The Original "Romeo and Juliet"

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

THE ORIGINAL 'ROMEO AND JULIET.'

I think it has not yet been noted by Shakspearean students that Arthur Brooke, the author of *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (published by Richard Tottell on Nov. 19, 1562) was concerned in the production of plays at the Inner Temple at Christmas, 1561. The entry (to which I was courteously given access at the Treasurer's Office of the Inn) is part of the proceedings of a Parliament of the Inn held on Feb. 4, 1562, and runs thus:

Item yt arthur broke shall have a spiall admittance w^out anything paying in consideration of certen playes & showes in chrm^s last, set forth by hym.

In the preface to his poem Brooke said that he had seen the same argument 'lately set forth on stage with more commendation, then I can looke for: (being there much better set forth then I have or can dooe).' It seems likely that the tragedy Brooke had in mind was produced at one of the Inns of Court, for it was, of course, before the days of the regular theatres, and all the four early classical tragedies that have survived were so produced, *Gorboduc* and *Gismond of Salerne* at the Inner Temple, *Jocasta* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* at Gray's Inn. It is possible that this early *Romeo and Juliet* was presented at the Inner Temple at Christmas, 1561, and that this drew Brooke's attention to the subject; the terms of his reference seem to imply that he was not the author of the tragedy. It is true that there is no mention of any such play in the records of the Inner Temple, but neither is there of *Gorboduc*, which we know was presented there at that time. Inderwick says (*A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records*): 'There are no entries, in our now existing records, of any particular play in our own hall before the reign of James I.'

My suggestion is little more than speculation, but it may be pardoned in view of the absence of known facts. Two theories on the subject may be said to hold the field. Hunter (*New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, vol. II, p. 130) and Courthope (*History of English Poetry*, vol. IV, p. 100) suggest that Brooke referred to a Latin tragedy among the Sloane MSS. in the British Museum. Dr Harold de W. Fuller

(*Modern Philology*, vol. iv, pp. 75—120), after a careful examination of the Latin tragedy, is of opinion that it was based on Brooke, and was probably written by a Cambridge student after 1605. Dr Fuller's theory is that Brooke refers to an English play, composed between 1559 and 1562, and now represented by a Dutch version entitled *Romeo en Juliette*. There is, of course, no conflict between Dr Fuller's theory and the suggestion now made.

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THE ETYMOLOGY OF 'ROISTER.'

The accepted etymology, from Fr. *rustre*, Lat. *rusticus*, is based on Cotgrave's gloss for *rustre*, 'a ruffin, royster, hackester, swaggerer; sawcie, paultry, scurvy fellow.' It seems to me out of the question to identify this *rustre* with Lat. *rusticus*, which would rather be explained as 'a clowne, boore, churle, hob, hinde, swayne, lobcock, rude or unmannerly lozell' (Cotgrave's gloss to *rustault*). Littré quotes from Brantôme, s.v. *rustre*, 'D'autres les ont appelez rustres (certains soldats) ainsi que nous lisons dans le roman de M. de Bayard, que M. de Bayard dit à ses rustres, appellan(s) ainsi ceux auxquels il commandoit.' This passage is possibly the origin of Cotgrave's *rustre*. Now the original of *roister* ought to be something of the nature of a *Miles gloriosus* or *Franc Archier de Bagnolet*, for the verb to *roist*, a back-formation from *roister*, is rendered *jactare* by the Latin dictionaries of the seventeenth century. I propose *reister*, a horse-soldier, bravo, a common word in seventeenth century English, from Fr. *reistre*, 'a reister, or swart-rutter, a German horseman' (Cotgrave). This *reistre*, now *reître*, is Ger. *Reiter*, with intrusive s. In sixteenth century French it occurs commonly in the sense of mercenary ruffian, and is so far associated with *routier* (from *route*, band) that *un vieux reître* and *un vieux routier* are interchangeable terms for an old soldier with the implied meaning of desperado. From about 1450 to 1750 Ger. *Reiter* is generally replaced by *Reuter*, 'a reiter or reister' (Ludwig, 1715), cf. Du. *ruiter*. Kluge regards the Dutch word as ultimately identical with Fr. *routier*, but Franck dissents. However that may be, the earliest form of the Dutch word is *rûter*, and, as we have Fr. *reistre* from Ger. *Reiter*, it seems reasonable to accept Fr. *rustre* from Du. *rûter* or from the early German form *rûter* (Weigand). This would explain Cotgrave's gloss to *rustre* and also the meaning of the English word, which, I fancy, owes more to *reister* than to *rustre*; for the vowel change cf. *boil* for *bile*. The