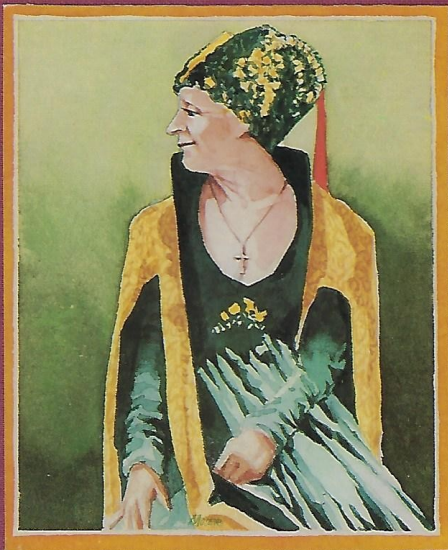


THE GUILD
Shakespeare



THE GUILD

Shakespeare

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
MEASURE FOR MEASURE

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY
JOHN F. ANDREWS

Foreword by John Houseman

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FOREWORD

to
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
and
MEASURE FOR MEASURE
by John Houseman



The plays contained in this volume are among my favorite Shakespearean comedies. *All's Well That Ends Well* is one of the Bard's lightest and most agreeable works: its lively, picaresque narrative raises few questions and has qualities of gentle magic that we

The late JOHN HOUSEMAN, an award-winning actor, producer, director, and author, was active in theatre and films for nearly six decades. He served as Artistic Director of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and of The Acting Company, and he was head of the drama division of the Juilliard School at Lincoln Center. In 1973 he won an Academy Award for his role as Professor Kingsfield in *The Paper Chase*. A co-founder of The Mercury Group in 1937 with Orson Welles, Mr. Houseman and his famous collaborator produced a Haitian *Macbeth*, a Fascist *Julius Caesar*, and the radio drama "War of the Worlds." Mr. Houseman died in 1988 on the fiftieth anniversary of that celebrated broadcast.

gladly accept. I have directed it twice and can testify that, except for the mild exasperation audiences may come to feel at Bertram's obtuse and snobbish inability to appreciate what a jewel of a girl he is getting, it contains nothing that can in any way perplex or offend. Clearly it was created for the sole purpose of giving pleasure.

It has three unusually charming, aging characters: the Countess of Rossillion, the courtly Lafew, and the ailing King of France are all models of courtesy, wisdom, and sophistication. The closest we get to a villain is the absurd Parolles (the traditional "military braggart"), who exercises a regrettable if temporary influence on young Bertram but whose comeuppance is so predictable that he gives us no serious cause for anxiety.

That leaves us with our heroine—one of that company of courageous, resourceful young women (played by boys on the Elizabethan stage) of whom Rosalind and Viola are the most celebrated. Added to her other qualities, Helena has a surprising modernity: her courtship of the reluctant Bertram makes us think of some of G. B. Shaw's self-confident, passionate, and persevering young women who do not hesitate, in the course of their wooing, to pursue and, if need be, to harass the males they have chosen for their mates. To get Bertram to the altar Helena is prepared to travel from the provinces to Paris, to undertake the hazardous task of curing the King of his mysterious malady, to cross the Alps into Italy armed only with a pilgrim's staff, and finally to take her place in another young lady's bed without losing her virtue. We admire her for her nerve and applaud her when she finally gets Bertram where she wants him.

Measure for Measure is quite a different cup of tea. Its only

similarity to *All's Well That Ends Well* lies in the "bed trick"—practiced by both heroines, Helena and Isabella—by means of which both manage, in quite different ways, to achieve a happy and honorable consummation of their marital affairs. There the likeness ends.

Measure for Measure deals with one of Shakespeare's favorite and most ambiguous themes: the dangers of excess in human behavior—excess of virtue no less than excess of vice. It is a curious, quirky play, subject to diverse, contradictory interpretations. When it became our first unqualified success of the 1956 Stratford Festival season, no one was more surprised than I.

