

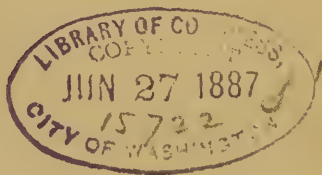
RICHARD THE THIRD

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THE PRIMROSE CRITICISM

Richard the Third

“A primrose by the river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1887

PK 2821

B7

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I ASK you to listen to a few words : first, a few general remarks on criticism, and then an illustration of them from the play of 'Richard III.,' or rather from the absence of certain things in the play of 'Richard III.,' which, to my mind, seem to indicate that it is not Shakespeare's work.

I propose to say a few words on one of the plays usually attributed to him, — a play in respect of which I find myself in the position of poor Peter Bell, seeing little more than an ordinary primrose where I perhaps hoped to see a plant, a flower of light. I mean the play of 'Richard III.'

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL,
Chicago, Feb. 22, 1887.

CONTENTS.



Part I.

	PAGE
THE PRIMROSE CRITICISM	II



Part II.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF RICHARD III.	65
--------------------------------------	----



Part III.

THE HISTORIC RICHARDS	109
---------------------------------	-----

PART I.

THE PRIMROSE CRITICISM.

“Your reasons are too shallow and too quick.”



THE PRIMROSE CRITICISM.

“THE pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength,”

may have contained virtues of beauty and suggestion which escaped the peculiar eye of Peter Bell. There may have been a language in them which to other eyes revealed ideas of taste, design, wisdom, creation. To Peter Bell and his Primrose Criticism many another object of beauty in nature, art, and literature has appeared to be but commonplace, though it bore the impress of high origin, and carried in upon other minds exquisite sentiments and edifying speculations. The historical tragedy of ‘Richard III.’ excites no admiration in the common-sense mind of Peter Bell. He fails to discover its poetic and dramatic merits, but, more par-

ticularly, seems to be oblivious to those masterly touches of energy and grandeur which declare its author to be Shakespeare. Primrose Criticism assumes to be synonymous with Common Sense, which is the only safe guide in the study of any subject, whether it be the Primrose or 'Richard the Third.' It is to be regretted, however, that Peter Bell has been so backward in coming forward with his peculiar critical method; and that, as a consequence, the world has been studying the "thousand-souled" Shakespeare for three hundred years without the light of common-sense. So uncommon was the sense of Pope, Dryden, rare Ben Jonson, and "starry-minded" Milton, the poet-eulogists of our glorious bard, that they accepted base counterfeits for the genuine productions of his inspired pen! So uncommon were the sense and scholarship of the distinguished commentators and editors, — Rowe, Farmer, Theobald, Capell, Hanmer, Steevens, Johnson, Malone, Chalmers, Douce, Dyce, and Knight, — that they were unable, with a life-long study, to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious plays of Shakespeare! With their masterful knowledge of Elizabethan literature, and their familiar acquaintance with the English

dramatists, they do not seem to have had the slightest suspicion that 'Richard III.' was not written in the style of Shakespeare, or that it was unworthy of him and must have been the production of an inferior genius.

Alas, that Peter Bell should have been so tardy in making his appearance! But Primrose Criticism had to await the coming of Peter Bell, and Peter Bell the advent of Wordsworth. It is certainly only a coincidence; but Peter Bell's criticism of the Primrose was almost identical with Wordsworth's estimate of Shakespeare. The author of 'Peter Bell' should not blame poor Peter for a dulness of vision of which he is himself guilty. On the authority of Mr. Buckle, Wordsworth once told Charles Lamb that Shakespeare was not so great as he was popularly estimated to be, and thought that he could, if he had a mind, write as well as Shakespeare. "But then, you see," said Lamb, "he had not the *mind*." Wordsworth looked upon Shakespeare through the very spectacles of Peter Bell, and

The primrose by the *Avon's* brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

But to all eyes that wear not Peter Bell's
spectacles the world never grew, before nor
since, such another primrose.

“Beware (delighted Poets!) when you sing
To welcome Nature in the early Spring:
Your num'rous Feet not tread
The Banks of Avon; for each Flowre
(As it nere knew a Sunne or Showre)
Hangs there, the pensive head.

“Each Tree, whose thick, and spreading growth hath
made
Rather a Night beneath the Boughs than shade,
(Unwilling now to grow.)
Lookes like a Plume a Captaine weares,
Whose rifled Falls are steept i' th teares
Which from his last rage flow.

“The pitious River wept it selfe away
Long since (Alas!) to such a swift decay;
That reach the Map, and looke
If you a River there can spie;
And for a River your mock'd Eye,
Will find a shallow Brooke.”

Valuable as common-sense may be, possibly the sense of man should not grow too common, if it would appreciate the most uncommon sense that ever yet was writ. Let it be admitted, however, that the unadulterated Primrose Criticism fully appreciates Shakespeare's genius, and even places him far above

the ignoble possibility of errors and vulgar faults; yet it attempts to stab to the heart the most celebrated offspring of the poet's genius, and then to deny its Shakespearian legitimacy.

It is to be supposed that a shoemaker is the best judge of a shoe, an artist of a picture, and a poet of verse. But while the cobbler's judgment as to the quality of the shoe must be accepted, the soundness of his judgment as to the age and the maker of it may be questioned. The poet may pass judgment on the poetical merits of an 'Iliad,' 'The Faerie Queene,' or a 'Richard III.,' but his poetical genius and instinct alone are not sufficient foundation for a judgment that must rest on historical data, on antiquarian knowledge, on records, facts, and logic. Let the poet declare on his judgment that 'Richard III.' is an inferior production, — that it by merit holds no high rank among dramas. Then let the critic have the courage of a Voltaire or a Wordsworth and attack Shakespeare himself, — point out his faults, expose his blunders, and show wherein his genius has been overrated. Here is critical heroism and enterprise. When Peter Bell turned his unique optics upon the primrose, and stared in upon its delicate

beauty, he did not have the temerity to argue that as the primrose is nothing but a primrose, therefore the Almighty needs to be relieved of the responsibility of having created it. But Peter Bell grows brave as he scrutinizes the dramatic flower known as 'Richard III.' To his superb common-sense it is but a rank and unsightly weed of low and vulgar origin. "But, 'in the name of all the gods at once,' charge me not," says Peter, "with the unpardonable offence of imputing any fault or slightest imperfection to Shakespeare's infallible judgment and genius, because 'Richard III.,' you know, must not be attributed to his divine, unerring pen." Sublime critical courage! Marvellous veneration for Shakespeare!

The Primrose Criticism lays down the new canon that whatever a genius may do that is unworthy of him shall not be attributed to him, but shall be branded as a literary founding. Happy the artist, general, statesman, historian, preacher, or poet who may be thus easily relieved of responsibility for his faults and weaknesses! But is this Common-sense Criticism? It is undoubtedly Primrose-sense, and Peter-Bell-sense put to criticism; but, in the name of scientific and literary integrity,

let it be hoped that it will long remain very Uncommon-sense.

The arguments employed by the Primrose Criticism in its attempt to rob Shakespeare of 'Richard III.' are not sound. One argument stands in this shape : Shakespeare never wrote deliberate nonsense, nor knowingly indulged in defective metre. 'Richard III.' contains deliberate nonsense and premeditated defective metre. Ergo : Shakespeare never wrote the historical tragedy of 'Richard III.' With all due and unfeigned respect for him who advanced this argument, it cannot be accepted as sound and reliable. It suggests itself to a careful student of the Primrose method, that it would take very uncommon sense at this time to discover whether Shakespeare's nonsense was deliberate or not, and whether he indulged in defective metre knowingly or unknowingly. The discussion of questions of this character is as futile as it is unimportant. But if Primrose Criticism affirms that Shakespeare never wrote nonsense nor indulged in defective metre as a fact, there shall be a square issue, which may be settled without resort to any transcendental speculations. Shakespeare did write nonsense, and he indulged very frequently in

defective metre. Peter Bell must be developing a supernatural power of vision in these latter days that he is able to discover in every production of Shakespeare absolute perfection of poetical form, infallibility of dramatic plan, unadulterated wisdom, and impeccable fancy. Surely this is finding "infinite deeps and marvellous revelations in a primrose."

There is not a play, among all that are attributed to Shakespeare, which can be said to be absolutely free from nonsense. Nor is there a single play that is absolutely free from defective metre. These are the very faults which our poet's detractors have most successfully proven against him, and which his admirers have most unhesitatingly admitted. Rare Ben Jonson was almost prophetic in his honest criticism; writing, it would seem, with his eye on the Primrose critic of this far-off time. "I remember," says he, "the Players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein

he most faulted." Editors and commentators have been severely and justly criticised themselves for attempting to correct Shakespeare's nonsense and defective metre. The perfection of nonsense has been employed to explain away the nonsense of Shakespeare; syllables have been added to or subtracted from his lines, and absolute prose changed into verse to mend the poet's limping metre. But the best editions of Shakespeare's works at the present time contain, in almost if not quite every play, instances of nonsense and of defective metre which have fortunately been rescued from the literary botchery of over-nice emendators whose delicate tastes and sensitive ears could not permit Shakespeare's art to remain in its original and now valuable imperfection. It is the aim of the highest Shakespearian scholarship and editorship to permit this age and all the future to know what this singer really sang, and to let

"sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

The metrical dissonance of an Alexandrine or a blank prose line introduced into the harmony of heroic verse has often thrown such critics as Steevens, Seymour, and Collier into

the very anguish of hypercriticism and into those emendatory spasms that have resulted in the infliction of wounds of metrical corrections upon the original text of Shakespeare's plays, which the best and wisest scholarship of to-day would heal and obliterate.

Primrose Criticism affirms that the original text of Shakespeare's plays could not have contained a faulty verse, nor a passage of obscure sense, nor a low, unchaste fancy. The conclusion is, that every such defect must be an interpolation, which originated with actors, short-hand reporters, and brainless critics of the Anti-Primrose school. This is certainly a *petitio principii*, if we are to ignore all the historical and scientific data on which an argument for the genuineness of the text should be based.

The scholarly judgment of Richard Grant White had not been bewitched by the Primrose method when he wrote: "Not what Shakespeare might, could, would, or should have written, but what, according to the best evidence, did he write, is the only admissible or defensible object of the labors of his editors and verbal critics." This is true common-sense applied to the study of Shakespeare; and no critic need fear that he will be "laying

himself open to the reproach of applying common sense to the study of Shakespeare," who tramples upon this canon. It may require an uncommon sense to determine what Shakespeare might, could, would, or should have written, — and this the Primrose Criticism, in consistency, should never attempt, — but to determine what Shakespeare did write may require simply that ordinary common-sense which is to be distinguished from extraordinary Primrose common-sense.

The external evidences of the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.' are many and indisputable.

In the Books of the Stationers' Company, London, the play is attributed to Shakespeare. Four editions of the quarto were issued during the author's lifetime. The first edition was published in 1597, according to the Stationers' Registers. This first edition did not bear the name of its author. It was published anonymously. All the subsequent editions, 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, 1621, 1622, 1629, and 1634, bore the name of William Shakespeare. When Shakespeare's complete plays were first published, in 1623, 'Richard III.' was included. Nor has that play ever been excluded from the undisputed works of Shakespeare.

This is at least *prima facie* evidence of the Shakespearian authorship of the play. If it be argued that some doubt is justified by the absence of Shakespeare's name from the title-page of the first quarto edition, the reply will be, that on the same ground doubt should be cast on the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard II.,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Henry IV.,' and 'Henry V.,' which even Primrose Criticism may not be prepared to do. At least three editions of 'Richard III.' were published during the lifetime of the author, bearing his name, nor was any question then raised as to the genuineness of the play. After the author's death, as has been stated, this tragedy took its place in all the folio editions of Shakespeare's works, and has not in a single instance been denied its rightful place in subsequent editions.

