

Act

COMEDY of ERRORS.

Scene



Randolph del.

C. Drevant sculp.

M^{rs} INCHBALL in the Character of LADY ABBESS.

*Oh, if thou bear the same Aegon, speak,
& speak unto the same Emilia!*

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S. H. A. P. & P. E.



COMEDY of ERRORS.

If I dream not; thou art Amelia.

Act I.

Scene I.

Bell's Edition.

COMEDY of ERRORS.

B Y

WILL. SHAKSPERE:

Printed Complete from the TEXT of

SAM. JOHNSON and GEO. STEEVENS,

And revised from the last Editions.

When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes
First rear'd the Stage, immortal SHAKSPERE rose;
Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:
His pow'ful strokes presiding Truth confess'd,
And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

LONDON:

Printed for, and under the direction of

JOHN BELL, British-Library, STRAND.

MDCCLXXXV.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE Fable AND Composition OF THE

COMEDY of ERRORS.

SHAKSPERE certainly took the general plan of this comedy from a translation of the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, by W. W. i. e. (according to Wood) William Warner, in 1595, whose version of the acrostical argument is as follows :

- “ Two twinne-borne sonnes, a Sicill marchant had,
- “ Menechmus one, and Sosicles the other ;
- “ The first his father lost a little lad,
- “ The grandsire namde the latter like his brother :
- “ This (growne a man) long travell tooke to seeke
- “ His brother, and to Epidamnum came,
- “ Where th’other dwelt inricht, and him so like,
- “ That citizens there take him for the same :
- “ Father, wife, neighbours, each mistaking either,
- “ Much pleasant error, ere they meet together.”

Perhaps the last of these lines suggested to Shakspeare the title for his piece.

In this comedy we find more intricacy of plot than distinction of character ; and our attention is less forcibly engaged, because we can guess in great measure how the denouement will

will be brought about. Yet the poet seems unwilling to part with his subject, even in this last and unnecessary scene, where the same mistakes are continued, till their power of affording entertainment is entirely lost. STEEVENS.

Dramatis Personae.

MEN.

SOLINUS, *Duke of Ephesus.*

ÆGEON, a Merchant of Syracuse.

ANTIPHOLIS of Ephesus, { Twin-Brothers, and Sons to
ANTIPHOLIS of Syracuse, { Ægeon and Æmilia, but un-
known to each other.

ANTIPHOLIS of Ephesus, } *Ægeon and Æmilia, but un-*
ANTIPHOLIS of Syracuse, } *known to each other.*

DROMIO of Ephesus, } Twin-Brothers, and Slaves to the
DROMIO of Syracuse, } two Antipholis's.

DROMIO of Syracuse, } *two Antipholis's.*

BALTHAZAR, a Merchant.

ANGELO, a Goldsmith.

A Merchant, Friend to Antipholis of Syracuse.

Dr. PINCH, a Schoolmaster, and a Conjuror.

WOMEN.

ÆMILIA, *Wife to Ægeon, an Abbess at Ephesus.*

ADRIANA, *Wife to Antipholis of Ephesus.*

LUCIANA, *Sister to Adrianu.*

LUCK, *Servant to Adriana.*

A Courtesan.

Failer, Officers, and other Attendants.

SCENE, Ephesus.



COMEDY of ERRORS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Duke's Palace. Enter the Duke of Ephesus, ÆGEON, Jailor, and other Attendants.

Ægeon.

PROCEED, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And, by the doom of death, end woes and all.

Duke. Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more;
I am not partial, to infringe our laws :
The enmity and discord, which of late
Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your duke
To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen,—
Who, wanting gilders to redeem their lives,
Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with their bloods,—
Excludes all pity from our threat'ning looks. 10
For, since the mortal and intestine jars
'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us,

B

It

It hath in solemn synods been decreed,
 Both by the Syracusans and ourselves,
 To admit no traffick to our adverse towns :
 Nay, more, If any, born at Ephesus,
 Be seen at Syracusan marts and fairs,
 Again, If any, Syracusan born,
 Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
 His goods confiscate to the duke's dispose ; 20
 Unless a thousand marks be levied,
 To quit the penalty, and to ransom him.
 Thy substance, valu'd at the highest rate,
 Cannot amount unto a hundred marks ;
 Therefore, by law thou art condemn'd to die.

Ægeon. Yet this my comfort ; when your words
 are done,

My woes end likewise with the evening sun.