Angelo, the Duke's deputy, is a puritanical figure who takes advantage of his master's absence from Vienna to enforce a series of severe moral edicts. One of his first victims is a young aristocrat named Claudio, Isabella's brother, who has been condemned to death for his infraction of those laws. Isabella (whom we first meet in her Nunnery) is no less fanatical than Angelo in her rigid notions of morality; her exaggerated preoccupation with and pride in her own virtue have led her into an attitude of intolerance for human frailty—including that of her beloved brother. Suddenly she is faced with the shocking realization that the only way she can hope to save Claudio is by surrendering her treasured virginity to that same Deputy, who, while she was kneeling before him pleading for her brother's life, has conceived a violent and guilty passion for her. Will Isabella yield her virtue to Angelo's lust, or will she let her brother die?

It is a contrived dramatic situation which is saved from melodrama by the intensity and eloquence with which Angelo and Isabella each plead their own insoluble case. Shakespeare finally

resolves their dilemma through the miraculous intervention of the all-knowing and all-powerful Duke, who, it turns out, has been monitoring the situation right along. The climax he contrives—full of impersonations, disguises, revelations, reversals, and comeuppances—seems to me to place *Measure for Measure*, without question, in the realm of comedy.

Not everyone agrees. I have seen effective productions of *Measure for Measure* that had a grim medieval quality: one eminent contemporary critic has gone so far as to find in the Duke's return an analogy with the Catholic concept of the Second Coming and the Last Judgment!

Either way, it remains a puzzling, equivocal play. Its dramatis personae, in addition to its three leading characters, include a second young lady (pregnant yet virtuous), a group of whores led by their madam and accompanied by their pimp, a whimsical executioner, a comic cop, a magistrate with a fine sense of justice, and a vicious man-about-town.

To confuse matters further, a strong atmosphere of death pervades the play. In two brilliant scenes (equal in quality to the best of Shakespeare's dramatic writing) death is treated successively as an object of personal terror and as a subject of philosophical contemplation. The approach of death also provides opportunities for macabre humor among the denizens of Vienna's underworld: we are even invited to witness a swapping of severed heads under the supervision of the Duke!

Such a mixture of attitudes and styles is acceptable in these days when "dark comedy" is again a popular theatrical form. Though it was generally unacceptable throughout most of the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Measure for Measure* is now a viable part of our Shakespearean repertory.

Heaven knows what future generations will think of it. Meantime—whether in the printed text or on the stage—it remains a lively challenge to readers and theatre people alike. Its presence in the same volume as *All's Well That Ends Well* is a tribute to Shakespeare's infinite versatility. At the same time it demonstrates the wide range and curiosity of Elizabethan theatre audiences, and their readiness to accept, as items of entertainment, plays written in so many utterly different and contradictory moods.

Editor's Introduction to
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
and
MEASURE FOR MEASURE



They say Best Men are molded out of Faults,
And for the most, become much more the Better
For being a little Bad.

So pleads Mariana in a speech (V.i.432-34) that penetrates to the heart of *Measure for Measure*. Her remarks are specific to the situation that occasions them, of course, but they apply with equal pertinence to the action of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Both comedies center on what the heroine of the first play in this volume calls a "Sinful Fact." Both plots turn on a bed trick that enables a spurned maiden to claim as husband a man so debased as to seem almost beyond reclamation. And by means of a paradox that illustrates the New Testament concept of Grace, both plays transfigure a "Wicked Meaning" into a shadowy "Deed" that proves not only lawful but redemptive.

Deriving from a period (1603-4) when Shakespeare was de-

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voting most of his attention to tragedy, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* are frequently described as "dark comedies" or "problem plays." Their tone is less festive than the atmosphere we relish in earlier pieces like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. At times, indeed, their mood is so somber and acerbic that we sense closer affinities with *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, four dramatic works that appear to have bracketed these two tragicomedies in Shakespeare's development as an artist. As we note what happens in each play we are reminded that human nature is so frail as to make some sort of failure all but inescapable. In a way that anticipates the "Wonder" so prevalent in the dramatist's final Romances, however, we are also given intimations of a "Power Divine" that looks upon our trespasses and treats them with a "Physic / That's Bitter to Sweet End."