It is not altogether unimportant as an argument, that this play has passed without challenge the scholarly and critical scrutiny of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, Johnson, Capell, Steevens, Reed, Malone, Chalmers, Harness, Singer, Knight, Collier, Halliwell-Phillipps, Hudson, Dyce, White, and Clarke, — a score of editors and critics whose several and united scholarship is the pride and glory of English letters. It will take

a more vigorous logic than Primrose Criticism employs to set aside the verdict of this splendid array of scholars.

It may strengthen the confidence of the wavering to glance at some of the allusions made to Shakespeare in connection with the play of 'Richard III.' by contemporaneous and immediately succeeding poets. There does not seem to have been a suspicion in Shakespeare's day that he was not the author of this tragedy, or that he had perpetrated the literary fraud of putting his name to a drama which he did not write.

One of the earliest references to Shakespeare is made in John Weever's Poem (1599), *Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare.*

"Honie-Tong'd *Shakespeare* when I saw thine issue
I swore *Apollo* got them and none other."

Of this "issue," the poet mentions "Rose-checkt *Adonis*," "Faire fire-hot *Venus*," "Chaste *Lucretia*," and

"*Romeo-Richard*; more whose names I know not."

Francis Meres, in his 'Palladis Tamia,' 1598, refers to Shakespeare in the words:—

"As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the

Latins; so Shakespeare among y^e English is the most excellent in both kinds of the stage . . . witness . . . for Tragedy his Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King John, Titus Andronicus and his Romeo and Juliet."

There was a rather broad anecdote current in Shakespeare's time, in which both the poet's and the actor Burbage's names were associated with the name and play of 'Richard III.,' which would be out of character here. But this same Burbage, Shakespeare's friend and the original Richard, is introduced as one of the characters in a play entitled 'The Returne from Pernassus; or the Scourge of Simony, publiquely acted by the Students in St. John's College in Camebridge, 1606.' The following lines occur in this play: —

"*Kemp.* Few of the university pen plaies well, they smell too much of that writer *Ovid*, and that writer *Metamorphosis*, and talke too much of *Proserpina* & *Juppiter*. Why here 's our fellow *Shakespeare* puts them all downe, I, and *Ben Jonson*, too. O, that *Ben Jonson* is a pestilent fellow, he brought up *Horace* giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow *Shakespeare* hath given him a purge that made him beray his credit.

Burbage. I like your face, and the proportion of your body for Richard the 3. I pray, M. Phil. let me see you act a little of it.

Philo. Now is the winter of our discontent,
Made glorious summer by this sonne of Yorke," etc.

In a religious poem on 'Saint Mary Magdalen's Conversion,' written by 'C. J.,' 1603, the following lines occur : —

"Of *Helens* rape and *Troyes* besieged Towne,
Of *Troylus* faith, and *Cressids* falsitie,
Of *Richards* stratagemes for the english crowne,
Of *Tarquins* lust, and *Lucrece* chastitie,
Of these, of none of these my muse now treates,
Of greater conquests, warres and loves she speakes."

Richard Brathwaite, in 'A Strappado for the Devill,' 1615, writes the lines : —

"If I had liv'd but in King Richard's days,
Who in his heat of passion, midst the force
Of his assailants troubled many waies,
Crying A horse, a kingdome for a horse,
O! then my horse, which now at livery staves,
Had beene set free, where now he's forc't to stand,
And like to fall into the Ostler's hand."

If it be kept in mind that these allusions to Shakespeare and his 'Richard III.' were made in his own lifetime and during the time in which Burbage was gaining celebrity as the principal character in the tragedy, the statement that Shakespeare was credited with the authorship of 'Richard III.,' and that this

tragedy produced a deep impression on literary as well as vulgar minds, will be admitted.

John Milton was one of Shakespeare's most enthusiastic eulogists, and, beyond question, an ardent student of his works. It would be remarkable for him to have given special attention to 'Richard III.' without discovering that it was written in a style wholly foreign to the manner of Shakespeare, if such were the case. It is matter for wonder that Milton's poetic tastes, instincts, and judgment did not equal the Primrose sense of Peter Bell in detecting the un-Shakespearian character of that tragedy. It is still more surprising, if the play is so very commonplace and is not the production of Shakespeare's genius, that glorious John Milton should have found in that very play some of the most striking ideas which he has introduced into 'Paradise Lost,' and that he should have quoted from that very play in his prose works, where he attributes the play to Shakespeare. Sir William Blackstone and Edmund Malone could not but think that Milton was indebted for his characterization of Satan to these lines:—

"Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him ;
And all their ministers attend on him."

ACT I. *Scene 3.*

In 'Eikonoklastes,' written in answer to 'Eikon Basilike,' in 1690, Milton makes this striking reference to Shakespeare and the play of 'Richard III.:'—

“From Stories of this nature both Ancient and Modern which abound, the Poets also, and some English, have been in this Point so mindful of *Decorum*, as to put never more pious words in the Mouth of any Person, than of a Tyrant. I shall not instance an abstruse Author, wherein the King may be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the Closet Companion of these his Solitudes, *William Shakespeare*; who introduces the Person of *Richard* the Third, speaking, in as high a strain of Piety, and mortification, as is uttered in any passage of this Book and sometimes to the same sense and purpose with some words in this Place, I *intended*, saith he, *not only to oblige my Friends, but mine enemies*. The like saith *Richard*, *Act II. Scene 1*:—

*'I do not know that English Man alive,
With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
More than the Infant that is born to-night;
I thank my God for my humility.'*

“Other stuff of this sort may be read throughout the whole Tragedy, wherein the Poet us'd not much License in departing from the Truth of History, which delivers him a deep Dissembler, not of his affections only, but of Religion.”

As the great poets themselves, including Jonson, Milton, Dryden, and Pope, never questioned the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.,' so the great actors who have won their renown in Shakespearian characters, and who have made Richard III. one of the most celebrated histrionic representations of the English stage, have never detected that Richard was not Shakespeare's. Burbage, Ryan, Cibber, Garrick, Mossop, Henderson, Cooke, Kean, Kemble, Booth, Macready — all the great, original Richards — have had as firm confidence in the Shakespearian authorship of this character as they have had of Hamlet, Macbeth, Coriolanus, Othello, Shylock, or Lear. It is ordinarily, if not extraordinarily reasonable, to suppose that actors of such intelligence and genius, actors devoted to the study and representation of Shakespeare, would be able to detect, if it existed, the un-Shakespearian character of 'Richard III.' The universal opinion of the stage is not easily to be set aside by the Primrose Criticism. Peter Bell has not a more authoritative voice than Burbage, Betterton, Cibber, Garrick, Kemble, Cooke, Kean, Young, and Macready.

The judgment of learned and philosophical students of Shakespeare should not be ignored in a discussion of this character. Yet Primrose Criticism is peculiarly and significantly hostile to anything that approaches the uncommon in sense, learning, scholarship, or subtlety of criticism; hence its antipathy to German criticism, and the scientific, philosophical instincts of the German mind. There may be method in this madness when Shakespeare is under discussion, as it is beyond all dispute that the Germans are the broadest, profoundest, and most scholarly critics and commentators of Shakespeare in the world. Englishmen must admit this, as the able and candid Furnivall has done. Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Tieck, Schlegel, Ulrici, and Gervinus are names that cannot be cast into shadow by even such names as Pope, Dryden, Johnson, Malone, Steevens, Collier, and Halliwell-Phillips. If these open-eyed German critics see more in the primrose than the littleness and inferiority of it, so do they also see more in the dramatic delineation of the character of Richard III. than the second-rate genius of a Marlowe, a Peele, or a Greene.

Schiller, with a true anti-Primrose spirit, closed his reading of 'Richard III.' with the

splendid encomium: "It is one of the sublimest tragedies I know." Ulrici finds in 'Richard III.' the fifth act of the great tragedy of which 'Richard II.' is the first. In a very un-Primrose fashion, this philosopher makes bold to say:—

"No drama shows more distinctly than Henry VI. and its continuation Richard III. how the two sides of tragedy and comedy—according to their ethical significance—meet in the historical drama, and become blended into a higher unity."

Schlegel advances a similar theory, and implies the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.' when he says:—

"These four plays ['Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.'] were undoubtedly composed in succession, as is proved by the style and the spirit in the handling of the subject: the last is definitely announced in the one which precedes it, and is also full of references to it; the same views run through the series; in a word, the whole make together only one single work."

This distinguished scholar thinks that the Englishmen's great admiration of this tragedy "is certainly in every respect well founded."

Dr. Gervinus, in his 'Shakespeare Commentaries,' unconsciously arrays himself against all Primrose Criticism when he bluntly and confidently says, with the assurance of a scholar : —

“Richard III. is Shakespeare's first tragedy of undoubted personal authorship ; it is written in connection with Henry VI., and appears as its direct continuation.”

But the great Professor comes into still closer collision with the Primrose Criticism when he says : —

“Richard III. shows extraordinary progress when compared to Henry VI. . . . The poetic diction, however much it reminds us of Henry VI., has gained surprisingly in finish, richness, and truth ; we need only compare the words of Anne at the beginning (Act I. Sc. 2) with the best parts of Henry VI., to find how thoroughly they are animated with the breath of passion, how pure and natural is their flow, and how entirely the expression is but the echo of the feeling.”

It would seem that Primrose Criticism had involved itself in a vastly greater iconoclastic enterprise than it had bargained for, in its attempt to disprove the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.,' since scientific criticism

demands that the genuineness of all these related historical plays be invalidated together, or that they all stand together in their unquestioned integrity.

Attention is further called to the reasons laid down by the Primrose Criticism for robbing Shakespeare of his 'Richard III.'

✓ It is asserted that the tragedy is not written in Shakespeare's style ; that it proceeds with a different gait ; that it contains nonsense and defective metre ; that it is devoid of humor and eloquence ; and that it contains whole scenes where the author's mind seems at dead low-tide throughout, and lays bare all its shallows and its ooze. ✓ With these serious charges made against the tragedy, singularly enough, not a shadow of a proof, not even an illustration or a quotation, is given in support of the charges.

It may again be suggested that it is remarkable that men of the poetical tastes of Jonson, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Schiller and Goethe ; and men of the critical acuteness and ripe scholarship of Johnson, Steevens, Malone, Hazlitt, Lamb, Halliwell-Phillipps, and Richard Grant White ; and men of the splendid histrionic genius of Burbage, Garrick, Cooke, Kean, Kemble, and Macready, have not de-

tected the un-Shakespearian style, the alien, unknown, and vulgar gait of this remarkable 'Richard III.'

As to the "nonsense," it would be un-Shakespearian if it were absolutely free from it. The same is true of the "defective metre." If Sophocles, Æschylus, Corneille, Racine, or Voltaire were to be our model, then Shakespeare would be full of "nonsense." The violation or utter ignoring of the Unities, the trampling under foot of Aristotelian rules of dramatic composition, would be considered "nonsense" by the classical school. But if this be the "nonsense" for which 'Richard III.' is condemned, then must many a play of Shakespeare's come under the ban of condemnation. Nor is this the only kind of "nonsense" that may be found in Shakespeare's plays. Ben Jonson made this charge in his day: —

"His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: As when hee said in the person of *Cæsar*, one speaking to him: '*Cæsar thou dost me wrong.*' Hee replied: '*Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause.*' and such like; which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices, with his vertues."

Anachronisms are "nonsense" to those who measure by the classical standards; but if such "nonsense" is un-Shakespearian, — and none would seem greater to Aristotle, Ben Jonson, or Voltaire, — then must nearly every play of Shakespeare's be denied its accredited merit and high origin.

'Coriolanus' is marred and disfigured by the "nonsense" of Titus Lartius quoting Cato's estimate of a true soldier, when Cato was not born until two hundred and fifty years after the time in which Lartius mentions him. In the same play Menenius Agrippa refers to Alexander the Great, more than two hundred years before the conqueror of the world was born. And the same person speaks of "the most sovereign prescription in Galen," six hundred and fifty years before the great physician saw the light of day.

