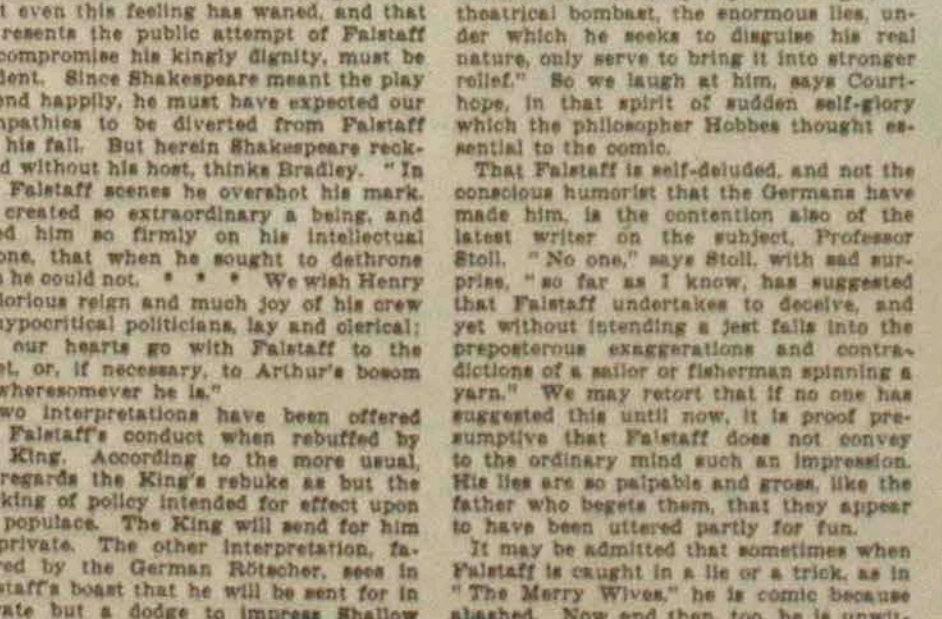
Morgann, like Chesterton, is apt in paradox, and, like Falstaff, adroit in framing excuses. Thus, he explains Falstaff's conduct at Gadshill as exceptional, "a case of accidental terror only," begging the very question at issue. He complains that the players have supplied touches of their own in the scenes of Falstaff's discomfiture to make him appear more of a poltroon than the text would warrant. It is Falstaff's lies rather than his want of courage that Poin and the Prince seek to reprove. Poin, moreover, is jealous and purposely pretends that Falstaff roared as he ran. When the knight drops flat in his encounter with Douglas, he falls not as a coward, but as a buffoon. The critical subtlety of Morgann is admirable, and to him we owe the first detailed study of any Shakespearean personage. Yet he was wrong in assuming of Falstaff that "to load him with the infamy of cowardice would poll all our mirth." Cowardice may be quite as ridiculous as gluttony, and the Falstaff of "The Merry Wives" is frankly a coward who sprawls on his face and trembles before the fairies, and who, hearing that Master Ford is coming, says to his tormentors: "Good hearts, devise something. Any extremity rather than a mischief!"

What Morgann definitely achieved, however, was to show once and for all that Falstaff, if cowardly on occasion, is not, except in "The Merry Wives," a constitutional coward like Andrew Aguecheek or Bob Acres. He will fight if he thinks it worth while, just as he will tell the truth, refrain from thieving, or from ribaldry. In short, he remains, generally, master of himself. As a humorist, moreover, he finds greater amusement than shame in the spectacle of his own lapses from the norm of conduct.

Now most of the modern critics have followed Morgann in removing Falstaff from the ranks of sheer cowards. The Germans in particular have exalted him to philosophic dignity. Among the English, Professor Raleigh has swelled Morgann's praise of the fat knight to a lofty diapason. "The accidents and escapades of his life give ever renewed occasion for the triumph of spirit over matter," writes Raleigh: "and above them all, and above from them, calm, aristocratic, fanciful, acornine opinion, following his own ends, and intellectual to his finger-tips." \* \* \* He is never for a moment entangled in the web of his own deceptions; his mind is absolutely clear of cant; his self-respect is magnificent and unshakable.

What! we ask in amazement, Falstaff calm, aristocratic, magnificent in self-respect? One who had no other knowledge of him would derive from such words a conception of his character wholly erroneous. It is true that he scorns opinion,

An old print of Peg Woffington as Mrs. Ford and Shuter as Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (1756).



but never top-tiltily; and his calm, when not perturbed, as at Gadshill or Hornet's Chak, is merely careless. His self-respect is conspicuous by its absence, or it is the ironic self-justification of the rogue only too common in letters and life.

