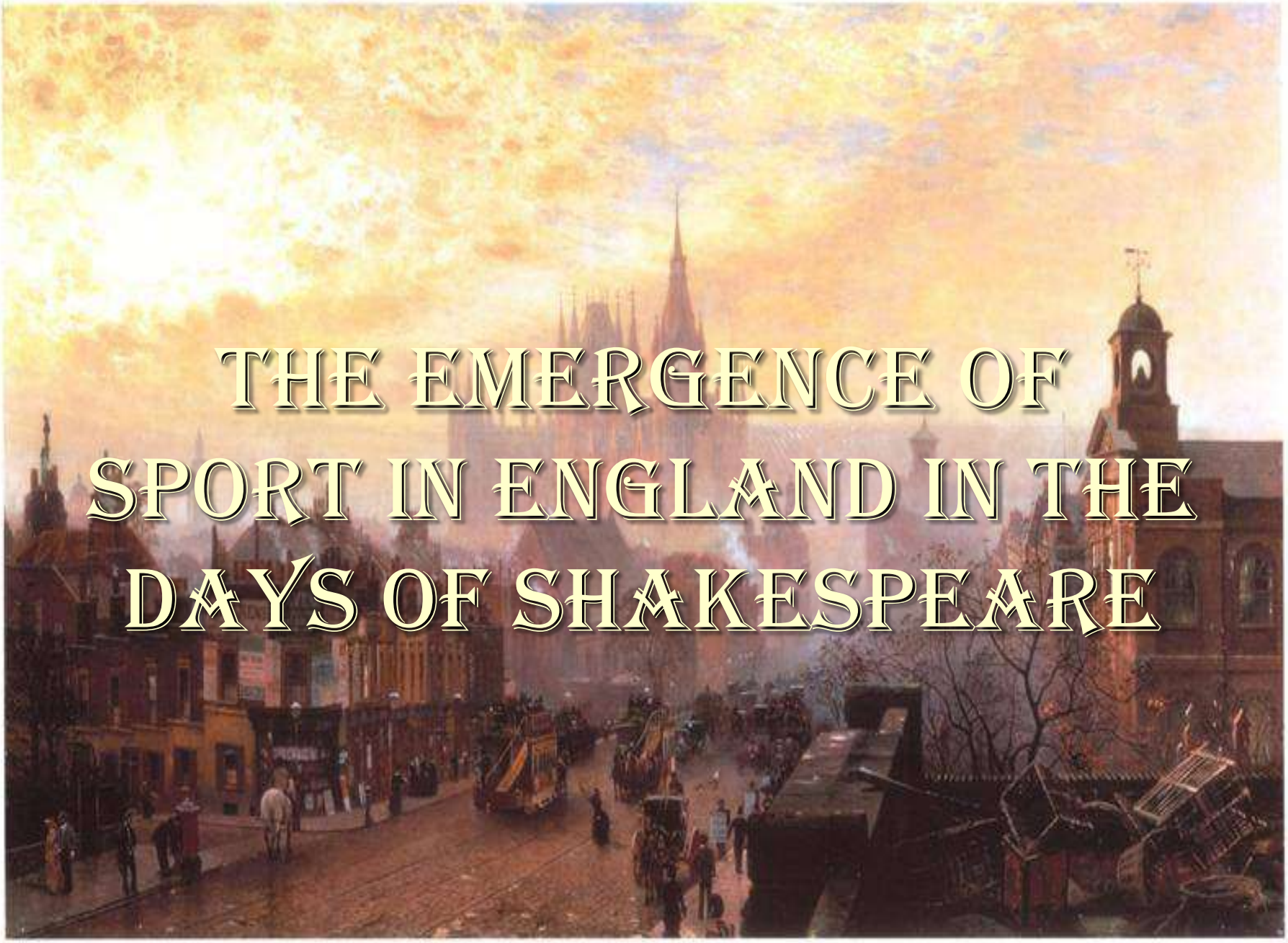
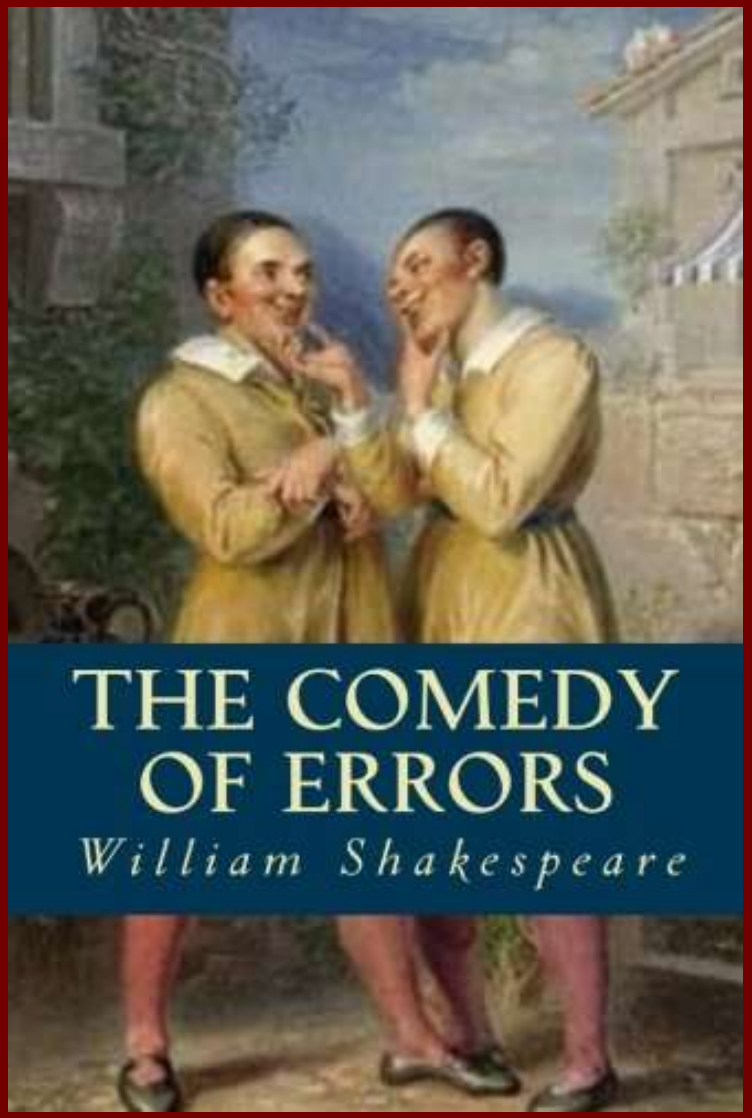

