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HOW EACH AGE FINDS NEW FLAWS IN SHAKESPEARE

Each Praises---But Rewrites Him

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES

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IN the last few years there has been rather a strong reaction from what has been humorously described as "bardolatry." An effort has been made to strip Shakespeare of the majesty and glamour in which the great critics of the nineteenth century enwrapped him and to put him to the small tests of common sense, probability, and simple logic which rule our more modern ways of thinking and writing. Since Swinburne sang his glorious hymn in pure praise of Shakespeare there has been a growing desire among our literary leaders to show either (1) that Shakespeare was really a twentieth century author in disguise, unfortunately born into a barbarous epoch or (2) that, failing to be a twentieth century author, his greatness was thereby limited. This desire is not usually quite so crudely expressed as in the foregoing statement. But it is implicit in most of our modern attempts to judge Shakespeare according to the standards and practice of today.

All such criticism will be very rudely avenged by posterity. Critics who make fun of "bardolatry" will as surely become a laughing stock for their grandchildren as Garrick has, or Dryden. "Bardolatry," far from needing any excuse or apology from those who profess it, is absolutely essential in a critic of Shakespeare. It is the critic's best and most necessary defense against all error. In proportion as critics of the past have suffered from bardolatry they have prospered. In proportion as they have lacked bardolatry they have proportionately become a byword.

The history of Shakespearean criticism shows one thing, at least, as plain as a church—that it has been almost invariably fatal to the gravity of ensuing generations to censure Shakespeare at all. However absurd and wrong Shakespeare may seem to be in the eyes of this or that generation in this or that particular, it is tempting time and Providence to say too much about it. Silence is best, unless we desire posterity to amuse itself at our expense. It may seem to us perfectly reasonable and right to assess Shakespeare strictly by our own contemporary standards, to require him to pass the tests which we normally apply to ourselves and to our own achievements. But we shall be well advised to resist the temptation. Men like Dryden and Dr. Johnson—bigger men than any of our critics today—yielded to precisely this temptation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their critical reputations have not recovered from it yet. A little bardolatry might have saved them. They might have left us only their praise; and it is in their praise that their greatness is revealed. They preferred to leave us also their censure; and here we simply perceive that, whereas Shakespeare was for all time, they most distinctly were, as critics, only for their own particular age.

Bardolatry pays in the long run. Praise what you can and leave the rest to your grandchildren is a good motto for Shakespeare's critics. Your grandchildren will almost certainly look at Shakespeare quite differently from yourselves, and discover the virtues which escaped you. Do not quarrel with Shakespeare's mirror because you cannot there find a perfect likeness of your own time. Many generations have looked into that mirror before you, and each of them has found in it something which was never seen before. Remember that Shakespeare has now been famous for over 300 years, and that he has never been famous in quite the same way for very long. It is Shakespeare's privilege to be born again about once in every quarter of a century. Each generation has praised him; but each generation has praised him for a different reason.

Ben Jonson praised him "on this side idolatry as much as any," but he was none the less rebuked by Dryden for a too limited allegiance. Dryden in turn was reprehended by Jonson's eighteenth century namesake, who in due time was taken severely to task by Hazlitt, Coleridge, and a host of others. To each succeeding age the criticism upon Shakespeare of its predecessor has seemed impertinent when it found fault with him and inadequate when it praised him. All the generations can agree that Shakespeare was the greatest dramatist who ever lived, but they find it altogether impossible to agree upon an explanation of his greatness. It would seem that lovers of Shakespeare, when they hear the eulogy of other lovers, become possessed with the rage of Hamlet when he heard Laertes praising Ophelia. How dare these other critics praise a godlike genius whom they had not the eyes or ears to understand? What right have these men, who picked holes in the fabric of Shakespeare's plays and measured his achievement by ephemeral standards of their own time, to join the congregation of his worshippers? Such is the feeling which jealously arouses as the eighteenth century reads what the seventeenth century has written concerning Shakespeare, or as we today survey the whole field from Ben Jonson to Bernard Shaw.

All this simply means that each generation has discovered some new aspect of Shakespeare's genius, and that it has quite rightly resented the blindness to its own particular discovery of those who went before. Dryden was well reproved by Johnson, who in turn was well reproved by Coleridge. The mistakes made by critics of every time and race who have written concerning Shakespeare are a fair motive for the indignation, mirth, and wonder of all those who today think it worth while to keep his centenary. They are also, it should be added, a fair motive for caution and humility. Let every critic of Shakespeare henceforth reflect that Shakespeare's critics in the past, wherever they have praised him, have rarely seemed in the view of after ages to praise him enough, and that whenever they have found fault with him time has usually decided that Shakespeare was right and that they were wrong—in most cases quite incredibly and absurdly wrong. Shakespeare is so great that each generation has been able to find in him something which particularly appealed to it, and to praise as immortal what it found, even though it was indifferent or hostile to the rest.

Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting of Garrick hesitating between Comedy and Tragedy
Garricks first great success was in Richard III Later he turned to Comedy.