In the tragedy of 'Hamlet' we are astonished to hear Hamlet and the King in the tenth or eleventh century speak of the school at Wittenberg, which was not founded until 1502. Then reference is therein made to a performance of the play of 'Julius Cæsar,' which took place at the Oxford University in 1582! Several references are made to "brazen

cannon" which were not in existence in Hamlet's time. Here is "nonsense"!

In 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' one may be surfeited with "nonsense." What right has Bardolph, in 1400, to know anything about "three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses"? What sense is there in Shallow's threatening Falstaff with, "I will make a Star-Chamber matter of it," when the Star-Chamber Court was not in existence? Mill sixpences were first coined in 1561, and the "Edward shovel-boards" not earlier than about 1550; yet Slender accuses Pistol, in 1400, of picking his pocket and robbing him "of seven groats of mill sixpences, and two Edward shovel-boards." Mrs. Ford, in a most unaccountable fashion, seemed to be familiar with the tune of "Green Sleeves" one hundred and seventy-five years before it was composed, which was in 1580. And Mr. Page had heard that "the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier," nearly two hundred years before the rapier was introduced.

In the 'Winter's Tale' is the famous "nonsense" which provoked the ridicule of Ben Jonson, to which Drummond refers:—

"He said that Shakespeare wanted art, and sometimes sense; for in one of his plays he

brought in a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by 100 miles."

To any sense but Primrose-sense it seems "nonsense" for one to put into a drama such a dialogue as this : —

"*Ant.* Thou art perfect then, our ship hath touch'd
upon
The deserts of Bohemia ?

Mar.

Ay, my lord."

In 'Henry VI.' mention is made of Machiavel, who was but two years old when Henry VI. died.

It has been charged that it is "nonsense" for the dramatist to represent Fortinbras, in the tragedy of 'Hamlet,' as appearing at a certain time in Denmark, and in an hour and a half returning victorious from Poland. And it is equal "nonsense" to represent Othello as passing from Venice to Cyprus in a few moments of time.

All that Bowdler eliminated from the text of Shakespeare — "those words and expressions . . . which cannot with Propriety be read aloud in a Family" — must be branded as "nonsense." The mixing up of tragedy and comedy in the same play is, by some, considered "nonsense." It would indeed be diffi-

cult to mention a species of "nonsense" that may not be found in Shakespeare. But there is hardly one of his plays that has less "nonsense" in it than 'Richard III.' This is true, whether the "nonsense" be the "nonsense" of vulgarity, of historical inaccuracy, of unnaturalness, or of the violation of the Unities of time and place. And the very criticism which would on the Primrose basis rob Shakespeare of 'Richard III.' would rob him of nearly every one of his great creations.

It may be of interest to take at least a glance at the suggestion that Shakespeare was so perfect in his poetic art that he could not have written in faulty style, nor in violation of any poetical canon. It is well known that he was admired by his contemporaries and immediate successors as a natural genius rather than as a trained and scholarly artist.

Ben Jonson, who knew Shakespeare personally, was candid in saying: "Shakespeare wanted Art. . . . His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had been so too."

Good Thomas Fuller expressed the common sentiment of the seventeenth century when he wrote of Shakespeare:—

"He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, '*Poeta non fit, sed nascitur*;' one

is not *made*, but born a poet. Indeed his learning was very little, so that, as *Cornish diamonds* are not polished by any Lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so *Nature* itself was all the *Art* which was used upon him."

Berkenhead, in praising Beaumont and Fletcher, most justly said : —

"Brave Shakespeare flow'd, yet had his Ebbings too,
Often above Himselfe, sometimes below."

Milton, master of poetic art, with taste and instinct exquisite, implies Shakespeare's deficiency in art as he listens to

"sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

Dryden honestly says of his idol : —

"I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clinches, his serious swelling into bombast."

As compared with Jonson, this is Dryden's estimate of Shakespeare : —

"The *faultless* Johnson *equally* writ well;
Shakespeare made *faults*, but then did more excel."

Again this noble writer says : —

“Shakespeare, who many times has written better than any poet, in any language, is yet so far from writing wit *always*, or expressing that wit according to the dignity of the subject, that he writes, in many places, below the dullest writer of ours, or any precedent age.”

Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton, in his ‘*Theatrum Poetarum*,’ 1675, says: —

“Shakespeare, in spite of all his unfiled expressions, his rambling and indigested fancys, the laughter of the Critical, yet must be confessed a *poet* above many that go beyond him in Literature some degree.”

And again: —

“From an Actor of Tragedies and Comedies he became a *Maker*; and such a *Maker*, that though some others may perhaps pretend to a more exact *Decorum* and *æconomie*, especially in Tragedy, never any express’d a more lofty and tragic height; never any represented nature more purely to the life, and where the polishments of Art are most wanting, as probably his Learning was not extraordinary, he pleaseth with a certain *wild* and *native* Elegance.”

Pope, with most excellent judgment, wrote in his preface: —

“It must be owned, that with all these great excellencies, he has almost as great defects;

and that as he has certainly written better, so he has perhaps written worse, than any other."

Samuel Johnson made bold to ascribe certain faults to Shakespeare, by saying : —

"The style of Shakespeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure."

The criticisms quoted above apply to the nonsense, the faulty style, the defective metre, and the occasional commonplace passages to be found in Shakespeare's works.

From these criticisms the conclusion is to be drawn that, contrary to the opinion of the Primrose Criticism, Shakespeare wrote nonsense and indulged in defective metre. And this further conclusion is logical, that to reject the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.' on the ground that it contains nonsense and defective metre, would warrant the rejection of nearly every play ascribed to Shakespeare. The faults of 'Richard III.' are not un-Shakespearian. And, with Professor Richardson, all may admit that "this tragedy, *like every work* of Shakespeare, has many faults."

It is further implied in the Primrose Criticism that as 'Richard III.' is without humor it lacks one of the infallible characteristics of

Shakespearian method and genius. Perhaps no play of this original dramatist adheres more closely to the classical standard with regard to its tragical unity than 'Richard III.' It lacks, let it be admitted, the unclassical admixture of comedy. But the play is of such an intensely cruel and tragic nature that it could with less consistency than any other play admit of the introduction of a comic strain. Its very diabolism seems to forbid any relief to the horror, or the admission of any ray of jest or clownishness into the damnable darkness. If, however, by the term "humor" we may include the idea of wit, sarcasm, cunning and adroit play of words, then, certainly, one of the greatest, if grimmest, humorists of Shakespeare's creation is Richard III. There are lines in the first soliloquy that contain humor. Gloster's wooing of Lady Anne, even in the presence of the corpse of Henry VI., is not only most eloquent, but consummately witty, bordering at least on the humorous. The strawberry subterfuge by which the Bishop of Ely is politely invited out of the council in the Tower, is a cheerful incident, if nothing more.

Nevertheless, it is true that this picture is very sparingly relieved of its sombre character by the comical or even by the humorous.

This fact, however, cannot rob the tragedy of its Shakespearian character, which is determined by its positive rather than by its negative elements, by what it contains rather than by what it lacks. A few of the great actors have so studied this play as to find in it rays of light, and in their acting they have relieved the play of the monotonous horror by bringing out the wit and even humor which they found therein. Kemble, Cooke, and Kean in particular were credited with the ability to find and to set forth these features of the dark tragedy. It was with difficulty that they succeeded.

On what grounds the Primrose Criticism insinuates that 'Richard III.' reveals a lack of patriotism in its author it is difficult to determine. If to portray reckless, heartless, insatiable ambition, a love of power which tramples underfoot the laws of God and society, — if to hold up to the universal gaze for everlasting execration

“ That foul defacer of God’s handy-work ;
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth,” —

if to record with dramatic force the diabolical intrigues, and the final, just calamities and ruin of a royal assassin and red-handed usurper, — be unpatriotic, then Shakespeare

has indeed most successfully and commendably proven himself of an unpatriotic spirit. If patriotism means simply loyalty to a "House" or an administration rather than to the country, then of that narrow sort of patriotism Shakespeare, the author of 'Richard III.,' was not largely and conspicuously possessed. But that great tragedy was written by a pen which had been inspired with the loftiest patriotism, — a love of country and the rights of men. The spirit that wrote the play breathes in the patriotic prayer of Richmond : —

" O, now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
 The true succeeders of each royal house,
 By God's fair ordinance conjoin together !
 And let their heirs (God, if thy will be so)
 Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
 With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days !
 Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
 That would reduce these bloody days again,
 And make poor England weep in streams of blood !
 Let them not live to taste this land's increase,
 That would with treason wound this fair land's
 peace !
 Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again ;
 That she may long live here, God say — Amen ! "

Primrose Criticism insinuates that to admit the Shakespearian authorship of this play would be to accuse the poet of therein permitting his mind to remain " at dead low-tide,

and lay bare all its shallows and its ooze." It is difficult for one to understand Schiller's admiration of such a shallow and oozy-minded tragedy. And if these lines are at a poetic and dramatic "dead low-tide," what was "Marlowe's mighty line," when such a scholarly critic as Chalmers, in turning from Marlowe's play, must say:—

"Certain it is that when we open Shakespeare's Richard III. we seem to mount from the uniform flat, wherein we had been travelling with uncheered steps, to an exalted eminence, from whence we behold around us, an extensive country, diversified by hill and dale, refreshed by many waters, and traversed by roads, leading to hospitable mansions:

'*Glos.* Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.'"

No "low-tide" performance here, to the mind of the Scotch antiquarian and critic!

All men have not been able to detect the shallows and ooze which the Primrose Criticism seems to find in 'Richard III.' Hazlitt had certainly seen virtues in this tragedy which escaped the eye of Peter Bell, for he wrote:—

"The play itself is undoubtedly a very powerful effusion of Shakespeare's genius. The

groundwork of the character of Richard — that mixture of intellectual vigour with moral depravity, in which Shakespeare delighted to show his strength — gave full scope as well as temptation to the exercise of his imagination.”

Coleridge must have found great excellences in this play; and his keen, critical eye must have overlooked the “shallows” and “ooze,” else he could not have written: —

“Shakespeare here, as in all his great parts, develops in a tone of sublime morality the dreadful consequences of placing the moral in subordination to the mere intellectual being.”

Let it not be supposed that an attempt is here made to prove the superiority of ‘Richard III.’ to all other Shakespearian productions. As a literary work it cannot hold rank with ‘Hamlet,’ ‘Othello,’ ‘Lear,’ and many other plays of this poet. Some may even wonder, with Johnson, Steevens, and Malone, why it has been so universally admired, without doubting its Shakespearian origin.

Hazlitt pronounces ‘Richard III.’ a play for the stage rather than for the study. Others criticise it for its inadaptability to the stage. Possibly the Cibber adaptation of the play was better calculated to produce theatri-

cal effect than the original, but there can be no question that the 'Richard III.' of Shakespeare is the more perfect and admirable in the study. Indeed, the Cibber adaptation eliminates portions which, in the study and from the literary standpoint, are the finest portions of the play, and rank with the noblest and most elegant poetic strains of Shakespeare.

That which would be "dead low-tide," "shallows," "ooze," to the play-goer and to the actor, might be high-tide, ocean deeps, crystalline purity of philosophic thought and poetic form to the student and moralist.

Let it be admitted that some of the scenes and dialogues would be tedious and devoid of good taste and exciting interest on the stage; the same admission must be made touching many of Shakespeare's plays. If this fault is un-Shakespearian, surely there is hardly a purely Shakespearian play in existence. There are entire plays of Shakespeare which have never been popular on the stage, and quite a large number of them have entirely disappeared from the repertoire of the Shakespearian actors. Who of this generation has witnessed a successful and popular performance of 'Timon of Athens,' 'Pericles,' 'Ti-

tus Andronicus,' 'Cymbeline,' 'King John,' 'Henry VI.,' 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'Measure for Measure'?