THE EMERGENCE OF
SPORT IN ENGLAND IN THE
DAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

Many famous types of sport originated in Great Britain, so sport plays a very important part in the life of the English people. Although, the national sport in England is cricket, but the most popular one is football.

The most famous and cruelest kind of football was called "crowd football". Games were held on the days of festivities. A medieval game was like a wild fight on the streets.

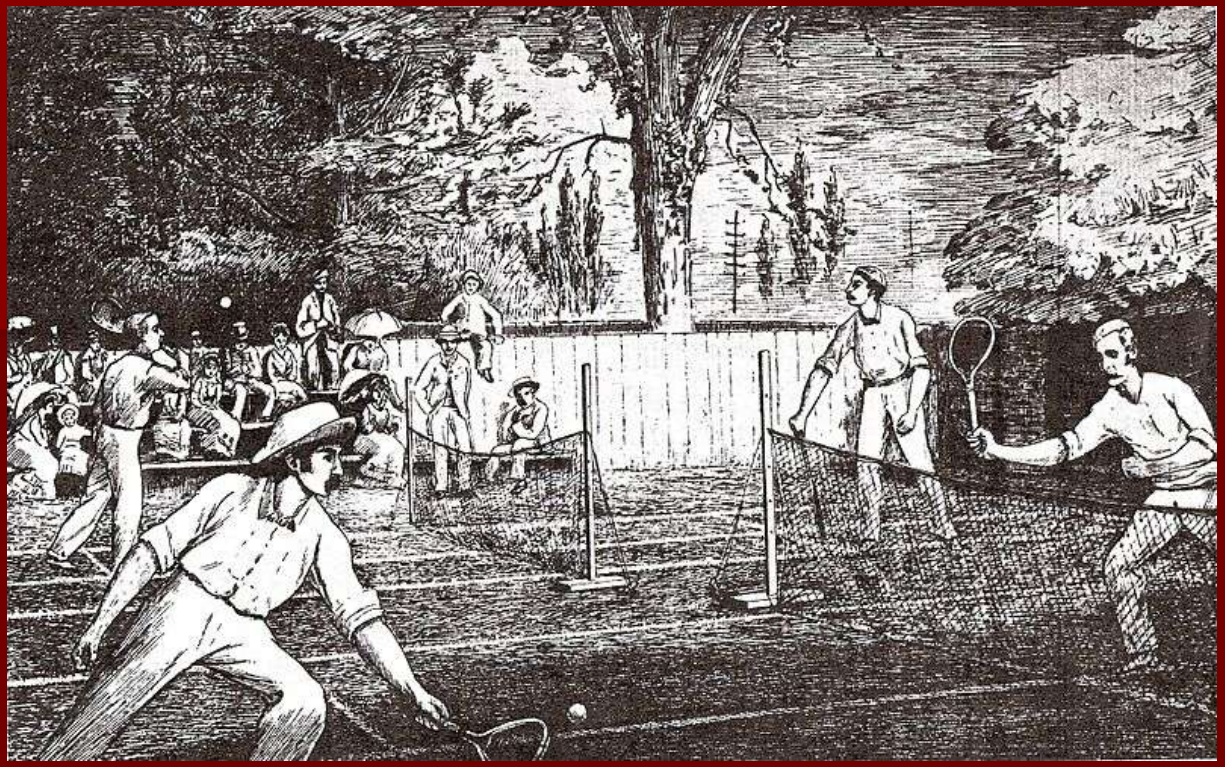
Before the matches, people who lived nearby closed the shutters. Both teams tried to dribble the ball to the central square of the rival district.