The genius which has appealed in turn to the luxuriant Elizabethans, the cavaliers, and Puritans of the early seventeenth century, the formal dramatists and poets of the eighteenth century, the romantic revolutionaries of the nineteenth century, and the intellectual realists of today—which has appealed to each of these generations on account of something in his work which was welcomed as appealing especially to itself alone—such genius must clearly be of a somewhat comprehensive character. It will not do lightly to assume that we have even yet thoroughly exhausted it. There may still be something lying in Shakespeare for ages yet unborn—something to which we are as blind today as Johnson was blind, among other things, to the quality of his lyrics; or as Lamb was blind to his skill as a practical playwright. This something may be precisely the thing we choose in our arrogance to despise. There is no reason why we should be any happier in our censures and excisions today than Cibber was, or Garrick. To find fault with Shakespeare is to incur the risk of standing in a famous and extensive pillory, where big men like Dryden and Voltaire are found in the company of little men like Rymer and Tate. I must confess that, whenever I hear an eminent critic finding fault with this thing or that to which Shakespeare has set his hand, I cannot help feeling a little anxious on that critic's account. It is so extremely probable that fifty years hence all the world will be laughing at him.

It is well in this time of celebration to glance allusively at one or two of the more striking passages in this comedy of critical errors. The full story would fill many books, but its merest chapter headings—a few references, for example, to Dryden, Garrick, and Dr. Johnson—are worth an occasional reprint. The kernel of the whole comedy of Shakespearean criticism from start to finish lies quite briefly in this: that, whereas almost every critic who has approached the plays of Shakespeare any time this 300 years has been ready to swear that Shakespeare was the greatest genius who ever lived, this same critic has usually been quite sure that Shakespeare's plays, as he wrote them, were not worthy to be heard or read. People have always been ready to agree that Shakespeare plays were immortal, but they have invariably been equally ready to improve them. Shakespeare, said the seventeenth century, was great; but Shakespeare rewritten by Dryden or D'Avenant was somehow greater. Shakespeare, said the eighteenth century, was a wonder of the world; but Shakespeare improved by Garrick was even better. Shakespeare, our own times have quite recently said, is a transcendent genius but that is no reason why he should not be susceptible of improvement for stage purposes by Irving or Herbert Tree. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that each succeeding period, after first declaring that Shakespeare's plays were incomparable, proceeded at once coolly to rewrite them. It almost seems as if hitherto Shakespeare's genius has been too intolerably shining for the common sight, and that he has required a succession of mediators to interpret to each succeeding generation such portions of his genius as could be made accessible.

The bones of many critical reputations whiten the roads. What better warning could we desire than the great Dryden himself? Dryden was a really great critic. His appreciation of Shakespeare is amazingly generous and true when we take into account the habit and fashion of his period. In an age which believed that every syllable in a poet's vocabulary should be "polite"; that plays should be written according to the unities of time and place; that plots should be single; that the best diction for drama was the rhymed couplet, which Dryden himself extolled; that tragedy and comedy should be strictly isolated one from another—at this time we find Dryden roundly declaring that Shakespeare "had a larger soul of poesy than any of our nation"; that the compassion and mirth of tragi-comedy did not necessarily destroy one another; and that plots and underplots were not necessarily barbarous, but often an advantage. Nevertheless, even so enlightened a critic as Dryden, when it came to the point, found it necessary to "improve" upon his hero; and he has accordingly handed himself over to the ridicule of posterity. Let all those who are editing Shakespeare for the stage today ponder carefully Dryden's preface to his version of the "Troilus":

"I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried. Accordingly I new-modeled the plot, threw out many unnecessary persons, improved those characters which were begun and left unfinished; as Hector, Troilus, Pandarus, and Thersites, and added that of Andromache. After this I made with no small trouble an order and connection of all the scenes, removing them from the places where they were inartificially set and * * * I have so ordered them that there is a coherence of them with one another and a dependence on the main design. *I need not say that I have refined his language which before was obsolete.*" We today are able to smile at the sanguine program here set forth, but there is no reason to believe that our present acting editions of Shakespeare will be any less amusing to our successors. Dryden's performance is essentially the same as that of almost every critic of Shakespeare from Ben Jonson to Bernard Shaw. It consists in asserting first of all that Shakespeare is the greatest poet who ever lived, and in going on to wish that he had written his plays rather differently.

Mr GARRICK in Four of his Principal Tragic Characters.

If Dryden is a warning to our critics, Garrick is a warning, even more alarming, to our actor managers. Garrick began in the traditional way by asserting that it was his aim as a producer of Shakespeare "to lose no drop of that immortal man." He went on, also in the traditional way, to edit him. He produced "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—with additions by himself, songs out of Waller and Dryden, and without any reference to Bottom the Weaver. He cut out such lines as

> And there the snake throws her enamelled skin,
> Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in,

and substituted verses by himself:

> Joy alone shall employ us,
> No griefs shall annoy us,
> No sighs the sad heart shall betray;
> Let the vaulted roof ring,
> Let the full chorus sing,
> Blest Theseus and Hippolita.