As a corrective to the romantic canonization of Falstaff, Professor Elmer Iger Stoll, in the most careful and learned of modern essays on the subject, has sought to demolish the sentimental structure of which Morgann laid the cornerstones. According to Professor Stoll, we are in danger of forgetting that Falstaff, to the Elizabethan audience, was unquestionably a coward, a wiles grotesque. He was not the highly complex character that the sentimentalists have later made him. He was only a personage designed to produce a comic effect in a stage entertainment. He should not be thought of, therefore, apart from his deeds on the stage, or apart from his place in a traditional gallery of theatrical types. He carries a bottle in his pistol case, just as the *Bozia* of Plautus sets and drinks upon the field. He hacks his sword and tickles his nose with spear grass to draw blood just as did other theatrical braggarts.

Therefore, says Professor Stoll, it is useless to see in Falstaff, even in a single play, a consistent character. He is both a coward and a boasting soldier, a type inherently inconsistent if measured by the rules of strict probability. "Cowards do not go to war, or, if driven to it, do not become Captains. Or, if even that is not beyond the compass of chance and their own contriving, the clever ones do not boast so extravagantly as to rob themselves of credence and engage themselves in undertakings which it is furthest from their wish to fulfill." It is idle, therefore, to speculate about Falstaff's motives, or to explain, like Balthazar and Bradley, that Falstaff's humor exalts him above all fear. He goes to war only to furnish matter for comedy, the Prince gives him a charge to get him to the war, and the dozen Captains come sweating to fetch the laggard to his charge. Everything in these plays, therefore, is only a device of the dramatist and not an expression of character on the part of his dramatic personae.

It should be noted, however, that the criticism of any novel or play involves distinguishing between the artist's reasons for making his people do this or that and the motives which he has assigned to the people themselves. No character seems truly to live unless the motives apparently controlling his actions are fairly consistent and plausible. We know, as a matter of course, that back of these lies the artist's design, but to focus attention on that alone would be to reduce the appreciation of any work of art to the study of its maker's technic.

Though we owe to Professor Stoll and other critics of the naturalistic school a debt for warning us not to philosophize Falstaff out of relation to the intention of his creator or the comprehension of his audience, yet to affirm that "probably Shakespeare seldom conceived his characters apart from the plot," and that what they do and say upon the stage is only a matter of scenic expediency, is to forego appreciation of what is most distinctive of the genius of Shakespeare. It is even to misunderstand the nature of any art that seeks to interpret human life.

In looking at a statue or a painting, the mind of the observer passes instinctively from the surface of the work noted by the senses to depths of thought and emotion suggested as lying within. It is this inner heart of the aesthetic object that is perceived as revealed in and determining the outer play of light, shade, color, form, and feature. In the same way, we instinctively pass, in observing the outward actions and speech of a personage upon the stage, to his inward sentiments and character. The actor who would successfully assume a rôle must, therefore, conceive of the character that lies beneath its manifestations of word and deed, and the audience that sees and hears only such deeds and words will inevitably penetrate beneath these to the being from which they seem to proceed.

Now the chief distinction between great artists and small lies precisely in the ability of the great to suggest through outward means unified, consistent, and vital personalities beneath. And the greater the artist, the more fully will his lines, colors, surfaces, words, or gestures reveal a personality larger than any of these. In such power no dramatist has ever excelled Shakespeare. As Taine put it: "Every word pronounced by one of his characters enables us to see, besides the idea which it contains and the emotion which prompted it, the aggregate of the qualities and the entire character which produced it." Or, more picturesquely, "The words which strike our ears are not the thousandth part of those we hear within; they are like sparks thrown off at intervals; the eyes catch rare flashes of flame; the mind alone perceives the vast conflagration of which they are the signs and the effect."

# PUTTING SHAKESPEARE IN A PROCRUSTES' BED



Stuart Robson as Glendower in *The Merry Wives*.  
Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress Anne the jest, how my father stole two peccot out of a hen, good uncle.  
©Gibbs & Co. Wendell Collection.



Samuel Phelps (1804-1878) as Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*.  
My endeavors have ever come too short of my desires.  
Wendell Collection ©Gibbs & Co.



Louis James as Caliban in *The Tempest*.  
All the charms of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!



Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852) as Richard III.  
Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,  
And I will stand the hazard of the die.  
Wendell Collection.

## His Plays Have Stood a Cruel Test, Racked or Sawed to Fit the Hour's Changing Fashion

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES  
By Clayton Hamilton,  
Author of "The Theory of the Theatre," "Studies in Stagecraft," &c.

