

# Most of the Heroines in Shakespeare's Plays Make Ardent Love, and Would Be in Fashion Now with Their Leap Year Methods

Twentieth Century Girls May Study Their Methods Very Profitably During the Anniversary of Shakespeare.

**N**EARLY all of Shakespeare's women pursue the men, try to entrap them into proposing and, if they fail in this, do the act themselves. Even when brutally rebuffed they persist and in the end usually carry the day. It matters not how feminine and shrinking a maiden may seem to be, in this particular she is actually bolder than the most hardened warrior. She puts on disguise or takes it off; she roughs it and suffers any discomfort, if only she may win her end and capture the man upon whom she has set her heart. Shakespeare defied the tradition that man is the pursuer and woman the pursued as boldly in his generation, as Bernard Shaw has in his. He shows conclusively that when a woman makes up her mind to get a man he may struggle and rebel, but his chances of escape are almost nil.

This being leap year, as well as the Shakespearean anniversary, maidens of to-day may take a few leaves out of the great dramatist's plays to bolster up their courage to the proposing point if their inclinations point that way.

"In Shakespeare's plays," says Shaw, "the woman always takes the initiative. In his problem plays and his popular plays alike the love interest is the interest of seeing the woman hunt the man down. She may do it by blandishment, like Rosalind, or by stratagem, like Mariana, but in every case the relation between the woman and the man is the same—she is the pursuer and contriver, he the pursued and disposed of. When she is baffled, like Ophelia, she goes mad and commits suicide, and the man goes straight from her funeral to a fencing match. No doubt Nature with very young creatures may save woman the trouble of scheming. Prospero knows that he has only to throw Ferdinand and Miranda together and they will mate like a pair of doves, and there is no need for Perdita to capture Florizel as the lady doctor in 'All's Well That Ends Well'—an early ascetic heroine—captures Bertram. But the mature cases all illustrate the Shakespearean law."

In "All's Well That Ends Well" Helena, who had protested that she not only affected constant sorrow for the loss of her father but had it, too, laments, as soon as Bertram, the Count of Roussillon, has left the court:

"I think not on my father; And these great tears grace his remembrance more."

That those I shed for him. What was he like? I have forgotten him: my imagination carries no favor in't but Bertram's. I am undone: there is no living, none, if Bertram be away. 'Twere all one that I should love a bright particular star and think to wed it, he is so above me; in his bright radiance and collateral light must I be comforted, not in his sphere. The ambition in my love thus plagues itself; the hind that would be mated by the lion must die for love."

She has no intention of dying, however, but lets her thoughts gloat over his attractions.

"'Twas pretty, though, a plague, to see him every hour; to sit and draw his arched brows, his hawk-like eye, his curls, in our heart's table; heart too capable of every trick and line of his sweet favor; but now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy must sanctify his relics."

She enters into conversation with Parolles, a follower of Bertram, so that she can ease her heart by talking about him.

"God send him well!— The court's a learning place—and he is one!"

Parolles—"What one, I faith?"

Helena—"That I wish well. 'Tis pity!"

Parolles—"What's pity?"

Helena—"That wishing well had not a body in't, which might be felt; that we, the poorer born, whose baser stars do shut us up in wishes, might with effects of them follow our friends, and show what we alone must think."

Afterward Helena muses thus for her own encouragement:

"Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie, which we ascribe to Heaven; the fated sky gives us free scope; only doth backward pull our slow designs when we ourselves are dull."

Who ever strove to show her merit, that did miss her love? The King's disease—my project may deceive me, but my intents are fix'd and will not leave me."

When Bertram's mother seeks to find out whether her waiting woman has presumed to fall in love with her son, Helena fences for a time, then confesses:—"I love your son."

My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love. Be not offended, for it hurts not him that he is lov'd of me. I follow him not by any token of presumptions suit; Nor would I have him till I do deserve him. Yet never know how that desert should be. I know I love in vain, strive against hope. Yet, in this captious and intricate sieve, I still pour in the waters of my love, And lack not to lose still."

The Countess presses Helena to say whether she had not the intent of going to Paris, whither Bertram had gone. Helena confesses that she had, taking with her prescriptions left by her father, a physician, to cure such maladies as the King suffered from. She finally wins the consent of the Countess to make her journey and see what she can do at court.

Having gained her audience with the King, Helena persuades him to try her cure. If she fails death is to be her portion; if she succeeds the King promises her as husband any one she may choose outside the royal blood.