He produced the "Tempest" in the version which Dryden and D'Avenant had worked upon—a version in which Miranda, who has never seen a man, is balanced with Hippolyte, a man who has never seen a woman. He produced "Romeo and Juliet"—with all the rhymes cut out and a doggerel scene of his own added to prolong his opportunities as a tragic actor in Romeo's tomb. He produced "A Winter's Tale," but suppressed the first three acts entirely. He produced "Hamlet"—without the gravediggers, and with the addition of a Queen who goes mad with remorse. Garrick's whole career is a reduction to absurdity of the assumption that Shakespeare, though an immortal poet, ought to have written his plays in a different way.

It will be objected that Garrick's mistakes need not alarm his more modern successors, because Garrick was soaked in French models and in eighteenth century classicism. He reverenced the unities as laws of nature and had quite lost touch with the fundamental humor and sense of English literature. But one would like to ask how exactly Garrick's reverence

And Is Laughed at by the Next

for the unities differs from the reverence of our own more modern managers for the picture-frame stage and its realistic furnishings—a reverence which makes it quite impossible for Shakespeare's skill in construction to tell upon his audience, and which incidentally requires that his plays shall be cut and rearranged to fit conventions quite unlike those of his own time and theatre. Are not our modern managers, in their reverence for the more modern carpentry of their art, perilously near the position of Garrick? One would also like to point out that the conventions to which Garrick was a thrall have not been by any means the sole cause of audacious folly in his editors. The spirit of the age was also to blame; and the spirit of the age is always with us—today as well as yesterday. The spirit and mental attitude of the generations has differed from period to period, with the result that one generation has worshipped what another has discarded.

For Johnson tore to shreds, once for all, the classical rules, not only in the famous "Preface," but in a paper, which should be more famous than it is, to the "Rambler": "It ought to be the just endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature from custom, or that which is established because it is right from that which is right only because it is established." Nevertheless, Johnson, the parent of all the moderns, is, equally with Garrick, a warning and example to all those who at any time or for any cause shall improve, or wish to improve, the plays of Shakespeare. When Johnson writes of Shakespeare, "In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting," he exhibits a blindness as great as that of the critics he dispossessed. Or, again, when he says of Ariel's songs that they "must be allowed of no supernatural dignity or elegance," we simply know that Dr. Johnson, with all his wisdom and sweep of imagination, was here obtuse to an appeal of which the least lover of literature today is entirely sensible. At this point, if we are reasonably modest, we shall begin to wonder whether some of our more modern strictures may not be due to a similar callosity of the literary nerves analogous to that which afflicted the great doctor in regard to the songs of Ariel.

Dryden, Garrick, and Dr. Johnson are a warning to all critics, in that their offenses have been exposed by the mere passage of time—offenses which cry aloud that the works of Shakespeare are not to be lightly brought before the bar of any merely contemporary standards.

Coleridge teaches the critics of Shakespeare the same necessary lesson in another way. Coleridge is Shakespeare's greatest critic. There is only one possible exception to this statement to be made in favor of Maurice Morgann, a critic who, a generation in advance of the Romantics, in a jocular essay upon Falstaff, reached a point in the general criticism of Shakespeare which will perhaps be reached by the main body of English and American critics some time within the next fifty years. But Morgann is almost entirely unknown, even by name, to readers of Shakespeare today, and the exact nature of his achievement would require a small treatise to set it forth in its exact historical setting and significance. Meantime Coleridge, who half a century after Morgann had written, got within speaking distance of that amazing amateur of criticism, may well stand by general acclamation for the captain and leader of us all. And what is the lesson we learn from Coleridge? What is his chief recommendation, his most urgent advice, the secret of his own amazing success? Briefly, it is the counsel of pure humility.

"The Englishman," says Coleridge, "who, without reverence, a proud and affectionate reverence, can utter the name of William Shakespeare, stands disqualified for the office of critic. He wants one at least of the very senses, the language of which he is to employ, and will discourse, at best, but as a blind man, while the whole harmonious creation of light and shade with all its subtle interchange of deepening and dissolving colors rises in silence to the silent *fiat* of the uprising Apollo. However inferior in ability I may be to some who have followed me, I own I am proud that I was the first in time who publicly demonstrated to the full extent of the position that the supposed irregularity and extravagancies of Shakespeare were the mere dreams of a pedantry that arraigned the eagle because it had not the dimensions of the swan."

Here is our warning; and we shall do well, after a glance back into the errors of the predecessors of Coleridge and a sidelook at some of the more impudent utterances of our modern "intellectuals," occasionally to go through every line that Coleridge has written, to watch the play of his reverent but piercing intelligence, and to take his lesson deeply home to ourselves.