INDISPUTABLE evidence of Shakespeare's greatness as a playwright is afforded by the fact that his plays have held the stage throughout three centuries, although the physical constitution of the theatre has been utterly altered in the interim. It is an axiom that the structure of the drama in any period is conditioned by the structure of the theatre in that period; for, to get his work before the public, the playwright, first of all, must fashion his plays in such a way that they will fit the sort of theatre that is ready to receive them. The popularity of Shakespeare during his own lifetime is an evidence of his ability to adapt his genius to the exigencies of the Elizabethan theatre; but it is surely an astounding fact that, after three centuries, his plays should remain almost equally popular in a theatre that is totally different from its Elizabethan prototype.

For purposes of illustration, let us select some typical great play of the contemporary period, such as Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" or Pinero's "The Thunderbolt," and let us imagine it enacted in the Globe Theatre on the Bankside in accordance with all the customs of the Elizabethan stage. It will be evident at once that the modern play would be rendered meaningless under these conditions. Yet, though Ibsen and Pinero could not be acted successfully in Shakespeare's theatre, Shakespeare can still be acted successfully in the theatre of Ibsen and Pinero. And, looking forward now instead of backward, is it not reasonable to suppose that, if the physical conditions of the theatre shall once more be changed completely in the next 300 years, both Ibsen and Pinero may be rendered obsolete, but Shakespeare may still persist as an actually acted dramatist?

In the entire history of the drama only three playwrights have been able to endure a drastic change in the conditions of theatrical production. These three are Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare. The "Oedipus King" of Sophocles is still regularly acted in the repertory of the Comédie Française; and, though the stage is set with modern scenery, and the chorus has been gathered out of the orchestra and placed upon the stage, and the actors are no longer masked and stilted, and the language has been changed, and a roofed and lighted theatre has been substituted for the sunlit hollow of a hill, the tragedy remains overwhelmingly appealing, and, acted in our modern manner, puts our modern plays to shame.

Since the plays of Shakespeare have continuously held the stage throughout three centuries of change in the physical conditions of the theatre, it may safely be assumed that, merely as a playwright, "he was not of an age, but for all time." Yet, on the other hand, two statements should be made emphatically: First, that the dramatic craftsmanship of Shakespeare can be properly appreciated only when it is studied in reference to the physical conditions of the Elizabethan theatre, and, second, that his plays are most effective on the stage when they are produced with some approximation to the customs of the type of theatre for which they were originally fashioned.

The main features of the Globe Theatre on the Bankside are now so generally known that it will be necessary only to summarize them briefly. A generation before the time of Shakespeare, the usual place for producing plays was the courtyard of an inn, at one end of which a platform could be hastily erected; and Shakespeare's theatre was merely a more developed inn yard, with the inn itself abolished. The stage was a platform at one end of the yard, and it was surrounded on three sides by standing spectators. There was no roof over the heads of these spectators; and plays were acted in the afternoon, under the unchangeable illumination of the sun. The yard was surrounded, like a Spanish bull ring, by tiers of boxes, in which more well-to-do spectators were seated. The essential fact to be noted in this type of building is that the theatre was an out-of-door theatre and that the dramatist was impeded from employing

any effects which were dependent on artificial illumination. The stage itself was divided into three sections, which were put to different purposes of stagecraft. These three sections may be called, for convenience, the fore-stage, the back-stage, and the upper-stage. The fore-stage was an absolutely bare platform projecting openly into the yard. No scenery, no furniture, no properties could be employed upon it, and it was therefore used by the Elizabethan playwrights only for the sort of scenes which did not need to be localized in either place or time. Any incident which could tolerably be imagined to happen anywhere and anywhere was played upon the fore-stage; and, in such scenes, the actors were required to rely entirely upon the medium of dialogue.

The fore-stage was divided from the back-stage (or "inner room," as it was sometimes called) by a hanging tapestry, or "arras." Behind the arras, set pieces of furniture could be set up while the dialogue was being conducted on the fore-stage. Then the arras could be drawn aside, and both the fore-stage and the back-stage would at once be merged imaginatively into what may be called the full-stage. Juliet's bed, or Macbeth's banquet table, which had been prepared behind the arras during a scene of conversation on the fore-stage, would now, when the curtain was withdrawn, serve as a concrete fact to localize the full-stage in both place and time. Scenes on the unfurnished fore-stage were usually confined to two or three actors at a time, but scenes on the furnished full-stage were often used to call together nearly the entire company.

The upper-stage was an open balcony built over the back-stage; and it could be used at any time when it seemed desirable to perform a scene upon two levels. Thus, the upper-stage (or "upper room," as it was sometimes called) could be employed with equal service as Juliet's balcony or as the station of a commandant supposed to stand upon the walls of an embattled city.

