8. In the same way was probably also acquired an old play of *The Taming of A Shrew.* This, which can be traced back as far as 1589, was published as acted by Pembroke’s men in 1594. In June of that year it was being acted by the Chamberlain’s, but more probably in the revised version by Shakespeare, which bears the slightly altered title of *The Taming of The Shrew.* This is a much more free adaptation of its original than had been attempted in the case of *Henry VI.,* and the Warwickshire allusions in the Induction are noteworthy. Some critics have doubted whether Shakespeare was the sole author of *The Shrew,* and others have assigned him a share in *A Shrew,* but neither theory has any very substantial foundation. The origins of the play, which is to be classed as a farce rather than a comedy, are to be found ultimately in widely distributed folk-tales, and more immediately in Ariosto’s *J Suppositi* (1509) as translated in George Gascoigne’s *The Supposes* (1566). It may have been Shakespeare’s first task for the newly established Chamberlain’s company of 1594 to furbish up the old farce. Thenceforward there is no reason to think that he ever wrote for any other company.

9. *Love's Labour's Lost* has often been regarded as the first of Shakespeare’s plays, and has sometimes been placed as early as 1589. There is, however, no proof that Shakespeare was writing before 1592 or thereabouts. The characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* are evidently suggested by Henry of Navarre, his followers Biron and Longaville, and the Catholic League leader, the duc de Maine. These personages would have been familiar at any time from 1585 onwards. The absence of the play from the lists in Henslowe’s *Diary* does not leave it impossible that it should have preceded the formation of the Chamberlain’s company, but certainly renders this less likely; and its lyric character perhaps justifies its being grouped with the series of plays that began in the autumn of 1594. No entry of the play is found in the Stationers’ *Register*, and it is quite possible that the present First Quarto of 1598 was not really the first edition. The title-page professes to give the play as it was “ corrected and augmented ” for the Christmas either of 1597 or of 1598. It was again revived for that of 1604. No literary source is known for its incidents.

**10.** *Romeo and Juliet,* which was published in 1597 as played by Lord Hunsdon’s men, was probably produced somewhat before *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* as its incidents seem to have suggested the parody of the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude. An attempt to date it in 1591 is hardly justified by the Nurse’s references to an earthquake eleven years before and the fact that there was a real earthquake in London in 1580. The text seems to have been partly revised before the issue of the Second Quarto in 1599. There had been an earlier play on the subject, but the immediate source used by Shakespeare was Arthur Brooke’s narrative poem *Romeus and Juliet* (1562).

**11.** *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* with its masque-like scenes of fairydom and the epithalamium at its close, has all the air of having been written less for the public stage than for some courtly wedding; and the compliment paid by Oberon to the “ fair vestal throned by the west" makes it probable that it was a wedding at which Elizabeth was present. Two fairly plausible occasions have been suggested. The wedding of Mary countess of Southampton with Sir Thomas Heneage on the 2nd of May 1594 would fit the May-day setting of the plot; but a widowed countess hardly answers to the “ little western flower ” of the allegory, and there are allusions to events later in 1594 and in particular to the rainy weather of June and July, which indicate a somewhat later date. The wedding of William Stanley, earl of Derby, brother of the lord Strange for whose players Shakespeare had written, and Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the earl of Oxford, which took place at Greenwich on the 26th of January 1595, perhaps fits the conditions best. It has been fancied that Shakespeare was present when “ certain stars shot madly from their spheres” in the Kenilworth fireworks of 1575, but if he had any such entertainment in mind it is more likely to have been the more recent one given to Elizabeth by the earl of Hertford at Elvetham in 1591. There appears to be no special

source for the play beyond Chaucer’s *Knight's Tale* and the wide­spread fairy lore of western Europe.

**12.** No very definite evidence exists for the date of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* other than the mention of it in *Palladis Tamia.* It is evidently a more rudimentary essay in the genre of romantic comedy than *The Merchant of Venice,* with which it has other affinities in its Italian colouring and its use of the inter-relations of love and friendship as a theme; and it may therefore be roughly assigned to the neighbourhood of 1595. The plot is drawn from various examples of contemporary fiction, especially from the story of the shepherdess Filismena in Jorge de Montemayor’s *Diana* (1559). A play of *Felix and Philiomena* had already been given at court in 1583.

**13.** *King John* is another play for which 1595 seems a likely date, partly on account of its style, and partly from the impro­bability of a play on an independent subject drawn from English history being interpolated in the middle either of the Yorkist or of the Lancastrian series. It would seem that Shakespeare had before him an old play of the Queen’s men, called *The Troublesome Reign of King John.* This was published in 1591, and again, with “ W. Sh.” on the title-page, in 1611. For copy­right purposes *King John* appears to have been regarded as a revision of *The Troublesome Reign,* and in fact the succession of incidents in the two plays is much the same. Shakespeare’s dialogue, however, owes little or nothing to that of his pre­decessor.

**14.** *Richard II.* can be dated with some accuracy by a comparison of the two editions of Samuel Daniel’s narrative poem on *The Civil Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York,* both of which bear the date of 1595 and were therefore issued between March 25, 1595 and March 24, 1596 of the modern reckoning. The second of these editions, but not the first, contains some close parallels to the play. From the first two quartos of *Richard II.,* published in 1597 and 1598, the deposition scene was omitted, although it was clearly part of the original structure of the play, and its removal leaves an obvious mutila- tion in the text. There is some reason to suppose that this was due to a popular tendency to draw seditious parallels between Richard and Elizabeth; and it became one of the charges against the earl of Essex and his fellow-conspirators in the abortive *émeute* of February 1601, that they had procured a performance of a play on Richard’s fate in order to stimulate their followers. As the actors were the Lord Chamberlain’s men, this play can hardly have been any other than Shakespeare’s. The deposition scene was not printed until after Elizabeth’s death, in the Third Quarto of 1608.

**15.** *The Merchant of Venice,* certainly earlier than July 22, 1598, on which date it was entered in the Stationers’ *Register,* and possibly inspired by the machinations of the Jew poisoner Roderigo Lopez, (who was executed in June 1594, shows a con- siderable advance in comic and melodramatic power over any of the earlier plays, and is assigned by a majority of scholars to about 1596. The various stories of which its plot is compounded are based upon common themes of folk-tales and Italian *novelle.* It is possible that Shakespeare may have had before him a play called *The Jew,* of which there are traces as early as 1579, and in which motives illustrating “ the greedinesse of worldly chusers ” and the “ bloody mindes of usurers ” appear to have been already combined. Something may also be owing to Marlowe’s play of *The Jew of Malta.*

**16, 17.** The existence of *Richard II.* is assumed throughout in *Henry IV.,* which probably therefore followed it after no long interval. The first part was published in 1598, the second not until 1600, but both parts must have been in existence before the entry of the first part in the Stationers’ *Register* on February 25th 1598, since Falstaff is named in this entry, and a slip in a speech-prefix of the second part, which was not entered in the *Register* until August 23rd 1600, betrays that it was written when the character still bore the name of Sir John Oldcastle. Richard James, in his dedication to *The Legend of Sir John Oldcastle* about 1625, and Rowe in 1709 both bear witness to the substitution of the one personage for the other, which Rowe