The practical application of all this is not far to seek. There is a good deal in Shakespeare which does not square with the rational "psychology" of our modern novelists and dramatists. Let them avoid it. If they cannot humble themselves enough to accept Coleridge's simile of the eagle and the swan they can at least be silent. That is our first practical application. A second application may be addressed to all those modern producers of Shakespeare who prefer to "arrange and edit," in other words, to mutilate and destroy, the plays of Shakespeare because they have never troubled to study the technique of his theatre, or, having studied it, still believe that their allegiance to the fashionable stage formalities of the moment are of more account than a fidelity to Shakespeare's spirit and text.

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HOW HE USED MASQUES, THE CRAZE OF THE DAY

Fred Tyler as Sir Toby Belch, Lizzie Hudson-Collier as Maria, Robert Peyton Carter as Sir Andrew PHOTO BY WHITE

The Maskers in Romeo and Juliet
Benvolio. We'll have no Cupid hoodwink'd with a scarf - - - - -
Drawn by Moritz Retzsch

Gay Costume Dances Were New in England When He Wrote

Written for The New York Times

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As a Court entertainment, consisting mainly of dances in costume, the masque was largely dependent on the taste and open-handedness of the reigning sovereign. The austere Henry VII. gave little encouragement to such frivolities. Bacon says of him: "In triumphs of jousts and tourneys and balls and masques (which they then called disguises) he was rather a princely and gentle spectator than seemed much to be delighted." It was, characteristically enough, under the pleasure-loving Henry VIII. that the masque, with its distinctive conventions, was established as an English institution, and its introduction from Italy in 1512 was thought important enough to be recorded by the chronicler Hall, whose description of the occasion is of sufficient interest and significance to be here quoted:

"On the day of the Epiphany at night, the King with eleven others were disguised, after the manner of Italy called a masque, a thing not seen before in England. They were appareled in garments long and broad, wrought all with gold, with visors and caps of gold. And after the banquet done, these masquers came in, with six gentlemen disguised in silk bearing staff torches, and desired the ladies to dance. Some were content, and some that knew the fashion of it refused, because it was not a thing commonly seen. And after they danced and communed together, as the fashion of the masque is, they took their leave and departed, and so did the Queen and all the ladies."

Henry VIII. had abundant opportunity for indulging his inclination for masquing at the Field of the Cloth of Gold with the Queen of France and her ladies in 1520, and on other occasions nearer home, but the masque during his reign remained a dancing show devoid of literary and dramatic features; and it made no progress in this direction during the troubled times of Edward VI. and Queen Mary. Elizabeth was eager for entertainments of all kinds for which other people paid, but she was too parsimonious to spend much on them herself. We find introductory dialogue and a semblance of dramatic construction in two Elizabethan masques which have come down to us—one devised for the right honorable Lord Montacute and preserved among the published works of its author, George Gascoigne, and the other "The Masque of Proteus," presented at Court by the Gentlemen of Gray's Inn on March 3, 1595; but it was not until James I. came to the throne in 1603 that the masque really flourished and took on those features of literary charm and scenic magnificence with which it is now most commonly associated. The King and Queen plunged into a round of masques at the Christmas celebrations following their accession, and during their reign the Court became "a continued masquerado, where the Queen and her ladies, like so many sea-nymphs or nereids, appeared often in various dresses, to the ravishment of the beholders; the King himself being not a little delighted with such fluent elegances as made the nights more glorious than the day."

The lavish expenditure on these Court entertainments and the appearance of the Queen in them provoked hostile comment from the stabler part of the English people at the time, and contributed no little to bringing about the Puritan Revolution in the following reign; but this is aside from our present purpose. The point to be noted is that the development of the literary and scenic features of the masque was not accomplished until Shakespeare's dramatic career was nearing its close; his retirement to Stratford is placed about 1609, and the first fully developed masque, Ben Jonson's "Masque of Queens," was performed in the same year. Although Shakespeare's latest dramas, as we shall see, come under the prevailing influence of the Court entertainments, he does not give us in his plays any example of the elaborate Jacobean masque, such as may be found in the dramas of his later contemporaries. There are references to masquing in his plays and examples of the earlier Elizabethan masque, but it is always the simpler form that he presents, as we should expect to be the case from the facts just recited. His treatment of the masque is not the less interesting on this account, for it illustrates in a striking fashion the growth of a simple improvised Court entertainment into an elaborate and carefully prepared spectacle, which in its later phases enlisted the services of some of the foremost literary men of the time, and made for itself a significant place, with far-reaching consequences, in the history of the drama.