The essential fact to be noted in this type of stage is that it allowed the playwright the utmost liberty in handling the categories of time and place. No scenes, in any way, were localized to the eye except such scenes as were set upon the full-stage, with a fixed background of furniture and properties. Shakespeare could change his place and change his time as often as he wanted by the simple expedient of emptying his stage and then reoccupying it with other characters. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he could never work a scene up to a "certain fall," because he had no curtain to ring down; and that—to cite a single but significant detail—he could never kill a character in tragedy without devising some means for having the dead body subsequently carried off the stage in full view of the audience.

The narrative method of Shakespeare was suited absolutely to this type of stage. Shakespeare built his plays not in five acts, nor in four or three, but in an uncounted sequence of scenes. The arbitrary division of each of Shakespeare's plays into five acts, with which the modern reader is familiar, was imposed upon the playwright by his eighteenth-century editors, who, knowing nothing about the Elizabethan theatre and assuming that every good play must be constructed in five acts, presumed to cut up Shakespeare's narrative in the interests of a falsely founded theory.

There is every reason to suppose that the plays of Shakespeare were originally acted, from the outset to the end, without any intermission; for otherwise it would be impossible to understand the famous phrase in the prologue to "Romeo and Juliet" about "the two hours' traffic of our stage." In this connection it may be interesting to point out that, though the narrative structure of the Elizabethan drama differs radically from that of the contemporary play, it coincides almost exactly with that of the contemporary moving-picture. Our moving-pictures, with their swift facility for changing time and place and their equipment for the easy exhibition of a story in an uncounted sequence of scenes, have



Adda Rehan as Viola, Catherine Lewis as Maria, in *Twelfth Night*.  
Maria will you hoist sail, Sir? here lies your way, Viola. No good weather, I am to hull here a little longer.



George Rignold (1838-1912) as Henry V, at the Battle of Agincourt.  
Courtesy of Laurence K. Hudson.

carried us back to the freedom and amplitude of narrative that was enjoyed by Shakespeare. Shakespeare never localized a scene, in either time or place, unless he needed to; and, whenever it was really necessary to anchor an incident in actuality, he achieved his purpose by describing the desired setting in the lines. Toward the close of "The Merchant of Venice," for example, he made his auditors imagine a moonlight night in the gardens of Portia's Belmont by talking about gardens and singing about moonlight so eloquently that not even the apprentices in the pit could resist the impetus of the impression. On the modern stage we produce the same effect by assaulting the eye instead of by besieging the ear; we employ painted scenery and modulated lights, and we delete all description from the lines. Our means are less literary and more pictorial; but they are no more effi-

Photo by Garyn Collection of William Winter.



Courtesy of Laurence K. Hudson.

When the cultivated class was at length restored to power in England, in 1660, it immediately called for theatres; and patents were granted speedily to Thomas Killigrew for the King's Theatre, in Drury Lane, and to Sir William Davenant (reputed falsely to have been an illegitimate son of William Shakespeare) for the Duke of York's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But after an interim of eighteen years the tradition of the old Elizabethan inn yard had been lost; and the new theatres—which were built in 1660 were constructed in accordance with the converted tennis court of Molière.

The theatre of the Restoration was roofed and lighted, and it was supplied with the sort of scenery that could be furnished by a backdrop and wings. A very important fact, however, must be pointed out with emphasis, namely, that the Restoration theatre maintained the old traditional distinction between the fore-stage and the full-stage. The Restoration fore-stage was an empty "apron," accessible by a proscenium door on either hand, surrounded by spectators on three sides, and practicable only for the enactment of such incidents as were not localized in place or time.

To make the plays of Shakespeare fit the Restoration stage, with its new customs carried home from France, it was not really necessary to do violence to the Elizabethan text; yet, because of a momentary change in taste, induced mainly by a contemplation of the "classical" Racine, Shakespeare fell into disfavor for the next half century, and was regarded generally as a barbarian whose work was hopelessly behind the times. "Romeo and Juliet" was rewritten by Thomas Otway in a version which more "classically" set the scene in ancient Rome; "Macbeth" was turned by Sir William Davenant into an opera, and John Dryden supplanted Shakespeare's untutored "Antony and Cleopatra" with an entirely new version of the same material, entitled "All for Love." In justice to Dryden it must be said that, although "All for Love" is inferior to "Antony and Cleopatra" in creative and poetic power, it is, according to the exigencies of the Restoration stage, a better built and more consolidated play. From the single point of view of stagecraft, the great Restoration poet, in this instance, succeeded really in making more modern the Elizabethan narrative of Shakespeare.

Although, in the eighteenth century, the greatest actor in the history of the English stage played many parts attributed to Shakespeare, the plays in which these parts were shown were grievously maltreated. Garrick played "King Lear" with a fabricated "happy ending." He played the part of Romeo in the costume of an English gentleman of the eighteenth century; yet this last anachronism should, logically, be excused, because in Shakespeare's own theatre the actors habitually wore the costumes of their own country and their own time, regardless of the place and period of the story.

