Entries in the *Register* of copyrights kept by the Company of Stationers indicate that editions of *As* *You Like It* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* were contemplated but not published in 1600 and 1608 respectively.

The Quartos differ very much in character. Some of them contain texts which are practically identical with those of the First Folio; others show variations so material as to suggest that some revision, either by rewriting or by shortening for stage purposes, took place. Amongst the latter are 2, 3 *Henry VI., Richard III., Romeo and Juliet, The Merry* *Wives* *of Windsor, Hamlet* and *King Lear.* Many scholars doubt whether the Quarto versions of 2, 3 *Henry VI.,* which appeared under the titles of *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York,* arc Shakespeare’s work at all. It seems clear that the Quartos of *The Troublesome Reign of John King of England* (1591) and *The Taming of A Shrew* (1594), although treated for copyright purposes as identical with the plays of *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew,* which he founded upon them, are not his. The First Quartos of *Romeo and Juliet, Henry V., The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and *Hamlet* seem to be mainly based, not upon written texts of the plays, but upon versions largely made up out of shorthand notes taken at the theatre by the agents of a piratical bookseller. A similar desire to exploit the commercial value of Shakespeare’s reputation probably led to the appearance of his name or initials upon the title-pages of *Locrine* (1595), *Sir John Oldcastle* (1600), *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602), *The London Prodigal* (1605), *The Puritan* (1607), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), and *Pericles* (1609). It is not likely that, with the exception of the last three acts of *Pericles,* he wrote any part of these plays, some of which were not even produced by his company. They were not included in the First Folio of 1623, nor in a reprint of it in 1632, known as the Second Folio; but all seven were appended to the second issue (1664) of the Third Folio (1663), and to the Fourth Folio of 1685. Shakespeare is named as joint author with John Fletcher on the title-page of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1634), and with William Rowley on that of *The Birth of Merlin* (1662); there is no reason for rejecting the former ascription or for accepting the latter. Late entries in the Stationers’ *Register* assign to him *Cardenio* (with Fletcher), *Henry I.* and *Henry II.* (both with Robert Davenport), *King Stephen, Duke Humphrey,* and *Iphis and Ianthe;* but none of these plays is now extant. Modern conjecture has attempted to trace his hand in other plays, of which *Arden of Feversham* (1592), *Edward III.* (1596), *Mucedorus* (1598), and *The* *Merry Devil of Edmonton* (1608) are the most important; it is quite possible that he may have had a share in *Edward III.* A play on *Sir Thomas More,* which has been handed down in manu­script, contains a number of passages, interpolated in various handwritings, to meet requirements of the censor; and there are those who assign one of these (ii. 4, 1-172) to Shakespeare.

Unfortunately the First Folio does not give the dates at which the plays contained in it were written or produced; and the endeavour to supply this deficiency has been one of the main preoccupations of more than a century of Shakespearian scholarship, since the pioneer essay of Edmund Malone in his *An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakespeare were Written* (1778). The investigation is not a mere piece of barren antiquarianism, for on it depends the possibility of appreciating the work of the world’s greatest poet, not as if it were an articulated whole like a philosophical system, but in its true aspect as the reflex of a vital and constantly developing personality. A starting-point is afforded by the dates of the Quartos and the entries in the Stationers’ *Register* which refer to them, and by the list of plays already in existence in 1598 which is inserted by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* of that year, and which, while not necessarily exhaustive of Shakespeare’s pre-1598 writing, includes *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, Love’s Labour’s Lost, A Mid­summer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, Richard II., Richard III., Henry IV., King John, Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet,* as well as a mysterious *Love’s Labour’s Won,*

which has been conjecturally identified with several plays, but most plausibly with *The Taming of the Shrew.* There is a mass of supplementary evidence, drawn partly from definite notices in other writings or in diaries, letters, account-books, and similar records, partly from allusions to contemporary persons and events in the plays themselves, partly from parallels of thought and expression between each play and those near to it in point of time, and partly from considerations of style, includ- ing the so-called metrical tests, which depend upon an analysis of Shakespeare’s varying feeling for rhythm at different stages of his career. The total result is certainly not a demonstration, but in the logical sense an hypothesis which serves to colligate the facts and is consistent with itself and with the known events of Shakespeare’s external life.

The following table, which is an attempt to arrange the original dates of production of the plays without regard to possible revisions, may be taken as fairly representing the common results of recent scholarship. It is framed on the assumption that, as indeed John Ward tells us was the case, Shakespeare ordinarily wrote two plays a year; but it will be understood that neither the order in which the plays are given nor the distribution of them over the years lays claim to more than approximate accuracy.

*Chronology of the Plays.*

1591. 1600.

(1, 2) *The Contention of York and (21) The Merry Wives of Windsor. Lancaster* (2, 3 *Henry VI.).* (22) *As You Like It.*

(3) 1 *Henry VI. (23) Hamlet.* 1601.

(The theatres were closed for not (24) *Twelfth Night.*

and plague from June to the end

of December.) (25) *Troilus and Cressida*

(4) *Richard* *III.* (26) *All's Well that Ends Well.*

(5) *Edward III.* (part only). (The theatres

(6) *The Comedy of Errors.* (The theatres were closed on

(The theatres were closed for Elizabeth's death in March, and

plague from the beginning of remained closed for plague February to the end of December.) throughout the year.)

1594. 1604.

(7) *Titus Andronicus.* (27) *Measure for Measure.*

(The theatres were closed for (28) *Othello.*

plague during February and 1605.

.) (29) *Macbeth.*

(8) *Taming of the Shrew.* (30) *King Lear.*

(9) *Love's Labour's Lost.* 1606

(10) *Romeo and Juliet.* (31) *Anthony and Cleopatra.*

(11) *A Midsummer Night's*

(11) *A Midsummer Night s* 1607.

(12) *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (33) *Timon of Athens* (un-

(12) *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* finished)

(13) *King John.* 1608.

(14) *Richard II.* (34) *Pericles* (part only).

(15) *The Merchant of Venice.* 1609.

1597. (35) *Cymbeline.*

(The theatres were closed for 1610

misdemeanour from the end of (36) *The Winter's Tale.*

July to October.) 1611.

(16) I *Henry IV.* (37) *The Tempest.*

1598. 1612.

(17) 2 *Henry IV.*

(18) *Much Ado About Nothing.* 1613.

1599. (38) *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

(19) *Henry* *V*. (part only).

(20) *Julius Caesar.* (39) *Henry VIII.* (part only).

A more detailed account of the individual plays may now be attempted. The figures here prefixed correspond to those in the table above.

1, 2. The relation of *The Contention of York and Lancaster* to 2, 3 *Henry VI.* and the extent of Shakespeare’s responsibility for either or both works have long been subjects of controversy. The extremes of critical opinion are to be found in a theory which regards Shakespeare as the sole author of 2, 3 *Henry VI.* and *The Contention* as a shortened and piratical version of the original plays, and in a theory which regards *The Contention* as written in collaboration by Marlowe, Greene and possibly Peele, and 2, 3 *Henry VI.* as a revision of