Going back to Hall's description of the first English masque—that of Epiphany, 1512—we notice that he remarks as its distinctive feature an Italian custom with which, up to that time, the English Court was unfamiliar. The masquers invited the ladies to dance, and the dancers entertained each other with conversation, the interest of which depended largely on the fact or supposition that the identity of the masquers was unknown. Shakespeare gives us the best example that has survived of this fashion of sprightly talk in the masquing scene of "Much Ado About Nothing" (II., i.). Even the gentle Hero replies saucily to Don Pedro under the benefit of his disguise, and the interchange of compliments between Benedick and Beatrice is, of course, the liveliest of all. Balthasar and Margaret, Antonio and Ursula, give us the standard wit and chaff usual on such occasions, and the conversation between these two couples may therefore be quoted:

> *Balth.* Well, I would you did like me.
> *Marg.* So would not I, for your own sake; for I have many ill qualities.
> *Balth.* Which is one?
> *Marg.* I say my prayers aloud.
> *Balth.* I love you the better; the hearers may cry Amen.
> *Marg.* God match me with a good dancer!
> *Balth.* Amen.
> *Marg.* And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done! Answer, clerk.
> *Balth.* No more words: the clerk is answered.
> *Urs.* I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.
> *Ant.* At a word, I am not.
> *Urs.* I know you by the waggling of your head.
> *Ant.* To tell you true, I counterfeit him.
> *Urs.* You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand up and down: you are he, you are he.
> *Ant.* At a word, I am not.
> *Urs.* Come, come; do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he: graces will appear, and there's an end.

In "Romeo and Juliet" (I., v.) the conversation of the two lovers, then meeting for the first time through the opportunity afforded by the masquing convention, is affected (it is in sonnet form) by the lyrical note of the play, and takes on a somewhat more serious character (though it is still light in tone) from the fate that from the first overshadows them. Incidentally, in the interchange of kisses between two young people who are supposed to be unknown to each other, it shows how the Italian convention of the masque had been modified by English custom. The English practice of kissing the ladies was the delight and astonishment of foreign visitors for over a century. Erasmus discourses upon it with rapture, and the Spanish Ambassador in 1604 kissed "upwards of twenty maids of honor" who were drawn up in a line to receive him when he paid his respects to the Queen. The French and Italians recognized kissing as a special feature of certain special dances, which were scandalously popular on that account, but it was only in England that the salute on the lips was the established convention for all dances, as well as for greetings and farewells. In "Henry VIII."—a play in which Fletcher is now held to have collaborated with Shakespeare—the King, who is among the masquers at Cardinal Wolsey's banquet, chooses Anne Bullen as his partner, and after dancing with her, takes off his mask to say:

> Sweetheart,
> I were unmannerly, to take you out,
> And not to kiss you.

This is not a mere excuse on the King's part, for an Elizabethan Puritan, inveighing against the frivolous practices of the time, says with bitter irony: "When the minstrels do make a sign to stint, then, if thou do not kiss her that thou leading by the hand didst dance withal, then thou shalt be taken for a rustical, and as one without any good manners and nurture."

The disguises in these earlier masques though doubtless often gorgeous enough, seldom depended upon any elaborate device such as became the rule under King James. In "Henry VIII." the King and his fellow-masquers are "habited like shepherds," and are introduced as "a noble troop of strangers," (i. e., foreigners,) who can "speak no English." In the masque in "Romeo and Juliet" all pretense of an allegorical device is discarded. Benvolio says:

> The date is out of such prolixity:
> We'll have no Cupid hood-wink'd with a scarf,

Viola Allen as Perdita at the "gallimaufry of gambols" in the Winter's Tale.

> Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath,
> Scaring the ladies like a crow-keeper;
> Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke
> After the prompter, for our entrance;
> But, let them measure us by what they will,
> We'll measure them a measure, and be gone.

In "Love's Labour's Lost," Moth, the page, acts as prologue for the masquers, and forgets his lines when the ladies maliciously turn their backs to him; and in this scene Shakespeare travesties the masque conventions by a reversal of the ordinary situation—the ladies, themselves masked, refuse to dance and by an exchange of favors conceal their identity from the masquers, whom they easily recognize. In "The Merchant of Venice" Lorenzo and Jessica use their disguises to elope in, though the masque which has been improvised—only two hours being left for preparation—is abandoned for lack of time; Jessica acts as Lorenzo's torch-bearer, a conventional though subordinate figure in the masque, which was almost invariably an evening entertainment. Oddly enough, the most complete example of the Elizabethan masque Shakespeare has given us is in "Timon of Athens," Cupid, the favorite spokesman on such occasions, appearing as prologue in half a dozen lines of formal compliment. Shakespeare has, of course, no compunctions about such a mild anachronism as the introduction of masques into ancient Athens. Theseus talks about masques in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," but the entertainment chosen by him is the interlude of Bottom and his companions—a very different kind of amusement, though still characteristically English and Elizabethan in ludicrous contrast with its classical setting.

In the early masques, which were, by convention at any rate, "surprise" entertainments, the music was naturally simple. In "Henry VIII." the arrival of the masquers is heralded by "drum and trumpet," in "Love's Labour's Lost" by sound of trumpet only. In "Much Ado About Nothing" the masquers "enter with a drum," and in "The Merchant of Venice" Shylock's reference in connection with masques to

> the drum
> And the vile squeaking of the wry-necked fife,

indicates that these were the instruments by which the masquers were usually accompanied on their way through the streets, though additional music was doubtless provided by the waiting host, who was really responsible for the entertainment.