Shakespeare, despite all momentary accidents of custom, held the stage without appreciable difficulty until the second half of the nineteenth century. But, half a century ago, the continuity of his establishment upon the stage was drastically threatened by the most revolutionary change in the principles of stagecraft which had been devised in all the centuries since Aeschylus wrote plays for ancient Athens. With the introduction of electric lights, the fore-stage was abolished, and the stage was reduced utterly to a picture in three dimensions exhibited behind a picture-frame proscenium. This revolution in stagecraft was of great advantage to the modern realistic dramatists, since it permitted them to localize their scenes in place and time by a direct and incontrovertible appeal to the visual imagination; but it was, correspondingly, of disadvantage to romantic and poetic dramatists, like Shakespeare, who had dealt largely with scenes unlocalized, and had appealed primarily to the ear instead of to the eye.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century, the endurance of Shakespeare in the theatre was put to the most appalling test. In this period those passages which had been sirily devised to be acted on the fore-stage, "out of place, out of time," were presented on a stage incumbered with realistic scenery which pinned them down to a definite place and a definite hour. The leader of this momentary heresy toward a realistic presentation of an essentially romantic playwright was the great actor, Sir Henry Irving. In Irving's production of "Romeo and Juliet," when Mercutio spoke his dying quip, saying humorously that his wound was "not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door," he waved his right hand and his left at an actual wall and an actual church door which were standing on the stage, insistent to the roving eye. No artifice of stagecraft, in any period, could have stood further from the imaginative intention of Shakespeare than this literal transcription of the text.

The method of Sir Henry Irving, which was supported in America by the late Augustin Daly, has been maintained until the present hour by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. Sir Herbert, in producing the platform plays of Shakespeare, draws the stage with realistic scenery, assiduously localizing incidents unlocalized in either place or time. Like Daly and like Irving before him, Sir Herbert cuts and rearranges Shakespeare's text in order to make it fit the realistic stage, and sacrifices the swift sweep of the Elizabethan narrative in order to force it to fit the conventions of the Victorian theatre. Nothing could be less Shakespearean in spirit than Sir Herbert Tree's production of "Henry VIII," which the present writer viewed in London in the Autumn of 1910; and the fact that the Elizabethan text is still undeniably appealing when submerged beneath the sumptuous scenery of this modern actor-manager must be accepted as a final evidence of Shakespeare's greatness as a dramatist.

In the last few years, a determined movement has been made by apostles of what is generally known as the "new stagecraft" to restore to Shakespeare an approximation to the general conditions of the stage for which his plays were originally fitted. The leader of this movement in England and America is Granville Barker. In his production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which Mr. Barker presented in New York a year ago, he restored the sharp distinction between the fore-stage and the back-stage, and substituted a summary and decorative background for the detailed, pictorial scenery of the Victorian period. By these reversions to the customary traffic of the Elizabethan theatre, Mr. Barker was enabled to re-establish the continuity of Shakespeare's narrative, and to present the original text, without cutting and without rearrangement, within "the two hours' traffic of the stage."

It will be noted that what is commonly called the "new stagecraft" is really a reversion to the old stagecraft of the Elizabethan theatre. No one can deny that the most emphatic way to demonstrate the effectiveness of Shakespeare in the theatre is to produce his plays with due consideration for the conventions of stagecraft to meet which they were deliberately fashioned. It would not be possible, nor would it be desirable, to re-establish at the present time all of the foregoing conditions of the Elizabethan theatre; but we should remember always that the plays of Shakespeare were devised to be presented in accordance with the conventions of the Elizabethan stage, and that we may best appreciate his power as a playwright when his plays are presented with some regard for the physical conditions of the sort of theatre for which they were originally planned. Copyright, 1916, by The New York Times Company.

# LOOK ON HAMLET'S PICTURE, AND ON QUIXOTE'S

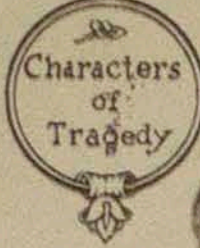
## The Masterpieces of the Northern and Southern Minds, the Heroes of Doubt and Faith

By Ivan Sergeyevitch Turgenev

Translated for The New York Times by Isaac Don Levine, from a lecture delivered by Turgenev in St. Petersburg in 1880.

(Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same date, April 23, 1616.)

THE first edition of Shakespeare's tragedy "Hamlet" and the first part of Cervantes's "Don Quixote" appeared in the same year, at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. This accident seemed to me significant, producing a series of thoughts, some of which may possibly strike one as extraordinary. But the very advantage of the great poetical works is that the genius of their creators has inspired them with eternal life, so that our views on them can be infinitely varied, even contradictory and at the same time be equally true. How many interpretations of Hamlet have already been written, and who can number those that will be written yet? To what diverse conclusions did not the study of this really inexhaustible character lead? Don Quixote, because of the truly magnificent lucidity of the story, which seems to be illumined by the southern sun, affords less opportunity for different interpretations of his character.