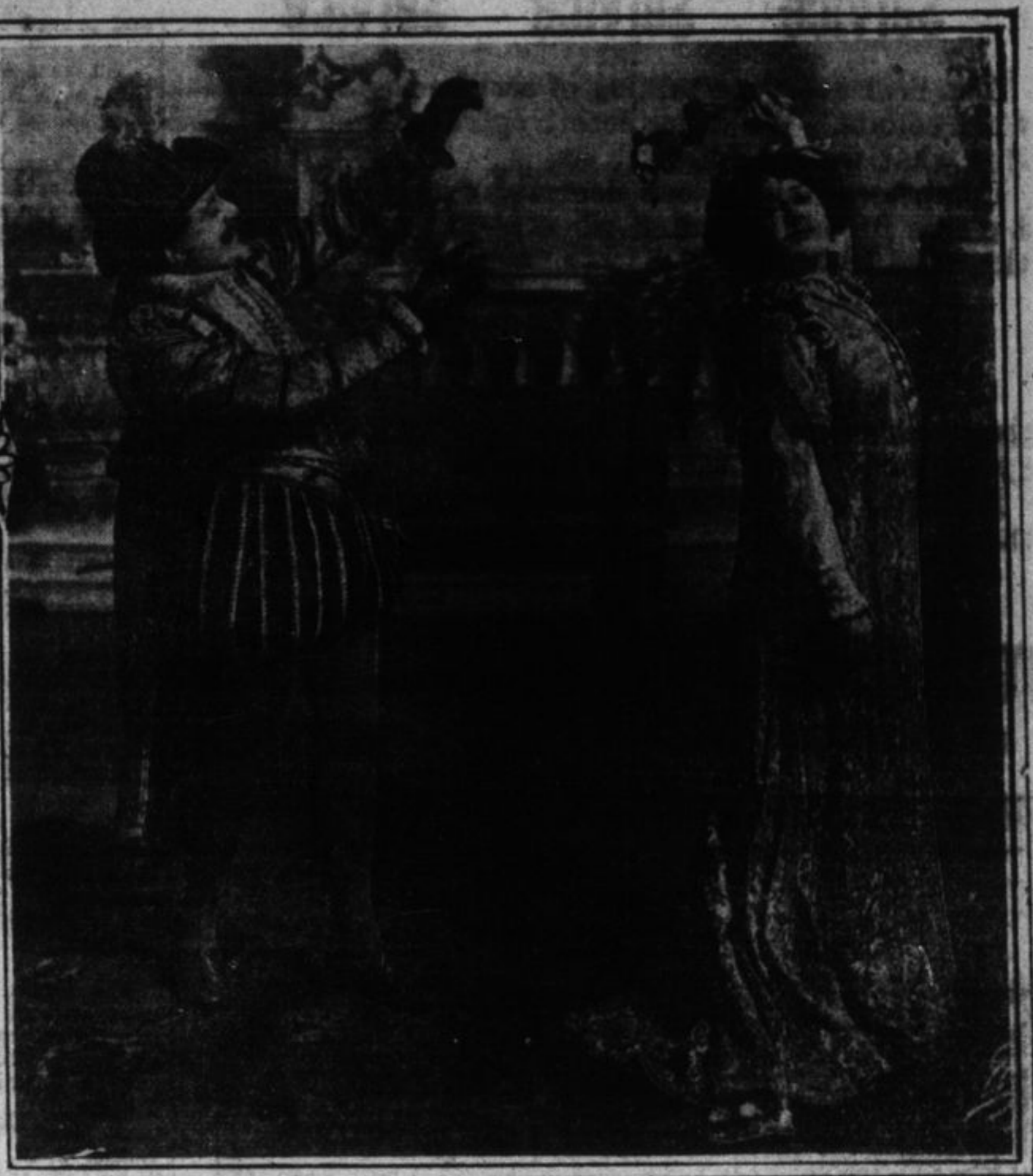
The King is cured and makes good his promise.



Ophelia, Who Died for Love.



Olivia, in 'Twelfth Night,' Sends Her Ring to Viola.



Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern as Beatrice and Benedick in 'Much Ado About Nothing.' Photo by White.



Adia Behan as Rosalind.



Fanny Dagenport as Cleopatra.

Calling the nobles of his court before him, he bids her choose. She passes along the line until she comes to Bertram, then says to him:

"I dare not say I take you; but I give Me and my services, love, whither I live, Into your guiding power. This is the man."

King—"Why, then, young Bertram, take her; she's thy wife."

Bertram protests:—"My wife, my liege! I shall beseech your highness."

In such a business give me leave to use The help of mine own eyes."

King:—"Know'st thou not, Bertram, What she has done for me?"

Bertram:—"Yes, my good lord; But never hope to know why I should marry her."

He goes on to protest that she is a poor physician's daughter and speaks his disdain of her freely. Even when the King says that he will bestow honor and wealth on her, Bertram retorts that he does not love her and will not try to. Uppier further command of the King he yields, however, and takes her hand.

After the ceremony he protests to his man:—"Al- though before the solemn priest I have sworn, I will not bed her." He is going to send her home to his mother with token of his hate and make off to the Italian wars. He refuses her petition for a kiss and writes a note to be delivered to her later, telling her that he will never see her again.