Football was so popular in Britain that even Shakespeare wrote about it in his work "The Comedy of Errors".



Besides cricket and football, the English enjoyed tennis. Tennis is quite an ancient sport game which is about 8 centuries old. It was a city game. People played tennis on squares and pavements. Old tennis had different rules and techniques.

Balls made of woolen cloth were heavy and big. The net separating the players appeared in the 16th century. The players wore special clothes: jackets and shirts. People played tennis with the help of rackets with ox strings.

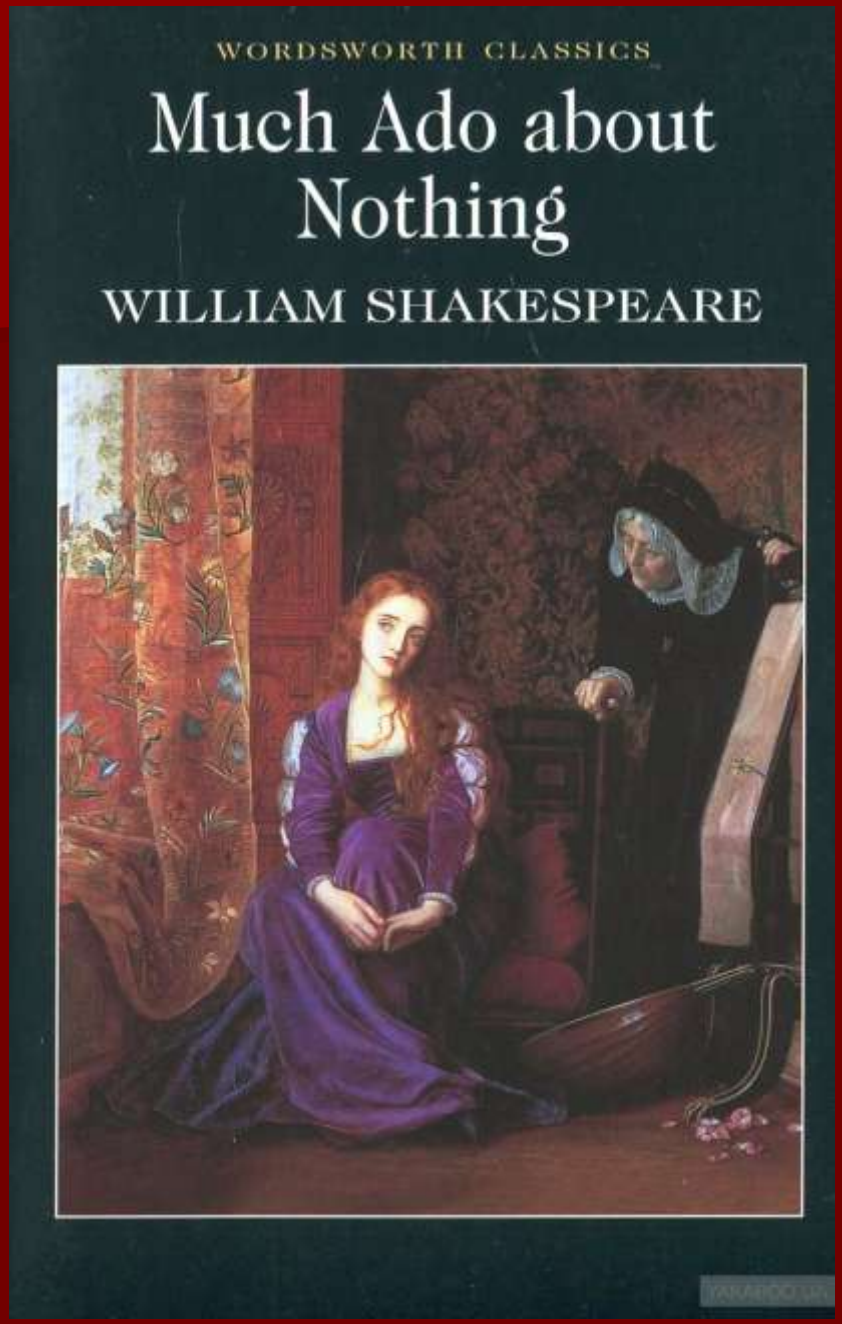


Tennis wasn`t an aristocratic pastime, so everybody could play it, because the game didn`t need a special building. But after a while, the local authorities forbade to play tennis, because of lots of noise and mess.

In the 15th century people began to play tennis in special covered tennis courts. After that tennis became "a royal game" because ordinary people couldn`t have tennis courts.

Shakespeare wrote in his plays about different sports which were popular in his time, especially about tennis. From Shakespeare`s works we can learn about some details, for example, what tennis balls look like in the past. People used to put hair into balls to make them flexible.

There is a joke about it in the comedy "Much Ado About Nothing" by Shakespeare. Here is an extract from the play.



"Don Pedro: Hath any man seen him at the barber`s?

Claudio: No, but the barber`s man hath been seen with him, and the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuffed tennis-balls."

A lot of time has passed since then, many things have changed, but tennis is still interesting and exciting!