In these two characters are embodied two basic, opposite peculiarities of human nature—two poles of the axis about which it is revolving. It seems to me that all men belong, in a larger or smaller degree, to one of these types; that nearly every one of them resembles either Don Quixote or Hamlet. True, in our own time, the Hamlets have thrived more than the Don Quixotes, but also the ranks of the Don Quixotes have not slackened. Let me commence with Don Quixote and see in him not solely a knight of wretched appearance, a figure created only as a satire on the mediaeval knight romances, but penetrate into the very substance of the matter.

What does Don Quixote express? First of all, faith. Faith in himself. Faith in something external, unshakable; in truth. Don Quixote is all permeated with his devotion to an ideal, for which he is ready to undergo all kinds of suffering, even



Characters of Tragedy

Hamlet expresses, primarily, self-analysis and egotism and, therefore, infidelity. He lives all for himself, he is an egoist. But even an egoist cannot believe in himself. Yet the ego, in which he believes not, is dear to Hamlet. It is the starting-point, to which he constantly returns, for he finds nothing in the whole world to which he could attach his soul. He is a skeptic, and is always busy with his own personality. He is always occupied not with his duty, but his condition. Doubting everything, Hamlet gives no quarter to himself; he recognizes his own weaknesses, but

Don Quixote loves an imaginary woman, and he is ready to die for her. He loves ideally, purely, so ideally that he does not even suspect that the object of his affection does not exist in reality. There is not a trace of sensuality in his love. But Hamlet? Does he love? Would his ironical creator himself, he who was the profoundest scholar of the human heart, dare give an egoist, a skeptic, one who was full of the decomposing poison of self-analysis, a loving, affectionate heart? Shakespeare made no such mistake, and the careful reader will easily convince himself that Hamlet is a sensuous man even justly. Hamlet does not love, but makes believe, and then only carelessly, that he does. We have the word of Shakespeare himself for it in Scene II, Act III, of the tragedy:

Hamlet—I did love this once.  
Ophelia—Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.  
Hamlet—You should not have believed me. \* \* \* I loved you not.

And in these last words Hamlet is much nearer to the truth than he himself imagines. His feelings for Ophelia are either cynical or phraseological.

However, enough about the dark sides of Hamlet, those sides that irritate us most, because they are so near and characteristic of ourselves. There is much legitimate and eternal in Hamlet. There is incarnated in him the beginning of negation, that very beginning which another great poet, separating it from the realm of humanity, presented to us in the form of Mephistopheles. Hamlet is the same Mephistopheles, only incarnated in the living form of human nature. That is why his negation is not evil, it is in itself directed against evil. The negation of Hamlet doubts the good, but it doubts not the evil, and enters into a bitter struggle against it. In doubting the good, it suspects its genuineness and sincerity, it attacks it not as good, but as an imitation of it, under the veneer of which are hidden evil and falsehood, its avowed enemies. Hamlet laughs not with the diabolically cold laughter of Mephistopheles; in his bitter smile there is melancholy, bespeaking his sufferings, inviting one's sympathy. The skepticism of Hamlet is not indifference, wherein lies its importance and value. Good and evil, truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness, do not blind themselves before him into one accidental, shapeless, dull something. The skepticism of Hamlet fights implacably against falsehood, and thereby alone becomes one of the foremost champions of truth, in which he is unable to have complete faith.

And thus, on one side there are the Hamlets, thinking, intelligent, but quite as often useless and condemned to inactivity; and on the other hand, the Don Quixotes, semi-insane, serving humanity just because they see and know but one point before them, which frequently exists not in the form seen by them.

The Hamlets are useless to the people. They give nothing. They can lead nowhere, for they go nowhere themselves. And how could they lead, having no ground beneath them? The Hamlets find nothing, invent nothing, leave no trace behind them, except that of their own personality. They love not. They believe not. How could they find things? They are solitary and therefore barren. The Hamlets condemn the masses. When one has no respect for one's self, how can he respect others? Is it worth his while to occupy himself with the masses? They are so rough and dirty. And Hamlet is an aristocrat, not only by birth.

The Hamlets are the expression of a centripetal force in nature, according to which every living being considers itself the centre of creation and regards all the rest as existing only for its sake. Without such a centripetal force (the force of egotism) nature could not exist, just as it could not exist without another centripetal force, by the laws of which everybody exists for all others, this principle being expressed by the Don Quixotes. These two forces of inertia and motion, conservation and progress, are the fundamental forces of all life.