The Countess takes the part of her daughter-in-law and bids his men tell him that his sword can never win the honor that he loses. Helena is filled with remorse to think that she has driven him from his home and exposed him to the dangers of war. Disguising herself as a pilgrim, she departs, begging that word may be sent so that he may return.

As a pilgrim she comes to the town where her husband and his fellow soldiers were. Convinced with a sweetheart of Bertram's, she takes her place at a midnight meeting with her husband. Later she makes her way to the French court and, proving that she has been a wife, unknown to him, is acknowledged by him.

"Will you be mine, now that you are doubly won?" Helena asks Bertram, and he replies that if she can



Julia Marlowe as Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice.' Photo by Sands & Brady.

I warrant, she is apter to do than to confess she does, that is one of the points in which women still give the lie to their consciences."

She promises Orlando to cure his melancholy on condition that he imagine her to be his love, and woo her every day."

Orlando protests that he would not be cured, but Rosalind replies, "I would cure you, if you would but call me Rosalind, and come every day to my cot, and woo me."

In the same play one of the subordinate characters also pursues her swain, Phoebe, the rustic, falling in love with Rosalind, whom she takes from her disguise to be a young man.

"I pray you do not fall in love with me," Rosalind says to her, but Phoebe continues the pursuit until Rosalind is revealed as a woman.

Orlando Rosalind says:—"Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to consent." And again she tells him:—"A woman's thoughts run before her actions."

Celia upbraid's her:—"You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate." But Rosalind retorts:—"O! coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fatuous deep I am in love. But it cannot be sounder."

In the last act, when she appears in woman's dress, Rosalind says to Orlando:—"To you I give myself, for I am yours." That is the leap year note—the woman gives, the man accepts.

Another case of a girl in man's attire who fell in love is that of Viola, in "Twelfth Night," who was set by the Duke, upon whom her own affections were placed, to woo the reprobate Olivia, who, in her turn, falls in love with what she takes to be a comely youth.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Helena pursues Demetrius, who is trying to win Hermia. Demetrius protests to Helena:—"I love thee not, therefore pursue me not. Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?"

Hence get thee gone and follow me no more. Undaunted, Helena retorts:—"You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant; But yet you draw not iron, for my heart is true as steel."

Demetrius:—"Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?"

Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth Tell you, I do not nor I cannot love you?"

Helena:—"And even for that I do love you the more. I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius, The more you beat me I will fawn on you; Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me, Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, Unworthy as I am, to follow you. What worse place can I beg in your love (And yet a place of high respect with me), Than to be used as you use your dog?"

Demetrius:—"Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit. For I am sick when I do look on thee."

Helena replied that she was sick when she looked not upon him, whereupon Demetrius observes with obvious truthfulness:—"You do impeach your modesty too much, To leave the city and commit yourself Into the hands of one that loves you not."

He threatens to run away and leave her to the mercy of wild beasts.

All Helena will say in return for his plain speaking is that women cannot fight for love as men do, but that she will follow him and make a heaven of hell; to die upon his hand.

When the spells that have turned lovers against their true sweethearts have passed, seeming small and indistinguishable, like far off mountains thrust into clouds, Demetrius still looks at things doubtfully, not sure whether he is awake or asleep, but Helena announces with satisfaction, "And I have found my Demetrius."

Even the gentle Ophelia pursues Hamlet, obeying her father's command to set her entreatments at a higher rate than a command to part, and this did make him mad for her, according to Polonius' opinion. When the Queen says:—"Ophelia, I do wish—"

That your good beauties be the happy cause Of Hamlet's madness; so shall I hope your virtues Will bring him to his wonted way again."

Ophelia dutifully replies:—"Madam, I wish it may." She puts herself in Hamlet's way and when he turns from his soliloquy and notices her she begs to return his remembrances. Hamlet denies having given them to her, but she urges:—"My honour'd lord, you know right well you did And with them words of sweet breath compos'd As made the things before rich; their perfume lost, Take these again; for to the noble mind Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

When Hamlet furrows her forehead and she begs to try her maid, who has shown him her heart, perishes under the cruelty of the strain:—"If it be love, indeed, tell me how much, Cleopatra begged Antony."

"There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned," he returned. "I'll set a bourn how far to be lov'd," she tells him.

When he is out of her sight she demands:—"See where he is, who's with him, what he does."

"If you find him, say I am dancing; if in talk, report That I am sudden sick."

Charman says chidingly:—"Madam, methinks if you did love him dearly, You do not hold the method to enforce The like from him."

Cleopatra:—"What should I do, I do not? Charman:—"In each thing give him way; cross him in nothing."

Cleopatra:—"Thou teachest like a fool—the way to lose him."

When the strong necessity of time commanded his services apart from her she makes tests of his love and wins him.

After a battle Antony reproached her:—"O! whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See How I convey my shame out of this Egypt. By looking back on what I have left behind, 'Stray'd in dishonour."

Egypt, thou knew'st too well My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings; O'er my spirit Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods Command me."