Dancing was the main feature of the masque in all the stages of its development. The earlier masque was a dance in costume, and little more than that; even after the setting of dialogue, song, and scenic devices became elaborately magnificent and expensive, dancing still remained its most prominent feature. Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in "Twelfth Night," after assuring Sir Toby Belch of his "delight in masques and revels," exhibits his competence in such "kickshawses" by "capering" as high as he can, while Sir Toby looks on and applauds. Muscular strength and good wind were needed for these displays, as well as agility, for the dancing was often of a very vigorous character. This is amusingly illustrated by Orazio Busino's account of the performance of Ben Jonson's masque, "Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue," before James I. in 1618. The King was bored, and the masquers, after dancing "every kind of dance," tired and began to flag. "Whereupon the King, who is naturally choleric, got impatient, and shouted aloud, 'Why don't they dance? What did you make me come here for? Devil take you all, dance!' On hearing this, the Marquis of Buckingham, his Majesty's most favorite minion, immediately sprang forward, cutting a score of lofty and very minute capers with so much grace and agility that he not only appeased the ire of his angry sovereign, but, moreover, rendered himself the admiration and delight of everybody. The other masquers, being thus encouraged, continued successively exhibiting their prowess with various ladies, finishing in like manner with capers, and by lifting their goddesses from the ground."

James Lewis as Sir Toby Belch in Twelfth Night (From the Collection of William Winter)

William E. Burton and his wife as Sir Toby and Maria (From the Collection of William P. Harvey)

In contrast to these elaborate dances, which constituted the masque proper, antic dances were introduced, and became known as the "antic-masque," "anti-masque," or "ante-masque." This preceded the main masque, and the three forms of spelling represent at once different phases of its purpose and conflicting theories of etymology, which need not detain us. Its historical significance lies in the fact that its performance necessitated the employment of professional dancers and actors from the public theatres, which were thus brought into contact with what had been an entertainment devised and executed by courtiers. Professional playwrights were engaged to provide the more elaborate setting of songs and dialogue, and thus became familiar with the ingenious devices by which Inigo Jones and his associates produced transformation scenes and other mechanical effects hitherto unknown to the public stage. The popular taste for spectacle grew by what it fed on, and it was at this point that the masque exerted the largest influence upon the drama in general and Shakespeare's work in particular. Some critics have called "A Midsummer Night's Dream" a masquelike play, overlooking the fact that at the time of its composition the masque was a private entertainment simple in character and absolutely independent of the regular drama. It was not until some fifteen years later that the two drew together and influenced each other. We find the evidence of this influence in the latest group of Shakespeare's plays, especially in the mechanical devices and scenic effects of "Cymbeline," "A Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest." The vision of Posthumus is masquelike enough, and the "gallimaufry of gambols" in "A Winter's Tale" was directly suggested, in Professor Thorndike's opinion, by the "antic dance, full of strange gesture and swift motion," in Jonson's "Masque of Oberon." The climax of masque effects is reached in the devices of Ariel in "The Tempest," generally regarded as Shakespeare's last play, and it was with these in mind that he wrote the profound and beautiful lines which, without excess of fancy, may be regarded as his farewell to the stage:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

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Priests and Misers

From Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Lectures on Shakespeare.

As I may not have another opportunity, the introduction of Friar Laurence into this tragedy enables me to remark upon the different manner in which Shakespeare has treated the priestly character, as compared with other writers. In Beaumont and Fletcher priests are represented as a vulgar mockery, and, as in others of their dramatic personages, the errors of a few are mistaken for the demeanor of the many; but in Shakespeare they always carry with them our love and respect. He made no injurious abstracts: he took no copies from the worst parts of our nature; and, like the rest, his characters of priests are truly drawn from the general body.

It may strike some as singular that throughout all his productions he has never introduced the passion of avarice. The truth is that it belongs only to particular parts of our nature, and is prevalent only in particular states of society; hence it could not, and cannot, be permanent. The miser of Molière and Plautus is now looked upon as a species of madman, and avarice as a species of madness. Elwes, of whom everybody has heard, was an individual influenced by an insane condition of mind; but, as a passion, avarice has disappeared. How admirably, then, did Shakespeare foresee that if he drew such a character it could not be permanent!

There is not one of the plays of Shakespeare that is built upon anything but the best and surest foundation; the characters must be permanent—permanent while men continue men—because they stand upon what is absolutely necessary to our existence. This cannot be said even of some of the most famous authors of antiquity. Take the capital tragedies of Orestes, or of the husband of Jocasta; great as was the genius of the writers, these dramas have an obvious fault, and the fault lies at the very root of the action. In Œdipus a man is represented oppressed by fate for a crime of which he was not morally guilty; and while we read we are obliged to say to ourselves that in those days they considered actions without reference to the real guilt of the persons.