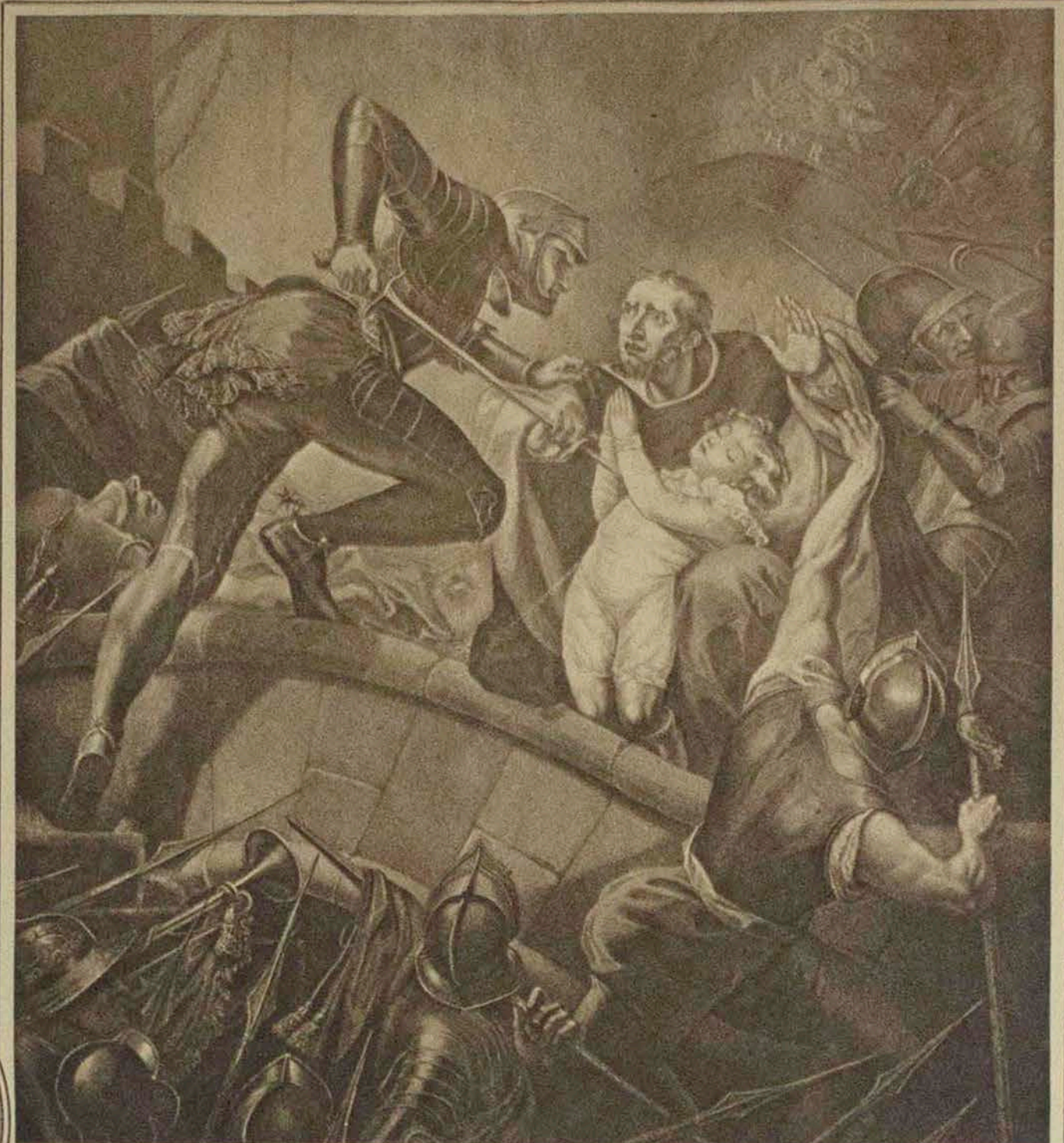
Don Quixote reverently respects all existing institutions, religion, monarchy, dukes, and at the same time he is free and recognizes the freedom of others. Hamlet

abuses kings, courtiers, and is, in reality, tyrannical and intolerant.

Don Quixote scarcely knows how to write and read. Hamlet, in all probabilities, kept a diary. Don Quixote, in spite of his ignorance, has certain conceptions of political affairs, administrative matters. Hamlet has no time and no desire to occupy himself with such things.

Both Hamlet and Don Quixote die tragically. But how unlike their deaths! The end of Don Quixote awakens in one's heart untold emotions, at that moment his real significance is revealed to all. "I am no more Don Quixote," he says before his death to his armor-bearer, "I am again the good Alonso, as they called me of old, Alonso el Bueno." Beautiful are the last words of Hamlet. He is "restful, calm, gives his last orders. But the eye of Hamlet is not turned forward. \* \* \* "The rest is silence," says the dying skeptic, and he becomes silent forever.

