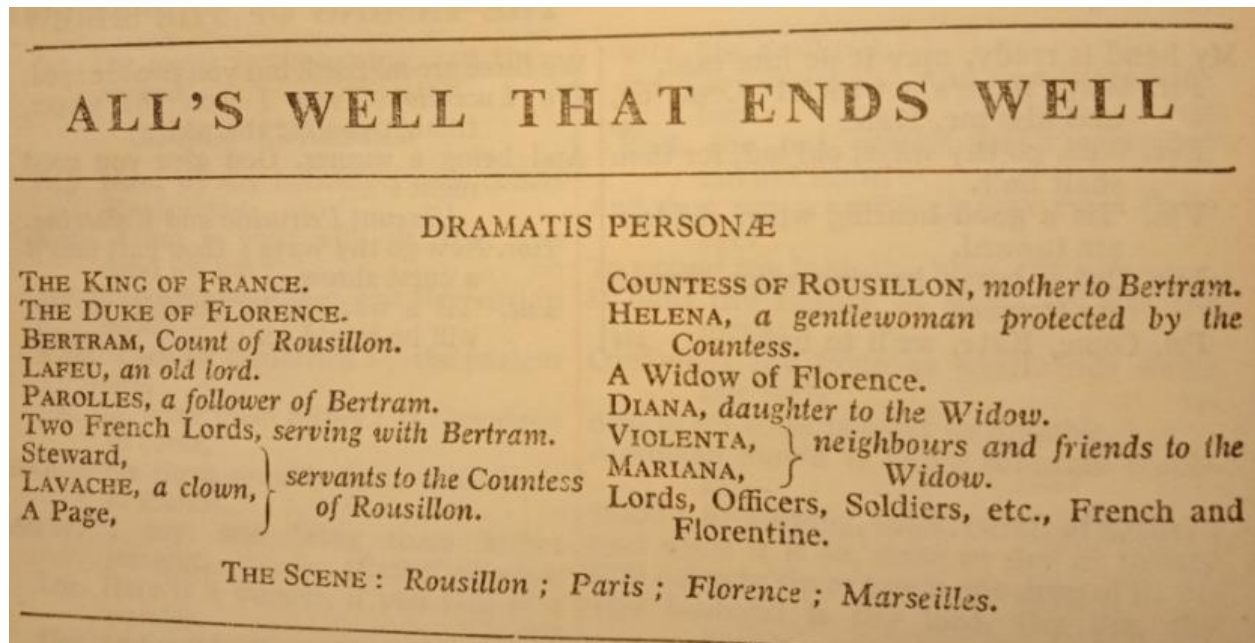


All's Well That Ends Well 1597



Source:

THE TUDOR EDITION OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
THE COMPLETE WORKS
COLLINS
LONDON AND GLASGOW
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A new edition, edited with an
Introduction and glossary by
PETER ALEXANDER
*Regius Professor of English Language
and Literature, University of Glasgow 1959*

David Akenhead, CEO Akenhead crosswords currently enjoying 506,873 visits at his Visits page on his website at crosswordsakenhead.com where there is a link to his crossword challenges thanks to AI, two individuals and Microsoft. A joint copyrighted 27 x 27 digital Times Jumbo has to be a First in On-line crossword competitions.

Sources:

Howard Staunton (1810-1874)

All is Well, that Endes Well written 1579 in a marginal note to Fulwell's "Ars Adulandi"

(Note: Helena, a physician's daughter, living under the protection of the Countess of Rousillon since the demise of her dear father, Gerard de Narbon – D.A.bracketed items include my comments).

"The fable is derived from the story of "Giletta of Narbona," forming the ninth novel of the third day in Boccaccio's "Decamerone," . . . (translation 1566) whereof the argument is thus set forth: "Giletta, a phisician's daughter of Narbon, healed the Frenche Kyng of a fistula, for reward whereof she demanded Bertramo counte of Rossigniole to husband. The counte being married againste his will, for despite fled to Florence and loved an other. Giletta his wife, by pollicie founde meanes to lye with her husbände in place of his lover, and was begotten with child of two soonnes; which knowen to her husbände, he received her againe and afterwards she lived in greate honor and felicitie. In the leading incidents Shakespeare has closely adhered to the story; but the characters of the Countess, Parolles, the Clown, and Lafeu as well as all the circumstances of the secondary plot, sprang from the inexhaustible resources of his own mind."