But the drama is not to be judged and fashioned by the tastes and demands of the theatre alone. Doubtless many have agreed with Charles Lamb that Shakespeare cannot be acted, that the stage is not great enough for his dramatic creations. The theatre demanded that the original tragedy of 'Richard III.' should be changed; the change was made, and the play thereby gained popularity for the time being on the stage, but lost popularity in the study.

Colley Cibber almost destroyed the literary identity of the great tragedy when in 1700 he adapted it to the stage; yet he made the character of Richard, whose horrible identity he preserved, a great favorite with actors and play-goers. And though Garrick, Cooke, and Kean achieved fame in the performance of this mutilated play, who will say that Shakespeare, in *revisiting* "the glimpses of the moon," would be willing to adopt the "adaptation" and applaud Cibber for his pains? Who will acknowledge from the standpoint of literary dramatic criticism that the Cibber adaptation is equal to the original drama?

Now the argument is this, that a dramatic composition may be of high excellence from a literary and intellectual standpoint which on the stage, from an actor's or the auditor's point, would prove too intricate, obscure, tame, or even revolting. Such a play, however, does not necessarily reveal the "shallows" and "ooze" and "dead low-tide" of its author's mind; it may show the greater heights, depths, powers, and splendors of it.

Astonishment increases when this new Primrose Criticism makes the remarkable discovery that 'Richard III.' is devoid of eloquence, and is not therefore of Shakespearian origin. It must be a very uncommon taste that is deaf to the eloquence of Richard's soliloquies, of Clarence's dream, of Margaret's curses, of Richmond's orations and prayers. Did not Gloster woo Lady Anne most eloquently? What can exceed the beauty and pathos of Edward's eulogy of his brother?

"K. Edw. Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,

And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?
My brother kill'd no man, his fault was thought,
And yet his punishment was bitter death.
Who sued to me for him? who, in my wrath,
Kneel'd at my feet, and bade me be advis'd?

Who spoke of brotherhood? who spoke of love?
 Who told me, how the poor soul did forsake
 The mighty Warwick, and did fight for me?
 Who told me, in the field at Tewksbury,
 When Oxford had me down, he rescu'd me,
 And said, *Dear brother, live, and be a king?*
 Who told me, when we both lay in the field,
 Frozen almost to death, how he did lap me
 Even in his garments; and did give himself,
 All thin and naked, to the numb-cold night?
 All this from my remembrance brutish wrath
 Sinfully pluck'd, and not a man of you
 Had so much grace to put it in my mind.
 But when your carters or your waiting-vassals
 Have done a drunken slaughter, and defac'd
 The precious image of our dear Redeemer,
 You straight are on your knees for pardon, pardon;
 And I, unjustly too, must grant it you:—
 But for my brother, not a man would speak,—
 Nor I (ungracious) speak unto myself
 For him, poor soul.—The proudest of you all
 Have been beholden to him in his life;
 Yet none of you would once plead for his life.—
 O God! I fear, thy justice will take hold
 On me, and you, and mine, and yours, for this.—
 Come, Hastings, help me to my closet. O, poor
 Clarence!”

Is such an eloquence unworthy of Shakespeare's pen?

In reading Queen Elizabeth's farewell to the Tower which holds “those tender babes,” and in reading Tyrrel's description of the “ruthless butchery,” one joins with Hazlitt in

pronouncing them "some of those wonderful bursts of feeling, done to the life, to the very height of fancy and nature, which our Shakespeare alone could give."

Has ever an actor in the noble character of Richmond doubted that he was pronouncing an eloquence equal to that of Henry V. before Harfleur, when on famous Bosworth field he harangued his troops, closing with the spirited and thrilling words:—

"Then, in the name of God, and all these rights,
Advance your standards, draw your willing swords:
For me, the ransom of my bold attempt
Shall be this cold corpse on the earth's cold face;
But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt
The least of you shall share his part thereof.
Sound, drums and trumpets, boldly and cheerfully;
God, and Saint George! Richmond, and victory!"

Not only the actions, but the very words of Richard on that fatal field were eloquent:—

"Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!"

"A thousand hearts are great within my bosom:
Advance our standards, set upon our foes;
Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! Victory sits on our helmets."

As Garrick acted the part, throwing into it the highest spirit of gallantry, what stirring eloquence was Richard's in the scene : —

K. Rich. A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse !

Catesby. Withdraw, my lord, I'll help you to a horse.

K. Rich. Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die ;
I think, there be six Richmonds in the field ;
Five have I slain to-day, instead of him : —
A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse ! ”

If eloquence be the test, ‘Richard III.’ is Shakespeare's.

The Primrose Criticism cannot suppress its mirth at the appearance of the ghosts on Bosworth field, and intimates that the scene is unworthy of Shakespeare, and hence was not his creation. Why Peter Bell does not laugh at the whole tribe of dramatic ghosts and every other sort of ghosts, is not apparent.

The ghosts in ‘Hamlet,’ ‘Macbeth,’ and ‘Julius Cæsar’ are as open to criticism, and are as provocative of mirth as the ghosts in ‘Richard III.’ Why Banquo's ghost should appear to Macbeth, and the ghost of the Royal Dane to Hamlet, and the ghost of Cæsar to Brutus, without challenging the

criticism of Peter Bell, while the appearance of the ghosts of Richard's victims on Bosworth field should be thought laughable, is perhaps unworthy of serious inquiry. Whether any ghost scene be pleasing or not to the reader of this age, there is a seriousness of mind in which to study the dramatic requirements and necessities of an earlier age, which the Primrose Criticism does not seem to cultivate. There is at least a philosophical dignity, which should ever accompany criticism, to be found in Schlegel's remarks on the ghost scene in 'Richard III.' In explanation of Richard's heroic death, he says:—

“He fights at last against Richmond like a desperado, and dies the honorable death of a hero on the field of battle. Shakespeare could not change this historical issue, and yet it is by no means satisfactory to our moral feelings, as Lessing, when speaking of a German play on the same subject, has very judiciously remarked. How has Shakespeare solved this difficulty? By a wonderful invention he opens a prospect into the other world, and shows us Richard in his last moments already branded with the stamp of reprobation. We see Richard and Richmond in the night before the battle sleeping in their tents: the spirits of the murdered victims

of the tyrant ascend in succession, and pour out their curses against him, and their blessings on his adversary. These apparitions are properly but the dreams of the two generals represented visibly. It is no doubt contrary to probability that their tents should only be separated by so small a space; but Shakespeare could reckon on poetical spectators who were ready to take the breadth of the stage for the distance between two hostile camps, if for such indulgence they were to be recompensed by beauties of so sublime a nature as this series of spectres and Richard's awakening soliloquy. The catastrophe of Richard the Third is, in respect to the external event, very like that of Macbeth; we have only to compare the thorough difference of handling them to be convinced that Shakespeare has most accurately observed poetical justice in the genuine sense of the word, that is, as signifying the relation of an invisible blessing or curse which hangs over human sentiments and actions."

It is certainly refreshing to turn from the Primrose sneer to such a philosophical criticism as this, which, if it serve no other end, may suggest the value of German seriousness above much American flippancy.

But why should Shakespeare be ridiculed for dramatizing tradition and history? The subject matter of the ghost scene was not

invented by Shakespeare. The dramatist could not eliminate that part of Richard's experience. The historians told it all before the poet adapted it to the stage. The horrible dreams, the appearance of ghosts and even devils to the tormented mind of Richard on the eve of battle, are in the records. Let the Primrose Criticism attempt to dramatize this experience less ludicrously ; let it undertake to do it more grandly and impressively.

Any criticism that overlooks the principal character of a drama must be logically defective if not scientifically worthless, however charmingly and elegantly it may be presented. Where criticism contents itself with pointing out the mote that dances in the beam of light, the withered leaf that hangs on the branch of the oak, the broken feather that still clings to the pinion of the eagle, the stain on the sail of the noble ship, the spot on the face of the glorious sun, the justice of the method may be seriously questioned. One of the most remarkable exhibitions of criticism ever witnessed was the recent notable Primrose study of the play of 'Richard III.' with Richard left out. Defective metre ; poverty of style ; lack of eloquence, humor, and patriotism ; superfluity of ghost ;

intellectual "dead low-tide," "shallows," "ooze;" and deliberate nonsense, — were dwelt upon with elegance and subtlety of assertion; but what of the character Richard III.? Nothing, absolutely nothing! And yet there is no other play of Shakespearian authorship that is so completely concentrated in one character as this. There is no other character that has become popular for the stage in which all the interests of the tragedy in which it is cast centre so completely. The play of 'Richard III.' leaves stamped upon the imagination and memory but one impression — Richard.

In a study of Shakespeare's other tragedies we find, for instance, that Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth severally share with one or two other characters the interest of the play in which they appear. But Richard is himself alone. He is the whole play. And as he would not share the honors of the kingdom with another, but tyrannically demanded all and all the power usurped; so will he not share the interest of a dramatic plot with another: the play is his, the stage is his, as the kingdom is his alone. "Richard is the soul, or rather the dæmon, of the whole tragedy." However defective the metre, however lame

the style, however tame the dialogue in certain parts, however dreary and even revolting some of the events and scenes in this tragedy, there stands a character which no pen but Shakespeare's could have delineated.

The most characteristic quality of Shakespeare's plays is the wonderful, unparalleled delineation of character to be found in them. Shakespeare was pre-eminent in his power "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature ; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." It is not the metre of the tragedy of 'Hamlet' that distinguishes it, and secures the immortality of its popularity, but the delineation of the character of Hamlet. It is not the absence of "nonsense," but the character of Shylock, that keeps up the world's interest in the 'Merchant of Venice.' It is not the literary style of the play of 'King Lear' that has placed it above all other modern tragedies ; that is accomplished by the character of Lear. Neither the "patriotism" nor the "humor" of 'Macbeth,' but the character of Macbeth himself, as therein set forth, makes the tragedy great in literature and on the stage. So is it with the tragedy of 'Richard III. ;' it is

great because therein the characterization of Richard is great. No dramatic person that Shakespeare's mighty pen ever drew is more worthy of his genius. No character has won greater fame and popularity on the stage. No character, with the possible exception of Lear, demands in its representation the exercise of greater histrionic genius. There have been but four great Richards on the English stage, and they are the acknowledged greatest geniuses of the stage. If another hand than Shakespeare's drew this wonderful character, then let not Greene, Marlowe, Jonson, or Fletcher share the fame of the "Bard of Avon," but let the unknown author and creator of 'Richard III.' be partner in the possession of the greatest fame in dramatic literature.

Are we certain that Swift wrote the 'Tale of a Tub,' and Scott 'The Antiquary,' because nobody else could do it? Then Shakespeare drew the dramatic character of Richard III. because nobody else could do it. Yes, "there is a gait that marks the mind as well as the body;" and if not in the metre nor the literary style, in the great, impressive, terrible character of Richard III. may be detected the infallible, unmistakable mental gait

of Shakespeare. It is submitted whether the Shakespearian character of any play in question is not to be determined rather from a study of the persons than of the prosody of the play.

Primrose Criticism will condescendingly admit that Shakespeare may have adapted the play to the stage, "making additions sometimes longer, sometimes shorter." But let it be noticed that the true author of the original play is not mentioned. No attempt is made to prove that the play had an existence in literature before 1597, when Shakespeare published it. Primrose Criticism is not wanting in antiquarian knowledge; let it therefore mention for the world's information just the play, with its title, date of publication, author's name, and dramatic plan, which Shakespeare laid his cunning if not thievish hand upon, and appropriated to himself. Will Primrose Criticism claim that it was Marlowe's play? or "A Tragical Report of King Richard, a Ballad," published in 1586? If so, there is an opportunity for candid comparison and argument.