MUSIC IN THE PLAYS, AND THE PLAYS IN MUSIC

Emma Eames as Desdemona
PHOTO © BY AIME DUPONT

Antonio Scotti as Iago
PHOTO © BY MISHKIN

Giulia Grisi as Desdemona
(FROM THE WENDELL COLLECTION)

Emma Calvé as Ophelia
PHOTO © BY AIME DUPONT

The Place It Held in His Mind and the Place He Has Filled in Its History

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES

By Richard Aldrich

SHAKESPEARE lived at a period when England was one of the most musical nations of Europe. Not only did the England of that period produce composers ranked among the greatest, but the love and knowledge of music—a practical and often advanced technical knowledge—was widely spread among people of all classes, high and low. Every person claiming any title to education or social prominence was expected to be able to take his part in extemporaneous part singing; he was also expected to be able to play at sight, and even to improvise according to the rules of counterpoint, in performances on stringed instruments.

Women of the upper classes were generally expert practitioners upon the virginals, a smaller-sized harpsichord; the spinet and harpsichord were no strangers in most houses. Pepys's diary gives an illustration of how much a gentleman of a generation or two later than Shakespeare's time concerned himself with music. Pepys was, as he calls himself, a "lover of Musique"; but he was hardly an exceptional case—he was far less an exceptional case than such a man would be in England or America today.

This universal knowledge and love of music among the people of England—that is, among the audiences who listened to Shakespeare's plays when he produced them—are reflected in the plays themselves. There are few of them that do not contain some reference, often many and copious references, to music; some figurative mention of music; frequent punning allusions to musical terms. Many of such passages are elaborated and have more than passing significance in the play. Thus, the passage about the "recorders," in which Hamlet turns upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; the punning contest in "The Taming of the Shrew," Act II., between Hortensio and Baptista; Lorenzo's exquisite passages in "The Merchant of Venice," including the allusion to the Pythagorean "music of the spheres"; and numerous others of a similar sort will occur to most lovers of Shakespeare. It is hardly possible to read through any of the plays, especially the comedies, without coming on such.

These facts suggest two things. One is that the incessant allusions to music and puns involving technical terms, which have to be explained in the notes for modern readers, must have been perfectly clear and intelligible to the contemporary audiences. The other is that Shakespeare's musical allusions show the same range of knowledge and accuracy as has been noticed in regard to so many other technical subjects in other branches of art and science. Some of his puns may be far-fetched; discouraging, considered merely as puns. But they never show a faulty technical knowledge. Music had a place and an important one, in the "myriad mind" of Shakespeare.

Among the musical allusions in Shakespeare are naturally not a few to contemporary songs. Mistress Ford, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," observes that Falstaff's disposition and the truth of his words "do no more adhere and keep pace than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.'" Later in the same play Falstaff calls upon the sky to "thunder to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.'" The tune meant is "A new courtly sonet of the Lady Green Sleeves," a song of Henry VIII.'s reign, immensely popular then and later. In "Much Ado About Nothing" Beatrice says that she "may sit in a corner and cry 'Heigh ho for a Husband'"; and there is another mirthful reference in the play to this old tune. "Heart's Ease" is urgently called for from the musicians in the fourth act of "Romeo and Juliet" by Peter; another old tune that goes back at least to the middle of the sixteenth century. Twice the tune of "Whoop, do me no harm," is mentioned in "A Winter's Tale." "Malvolio's a 'Peg-a-Ramsey' and 'Three Merry Men Be We,'" says Sir Toby Belch in "Twelfth Night," referring to two well-known old songs. In "Much Ado About Nothing" Margaret proposes to Beatrice to "clap us into 'Light o' Love'; that goes without a burden"—chorus or refrain—"do you sing it and I'll dance to it." Unfortunately, she did not sing it; and the original words of the song, partly as a consequence of her neglect, are now unknown.

Many other songs are mentioned and quoted in the plays. The inference is obvious that they were all familiar to the audiences, and that Shakespeare's references to them were found apt and suggestive.

Shakespeare calls for songs to be sung in the course of many of his plays. They are too frequent and many of them are too well known to need more than instancing; such as the "Willow" song in "Othello," "O Mistress Mine" in "Twelfth Night," "It Was a Lover and His Lass" in "As You Like It," "Where the Bee Sucks" in "The Tempest." There are many more. It is likely that Shakespeare wrote many of these verses to tunes already in existence and popular at the time but the investigators have not arrived at certainty on this point.

Unfortunately there are only six songs of which we can be at all sure that we possess the music exactly as it was sung in the plays in Shakespeare's time. The Globe Theatre was burned in 1613, and with it were lost most of the performing manuscripts, including the music of the songs.

Only one of his class of songs was by a composer whose fame has endured. That is Thomas Morley, distinguished as a writer of madrigals, who is the author of the music of "It Was a Lover and His Lass" in "As You Like It," appearing in the first book of his "Ayres or Little Short Songs," published in 1600. Robert Johnson, a composer and lute player of the early seventeenth century, wrote music for "Where the Bee Sucks" and "Full Fathom Five" in "The Tempest," probably for performance in the play in Shakespeare's lifetime. The other four that are supposed to be contemporaneous and to have been sung as we now possess them are the "Willow" song in "Othello," "O Mistress Mine" in "Twelfth Night," both by unknown composers; "Lawn as White as Driven Snow" from "The Winter's Tale," and "Take, O Take, Those Lips Away," from "Measure for Measure," these two being variously attributed to both John Wilson and Robert Johnson.