In *All's Well That Ends Well* the attending "physician" is an orphaned maiden whose renowned father has bequeathed her "some Prescriptions / Of rare and prov'd Effects" (I.iii.228-29). At first it appears that Helena's only other assets are the "Simplicity," "Honesty," and "Goodness" the Countess of Rossillion ascribes to her ward in the dialogue that opens the play. But by the conclusion of the initial scene we realize that the daughter of Gerard de Narbon is a virgin with exalted aspirations. Her questing spirit is prompting her to "strange Attempts" that will "show her Merit," overcome the King's disease, and achieve the love whose favor spurs her "idolatrour Fancy" to "mount so high" (I.i.91-107, 237-46).

Helena is in many ways the most brazenly assertive of Shakespeare's comic heroines, and the "Ambition" that motivates her

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"Project" suggests analogies with the "Impudence," the "Strumpet's Boldness" (II.i.170-71), proverbially associated with Helen of Troy (a parallel made explicit in I.iii.75 and hinted at elsewhere). As he introduces "Doctor She" to the King of France in II.i, moreover, Lord Lafew alludes to another Trojan "Traitor" of related repute: he prepares the monarch for a "Cressid" whose sweet "Medicine" will "breathe Life into a Stone," "araise King Pippin," and make a sick man "dance Canary / With sprightly Fire and Motion."

Once Helena is alone with the King, her words make it evident that the "Remedy" she bears is an "Appliance" quite different from those associated with either of the wantons to whom she has been compared. She presents herself "with all bound Humbleness" as "the weakest Minister" of the "Help of Heav'n" (II.i.114, 134-44, 148-52). And the cure she effects is described two scenes later as something so manifestly "Supernatural" as to call into question the modern presumption that "Miracles are past" (II.iii.1-3).

From this point on in the play, Helena is depicted more frequently as a pious wonder-worker than as a woman with worldly designs, and the consequence is that she comes to resemble another archetypal namesake, the Saint Helena who conducted a sacred pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, found and exalted to a place of honor the Cross that had lain buried for three centuries, and converted to the truth an enemy of the Faith who eventually became one of its most esteemed Fathers.

Almost as soon as Shakespeare's Helena attains the object of her mission to the Court of France, she discovers that she has

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been rejected by the husband she earned by healing the King. Rather than despising the scornful Count for behavior that draws him the contempt of the monarch and even of his own mother, Helena reproaches herself for Bertram's flight to the Florentine wars, pities him for the perils into which she feels she has cast him, and sets out on another journey to restore him to the title he has bitterly forfeited. Once again the heroine resolves to accomplish what appears impossible, and the "Medicine" she employs to win her husband for good breathes life into a second "Stone" with even more quickening efficacy.

The device by which Helena "turns a sour Offense" into a "remorseful Pardon" proves to be but the most telling instance of a "Mingl'd Yarn" in which *All's Well That Ends Well* shows "our Life" to be an inextricable "Web" of "Good and Ill together" (IV.iii.83-84). In the opening scene as she blesses Bertram on his departure for the Court, the Countess prays that her son's "Blood and Virtue" will "Contend for Empire" in him. What the Countess means by *Blood* is "Birthright," the heritage that is presumed to flow from the veins of one generation to the next. But *blood* is also a term for the passionate human will, and when Rossillion's "unseason'd Courtier" gives rein to that kind of contention it is only by Providence that the "rash and unbridl'd Boy" makes Helena's bridal knot rather than his own self-destructive "not" eternal (III.ii.30-34). Under the influence of the foppish Parolles, Bertram "contrives against his own Nobility" (IV.iii.29) to undertake a "Business which he knows is not to be done" (III.vi.97-99). But by the conclusion of the action, through the "connectural" ministrations of his "Clog," he is "chang'd almost into another Man" (V.iii.13, II.v.59, IV.iii.5-6).