George Steevens tells us — what many an antiquarian well knows — that several dramas on the present subject had been written

before Shakespeare attempted it. If Shakespeare's attempt was not a new, an original, and a genuine production, then, in the name of critical fairness, it is unjust to charge Shakespeare with literary theft until it has been proven who else did write the play, or that it had a previous existence.

With all the poems and plays on this subject before them, after careful study and comparison, no editor, commentator, antiquarian, or critic has been able to find the original play or poem which Primrose Criticism accuses Shakespeare of stealing, revamping, and publishing in his own name. Common sense and common fairness suggest that there never existed such a play or poem, and that, until it is produced, Shakespeare is entitled to the honor and glory of having been the author of 'Richard III.'

That Shakespeare made his honey from the flowers that were blooming about him; that he did not create the silk and gold which he wove into the rich tapestries of his fancy; that he hewed from existing quarries the blocks out of which he constructed his gorgeous dramatic palaces, will be admitted. Not a play of his unquestioned authorship exists that does not bear proofs of his indebt-

edness to poets, historians, romancists, and translators, of his own and of preceding times. It is well known that there were already in existence and in common circulation the stories, poems, and chronicles which inspired or suggested the plots of Shakespeare's greatest plays. The stories of 'Hamlet,' 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'King Lear,' 'Macbeth,' 'Othello,' etc., were not original with Shakespeare; they were only modified and dramatized by him. This is the work and mission of the dramatist. In such a sense the tragedy of 'Richard III.' was a dramatization of an historical time and person.

For the historical basis of this tragedy Shakespeare depended upon others. He did not evolve his historical plays from his internal consciousness. That he received suggestions from poets, novelists, and dramatists who had written upon the same subject, is as probable as that he obtained necessary information from sober and learned historians. But detecting Plutarch, Boccaccio, Sir Thomas More, Holinshed, Hall, Grafton, Painter, Florio, and other authors and translators, in the dramatic works of Shakespeare does not justify the insinuation that he was a plagiarist.

Nor will a scientific criticism attempt on such ground to base an argument for the un-Shakespearian character and style of 'Richard III.'

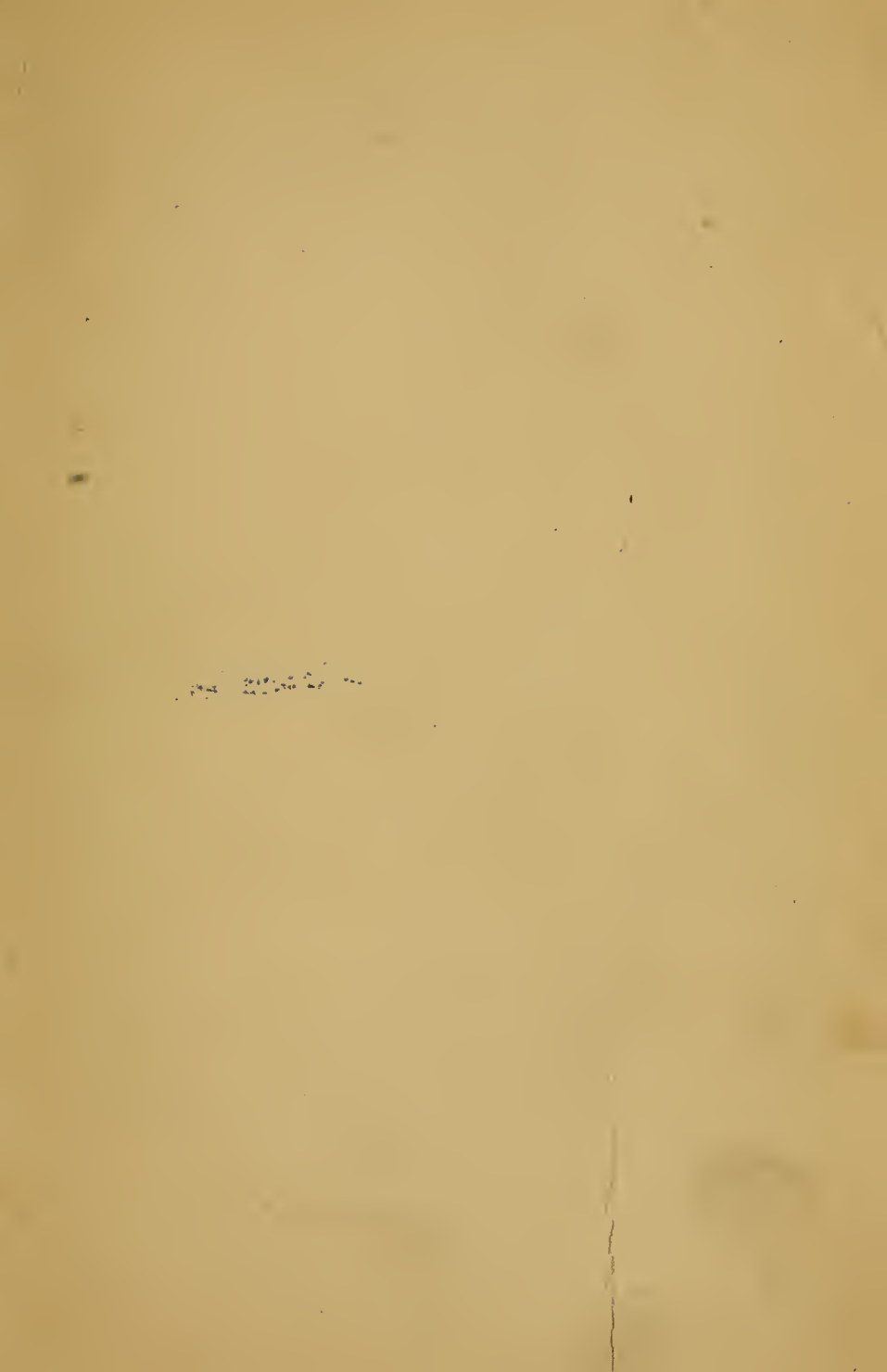
Having noticed what seem to be some of the defects of the Primrose Criticism in its discussion of the Shakespearian authorship of 'Richard III.' it may not be unprofitable for us to turn to a short study of the sources from which Shakespeare drew the subject-matter of his tragedy.



PART II.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF 'RICHARD III.'

"My villainy they have upon record."





THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF RICHARD III.

GOETHE placed Shakespeare before all other poets for power of invention and for variety and originality of characterization. Yet he knew that the dramatist seldom, if ever, invented the subject matter of his plays. The jealousy of Greene has not biassed the judgment of fair-minded critics in determining Shakespeare's merit for originality. The author of 'Groats-worth of Wit' assailed Shakespeare after this fashion :

“ There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you : and being an absolute *Johannes factotum* is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. O, that I might entreate your rare wits

to be employed in more profitable courses : and let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions."

It would take more than a groat's worth of such wit to convince the world that the 'sweet Swan of Avon,' with borrowed or with stolen wings, made

" . . . those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James."

Few have had the temerity to charge Shakespeare with aping the excellences of superior wits. It was not necessary for that

" Soule of the Age "

to depend upon the invention or originality of any other genius of his time ;

" Nature her selfe was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines ! "

Though Shakespeare, in common with all great dramatic poets, has borrowed the foundation material of his plays from history, fable, classic lore, and romance, yet his power of invention and his originality of genius are not to be questioned. His invention is shown, not in the creation of the figures of his plays,

but in the elevation and transformation of them into poetic and dramatic characters. This, to the philosophical mind of Ulrici, "is proof of greater force and intensity of genius, greater truth and depth of intellect, than if he had himself invented the subject matter of his dramas."

For the subject matter of the historical tragedy of 'Richard III.,' Shakespeare was indebted to several sources, — historical and poetical. The principal sources were Holinshed, Grafton, Hall, Sir Thomas More, Marlowe, 'The True Tragedy of Richard III.,' and the 'Mirour for Magistrates.' If, as Walpole claims, the Shakespearian 'Richard' is not true to historical facts, then the blame of it must lie at the door of the historian rather than of the dramatist. It is beyond question, that the world bases its conception of Richard's character on Shakespeare's play, and that the dramatist has done more than any other to prejudice the world's opinion to the theory of the unmitigated diabolism of this infamous tyrant and usurper. But it will be found that the historians approach Shakespeare in the darkness of their representations; they approach him as nearly as sober, dispassionate history may approach impassioned drama.

The physical deformities of Richard, on which the poet makes him frequently soliloquize, both in 'Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.,' are minutely described by the historians. Several of the obscure or seemingly trifling passages of the play are suggested by Holinshed and More, and they appear in the play in almost the identical language of the historians. In illustration of these points reference is now made to the corresponding passages and descriptions found in the play, and the historical authorities on which the drama is based.

In the first soliloquy of Richard occur the lines : —

“ But I, — that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass ;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's maj-
esty,
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph ;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable,
That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them ; —
Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time ;
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity.”

After his wooing of Lady Anne he again refers to his bodily deformity : —

“And will she yet abase her eyes on me,
That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,
And made her widow to a woful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
On me, that halt, and am mis-shapen thus?”

Lady Anne refers to Richard's physical condition when she cries : —

“Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity.”

Again, spitting upon him and wishing her spittle were poison, she says : —

“Never hung poison on a fouler toad.
Out of my sight! thou dost infect mine eyes.”

Queen Margaret's bitter curse contained the words : —

“Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!
Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity
The slave of nature, and the son of hell!
Thou slander of thy mother's heavy womb!
Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!
Thou rag of honour!”

Again she cries : —

“Sin, death, and hell, have set their marks on him.”

In the third part of 'Henry VI.,' Gloster soliloquizes : —

“Why, love forswore me in my mother’s womb;
 And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
 She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe
 To shrink mine arm up like a wither’d shrub;
 To make an envious mountain on my back,
 Where sits deformity to mock my body;
 To shape my legs of an unequal size;
 To disproportion me in every part,
 Like to a chaos, or an unlick’d bear-whelp,
 That carries no impression like the dam.”

In the eyes of King Henry, Gloster was

“ an indigest deformed lump.”

There seems to be no exaggeration of Richard’s physical deformities in Shakespeare’s descriptions. The historian gives him no better aspect than the dramatist. The ‘History of King Richard the Third,’ written by Master Thomas More about the year 1513, contains the following description of Richard, in comparing him with his brothers Edward and Clarence : —

“Richarde the third sonne, of whom we nowe entreate, was in witte and courage egall with either of them, in bodye and prowesse farre under them bothe, little of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoul-der much higher than his right, hard favoured of visage.”

Holinshed drew largely upon Sir Thomas More and Grafton for his material. Shakespeare obtained his information directly from Holinshed rather than from More or Grafton. From the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1586, the following description of Richard is transcribed: —

“As he was small and little of stature, so was he of bodie greatlie deformed; the one shoulder higher than the other; his face was small, but his countenance cruell, and such, that at the first aspect a man would judge it to savour and smell of malice, fraud, and deceit.

“When he stood musing, he would bite and chew busilie his nether lip; as who said that his fierce nature in his cruell bodie alwaies chafed, stirred and was ever unquiet.”

So much for Shakespeare's historical accuracy in his description of Richard's physical defects.

When Shakespeare makes Richard say, —

“I am determined to prove a villain,”

and in 'Henry VI.' puts into his mouth the terrible self-imprecation, —

“Then since the heavens have shap'd my body so,
Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it,”

then draws a picture of Richard which carries out his determination into blackest deeds of villany and most hellish crookedness of mind, there is justification for it all in the historic records.

Sir Thomas More represents Richard's moral nature to be as deformed as his physical: —

“He was malicious, wrathfull, envious, and from afore his birth ever forward. . . . Hee was close and secrete, a deepe dissimuler, lowlye of counteynaunce, arrogant of heart, outwardly coumpinable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kisse whome hee thoughte to kyll: dispiteous and cruell, not for evill will alway, but after for ambicion, and either for the suretie or encrease of his estate. Frende and foo was muche what indifferent, where his advauntage grew, he spared no mans deathe, whose life withstoode his purpose.”

