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| 33. Othello | 1611 |
| 34. The Tempeſt | 1612 |
| 35. Twelfth Night | 1614 |

The three firſt of theſe, Mr Malone thinks, there is very ſtrong reaſon to believe are not the original pro­ductions of Shakeſpeare ; but that he probably altered them, and added ſome new scenes.

In the firſt folio edition in 1623, theſe plays were en­titled “ Mr William Shakeſpeare’s Comedies, Hiſtories, and Tragedies.” They have been publiſhed by various editors. The firſt folio edition by Iſaac Jaggard and Edward Blount ; the ſecond, folio, 1632, by Thomas Cotes for Robert Allot ; the third, 1664, for P, C. ; the fourth, 1685, for H. Herringman, E, Brewſter, and R. Bentley. Rowe publiſhed an 8vo edition in 1709, in 7 vols, and a 12mo edition in 1714, in O vols ; for which he received L. 36, 10s. Pope pu­bliſhed a 4to edition in 1725, in 6 vols, and a 12mo in 1728, in 10 vols; for which he was paid L. 217, 128. Theobald gave a new edition in 8vo in 1733, in 7 vols, another in 12mo in 1740, in 8 vols; and received for his labour L. 652, 10s. Sir Thomas Hanmer publiſhed an edition in 1744, in 6 vols 4to. Dr Warburton’s 8vo edition came out in 1747, in 8 vole ; for which he was paid L. 560. The editions publiſhed ſince that time, are Dr Johnſon’s in 1765, in 8 vols 8vo. Stevens’s in 1766, in 4 vols 8vo. Capell’s in 1768, in 10 vols, crown 8vo ; for this the au­thor was paid L. 300. A ſecond edition of Hanmer’s in 1771, 6 vols. Johnſon’s and Stevens’s in 1773, in 10 vols 8vo ; a ſecond edition in 1778; a third by Reed in 1785 ; and Malone’s crown 8vo edition in 1789, in 10 vols.

The moſt authentic of the old editions is that of 1623. “ At laſt (says Dr Johnſen) an edition was undertaken by Rowe ; not becauſe a poet was to be publiſhed by a poet, for Rowe ſeems to have thought very little on correction or explanation, but that our author’s works might appear like thoſe of his fraterni­ty, with the appendages of a life and recommendatory preface. Rowe has been clamorouſly blamed for not performing what he did not undertake, and it is time that juſtice be done him, by confeſſing, that though he ſeems to have had no thought of corruption beyond the printer’s errors, yet he has made many emendations, if they were not made before, which his ſucceſſors have received without acknowledgment, and which, if they had produced them, would have filled pages with cεm ſures of the ſtupidity by which the faults were committed, with diſplays of the abſurdities which they in­volved, with oſtentatious expoſitions of the new reading, and ſelf-congratulations on the happineſs of diſcovering it.”

The nation had been for many years content enough with Mr Rowe’s performance, when Mr Pope made them acquainted with the true ſtate of Shakeſpeare’s text, ſhowed that it was extremely corrupt, and gave reaſon to hope that there were means of reforming it, Mr Rope’s edition, however, he obſerves, fell below his own expectations ; and he was ſo much offended, when he was found to have left any thing for others to do, that he paſſed the latter part of his life in a ſtate of hoſtility with verbal criticiſm.

The only talk, in the opinion of Mr Malone, for which Rope was eminently and indiſputably qualified, was to mark the faults and beauties of his author. When he undertook the office of a commentator, every anomaly of language, and every expreſſion that was currently in uſe, were considered as errors or corruptions, and the text was altered or amended, as it was called, at pleaſure. Pope is openly charged with being one of the great corrupters of Shakeſpeare’s text.

Pope was ſucceeded by Theobald, who collated the ancient copies, and rectified many errors. He was however, a man of narrow comprehension and of little learning, and what is worſe, in his reports of copies and editions, he is not to be truſted without examination. From the liberties taken by Pope, the edition of Theobald was juſtly preferred, becauſe he profeſſed to adhere to the ancient copies more ſtrictly, and illuſtrated a few paſſages by extracts from the writers of our poet’s age, Still, however, he was a conſiderable innovator ; and while a few arbitrary changes made by Pope were detected, innumerable sophiſtications were ſilently adopted.

Sir Thomas Hanmer, who comes next, was a man of critical abilities, and of extensive learning. His corrections are commonly just, but ſometimes capricious. He is cenſurable, too, for receiving without examination almoſt all the innovations of Pope.

The original and predominant error of Warburton’s commentary, is acquieſcence in his firſt thoughts ; that precipitation which is produced by conſciouſneſs of quick diſcernment ; and that confidence which preſumes to do, by ſurveying the ſurface, what labour only can perform, by penetrating to the bottom. His notes exhibit ſometimes perverſe interpretations, and ſome­times improbable conjectures ; he at one time gives the author more profundity of meaning than the ſentence admits, and at another discovers abſurdities where the ſenſe is plain to every other reader. Rut his emenda­tions are likewiſe often happy and just; and his interpretation of obſcure paſſages learned and ſagacious.

It has indeed been ſaid by his defenders, that his great object was to diſplay his own learning ; and certainly, in ſpite of the clamour raiſed againſt him for ſubſtituting his own chimerical conceits inſtead of the genuine text of Shakeſpeare, his work increaſed his reputation. But as it is of little value as a commentary on Shake­ſpeare, since Warburton is now gone, his work will pro­bably ſoon sink into oblivion,

In 1765 Dr Johnſon’s edition, which had long been impatiently expected, was given to the public. His vigorous and comprehensive underſtanding threw more light on his author than all his predecessors had dope, The character which he gave of each play is generally just. His refutation of the falſe gloſſes of Theobald and Warburton, and his numerous explications of involved and difficult paſſages, entitle him to the gratitude of every admirer of Shakeſpeare,

The laſt editor is Mr Malone, who was eight years employed in preparing his edition, By collating the moſt authentic copies, he has been careſul to purify the text. He has been ſo induſtrious, in order to diſcover the meaning of the author, that he has ranſacked many volumes, and truſts that, besides his additional illuſtrations, not a single valuable explication of any obſcure paſſage in theſe plays has ever appeared, which he has not inſerted in his edition. He rejects Titus Andronicus, as well as the three plays formerly mentioned, as