Preliminaries to the First Folio of Shakespeare (1623)

1. TO THE READER.
2. TO THE MOST NOBLE AND INCOMPARABLE PAIRE OF BRETHREN.
3. TO THE GREAT VARIETY OF READERS.
4. TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOUED [Ben Jonson on Shakespeare].
5. VPON THE LINES AND LIFE OF THE FAMOUS SCENICKE POET, MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.
6. A CATALOGVE OF THE SEUERALL COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES CONTAINED IN THIS VOLUME.
7. TO THE MEMORIE OF THE DECEASEDAUTHOUR MAISTER W. SHAKESPEARE.
8. TO THE MEMORIE OF M. W. SHAKE-SPEARE.
9. THE NAMES OF THE PRINCIPALL ACTORS IN ALL THESE PLAYES.

TO THE READER.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,

It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;

Wherein the Grauer had a strife

With Nature, to out-doo the life:

O, could he but haue drawne his wit

As well in brasse, as he hath hit

His face; the Print would then surpasse

All, that was euer writ in brasse.

But, since he cannot, Reader, looke

Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I.

TO THE MOST NOBLE AND

INCOMPARABLE PAIRE OF BRETHREN.

WILLIAM Earle of Pembroke, &c. Lord Chamberlaine to the Kings most

Excellent Maiesty. AND PHILIP Earle of Montgomery, &c. Gentleman of his Maiesties Bed-

Chamber. Both Knights of the most Noble Order of the Garter, and our singular good LORDS.

Right Honourable,

Whilst we studie to be thankful in our particular, for the many fauors we haue receiued from your L. L. we are falne vpon the ill fortune, to mingle two the most diuerse things that can bee, feare, and rashnesse; rashnesse in the enterprize, and feare of the successe. For, when we valew the places your H. H. sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to

the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we haue depriu'd our selues of the defence of our Dedication. But since your L. L. haue beene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, heeretofore; and haue prosequuted both them, and their Authour liuing, with so much fauour: we hope, that (they out-liuing him, and he not hauing the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings) you will vse the like indulgence toward them, you haue done vnto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any Booke choose his Patrones, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so much were your L. L. likings of the seuerall parts, when they were acted, as before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We haue but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow aliue, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we haue iustly obserued, no man to come neere your L. L. but with a kind of religious addresse; it hath bin the height of our care, who are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But, there we must also craue our abilities to be considerd, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruites, or what they haue: and many Nations (we haue heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leauened Cake. It was no fault to approch their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remaines of your seruant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them, may be euer your L. L., the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the liuing, and the dead, as is Your Lordshippes most bounden,

IOHN [HEMINGES].

HENRY CONDELL.

TO THE GREAT VARIETY OF READERS.

From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd. We had rather you were weighd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends vpon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & you wil stand for your priuiledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soeuer your braines be, or your wisedomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Iudge your sixepen'orth, your shillings worth, your fiue shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates, and welcome. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue a Trade, or make the Iacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock=pit, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes haue had their triall alreadie, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation. It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed

from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; and so to haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious impostors, that expos'd them: euen those, are now offer'd to your

view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued thē. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarse receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who

onely gather his works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that

reade him. And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need,

can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

Iohn [Heminges].

Henrie Condell.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOUED,

THE AVTHOR

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:

AND

WHAT HE HATH LEFT VS.

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,

Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;

While I confess thy writings to be such

As neither man nor muse can praise too much;

'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways

Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;

For seeliest ignorance on these may light,

Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;

Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance

The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;

Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,

And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise.

These are, as some infamous bawd or whore

Should praise a matron; what could hurt her more?

But thou art proof against them, and indeed,

Above th' ill fortune of them, or the need.

I therefore will begin. Soul of the age!

The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!

My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by

Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie

A little further, to make thee a room:

Thou art a monument without a tomb,

And art alive still while thy book doth live

And we have wits to read and praise to give.

That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,

I mean with great, but disproportion'd Muses,

For if I thought my judgment were of years,

I should commit thee surely with thy peers,

And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,

Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.

And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,

From thence to honour thee, I would not seek

For names; but call forth thund'ring Aeschylus,

Euripides and Sophocles to us;

Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,

To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,

And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,

Leave thee alone for the comparison

Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome

Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Tri'umph, my Britain, thou hast one to show

To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

He was not of an age but for all time!

And all the Muses still were in their prime,

When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm

Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!

Nature herself was proud of his designs

And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines,

Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,

As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.

The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,

Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,

But antiquated and deserted lie,

As they were not of Nature's family.

Yet must I not give Nature all: thy art,

My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.

For though the poet's matter nature be,

His art doth give the fashion; and, that he

Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,

(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat

Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same

(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,

Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn;

For a good poet's made, as well as born;

And such wert thou. Look how the father's face

Lives in his issue, even so the race

Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines

In his well-turned, and true-filed lines;

In each of which he seems to shake a lance,

As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.

Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were

To see thee in our waters yet appear,

And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,

That so did take Eliza and our James!

But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere

Advanc'd, and made a constellation there!

Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage

Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage;

Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,

And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

BEN: IONSON.

VPON THE LINES AND LIFE OF THE FAMOUS

SCENICKE POET, MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Those hands, which you so clapt, go now, and wring

You Britaines braue; for done are Shakespeares dayes:

His dayes are done, that made the dainty Playes,

Which made the Globe of heau'n and earth to ring.

Dry'de is that veine, dry'd is the Thespian Spring,

Turn'd all to teares, and Phæbus clouds his rayes:

That corp's, that coffin now besticke those bayes,

Which crown'd him Poet first, then Poets King.

If Tragedies might any Prologue haue,

All those he made, would scarse make one to this:

Where Fame, now that he gone is to the graue

(Deaths publique tyring-house) the Nuncius is.

For though his line of life went soone about,

The life yet of his lines shall neuer out.

HVGH HOLLAND.

A CATALOGVE OF THE SEUERALL COMEDIES, HISTORIES,

AND TRAGEDIES CONTAINED IN THIS VOLUME.

COMEDIES.

The Tempest. Folio 1.

The two Gentlemen of Verona. 20

The Merry Wiues of Windsor. 38

Measure for Measure. 61

The Comedy of Errours. 85

Much adoo about Nothing. 101

Loues Labour lost. 122

Midsommer Nights Dreame. 145

The Merchant of Venice. 163

As you Like it. 185

The Taming of the Shrew. 208

All is well, that Ends well. 230

Twelfe=Night, or what you will. 255

The Winters Tale. 304

HISTORIES.

The Life and Death of King John. Fol. 1.

The Life & death of Richard the second. 23

The First part of King Henry the fourth. 46

The Second part of K. Henry the fourth. 74

The Life of King Henry the Fift. 69

The First part of King Henry the Sixt. 96

The Second part of King Hen. the Sixt. 120

The Third part of King Henry the Sixt. 147

The Life & Death of Richard the Third. 173

The Life of King Henry the Eight. 205

The Tragedy of Coriolanus. Fol. 1.

Titus Andronicus. 31

Romeo and Juliet. 53

Timon of Athens. 80

The Life and death of Julius Caesar. 109

The Tragedy of Macbeth. 131

The Tragedy of Hamlet. 152

King Lear. 283

Othello, the Moore of Venice. 310

Anthony and Cleopater. 346

Cymbeline King of Britaine. 369

TO THE MEMORIE OF THE DECEASED

AUTHOUR MAISTER W. SHAKESPEARE.

Shake-speare, at length thy pious fellowes giue

The world thy Workes: thy Workes, by which, out-liue

Thy Tombe, thy name must: when that stone is rent,

And Time dissolues thy Stratford Moniment,

Here we aliue shall view thee still. This Booke,

When Brasse and Marble fade, shall make thee looke

Fresh to all Ages: when Posteritie

Shall loath what's new, thinke all is prodegie

That is not Shake-speares; eu'ry Line, each Verse

Here shall reuiue, redeeme thee from thy Herse.

Nor Fire, nor cankring Age, as Naso said,

Of his, thy wit=fraught Booke shall once inuade.

Nor shall I e're beleeue, or thinke thee dead

(Though mist) vntill our bankrout Stage be sped

(Impossible) with some new straine t'out=do

Passions of Iuliet, and her Romeo;

Or till I heare a Scene more nobly take,

Then when thy half=Sword parlying Romans spake.

Till these, till any of thy Volumes rest

Shall with more fire, more feeling be exprest,

Be sure, our Shake=speare, thou canst neuer dye,

But crown'd with Lawrell, liue eternally.

L. Digges.

TO THE MEMORIE OF M. W. SHAKE-SPEARE.

Wee wondred (Shake-speare) that thou went'st so soone

From the Worlds=Stage, to the Graues-Tyring-roome.

Wee thought thee dead, but this thy printed worth,

Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth

To enter with applause. An Actors Art,

Can dye, and liue, to acte a second part.

That's but an Exit of Mortalitie;

This, a Re-entrance to a Plaudite.

I. M.

THE WORKES OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, CONTAINING

ALL HIS COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES: TRUELY

SET FORTH, ACCORDING TO THEIR FIRST ORIGINALL.

THE NAMES OF THE PRINCIPALL

ACTORS IN ALL THESE PLAYES.

William Shakespeare.

Richard Burbadge.

John Hemmings.

Augustine Phillips.

William [Kempe].

Thomas [Pope].

George Bryan.

Henry Condell.

William Slye.

Richard Cowly.

John Lowine.

Samuell Crosse.

Alexander Cooke.

Samuel Gilburne.

Robert Armin.

William Ostler.

Nathan Field.

John Underwood.

Nicholas Tooley.

William Ecclestone.

Joseph Taylor.

Robert Benfield.

Robert Goughe.

Richard Robinson.

Iohn Shancke.

Iohn Rice.