Holinshed wrote in the same strain: —

“Now when his death was knowne, few lamented, and manie rejoiced. The proud bragging white bore (which was his badge) was violentlie rased and plucked downe from everie signe and place where it might be espied: so ill was his life, that men wished the memorie of him to be buried with his carren corps. He

reigned two yeers, two moneths and one daie (too long by six and twentie months, and foure and twentie houres in most mens opinions, to whome his name and presence was as sweet and delectable, as his dooings princelie and his person amiable). . . . The dagger which he ware, he would (when he studied) with his hand plucke up and downe in the sheath to the midst, never drawing it fullie out: he was of a readie, pregnant, and quicke wit, wilie to feine, and apt to dissemble: he had a proud mind, and an arrogant stomach, the which accompanied him even to his death, rather choosing to suffer the same by dint of sword, than being forsaken and left helpllesse of his unfaithfull companions, to preserve by cowardlie flight such a fraile and uncertaine life, which by malice, sicknesse, or condigne punishment was like shortlie to come to confusion. Thus ended this prince his mortall life with infamie and dishonor, which never preferred fame or honestie before ambition, tyrannie and mischief.

In the above estimate of Richard's character, Holinshed has quoted freely from Grafton, an earlier chronicler.

It is singular that Malone should have been of the opinion that Shakespeare was not indebted to 'The Mirour for Magistrates' in the composition of this tragedy. He says: "The Legend of King Richard III., by

Francis Seagars, was printed in the first edition of *The Mirrour for Magistrates*, 1559, and in that of 1575 and 1587; but Shakespeare does not appear to be indebted to it. In a subsequent edition of that book printed in 1610 the old legend was omitted, and a new one inserted by Richard Niccols, who has very freely copied the play before us." A perusal of the edition of 'The Mirrour for Magistrates' published in 1587, ten years before Shakespeare's play was published, will reveal almost as much material for a tragedy of 'Richard III.' as may be found in More, Grafton, or Holinshed. It is sufficient to quote from the table of contents to show how fully the reign of Richard III. is therein treated. The work contains poems under the following titles:—

"60. How King Henry the Sixt, a vertuous Prince, was after many other miseryes, cruelly murdered in the Tower of London, the 22. of May. Anno. 1471.

"61. How George Plantagenet, thyrd sonne of the Duke of Yorke, was by his brother King Edward wrongfully imprysoned, and by his brother Richard miserably murdered, the 11. of January. Anno 1478.

"64. How the Lord Hastings was betrayed by trusting too much to his evill Councillour

Catesby, and villanously murdered in the Towre of London, by Richard Duke of Glocester, the 13. of June. Anno 1483.

"66. The complaynt of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.

"67. How Collingbourne was cruelly executed for making a foolish rime.

"68. How Richard Plantagenet Duke of Glocester, murdered his brothers children, usurping the Crowne: and in the 3. yeare of his raigne, was most worthely deprived of life and Kingdome in Basworth plaine, by Henry Earle of Richmond, after called King Henry the Seaventh: the 22. of August. 1485.

"73. How Shores wife, King Edward the fourths concubine, was by King Richard despoyled of all her goods, and forced to doe open penance."

Here would seem to be a rich field of resources for the dramatist, as all the persons figuring in the poems mentioned above are to be found in Shakespeare's tragedy of 'Richard III.'

In these poems the same character is given to Richard that may be found in More, Grafton, Holinshead, and Shakespeare.

In the poem on Lord Rivers occur the lines:—

"The Duke of Glocester that incarnate devill
Confedred with the Duke of Buckingham,

With eke Lord Hastings, hasty both to evill
 To meete the King in mourning habit came,
 (A cruell Wolfe though clothed like a Lambe.) ”

In the poem on ‘The complaynt of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham,’ that conspirator is made to say : —

“ For having rule and riches in our hand
 Who durst gaynesay the thing that wee averd ?
 Will was wisdom, our lust for law did stand,
 In sort so straunge, that who was not afeard,
 When hee the sounde but of King Richard heard ?
 So hatefull waxt the hearing of his name,
 That you may deeme the residue of the same.

.
 So cruell seemde this Richard third to mee,
 That loe myselfe now loathde his cruelty.”

The poem on ‘Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Glocester,’ is prefaced with the remark of the supposititious story-teller : —

“ I have here King Richards tragedy. . . .
 For the better understanding whereof, imagine
 that you see him tormented with Dives in the
 deepe pit of Hell, and thence howling this
 which followeth.

‘ What heart so hard, but doth abhorre to heare
 The ruffull raigne of me the third Richard ? ’ ” etc.

The poem represents Richard as confessing his cruelties ; acknowledging that he

“right did not regard,” that in him “trust turned to treason,” and

“Desire of a Kingdom forgetteth all kindred.”

He says : —

“For right through might I cruelly defaced.”

His crimes, he admits, brought the curses of men and God upon him, —

“For which I was abhorred both of yong and olde,
But as the deede was odious in sight of God and
man,
So shame and destruction in the end I wan.”

At the close of the poem the reader of it is made to say : —

“When I had read this, we had much talke about it. For it was thought not vehement enough for so violent a man as King Richard had been.”

In defending the uncertain and broken metre of the poem, the reader says : —

“It is not meete that so disorderly and unnaturall a man as King Richard was, should observe any metricall order in his talke : which notwithstanding in many places of his oration is very well kepte : it shall passe therefore even as it is though too good for so evill a person.”

Thus, in all these old authors, the villainous, diabolical character of Richard is set forth with most vigorous language.

Shakespeare seems completely justified in painting his dramatic portrait with the darkest colors, and on the authority of the historians he holds, "as 't were, the mirrour up to nature."

History justifies the bitter warning of Queen Margaret : —

" O Buckingham, beware of yonder dog ;
 Look, when he fawns, he bites ; and when he bites,
 His venom tooth will rankle to the death :
 Have not to do with him, beware of him ;
 Sin, death, and hell, have set their marks on him ;
 And all their ministers attend on him."

Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, was historically justified in heaping upon the head of her cruel son the following accusations : —

". thou know'st it well,
 Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
 A grievous burden was thy birth to me ;
 Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy ;
 Thy school-days frightful, desperate, wild and
 furious ;
 Thy prime of manhood, daring, bold, and venturous ;
 Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody,
 More mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred :
 What comfortable hour canst thou name,
 That ever grac'd me in thy company?"

The very conscience of Richard, as Shakespeare represents it, accords with the verdict of history : —

“My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree ;
Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree ;
All several sins, all us'd in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, — Guilty ! guilty !”

Richmond's estimate of Richard is that of history : —

“A bloody tyrant, and a homicide ;
One rais'd in blood, and one in blood establish'd ;
One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughter'd those that were the means to
help him ;
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set ;
One that hath ever been God's enemy.”

It must appear conclusive that Shakespeare did not depart from history in depicting the character of Richard III., but that in the darkest, most diabolical aspect of it he was supported by truth and fact.

It is interesting to trace to their sources the obscure references and seemingly far-fetched incidents which appear quite fre-

quently in Shakespeare's lines, and have an historical basis.

In Richard's first soliloquy reference is made to a certain prophecy:—

“ And, if King Edward be as true and just,
As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
About a prophecy, which says — that G
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul! here Clarence
comes.

(*Enter CLARENCE, guarded, with BRAKENBURY.*)

Brother, good day: What means this armed guard,
That waits upon your grace?

Clar. His majesty,
Tendering my person's safety, hath appointed
This conduct to convey me to the Tower.

Glos. Upon what cause?

Clar. Because my name is — George.

Glos. Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;
He should, for that, commit your godfathers:—
O, belike, his majesty hath some intent,
That you shall be new christen'd in the Tower.
But what's the matter, Clarence? may I know?

Clar. Yea, Richard, when I know; for, I protest,
As yet I do not: But, as I can learn,
He hearkens after prophecies, and dreams;
And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,
And says — a wizard told him, that by G
His issue disinherited should be;
And, for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought, that I am he.

These, as I learn, and such like toys as these,
Have mov'd his highness to commit me now."

In 'The Mirour for Magistrates' may be found these lines, put into the mouth of the Duke of Clarence : —

"For by his Queene two Princelyke sonnes he had,
Borne to be punisht for their parents synne :
Whose Fortunes balked made the father sad,
Such wofull haps were found to be therein :
Which to avouch, writ in a rotten skin
A prophesie was found, which sayd a G,
Of Edwards children should destruction bee.

"Mee to bee G, because my name was George
My brother thought, and therefore did mee hate,
But woe be to the wicked heads that forge
Such doubtfull dreames to breede unkinde debate :
For God, a Gleve, a Gibbet, Grate, or Gate,
A Gray, a Griffeth, or a Gregory,
As well as George are written with a G."

In the poem on Lord Rivers, in the same book, reference is made to this prophecy, but with a different interpretation.

"Sir Thomas Vaughan chafing cryed still :
This tyrant Glocester is the gracelesse G
That will his brothers children beastly kyll."

Holinshed mentions this prophecy in his 'Life of Edward IV. : ' —

"Some have reported, that the cause of this noble mans death rose of a foolish prophesie,

which was, that after K. Edward one should reigne, whose first letter of his name should be a G. Wherewith the king and queene were sore troubled, and began to conceive a greevous grudge against the duke and could not be in quiet till they had brought him to his end. And as the divell is woont to incumber the minds of men which delite in such divelish fantasies, they said afterward, that that prophesie lost not his effect, when after king Edward, Gloucester usurped his kingdome."

In the remarkable dialogue of the wooing scene between Lady Anne and Gloster, pointing to the corpse of Henry VI., Anne cries :

"O, gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
 Open their congeal'd mouths, and bleed afresh!
 Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
 For 't is thy presence that exhales this blood
 From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
 Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural."

This incident in the drama is based not only on the superstition that it was supposed the wounds of the victim bled afresh at the approach of the murderer, but also upon this record found in Holinshed's Chronicle : —

"The dead corps on the Ascension even was conveyed with billes and glaves pompouslie (if you will call that a funerall pompe) from the

Tower to the church of saint Paule, and there laid on a beire or coffen barefaced, the same in presence of the beholders did bleed; where it rested the space of one whole daie. From thence he was caried to the Black-friers, and bled there likewise: and on the next daie after, it was conveied in a boat, without priest or clerke, torch or taper, singing or saieng, unto the monasterie of Chertsie, distant from London fifteene miles, and there was it first buried."

In Act II. Scene 3, a citizen is made to cry, —

"Woe to that land that 's govern'd by a child!"

Sir Thomas More records these words in the oration of the Duke of Buckingham in the "yeld hall in London." Buckingham is haranguing the people in the interest of Richard, and dwelling upon his merits for the high office which he seeks, —

"Which roume I warne you well is no childes office. And that the greate wise manne well perceived. When hee sayde: *Veh regno cujus rex puer est.* Woe is that Realme, that hathe a chylde to theyre Kynge."

Reference is here made to Ecclesiastes x. 16: —

"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child."

Shakespeare, however, must have found this thought in More's 'Life of Richard III.,' or in Holinshed, who has transcribed the same oration from More or Hall into his own 'Life of Edward V.'

At a council held in the Tower (Act III. Scene 4) there are present Buckingham, Stanley, Hastings, the Bishop of Ely, Catesby, Lovel, Gloster, and others. For some unknown reason Gloster sends the Bishop of Ely from the Council on a very singular errand in these words : —

Glos. My lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn, I saw good strawberries in your garden there ;
I do beseech you send for some of them.

Ely. Marry, and will, my lord, with all my heart."

The Bishop retires, and after a short time re-enters with, —

"Where is my lord protector? I have sent for these strawberries."