Perhaps of all the works of Shakespeare "Hamlet" is the most popular. It is impossible not to marvel at the genius who, resembling his Hamlet in so many respects, separated him from his own self by a free motion of his creative power, placing his character before posterity for eternal study. The spirit that has created Hamlet is the spirit of the northerner, the spirit of reflection and self-criticism, a heavy, gloomy spirit, void of harmony and bright colors, not shaped in elegant but petty forms, but a deep, powerful, many-sided, independent, masterly spirit. The spirit of the southerner had molded the



Frederick Ward as Iago

Murder of the Duke of Rutland, 3 Henry VI, Act I, Scene III.  
Tutor. Ah, Clifford! murder not this innocent child!  
Lest thou be hated both of God and man!

Painted by James Northcote. Collection of Emil F. Bejding.



King John, Act IV, Scene I.  
Arthur. O, save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.

sacrifice his life. For his life he values as much as it is worth as a medium in the realization of his ideal, in the inauguration of a reign of truth and justice on earth. It may be argued by some that his ideal was derived by his distorted imagination from the fantastic world of knight romances. Very well, this forms the comical side of Don Quixote, but the ideal retains all its untarnished purity. Don Quixote would think it shameful to live for his own sake, to care for his own self. He lives outside of himself, for others, for his brethren, for the extermination of evil. There is not a trace of egotism in him, he never worries about his own well, he is all self-sacrifice, he trusts—trusts firmly, without any suspicion. That is why he is fearless, patient, satisfied with the scantiest food, with the neediest garments; all this concerns him little. Humble by heart, his spirit is great and courageous. His pitiable piety does not stifle his freedom. Foreign to pride, he never doubts his ability, his calling, even his physical powers. His will is the inflexible will.

The constant pursuit of the same goal makes his thoughts somewhat monotonous, his mind one-sided. He knows little, and he really does not need to know much. He knows what he wants, wherefore he lives on earth and this is the main thing. Don Quixote at one time may appear to be entirely insane, as indisputable matter vanishes before his eyes, melts away like wax at the touch of the flame of his enthusiasm, and, at another time, narrow-minded, unable to sympathize with or enjoy anything quickly. But the strength of his moral organism—and this insane wandering knight is the most moral being in the world—adds special force and dignity to all his comments and utterances, to all his figure, in spite of the comical and humiliating situations in which he constantly entangles himself. \* \* \* Don Quixote is an enthusiast, a champion of an ideal, enveloped by its brilliant lustre.

And what is Hamlet?



Robert Mantell as King Lear.  
Cordelia. Sir, do you know me?  
Lear. You are a spirit, I know, when did you die?



Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson as Hamlet, Gertrude Elliott as Ophelia.  
Ophelia. Rich gifts wax poor when silver prove unkind.



George Frederick Cooke as Richard III.  
Was ever woman in this humor hood?  
Was ever woman in this humor work?

form of Don Quixote, a light, cheerful, naive, impressionable spirit which goes not to the bottom of life, which reflects, but not embraces, all the phenomena of life.

Shakespeare and Cervantes—it may be said—what comparison can there be between the two? Shakespeare is a giant, a demi-god. True, but neither is Cervantes a pigmy before this giant, but a full-sized man. Doubtless, Shakespeare crushes Cervantes with the wealth and force of his imagination, the brilliancy of his poetic heights, the depth and vastness of his tremendous mind. But neither can one meet in "Don Quixote" dull witticisms, unnatural comparisons, or imitated passages. Shakespeare takes his characters from everywhere, from heaven, from earth; nothing can escape his piercing look. He uproots them with incomparable violence, with the force of an eagle dropping on its prey. Cervantes gently presents before his reader his few characters, as a father introduces his children. He takes only what is near him, but what is near him he knows well. All humanity seem to be subject to the mighty genius of the English poet, while Cervantes obtains his wealth from his own soul, clear, humble, rich with experiences in life, but not hardened by them. The circle subject to him is much narrower than Shakespeare's, but it also reflects a humanity in itself. Cervantes will not dazzle his reader's eye with a lightning-like word, will not thrill him with the titanic power of his masterful inspiration; his poetry is not Shakespeare's—often a tempestuous ocean—it is a deep river, calmly flowing between its multicolored banks.

One's imagination readily pictures the figures of the two poets—contemporaries, who died on the very same day, the 23d of April, 1616. Cervantes, in all probability, knew nothing of Shakespeare. But the great dramatist, in the quietude of his Stratford home, may have read the famous novel, which was then already translated into English. \* \* \* A picture worthy of the brush of a painter-philosopher!

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