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845)

"*All's Well that Ends Well* is the old story of a young maiden whose love looked much higher than her station. She obtains her lover in marriage from the hand of the King, as a reward for curing him of a hopeless and lingering disease, by means of a hereditary areanum of her father, who had been in his lifetime a celebrated physician. The young man despises her virtue and beauty; concludes the marriage only in appearance, and seeks in the dangers of war, deliverance from a domestic happiness which wounds his pride. (Undeterred as probably the original exponent of womens' suffrage!) By faithful endurance and an innocent fraud, she fulfils the apparently impossible conditions on which the Count had promised to acknowledge her as his wife. Love appears here in humble guise; the wooing is on the woman's side; it is striving, unaided by a reciprocal inclination to overcome the prejudices of birth. But as soon as Helena is united to the Count by a sacred bond, though by him considered an oppressive chain, her error becomes her virtue. She affects us by her patient suffering (because she is determined to win his love, whatever the cost): the moment in which she appears to most advantage is when she accuses herself as the persecutor of her inflexible husband. (!!!) Johnson (Samuel Johnson – 1709-1784) expresses a cordial aversion for Count Bertram! And regrets that he should be allowed to come off at last with no other punishment than a

temporary shame, nay, even be rewarded with the unmerited possession of a virtuous wife! But has Shakespeare attempted to soften the impression made by his (Bertram's) unfeeling pride and light-hearted perversity? He has but given him the good qualities of a soldier. And does not the Poet (Shakespeare) paint the true way of the world, which never makes much of man's injustice to woman, if so-called family honour is preserved? (Don't I just know it! Well said, Sir! Some women earn their spurs ten times over! – D.A.).

Story (extracts and further comments) courtesy of John Goodwin RSC's Short Guide to Shakespeare's Plays 1990 – bracketed items with my observations – DA

“All's Well That Ends Well The theme concerns a woman asserting herself against male prejudice and stupidity. The story shows how Helena, a physician's daughter, who has been brought up by the widowed Countess of Rousillon, comes to Court, and with one of her late father's prescriptions heals the King of France of a fistula. As a reward, he promises that he will use his power to enable her to marry the man of her choice. She chooses, Bertram, the Countess's son, with whom she is passionately in love.

Bertram is furiously indignant at being forced to marry a commoner, and declares he will never be her husband until she gets the ring he wears, and is pregnant with his child: in other words, until the apparently impossible happens. He then goes off to the wars in Italy, hoping never to see her again.

But Helena follows him in disguise, (and given up for dead at Court, in her absence but in reality, now in her new role as a wayfaring veiled pilgrim – ed.) and by secretly taking the place of another woman . . . , in his bed, (the 'bed-trick', much used in medieval and Renaissance stories), she makes him her unknowing lover and at the same time gets the ring.

At the end, returned to the French Court, the wars finished, Helena reveals what has happened, confronts Bertram with the ring, announces she is carrying his child, and they are reconciled.”

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Above part of my legacy to Shakespeare, courtesy of my former wife, Celia Ruth Staunton and her celebrated ancestor Howard Staunton (1810-1874), supreme Shakespearean authority from his Globe Illustrated Shakespeare, and a former English Chess Grand Master to boot! Enjoy my digital Jumbo crossword evolved from two chess supremos: Howard Staunton and Edmund Akenhead former Times crossword editor 1965-1983 via his mother, Myrtle Akenhead nee Nicholson Grant MacGregor, former Ladies Chess Champion of Somerset who I had the audacity to beat aged 10 with hitherto unconventional moves using the Queen's pawn!

David Akenhead, February 2026