There seems to be very little, if any, sense in this strawberry incident, yet it was not invented by Shakespeare. It occurs in More and Holinshed in the following language : —

"These lordes so syting togyther comoning of thys matter, the protectour came in among them, fyrst aboute IX. of the clock, saluting

them curtesly, and excusing himself that he had ben from them so long, saieng merely that he had bene a slepe that day. And after a little talking with them, he sayd unto the Bishop of Elye : My lord, you have very good strawberies at your gardayne in Holberne, I require you let us have a messe of them. Gladly my lord quod he, woulde god I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that. And therewith in al the hast he sent hys servant for a messe of strawberies."

Gloster withdraws from the Council for about an hour and returns. As he re-enters the Council with Buckingham the following dialogue takes place : —

Glos. I pray you all, tell me what they deserve,
That do conspire my death with devilish plots
Of damned witchcraft ; and that have prevail'd
Upon my body with their hellish charms ?

Hast. The tender love I bear your grace, my lord,
Makes me most forward in this noble presence
To doom the offenders : Whosoe'er they be,
I say, my lord, they have deserved death.

Glos. Then be your eyes the witness of their evil,
Look how I am bewitch'd ; behold mine arm
Is like a blasted sapling, wither'd up :
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have marked me.

Hast. If they have done this deed, my noble lord, —

Glos. If ! Thou protector of this damned strumpet,
Talk'st thou to me of ifs ? — Thou art a traitor : —

Off with his head : — now, by Saint Paul I swear,
 I will not dine until I see the same. —
 Lovel, and Catesby, look, that it be done ;
 The rest that love me, rise, and follow me.”

The original version of this incident as given by More, and transcribed into the *Chronicles of Hall and Holinshed* has been very closely followed by Shakespeare, as will appear by the following, taken from More's 'Life of Richard III. : ' —

“ The protectour sette the lordes fast in com-
 oning, and therupon praying them to spare hym
 for a little while, departed thence. And sone
 after one hower betwene X. and XI. he returned
 into the chamber among them, al changed with a
 wonderful soure angrye countenance, knitting
 the browes, frowning and froting and knawing on
 hys lippes, and so sat him downe, in hys place :
 al the lordes much dismaied and sore merveil-
 ing of this maner of sodain change, and what
 thing should him aile. Then when he had
 sitten still a while, thus he began : What were
 they worthy to have, that compasse and ymagine
 the distruccion of me, being so nere of blood
 unto the king and protectour of his riall person
 and his realme. At this question, al the lordes
 sat sore astonied, musyng much by whome thys
 question should be ment, of which every man
 wyst himselfe clere. Then the lord chamberlen,
 as he that for the love betwene them thoughte

he might be boldest with him, answered and sayd, that thei wer worthy to bee punished as heighnous traitors whatsoever they were. And al the other affirmed the same. . . . Then said the protectour: ye shal al se in what wise that sorceres and that other witch of her counsel Shoris wife with their affynite, have by their sorcery and witchcraft wasted my body. And therwith he plucked up hys doublet sleve to his elbow upon his left arme, where he shewed a werish withered arme and small, as it was never other. And therupon every mannes mind sore misgave them, well perceiving that this matter was but a quarel. . . . Netheles the lorde Chamberlen answered and sayd: certainly my lorde if they have so heinously done, thei be worthy heinouse punishment. What quod the protectour thou servest me I wene with iffes and with andes, I tel the thei have so done, and that I will make good on thy body traitour. And therwith as in a great anger, he clapped his fist upon the borde a great rappe. At which token given, one cried treason without the chambre. . . . And anon the protectour sayd to the lorde Hastings: I arest the traitour. What me my Lorde quod he. Yea the traitour, quod the protectour. . . . Then were they al quickly bestowed in divers chambres, except the lorde Chamberlen, whom the protectour bade spede and shryve hym a pace, for by saynt Poule (quod he) I wil not to dinner til I se thy hed of."

In Act III. Scene 2, the following dialogue occurs : —

Hast. Cannot thy master sleep these tedious nights ?

Mess. So it should seem by that I have to say. First, he commends him to your noble lordship.

Hast. And then, —

Mess. And then he sends you word, he dreamt To-night the boar had rased off his helm."

In the fourth scene Hastings is made to say : —

" Woe, woe, for England ! not a whit for me ;
For I, too fond, might have prevented this :
Stanley did dream, the boar did rase his helm ;
But I disdain'd it, and did scorn to fly.
Three times to-day my foot-cloth horse did stumble,
And startled, when he look'd upon the Tower,
As loath to bear me to the slaughter-house."

More and Holinshed are Shakespeare's authorities for the subject matter of the above-mentioned incidents.

More writes : —

" A marveilouse case is it to here, either the warnings of that he shoulde have voided, or the tokens of that he could not voide. For the self night next before his death, the lord Stanley sent a trustie secret messenger unto him at midnight in al the hast, requiring hym to rise and ryde away with hym, for he was dis-

posed utterly no longer to bide : he had so fereful a dreame, in which him thoughte that a bore with his tuskes so raced them both bi the heddes, that the blood ranne aboute both their shoulders. And forasmuch as the protector gave the bore for his cognisaunce, this dreame made so fereful an impression in his hart, that he was thoroughly determined no longer to tary, but had his horse redy, if the lord Hastings wold go with him to ride so far yet the same night, that thei shold be out of danger ere dai . . .

“ Certain it is also, that in the riding toward the tower, the same morning in which he was beheaded, his horse twice or thrise stumbled with him almost to the falling, which thing albeit eche man wote wel daily happeneth to them to whom no such mischaunce is toward : yet hath it ben of an olde rite and custome, observed as a token often times notably foregoing some great misfortune.”

Holinshed follows More word for word in recording the above incidents.

Gloster urges Buckingham to appear before the people to shake their confidence in the legitimacy of Edward and Clarence (Act III. Scene 5) : —

“ *Glos.* Go, after, after, cousin Buckingham.
The mayor towards Guildhall hies him in all post : —
There, at your meetest vantage of the time,
Infer the bastardy of Edward’s children :

.

Buck. Doubt not my lord ; I 'll play the orator,
As if the golden fee, for which I plead,
Were for myself : and so, my lord, adieu.

Glos. If you thrive well, bring them to Baynard's
castle ;
Where you shall find me well accompanied,
With reverend fathers, and well-learned bishops."

They meet again in the court of Baynard's
castle (Act III. Scene 7) : —

" *Glos.* How now, how now ? What say the citizens ?

Buck. Now by the holy mother of our Lord,
The citizens are mum, say not a word.

Glos. Touch'd you the bastardy of Edward's chil-
dren ?

Buck. I did ; . . .

I bade them that did love their country's good,
Cry — *God save Richard, England's royal king !*

Glos. And did they so ?

Buck. No, so God help me, they spake not a word ;
But, like dumb statuas, or breathing stones,
Star'd on each other, and look'd deadly pale.
Which when I saw, I reprehended them ;
And ask'd the mayor, what meant this wilful silence ;
His answer was, — the people were not us'd
To be spoke to, but by the recorder.

Then he was urg'd to tell my tale again ; —

Thus saith the duke, thus hath the duke inferred ;
But nothing spoke in warrant from himself.

When he had done, some followers of mine own,
At lower end o' the hall, hurl'd up their caps,
And some ten voices cried, *God save king Richard !*
And thus I took the vantage of those few, —

*Thanks, gentle citizens, and friends, quoth I;
This general applause, and cheerful shout
Argues your wisdom, and your love to Richard:
And even here brake off, and came away."*

Sir Thomas More gives in full Buckingham's oration, which was historically spoken for the very purpose indicated by Shakespeare in the drama. More has also left on record the effect of the oration on the people : —

"When the duke had saied, and looked that the people whome he hoped that the Mayor had framed before, shoulde after this propoicion made, have cried, king Richarde, king Richarde: all was husht and mute, and not one word aunswered thereunto. . . . And by and by somewhat louder, he rehersed them the same matter againe in other order and other wordes. . . . But were it for wonder or feare, or that eche looked that other shoulde speake fyrste: not one woorde was there aunswered of all the people that stode before, but al was as styl as the midnight, . . . when the Mayor saw thys he wyth other pertners of that counsayle, drew aboute the duke and sayed that the people had not ben accustomed there to be spoken unto but by the recorder. . . . At these wordes the people began to whisper among themselves secretly, that the voyce was neyther loude nor distincke, but as it were the sounde of a swarme of bees, ty at the last in the nether ende of the

hal, a bushement of the dukes servants and Nashefeldes and other longing to the protectour, with some prentises and laddes that thrust into the hal amonge the prese, began sodainely at mennes backes to crye owte as lowde as their throtes would gyve: king Richarde kinge Richarde, and threwe up their cappes in token of joye. And they that stode before, cast back theyr heddes mervailleling thereof, but nothing they sayd. And when the duke and the Maier saw thys maner, they wysely turned it to theyr purpose. And said it was a goodly cry and a joyfull to here, every man with one voice no manne sayeng nay."

In this matter Holinshed transcribes literally from Sir Thomas More.

When, in Act IV. Scene 2, Richard proposes to Buckingham to make way with Edward, the Duke hesitates, and asks for time to consider the matter. This angers Richard, who descended from his throne, gnawing his lip and muttering:—

K. Rich. I will converse with iron-witted fools,
And unrespective boys; none are for me,
That look unto me with considerate eyes;—
High reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.—
Boy, —

Page. My lord.

K. Rich. Know'st thou not any whom corrupting
gold
Would tempt unto a close exploit of death?

Page. I know a discontented gentleman,
Whose humble means match not his haughty mind :
Gold were as good as twenty orators,
And will, no doubt, tempt him to anything.

K. Rich. What is his name ?

Page. His name, my lord, is Tyrrel.

K. Rich. I partly know the man ; Go, call him
hither, boy."

The page brings Tyrrel into the presence of Richard, who engages him to make way with

" . . . those bastards in the Tower."

This incident is based upon, but is a slight modification of, the historical record to be found in Holinshed and More. It appears that Richard sent one John Grene with a letter to Sir Robert Brakenbury, constable of the Tower, requesting him to put the princes to death. Brakenbury refused to commit the murder. Grene returned with the refusal to Richard, —

" wherwith he toke such displeasure and thought, that the same night, he said unto a secrete page of his : Ah whome shall a man trust? those that I have broughte up myselfe, those that I had went would most surely serve me, even those fayle me, and at my commanmente wyll do nothyng for me. Sir quod his page there lyeth one on your paylet without,

Teeth had'st thou in thy head, when thou wast born,
To signify, — thou cam'st to bite the world."

After stabbing the King, Gloster solilo-
quizes: —

"Indeed, 't is true, that Henry told me of;
For I have often heard my mother say,
I came into the world with my legs forward;

The midwife wonder'd; and the women cried,
O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!"

More and Holinshed give the historical ba-
sis for these incidents of the birth of Richard
referred to in Shakespeare's drama: —

"It is for trouth reported, that the Duches
his mother had so muche a doe in her travaile,
that shee coulde not bee delivered of hym un-
cutte: and that hee came into the worlde with
the feete forwarde, as menne bee borne out-
warde, and (as the fame runneth) also not
untothed."

In Act IV. Scene 4, Richard entreats
Queen Elizabeth to plead his suit with her
daughter.

K. Rich. Then in plain terms tell her my loving
tale.

Q. Eliz. Plain and not honest, is too harsh a style.

K. Rich. Your reasons are too shallow and too
quick.

Q. Eliz. O, no, my reasons are too deep and dead ; —

Too deep and dead, poor infants, in their graves.

K. Rich. Harp not on that string, madam ; that is past.

Q. Eliz. Harp on it still shall I, till heart-strings break.”

As the figure “Harp not on that string” occurs in More’s ‘Life of Richard III.,’ it is reasonable to suppose, though it had long been a common expression, that Shakespeare borrowed it from More or from Holinshed, though he uses it in a different connection and puts it into the mouth of a different person.