Duke. Well, Syracusan, say, in brief, the cause
 Why thou departedst from thy native home ;
 And for what cause thou cam'st to Ephesus. 30

Ægeon. A heavier task could not have been impos'd,
 Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable :
 Yet, that the world may witness, that my end
 Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,
 I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave.
 In Syracuse was I born ; and wed
 Unto a woman, happy but for me,
 And by me too, had not our hap been bad.
 With her I liv'd in joy ; our wealth increas'd,
 By prosperous voyages I often made 40
 To Epidamnum, till my factor's death ;

And

And he, great care of goods at random left,
 Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse:
 From whom my absence was not six months old,
 Before herself (almost at fainting, under
 The pleasing punishment that women bear)
 Had made provision for her following me,
 And soon, and safe, arrived where I was.
 There she had not been long, but she became
 A joyful mother of two goodly sons; 50
 And, which was strange, the one so like the other,
 As could not be distinguish'd but by names.
 That very hour, and in the self-same inn,
 A poor mean woman was delivered
 Of such a burden, male twins, both alike:
 Those, for their parents were exceeding poor,
 I bought, and brought up to attend my sons.
 My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,
 Made daily motions for our home return:
 Unwilling I agreed; alas, too soon. 60
 We came aboard:
 A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd,
 Before the always-wind-obeying deep
 Gave any tragic instance of our harm:
 But longer did we not retain much hope;
 For what obscured light the heavens did grant
 Did but convey unto our fearful minds
 A doubtful warrant of immediate death;
 Which, though myself would gladly have embrac'd,
 Yet the incessant weepings of my wife, 70
 Weeping before, for what she saw must come,

And piteous plainings of the pretty babes,
That mourn'd for fashion, ignorant what to fear,
Forc'd me to seek delays for them and me.

And this it was,—for other means were none.—

The sailors sought for safety by our boat,
And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us:

My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
Had fasten'd him unto a small spare mast,

Such as sea-faring men provide for storms ;

80

To him one of the other twins was bound,

Whil'st I had been like heedful of the other.

The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,

Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,

Fasten'd ourselves at either end the mast ;

And floating straight, obedient to the stream,

Were carry'd towards Corinth, as we thought.

At length the sun, gazing upon the earth,

Dispers'd those vapours that offended us ;

And, by the benefit of his wish'd light,

90

The seas wax'd calm, and we discovered

Two ships from far making amain to us,

Of Corinth that, of Epidaurus this :

But ere they came,—Oh, let me say no more !

Gather the sequel by that went before.

Duke. Nay, forward, old man, do not break off so ;
For we may pity, though not pardon thee.

Egeon. Oh, had the gods done so, I had not now
Worthily term'd them merciless to us !

For, ere the ships could meet by twice five leagues,
We were encountred by a mighty rock ;

101

Which

Which being violently borne upon
 Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst,
 So that, in this unjust divorce of us,
 Fortune had left to both of us alike
 What to delight in, what to sorrow for.
 Her part, poor soul! seeming as burdened
 With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,
 Was carry'd with more speed before the wind;
 And in our sight they three were taken up 110
 By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.
 At length, another ship had seiz'd on us;
 And, knowing whom it was their hap to save,
 Gave helpful welcome to their shipwreck'd guests;
 And would have reft the fisher of their prey,
 Had not their bark been very slow of sail,
 And therefore homeward did they bend their course.—
 Thus have you heard me sever'd from my bliss;
 That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd,
 To tell sad stories of my own mishaps. 120

Duke. And, for the sakes of them thou sorrowest
 for,

Do me the favour to dilate at full
 What hath befall'n of them, and thee, till now.

Egeon. My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
 At eighteen years became inquisitive
 After his brother; and importun'd me,
 That his attendant (for his case was like,
 Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name),
 Might bear him company in the quest of him;
 Whom whilst I labour'd of a love to see, 130

I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd,
Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,
Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,
And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus;
Hopeless to find, yet loth to leave unsought,
Or that, or any place that harbours men.
But here must end the story of my life;
And happy were I in my timely death,
Could all my travels warrant me they live.

Duke. Hapless Ægeon, whom the fates have
mark'd

140

To bear the extremity of dire mishap!
Now, trust me, were it not against our laws,
Against my crown; my oath, my dignity,
Which princes, would they, may not disannul,
My soul should sue as advocate for thee.
But, though thou art adjudged to the death,
And passed sentence may not be recall'd,
But to our honour's great disparagement,
Yet will I favour thee in what I can:
Therefore, merchant, I'll limit thee this day,
To seek thy help by beneficial help:
Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus;
Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum,
And live; if not, then thou art doom'd to die:—
Jailer, take him to thy custody. [*Ex. Duke and Train.*
Jail. I will, my lord.

