

**SHAKESPEARE'S KING HENRY THE
FIFTH. WITH INTRODUCTION AND
NOTES EXPLANATORY AND
CRITICAL. FOR USE IN SCHOOLS
AND FAMILIES**

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Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth. With Introduction and Notes Explanatory and Critical. For Use in Schools and Families by William Shakespeare & Henry N. Hudson

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & HENRY N. HUDSON

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INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL,

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BY THE

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INTRODUCTION.

History of the Play.

THE LIFE OF HENRY THE FIFTH, as it is called in the folio of 1623, was registered, along with *As You Like It*, at the Stationers', August 4, 1600, but was locked up from the press under an order "to be stayed." In respect of *As You Like It* the stay seems to have been continued; but not so in regard to the other, as this was entered again on the 14th of the same month, and was published in the course of that year. The same text was reissued in 1602, and again in 1608. In these editions, known as the quartos, the author's name was not given: the play, moreover, was but about half as long as we have it; the Choruses, the whole of the first scene, and also many other passages, those too among the best in the play, and even in the whole compass of the the Poet's works, being wanting altogether. All these, besides more or less of enlargement in a great many places, together with the marks of a careful finishing hand running through the whole, were supplied in the folio of 1623; which, accordingly, is our only *authority* for the text, though the quartos yield valuable aid towards correcting the errors and curing the defects of that copy.

That the issue of 1600 was surreptitious is on all hands allowed. But there has been much controversy whether it was printed from a full and perfect copy of the play as first written, or from a mangled and mutilated copy, such as

could be made up by unauthorized and incompetent reporters. Many things might be urged on either side of this question; but, as no certain conclusion seems likely to be reached, the discussion probably may as well be spared. Perhaps the most considerable argument for the former position is, that the quarto has in some cases several consecutive lines precisely as they stand in the folio; while, on the other hand, of many of the longest and best passages in the folio the quarto has no traces whatever. But this is nowise decisive of the point either way, because, granting that some person or persons undertook to report the play as spoken, it is not impossible that he or they may have taken down some parts very carefully, and omitted others altogether. And the Editors of the folio tell us in their Preface that there were "divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them."

And here it may not be unfitting to remark that in other cases, as especially in *Hamlet*, we have strong and even conclusive evidence of the Poet's plays having been carefully rewritten and vastly improved after the original draughts of them had been made. Nor is it unlikely that some of them underwent this process more than once. And the fact is of consequence as refuting what used to be, and perhaps still is, the common notion, that Shakespeare's best workmanship was struck out with little or no labour of reflection and study. Assuredly it was not without severe and patient exercise of thought that he achieved his miracles of poetry and art, and won his place as the greatest of human intellects. We have been taught to think of him as a prodigy of genius going rather by nature and instinct than by reason and purpose, and beating all other men because he could not help it:

whereas in truth his judgment was fully equal to his genius ; and his greatness stands in nothing else so much as in just that solidity and sobriety of understanding which comes by industry and application, and by making the best use of one's native gifts. And the instance of *King Henry the Fifth* yields pregnant matter in this behalf ; the difference between the quarto and folio copies in that case not being greater than between the first and second quartos of *Hamlet*.

In the Epilogue to *King Henry the Fourth* the speaker says, "Our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Catharine of France." Whether this promise was directly authorized by Shakespeare, we cannot positively say, as that Epilogue was probably not of his writing ; but there is little doubt that the play to which it is affixed was written as early as 1597. That the play now in hand was written soon after the date of that promise, is highly probable. On the other hand, in the Chorus to Act v. we have the following :

Were now the general of our gracious Empress —
As in good time he may — from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broach'd on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit,
To welcome him !

This undoubtedly refers to the Earl of Essex, who went on his expedition against the Irish rebels in April, 1599, and returned in September following. That Chorus, therefore, and probably the others also, was written somewhere between those two dates. The most likely conclusion, then, seems to be, that the first draught of the play was made in 1597 or 1598 ; that the whole was rewritten, enlarged, and the Choruses added during the absence of Essex, in the Summer of 1599 ; and that a copy of the first draught was

obtained for the press, fraudulently, after it had been superseded on the stage by the enlarged and finished copy.