In similar fashion a figure who believes he has successfully evaded his matrimonial bonds is brought to account in *Measure for Measure*. Here, however, the primary agent of redress is not the forsaken maiden but "some more mightier Member / That sets them on" (V.i.226-27). Vincentio, the ruler who appoints a "strict Deputy" to rid Vienna of the license that has become rampant through the magistrate's own "permissive Pass," appears at times to be a Machiavellian manipulator. His most persistent detractor describes him as "the old fantastical Duke of Dark Corners," and twentieth-century interpreters have sometimes latched onto Lucio's words as an indication that the playwright expects the audience to question the craft by which the disguised "Friar" addresses the "Vice" for which he himself is at least partly responsible.

However his methods strike a modern reader, though, the Duke of Vienna is a character whose role in the action would probably have pleased the most influential of *Measure for Measure's* early audiences. The first performance that can be dated with certainty occurred at the Court of King James I on December 26, 1604, and it is quite likely that the newly installed monarch was in attendance. *Measure for Measure* echoes some of King James's own writings on the principles of good government, particularly his views on the need to exercise measure (temperance) in the administration of justice; it is thus probable that the King perceived himself as the principal model for a "Sword of Heav'n" who tempers justice with mercy and whose harshest punishment is reserved for a scandalmonger who exemplifies the kind of "un-reverent speaker" that James is said to have found particularly irritating.

As he moves among his people in disguise, having divested himself of all the trappings of imperial dignity, the Duke of *Measure for Measure* is reminiscent of "the Mirror of all Christian Kings" as Shakespeare had depicted England's "Warlike Harry" on the eve of Agincourt in *Henry V*. Meanwhile, as he secludes himself and his purposes from those who govern Vienna in his absence, this Duke resembles the "Deus absconditus," the unfathomable hidden God, whose mysterious ways would later inspire the theological reflections of Blaise Pascal. It would be going too far, no doubt, to suggest that Vincentio's divestiture is an allegory of the Incarnation as depicted in Philippians 2:5-7; but in his various aspects as "Father," "Shepherd," "dread Lord," and "Grace," this Duke is surely intended to remind us that in Shakespeare's time the ruler of a state was to be revered as God's anointed surrogate.

Shakespeare's original audience would not have been surprised, then, to see the Duke of *Measure for Measure* assume the persona of another minister of God's will. Nor would they have been shocked by his instigation of a "Deceit" with Biblical precedent (see Genesis 38 for a ruse with analogies to both plays), particularly when that undertaking brings about a "Consummation" that can be described as both devout and "devoutly to be wished" (*Hamlet*, III.i.60-61). If we take the Duke at his own estimate, he functions as an agent of Providence who puts other characters through a season of "testing" to find out what they are made of, teach them something about their own limitations, and eventually bring them to a crisis where each is called upon to display a spirit of humility, forgiveness, and love that was absent

or deficient at the outset. Seeing that his Vienna has become a sick society, the Duke takes it upon himself to restore it to health.

His treatment begins with Angelo, a deputized "Substitute" so "precise" in his own life that he can be expected to enforce the laws of the dukedom with absolute rigor. And so he does: notwithstanding the demurrals of Escalus, a more experienced and humane justice, Angelo condemns to death a man whose only crime is to have slept with his bride before the public consecration of their marriage vows. When Angelo's colleague remarks that Claudio's offense is little more than a technicality, the sort of "Fault" that anyone with "Affections" and "Blood" might have fallen victim to, the Deputy replies that "'Tis one thing to be Tempted, Escalus, / Another thing to Fall" (II.i.8-18). Similarly, when Claudio's sister asks the Deputy to spare him, Angelo assures Isabella that "It is the Law, not I, condemn your Brother" (II.ii.81). Sincerely believing himself to be without error, Angelo maintains that in his policy of executing the "strict Statutes" with unstinting exactitude he is simply applying to his fellow citizens the same high standards he demands of himself.