The Lord Cardinal engages in a discussion with Queen Elizabeth on the use and abuse of sanctuary, in which Lord Howard joins. The latter by an indiscreet remark brings a mild rebuke upon himself. Sir Thomas More writes : —

“The Cardinall made a countenance to the other Lord, that he should harp no more upon that string.”

In the histories these words are spoken in the presence of Elizabeth, but are addressed by the Cardinal to Lord Howard ; in the drama they are addressed to Elizabeth by

Richard. It is very probable that Shakespeare found the suggestion in the history.

On the eve of the day of battle Richard, having made arrangements for the conflict, proceeds to his tent with, —

“So, I am satisfied. Give me a bowl of wine :
I have not that alacrity of spirit,
Nor cheer of mind, that I was wont to have.”

This corresponds with the historical record as found in Holinshed : —

“His heart being almost damped, he prognosticated before the doubtful chance of the battell to come; not using the alacritie and mirth of mind and countenance as he was accustomed to doo before he came toward the battell.”

The ghost scenes and the troubled dreams of Richard on the eve of battle, so vividly represented by the masterly pen of Shakespeare, were not purely imaginary and created for dramatic effect; they were based on history or tradition, and belonged to the life and experience of Richard.

No less than eleven ghosts rise to predict disaster for Richard in the approaching battle; they are the ghosts of his murdered victims,

and their appearance fills him with terror.
As they vanish he starts from his dream,
with, —

“Give me another horse, — bind up my wounds, —
Have mercy, Jesu ! — Soft ; I did but dream.
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me !
The lights burn blue. — It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear ? Myself ? there’s none else by :
Richard loves Richard ; that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here ? No ; — Yes ; I am :
Then fly, — What, from myself ? Great reason :
 Why ?
Lest I revenge. What ? Myself on myself ?
Alack ! I love myself. Wherefore ? for any good,
That I myself have done unto myself ?
O, no : alas, I rather hate myself,
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain : Yet I lie, I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well : — Fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high’st degree ;
Murder, stern murder, in the dir’st degree ;
All several sins, all us’d in each degree, —
Throng to the bar, crying all, — Guilty ! guilty !
I shall despair. — There is no creature loves me ;
And, if I die, no soul will pity me ; —
Nay, wherefore should they ? since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself.
Methought, the souls of all that I had murder’d
Came to my tent : and every one did threat
To-morrow’s vengeance on the head of Richard.”

On the morning of the fatal day, Ratcliff enters Richard's tent, when the trembling King says : —

“O Ratcliff, I have dream'd a fearful dream! —
What thinkest thou? Will our friends prove all true?

Rat. No doubt, my lord.

K. Rich. Ratcliff, I fear, I fear, —

Rat. Nay, good my lord, be not afraid of shadows.

K. Rich. By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard,
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers,
Armed in proof, and led by shallow Richmond.”

The historical basis for such dramatic representation as the above may be found in the following passages from More, Grafton, and Holinshed. More says : —

“I have heard by credible report of such as wer secrete with his chamberers, that after this abbominable deede done, he never hadde quiet in his minde, hee never thought himself sure. Where he went abrode, his eyen whirled about, his body privily fenced, his hand ever on his dager, his countenance and maner like one alway ready to strike againe, he toke ill rest a nightes, lay long wakyng and musing, sore weried with care and watch, rather slumbered than slept, troubled wyth feareful dreames, sodainly somme tyme sterte up, leape out of his bed and runne about the chamber, so was his restles herte continually tossed and tumbled with the tedious

impression and stormy remembrance of his abominable dede.”

Holinshed moralizes on the disturbed condition of Richard’s mind : —

“Than the which there can be no greater torment. For a gilty conscience inwardlie accusing and bearing witness against an offendor, is such a plague and punishment, as hell itself (with all the feends therein) can not afford one of greater horror and affliction.”

In Grafton’s Chronicles it is written : —

“In the meane season, Kyng Richarde . . . marched to a place meete for two battayles to encounter by a Village called Bosworth, not farre from Leycester, and there he pitched hys felde, refreshed hys souldyours and toke his rest. The fame went that he had the same night a dreadfull and a terrible dreame, for it seemed to him beyng a sleepe that he sawe dyvers ymages like terrible Devils which pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take any quiet or rest. The which straunge vision not so sodainly strake his hart with a sodaine feare, but it stuffed his head and troubled his minde with many dreadfull and busie imaginations. . . . And least that it might be suspected that he was abashed for feare of his enemies, and for that cause looked so pitteously, he recyted and declared to his familiar friends in the morning

his wonderful vision and terrible dreame. But I think this was no dreame, but a punction and prick of his sinnefull conscience, for the conscience is so much more charged and aggravate as the offence is greater and more heynous in degree."

Holinshed adds to Grafton's words his own moralizing : —

"So that king Richard, by this reckoning, must needs have a woonderfull troubled mind, because the deeds that he had doone, as they were heinous and unnaturall, so did they excite and stirre up extraordinarie motions of trouble and vexations in his conscience."

Now, if the Primrose Criticism would laugh when ghosts rise before the tent of Richard, let it laugh at Sir Thomas More, Grafton, Holinshed, tradition, and history ; not at Shakespeare, who merely dramatized the incident.

The orations of Richard and Richmond on the field of battle Shakespeare has condensed from Grafton's and Holinshed's Chronicles, where they appear in full. The dramatist has preserved the ideas expressed, and, in many cases, the language and figures used by the historians. So closely do the speeches of Richard and Richmond, as they appear in Shakespeare, follow those found in

Holinshed, that they would be considered plagiarisms if put into the mouths of other persons.

In the historic oration Richard speaks of the "beggarly Britons" and "faynt harted Frenchmen" who come against them. In the play he calls them

"A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
A scum of Bretagnes and base lackey peasants;"

and he cries: —

"Let 's whip these stragglers o'er the seas again;
Lash hence these over-weening rags of France;
These famished beggars weary of their lives."

In speaking of Richmond, in the historic oration, he says: —

"And to begin with the erle of Richmond, capteine of this rebellion, he is a Welsh milkesop, a man of small courage, and of lesse experience in martiall acts and feats of warre, brought up by my moothers meanes and mine, like a captive in a close cage in the court of Francis duke of Britagne; and never saw armie," etc. (Holinshed.)

In the dramatic oration Richard says: —

"And who doth lead them, but a paltry fellow,
Long kept in Bretagne at our mother's cost?"

A milk-sop, one that never in his life
Felt so much cold as overshoes in snow?"

Richmond says, in his historic oration : —

"I doubt not but God wil rather aide us (ye and fight for us). . . . Our cause is so just that no enterprise can be of more vertue, both by the lawes divine and civile." (Grafton.)

In the play he says : —

"God, and our good cause, fight upon our side."

Again, the Chronicles put these words into Richmond's mouth : —

"What can be more honest, goodly, or godly quarrell than to fight against a Captayne, being an homicide, and a murderer of his owne blood, and progenie?"

"Who will spare yonder tirant, Richard Duke of Glocester untruly calling himself king, considering that he hath violated, and broken both the lawe of God and man, what vertue is in him, which was the confusion of his brother, and murtherer of his Nephewes?"

In the play Richmond says : —

"For what is he they follow? truly, gentlemen,
A bloody tyrant, and a homicide;
One rais'd in blood, and one in blood establish'd;
One that made means to come by what he hath,

And slaughter'd those that were the means to help
him ;
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set ;
One that hath ever been God's enemy : " etc.

This interesting comparison of the speeches of the play with the speeches of the chronicle might be followed still further ; but enough has been done to show that the drama does not vary from history in the substance of these battle harangues.

It is acknowledged that this short chapter cannot, even as a whole, claim to be an exhaustive comparison of the play of 'Richard III.' with the historical authorities on which it is based. There are many other incidents in the play the origin of which might easily be traced to tradition and history ; but a sufficient number of illustrations have been produced to indicate beyond all question the true sources of the subject matter of 'Richard III.'

It may be found in several instances that Shakespeare has written nonsense, for which critics hold him responsible, when the nonsense is the result of the historian's mistakes or weaknesses. Historical accuracy is one of the merits of this tragedy of 'Richard III.,' "wherein," says Milton, "the Poet us'd not

much Licence in departing from the truth of History, which delivers him a deep Dissembler, not of his affections only, but of Religion."

The Richard of Shakespeare is the Richard of History.



PART III.

THE HISTRIONIC RICHARDS.

“Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first, and now, was, and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirrour up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.”



THE HISTRIONIC RICHARDS.

THE stage is not the best interpreter of Shakespeare. It has been the most efficient corrupter of that supreme dramatist. The mutilations of the original text, the interpolations and eliminations, which have rendered it almost impossible to determine what Shakespeare originally wrote, have originated in the theatre. Very few of the actors of the English stage have been scholars, though many of them have ranked with men of highest native intellectuality and taste.

Many a genius has been able to catch the spirit of Shakespeare's characters, and to present upon the stage thrilling and captivating performances, who has lacked the knowledge, learning, critical acumen, and literary taste necessary to a thorough and scientific study

of Shakespeare as a literature. It is well known that Kemble, Cooke, Kean, and J. B. Booth made some of their most telling "points" by glaring misinterpretations of Shakespeare's thought. It has not infrequently transpired that the actor has given to a Shakespearian character an interpretation which, while it stamped the performance with the actor's genius or eccentricity, almost destroyed its Shakespearian identity. The student and scholar of to-day owe more to Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Johnson, Steevens, Malone, Ulrici, Goethe, Gervinus, Collier, Halliwell-Phillipps, and Richard Grant White, for present light on everything that is Shakespearian in literature, than to all the actors that have strutted the stage from the days of Burbage to the age of Salvini, Irving, and Edwin Booth. Actors have not enriched the theme by any valuable restorations to the text, any wise verbal criticism, any antiquarian research and discovery, any etymological or grammatical elucidations, any historical or classical illustrations of importance. For all these important helps to the study and comprehension of Shakespeare we are indebted to men of letters and of the academic gown rather than to men of the sock and buskin.

It is nevertheless interesting to consider the merits of those great actors who by common consent have been the finest interpreters of Shakespeare on the stage. In calling to our attention the greatest Richards of the theatre it is not surprising that we are compelled to summon before us the greatest actors, the most conspicuous histrionic geniuses that have graced the English stage. No mean actor has ever been able to worthily represent Richard III., which fact must add peculiar lustre to the fame of its author.

The first, the original Richard, was a friend and a fellow actor of Shakespeare, and doubtless studied the great character in the light of its author's instruction. This was Richard Burbage, "England's great Roscius." He was born in 1566, two years after the great poet, and died in 1619, surviving his illustrious friend but three years. The name of this renowned actor appears second in the list of Principal Actors, of which Shakespeare's is first, printed in the first folio edition of the poet's works. Reference has already been made to the Tooley anecdote, in which both Burbage and Shakespeare assume the name of Richard III. The story would indicate that Burbage was as univer-

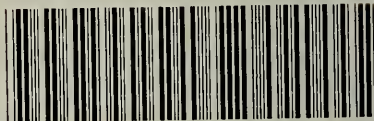
sally recognized to be the actor of the character as Shakespeare was to be the author of it.

In a play performed at one of the Universities, while Burbage was performing this tragedy and making fame in the character of Richard, the actor is represented as teaching an apt pupil how to perform the part; which would also seem to intimate that he was recognized to be the Richard of his day, and the authority on the subject so far as the theatrical representation of the character was concerned. In the literature of his day, Burbage is perhaps more conspicuously and anagogically identified with this than with any other character which he assumed. Bishop Corbet represents that when he visited Bosworth field his host confounded Burbage with Richard in describing the battle, showing what a profound impression the actor had made in this character.

“Besides what of his knowledge he could say,
He had authentic notice from the play,
Shown chiefly by that one perspicuous thing,
That he mistook a player for a King;
For when he should have said, here Richard died
And called ‘a horse, a horse’—he Burbadge
cried.”

Burbage must have resembled Garrick in universality and versatility of genius, as he

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