

- (2) the anonymous Italian comedy *Gl' Ingannati* (1531);  
 (3) Gonzaga's play *Gl' Inganni* (1592).

It must not be supposed that Shakespeare's indebtedness to these sources amounts to much. The poetry of *Twelfth Night*; its romance and humour; the manner in which ideas borrowed from other writers are turned to finer issues and improved upon; the whole of the comic underplot; the skilful interweaving of the comic and serious parts; above all, the characterisation: these things, which make *Twelfth Night* the beautiful work it is, are absolutely Shakespeare's own.

*The extent of Shakespeare's indebtedness.*

## V

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAY

*Twelfth Night* has always been a favourite play with students of Shakespeare. Its charm lies primarily in the union of humour with romance, of diverting action with masterly characterisation.

There is the obvious humour of the scenes in which Malvolio is tricked; of the revelling-scenes wherein Sir Andrew is made the butt of his wittier companions; of the duel-scene; and of the confusions that arise through the resemblance of the brother and sister. And a less obvious but equally delightful humour animates many another incident and idea in the play. Thus Orsino's protesting a changeless love for Olivia—and transferring that love to Viola (with Olivia's full approbation); Olivia's protesting that for seven summers she will keep fresh a "brother's dead love" in cloistered seclusion from the sight of men—and falling in love with the first handsome young man who crosses her path (we hear no more of the dead brother); the fatuous Sir Andrew's presumption in paying court to the rather imperious Countess; Sebastian's calm acceptance of Olivia for a wife, and easy self-confidence in his love-affairs, so unlike the tortures of anxiety endured by Olivia and Viola and Orsino: all these things surely (and much else) were "intimated" to the poet by the very "spirit of humours."

*Humour.*