Ægeon. Hopeless, and helpless, doth Ægeon wend,
But to procrastinate his liveless end.

[*Exeunt ÆGEON and Jailer.*

SCENE II.

*Changes to the Street. Enter ANTIPHOLIS of Syracuse,
a Merchant, and DROMIO.*

Mer. Therefore give out, you are of Epidamnium,
Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate. 160
This very day, a Syracusan merchant
Is apprehended for arrival here;
And, not being able to buy out his life,
According to the statute of the town,
Dies ere the weary sun set in the west.
There is your money, that I had to keep.

Ant. Go bear it to the Centaur, where we host,
And stay there, Dromio, till I come to thee.
Within this hour it will be dinner-time :
'Till that, I'll view the manners of the town, 170
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings,
And then return, and sleep within mine inn;
For with long travel I am stiff and weary.
Get thee away.

Dro. Many a man would take you at your word,
And go indeed, having so good a means.

[Exit DROMIO.]

Ant. A trusty villain, sir ; that very oft,
When I am dull with care and melancholy,
Lightens my humour with his merry jests.
What, will you walk with me about the town, 180
And then go to my inn and dine with me ?

Mer.

Mer. I am invited, sir, to certain merchants,
Of whom I hope to make much benefit,
I crave your pardon. Soon, at five o'clock,
Please you, I'll meet with you upon the mart,
And afterwards consort you till bed-time;
My present business calls me from you now.

Ant. Farewel till then: I will go lose myself,
And wander up and down to view the city.

Mer. Sir, I commend you to your own content. 190

[*Exit Merchant.*]

Ant. He that commends me to mine own content,
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
I to the world am like a drop of water,
That in the ocean seeks another drop;
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself:
So I, to find a mother, and a brother,
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.

Enter DROMIO of Ephesus.

Here comes the almanack of my true date.—
What now? How chance, thou art return'd so soon?

E. Dro. Return'd so soon! rather approach'd too
late: 201

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
The clock has stricken twelve upon the bell,
My mistress made it one upon my cheek:
She is so hot, because the meat is cold;
The meat is cold, because you come not home;
You come not home, because you have no stomach;—
You

You have no stomach, having broke your fast;
But we, that know what 'tis to fast and pray,
Are penitent for your default to-day. 210

Ant. Stop in your wind, sir: tell me this, I pray;
Where have you left the money, that I gave you?

E. Dro. Oh,—six-pence, that I had o' Wednesday
last,

To pay the sadler for my mistress' crupper;—
The sadler had it, sir, I kept it not.

Ant. I am not in a sportive humour now;
Tell me, and dally not, where is the money?
We being strangers here, how dar'st thou trust
So great a charge from thine own custody?

E. Dro. I pray you, jest, sir, as you sit at dinner:
I from my mistress come to you in post 221
If I return, I shall be post indeed,
For she will score your fault upon my pate.
Methinks, your maw, like mine, should be your
clock,

And strike you home without a messenger.

Ant. Come, Dromio, come, these jests are out of
season;

Reserve them till a merrier hour than this:
Where is the gold I gave in charge to thee?

E. Dro. To me, sir? why you gave no gold to me.

Ant. Come on, sir knave, have done your foolish-
ness, 230

And tell me, how thou hast dispos'd thy charge.

E. Dro. My charge was but to fetch you from the
mart

Home to your house, the Phoenix, sir, to dinner;
My mistress, and her sister, stay for you,

Ant. Now, as I am a Christian, answer me,
In what safe place you have dispos'd my money;
Or I shall break that merry sconce of yours,
That stands on tricks when I am undispos'd:
Where are the thousand marks thou had'st of me?

E. Dro. I have some marks of yours upon my
pate, 240
Some of my mistress' marks upon my shoulders,
But not a thousand marks between you both.—
If I should pay your worship those again,
Perchance, you will not bear them patiently.

Ant. Thy mistress' marks! what mistress, slave,
hast thou?

E. Dro. Your worship's wife, my mistress at the
Phoenix;
She, that doth fast, till you come home to dinner,
And prays, that you will hie you home to dinner.

Ant. What, wilt thou flout me thus unto my face,
Being forbid? There, take you that, sir knave. 250

E. Dro. What mean you, sir? for God's sake, hold
your hands;
Nay, an you will not sir, I'll take my heels.

Exit DROMIO.

Ant. Upon my life, by some device or other,
The villain is o'er-raught of all my money.
They say, this town is full of cozenage;
As, nimble jugglers, that deceive the eye,

Dark.