

**THE WORKS OF
SHAKESPEARE LOVE'S
LABOUR'S LOST**

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The Works of Shakespeare Love's Labour's Lost by William Shakespeare & H. C. Hart

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & H. C. HART

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H. C. HART



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INTRODUCTION

DATE OF PLAY

Love's Labour's Lost first appeared in print, in Quarto, in 1598, with the following title:—

A | PLEASANT Conceited Comedie | CALLED, | Loues
labors lost. | As it was presented before her Highnes | this
last Christmas, | Newly corrected and augmented | By W.
Shakespere. | [Ornamental device] | Imprinted at London by
W. W. | for Cutbert Burby. | 1598.

Two points may be noticed at once—that this is the earliest play published with Shakespeare's name on the title; and that the words "newly corrected and augmented" seem to imply an earlier edition from which this differs appreciably. They can hardly be held with fairness to refer merely to the manner in which the manuscript or prompter's copy, or copies, had been dealt with. And the corrections and augmentations, we are distinctly told, are by W. Shakespeare.

The next publication of *Love's Labour's Lost* was in the First Folio of 1623, where it is the seventh in order among the comedies. This text is distinguished from the Quarto by a considerable number of mostly unimportant variations generally for the better. These will be dealt with later in the present Introduction. Sidney Lee classes this Quarto amongst those in which "comparatively few faults are visible," in his Introduction to the Folio facsimile. The Folio divides the play into Acts, which is not done in the Quarto. The Folio is the more carefully printed. It is also the most authoritative. In 1631 a second edition of the Quarto was printed from the Folio, "by W. S. for Iohn Smethwicke"; "As it was Acted by

his Maiesties Seruaunts at the Blacke-Friers and the Globe." It is of no weight as an authority.

We are without any direct evidence as to the date of composition or of the earliest appearance of the play. It is not mentioned in the Stationers' Register earlier than 1606-7, but it is one of the plays mentioned by Meres in his *Wits Treasurie* printed in the year 1598: "Shakespeare among ye English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage: for Comedy, witnes his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Loue Labors Lost*, his *Loue labours womne*" (*Shakespeare Allusion Books*, New Shakes. Soc. 1874). And in the same year it was referred to by Tofte, in his *Alba* (Grosart's reprint, p. 105): "*Loves Labour Lost* I once did see a play, Ycleped so, so called to my paine." Robert Tofte's words imply that some considerable time had elapsed since he saw it. He had seen the unaugmented play, prior to Christmas, 1597, probably.

In 1599 appeared *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a piratical collection of poetry published by Jaggard. In this anthology are placed three pieces from the play. See notes at IV. ii. 98, IV. iii. 57, and IV. iii. 98. And in *England's Parnassus* (1600) the line IV. iii. 376, "Revels, Daunses, Maskes and merrie houres," is quoted. See *Centurie of Prayse* (New Shakes. Soc. p. 432). There is also a 1606 reference to the play in the *Centurie*. It was one of the "Bookes red be me [Drummond of Hawthornden] anno 1606" (p. 71).

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF DATE

We must, therefore, have recourse to the play itself for evidence as to its date of production; and taking this in its general aspect, no better survey has been given than that of Gervinus (translated by Burnett, 1875). He says: "The comedy of *Love's Labour's Lost* belongs indisputably to the earliest dramas of the poet, and will be almost of the same date as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The peculiarities of Shakespeare's earliest pieces are perhaps most accumulated in this play. The reiterated mention of mythological and historical personages; the air of learning, the Italian and Latin