Historic Matter of the Play.

In this play, as in *King Henry the Fourth*, the historical matter was taken from Holinshed, both the substance and the order of the events being much the same as they are given by the historian. The King came to the throne in March, 1413, being then twenty-six years old. The Parliament with which the play opens was held in the Spring of 1414, and the King's marriage with Catharine took place in the Spring of 1420; so that the time of the action is measured by that interval.

The civil troubles which so much harassed the preceding reign naturally started the young King upon the policy of busying his subjects in foreign quarrels; "that action, hence borne out, might waste the memory of the former days." At the Parliament just mentioned a proposition was made, and met with great favour, to convert a large amount of Church property to the uses of the State; which put the Clergy upon adding the weighty arguments of their means and counsel in furtherance of the same policy; inasmuch as they judged that the best way to prevent a spoiling of the Church was by engaging all minds in a transport of patriotic fervour. King Henry derived his claim to the throne of France from Isabella, Queen of Edward the Second, and daughter of Philip the Fair; he being the fourth in a direct line of descent from that celebrated woman. This Philip had left two sons, both of whom died without male issue; whereupon the crown passed to Charles the Fair, the youngest brother of Philip. In effect, the English King was easily

persuaded that the Salique law had no right to bar him from the throne of France; and ambassadors were sent over to demand the French crown and all its dependencies; the King offering withal to take the Princess Catharine in marriage, and endow her with a part of the possessions claimed; at the same time threatening that, if this were not done, "he would recover his right and inheritance with mortal war and dint of sword." An embassy being soon after received from France, the demand was renewed, and peremptorily insisted on. The French King being then incapable of rule, the government was in the hands of the Dauphin, who saw fit to play off some merry taunts on the English monarch, referring to his former pranks; whereupon the latter dismissed the ambassadors, bidding them tell their master that within three months he would enter France as his own true and lawful patrimony, "meaning to acquire the same, not with big words, but with the deeds of men."

This took place in June, 1415. Before the end of July the King's preparations were complete, and his army landed at Harfleur on the 15th of August. By the 22d of September the town was brought to an unconditional surrender, and put in the keeping of an English garrison. The English army was now reduced to about half its original numbers; nevertheless the King, having first challenged the Dauphin to single combat, and getting no answer, took the bold resolution of marching through several provinces to Calais. After a slow and toilsome march, during which they suffered much from famine and hostile attacks, the army came within sight of Agincourt, where the French were strongly posted, so that Henry must either surrender or cut his way through them. The French army spent the following night in revelry and debate, and in fixing the ransom of King Henry and his

nobles. The night being cold, dark, and rainy, many fires were kindled in both camps; and the English, worn out with labour, want, and sickness, passed the hours in anxious preparation, making their wills and saying their prayers, and hearing every now and then peals of laughter and merriment from the French lines. During most of the night the King was moving about among his men, scattering words of comfort and hope in their ears, and arranging the order of battle; and before sunrise he had them called to matins, and from prayers led them into the field. From the confident bearing of the French it was supposed they would hasten to begin the fight, but when it was found that they kept within their lines, the King gave order to advance upon them. The battle continued with the utmost fury for three hours, and resulted in the death of ten thousand Frenchmen, five hundred of whom had been knighted the day before. Some report that not above twenty-five of the English were slain; others affirm the number to have been not less than five or six hundred.

The news of this victory caused infinite rejoicing in England, and the King soon hastened over to receive the congratulations of his people. When he arrived at Dover, the crowd plunged into the waves to meet him, and carried him in their arms from the vessel to the beach: all the way to London was one triumphal procession: Lords, Commons, Clergy, Mayor, Aldermen, and citizens flocked forth to welcome him: pageants were set up in the streets, wine ran in conduits, bands of children sang his praise; and, in short, the whole population were in a perfect ecstasy of joy.

During his stay in England, the King was visited by several great personages, the Emperor Sigismund being one of them, who came to mediate a peace between him and