But suddenly Angelo feels "Motions of the Sense" that are new to him. Words meant in all innocence evoke thoughts and feelings that are anything but innocent. By the end of his first conversation with Isabella, the Deputy realizes something he had not previously imagined: that he is *not* "a Man whose Blood / Is very Snow-broth" (I.v.57-58). By Isabella's second visit, Angelo is beginning to echo the guilty Claudius of *Hamlet's* Prayer Scene: "Heaven hath my empty Words," the Deputy says, "Whilst my Invention, hearing not my Tongue, / Anchors on Isabel" (II.iv.2-4). Like the Apostle Paul, Angelo discovers to his dismay

that sin, "that it might appear sin," has worked death in him "by that which is good" (Romans 7:13). The zeal with which he has upheld his office proves ineffectual against the stirrings of "the flesh," and in due course the Deputy finds himself a "Forfeit" of the same law that he has brought to bear upon Claudio. That sets up a concluding trial in which Justice demands "An Angelo for Claudio, Death for Death!" (V.i.402).

Through the maneuverings of the "Friar," the requirements of Justice turn out to be less grievous than the Deputy rightly believes himself to deserve. What Angelo has earlier described as a fall from Grace (IV.iv.35) emerges as a fall *into* Grace, a *felix culpa* ("happy fault" or fortunate fall) that leaves him shaken but both wiser and better than the uninitiated puritan of the opening scene.

But this can be so only because of a parallel development in Isabella. When we meet her for the first time in I.v, Claudio's sister seems remarkably similar to the icy Deputy. Like the "Prenzie Ang'lo," Isabella desires "a more strict Restraint." And in her first confrontation with the Deputy, she is just as absolute for Mercy as the upright Angelo is for Law. We are surely meant to commend Isabella's reminder that "all the Souls that were were Forfeit once; / And He that might the Vantage best have took / Found out the Remedy" (II.ii.74-76). At the same time, however, we are almost certainly to be taken aback by the cool conviction with which a loving sister can later say "More than our Brother is our Chastity" (II.iv.187).

By the end of the play Isabella is called upon to be absolute for Chastity in much the same way that Claudio has been enjoined to "be absolute for Death" (III.i.4). Her final test places

her in the agonizing position of being asked to plead for the life of a corrupt Deputy who has not only committed the same crime as her brother but has reneged on his promise to spare the condemned Claudio in return for the lewd "Remedy" he has exacted. The Duke insists that "Should she kneel down in Mercy of this Fact, / Her Brother's Ghost his paved Bed would break / And take her hence in Horror" (V.i.424-26). In one of the most dramatic moments in all of Shakespeare, Isabella makes a choice that might appear to be a reiteration of her earlier refusal to be her brother's keeper. But now "the Case is alter'd" (3 *Henry VI*, IV.iii.31), and the Isabella who is placed in "the Top of Judgment" responds with the kind of compassion she earlier credited with the power to transform a stern judge into a "Man new made." Her reward, through "an Accident that Heav'n provides," is to regain what she had believed lost. By declining the course the Duke appears to be urging upon her, she metamorphoses a potential revenge tragedy into a comedy of forgiveness and reconciliation, and one that resonates with the deepest chords of rebirth and resurrection.

Shakespeare drew upon multiple sources for both of the plays in this volume, among them Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348-58) and William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566) for *All's Well That Ends Well*, and Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565) and George Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) for *Measure for Measure*. But at least as important as any narrative precedents for the comedies were such New Testament passages as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The title for *Measure for Measure* derives from Matthew 7:1-2, where Jesus says "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For

with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And the complexities of the language, character, and plot in both plays are best explained by the understanding of human nature implicit in Paul's observation that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17).

Both plays appeared in print for the first time in the 1623 collection now known as the First Folio. The Folio provides the sole authority for all subsequent editions, including the ones to be found in this volume.

Because of the many links between *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, and because of the ways in which key developments in each plot are ironically anticipated by words, phrases, and gestures that occur earlier in the action, the notes to this volume provide an unusual number of cross-references. The playwright frequently puts into a character's mouth words that carry implications other than, or in addition to, those consciously intended at that moment by the speaker. In many instances those statements acquire their larger dimensions only in the context of things said or done elsewhere. Readers approaching the plays for the first time may wish to disregard many of the suggestions to compare one passage with others; readers going back for a second look, however, will perhaps find them helpful as a guide to some of the subtleties of Shakespeare's dramatic art.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

