

**THE PROMPT-BOOK.
SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF MUCH
ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

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The Prompt-Book. Shakespeare's Comedy of Much Ado about Nothing by William Shakespeare & Edwin Booth

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & EDWIN BOOTH

**THE PROMPT-BOOK.
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COMEDY OF MUCH
ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

The Prompt-Book.

Edited by

William Winter.



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Hamlet.	The Merchant of Venice.	King Lear.
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&c. &c.

As presented by

Edwin Booth.



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The Prompt-Book.

Edited by William Winter.

William

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Shakespeare's Comedy

of

Much Ado About Nothing.

As Presented by

Edwin Booth.

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"My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua."

"He is of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty."

"From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he is all mirth."

"Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice."

"There was a star danced, and under that was I born."

"There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her."

"When I said I would die a bachelor; I did not think I should live till I were married."

"Man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion."

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1878.

Preface.



*F*RANCIS MERES,—1598,—who mentions twelve of Shakespeare's plays, then known, does not mention "*Much Ado About Nothing*"; and this comedy was first published in 1600. The date of its composition is indicated by these facts. That part of it which relates to Hero and Claudio is founded on the story of Genevra and Ariodant, in Ariosto's "*Orlando Furioso*"—a translation of which, by Sir John Harrington, appeared in England, in 1591. There is a similar story in one of Bandello's novels, translated by Belleforest, and also in Spenser's "*Faerie Queen*," Book ii, Canto 4th, 1590. An earlier play, touching upon the same theme, was acted before Queen Elizabeth, by "the Children of Paul's," in 1582-3. Either or all of these may have met the eye of Shakespeare. His treatment of the story, however, is found to be entirely his own; and he may, in fact, be said to have re-created it. Benedick and Beatrice, Dogberry and Verges, and all that relates to these characters, are the invention of Shakespeare. The text of "*Much Ado*," as first published, was not divided into acts; but, in the Folio of 1623 these divisions appear. The comedy was popular in Shakespeare's time, and it has always been a favourite in the theatres. The original representative of Dogberry was William Kempe; who, also, probably, was the original of Bottom. Verges was first acted by Towley; and Balthazar,—with the song of "*Sigh no more, ladies*,"—by Wilson: these facts

are denoted in the Folio reprint. The period of "Much Ado" is supposed to be about 1529-35; for the reason that the last war in which the Italians under Spanish rule were engaged was ended in 1529, and the Emperor Charles V., of Spain, who had gained the crowns of Naples and Sicily, made a triumphal entry into Palermo and Messina in 1535. To these events the opening of the comedy seems to refer. The present acting-copy of "Much Ado," which differs from all others, condenses the piece from five acts into three. The volume of excisions is, of course, considerable. The most important sacrifice is that of the scene in which Dogberry bestows his "tediousness" upon Leonato. Balthazar's song will also be missed. It is thought, though, that this version of "Much Ado"—which has been effectually tested in the practical experience of Edwin Booth—does no injustice to either the story, the characters, the movement, or the text of the original. The stage copy generally used is that which John Philip Kemble arranged, in 1799. The animalism, the self-assertive intrusiveness, and the rank flippancy of Benedick and Beatrice—qualities which caused Campbell to characterize the lady as "odious," and the cavalier as only a little less disagreeable—are apparent in the original, but subdued in the acting version. The most admired Benedick of the last century was Garrick; the most brilliant representatives of Beatrice were Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Abington. The latter was the original Lady Teazle. "Beatrice has more wit and pertness than good-breeding," says old John Taylor, "and in that she [Mrs. Abington] was excellent." The most renowned Benedick of recent times was Charles Kemble.

W. W.

New-York, October 24th, 1878.





" *The wars are over,
The Spring is come.*"—BYRON.

" *Then let me live one long romance,
And learn to trifle well;
And write my motto, 'Vive la danse,
And 'Vive la bagatelle'!*"—PRAED.

" *White favours rest
On every breast,
And yet methinks we seem not gay:
The church is cold,
The priest is old,
And who shall give the bride away?*"
WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.

" *Each lonely scene shall thee restore,
For thee the tear be duly shed;
Beloved till life can charm no more,
And mourned till Pity's self be dead.*"—COLLINS.

" *You suspect, I see,
And rightly—there has been some masking here.*"
KNOWLES.

" *A lover's jealousy and hopeless pangs
No kindly heart contemns.*"—JOANNA BAILLIE.

" *A human heart should beat for two,
Despite the scoffs of single scorers,
And all the hearths I ever knew
Had got a pair of chimney corners.*"
FREDERICK LOCKER.



Persons Represented.



DON PEDRO, *Prince of Aragon.*

DON JOHN, *Natural Brother to Don Pedro.*

CLAUDIO, *a young Lord of Florence,* } *Favourites to Don Pedro.*
BENEDICK, *a young Lord of Padua,* }

LEONATO, *Governor of Messina.*

ANTONIO, *Brother to Leonato.*

BALTHAZAR, *Servant to Don Pedro.*

BORACHIO, } *Followers of Don John.*
CONRADE, }

DOGBERRY, } *Officers of Police in Messina.*
VERGES, }

SEACOAL, } *Watchmen.*
OATCAKE, }

FRIAR FRANCIS.

A SEXTON.

HERO, *Daughter to Leonato.*

BEATRICE, *Niece to Leonato.*

MARGARET, } *Gentlewomen, attendant on Hero.*
URSULA, }

LORDS, LADIES, WATCHMEN, AND ATTENDANTS.

Place and Time.



SCENE.—*Messina, in the Island of Sicily.*

PERIOD.—*The Sixteenth Century [1535].*

TIME OF ACTION.—*In this version of the Comedy, four days.*