Musical settings of the songs in the plays are simply legion in later years, and the list of them grows with every year that passes. Shakespeare's songs have been always a strong temptation to composers and began to be, of course, as soon as they were known. Naturally English composers turned to them first. Henry Purcell, besides his complete opera based on Shakespeare, "The Fairy Queen," adapted from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," composed much incidental music for the plays, as for "Macbeth" and for Shadwell's versions and tinkerings of "Timon of Athens" and "The Tempest." From the latter we possess the familiar songs, "Come Unto These Yellow Sands," "Full Fathom Five," and, for chorus, "Hark, Hark, the Watch Dogs Bark." John Banister and Pelham Humfrey found inspiration in Shakespeare even earlier.

To enumerate even the most noted composers and the favorite settings of Shakespearean songs from that time to this would be to set up a catalogue. Dr. Thomas Augustine Arne, composer of "Rule Britannia," among other things, wrote many, some of which are still sung. Sir Henry R. Bishop, most famous, perhaps, as the composer of the melody of "Home, Sweet Home," was remarkably industrious in writing music for the plays. Sir Arthur Sullivan provided music for "The Tempest," "The Merchant of Venice," the "Merry Wives of Windsor," "Henry VIII.," "Macbeth." Mendelssohn's music for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is, of course, better known than any other incidental music for Shakespeare. Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Stanford have in recent years added to the list of Shakespeare songs.

A few of the most beautiful and most famous Shakespeare songs have come to us from Germany. Haydn, whose visits to England brought English verses to his attention, set music for "She Never Told Her Love," which is not among the better known of his English songs. It need hardly be said that two of the most perfect of Shakespeare settings are Schubert's. Best known is probably "Hark, Hark the Lark," that "wonderful sweet air with admirable rich words to it"; that "very excellent, good-conceited thing," as Cloten calls it, when he persuades Imogen to sing it. Unforgettable, too, is the story of its origin, as told by Schubert's friend Doppler, and thus presented by Sir George Grove:

"Returning from a Sunday stroll with some friends through the village of Währing, he saw a friend sitting at a table in the beer garden of one of the taverns. The friend, when they joined him, had a volume of Shakespeare on the table. Schubert seized it and began to read; but before he had turned over many pages pointed to 'Hark, Hark the Lark,' and exclaimed: 'Such a lovely melody has come into my head, if I had but some music paper.' Some one drew a few staves on the back of a bill of fare, and there, amid the hubbub of the beer garden, that beautiful song, so perfectly fitting the words, so skillful and happy in the accompaniment, came into perfect existence."

Hardly less popular and widely beloved than the "Serenade" is "Who is Sylvia?" from "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." The third of Schubert's Shakespearean settings, the drinking song, "Come, Thou Monarch of the Vine," from "Antony and Cleopatra," is much inferior to its companions, and is correspondingly little known.

It is natural that the operatic librettists, an insatiable tribe, rummaging through all the world's literature for their material, should repeatedly have laid violent hands upon the plays. These have served as a basis for more operas than the works of all the other great poets put together. Shakespeare, however, has had his revenge of almost all of the librettists and composers. The quality and substance of the plays have shown themselves to be something that has rarely failed to plant the seeds of more or less speedy death in any perversion of them. Not till the true spirit of the lyric drama came to the consciousness of both composer and librettist was it possible to make a Shakespearean opera that had the breath of life in it and that was in any essential other than an indignity to a masterpiece.

This achievement was made by an Italian, with the invaluable and indispensable aid of another Italian, both of whom assimilated the spirit and meaning of Shakespeare as no other dramatic composer and librettist before them had ever done. They were Giuseppe Verdi and Arrigo Boito; and their joint works, "Otello" and "Falstaff," are today the only Shakespearean operas that really represent in the lyric drama the full significance of their great prototypes.

It is not from want of trying that innumerable masterpieces in Shakespearean operas have not been composed. The first of a great number appears to have been Henry Purcell's "Fairy Queen," based on "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The libretto was adapted by an anonymous writer, and the opera was first played in 1692. One peculiarity of the libretto is that not a single line as Shakespeare wrote it appears with Purcell's music. The score was lost in 1700, and a reward was offered for it in that year. By an extraordinary turn of events, it was found in the library of the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1901, and it has since been published.

Perhaps the first of a long and venturesome line of musicians outside of England to evolve a real opera from a play of Shakespeare's was Francesco Gasparini, who composed an opera, "Ambleto," which owes its origin to "Hamlet." It was first heard in 1705 in Italy, and was one of the pieces produced in London by Handel in the course of his disastrous experiences there as an operatic manager. Another "Amleto"—so spelled this time, and one of a number from Italy in the early eighteenth century—was by Domenico Scarlatti. It was first given in Rome in 1715; and though its composer is known to all musical amateurs as the composer of harpsichord music that still lives and is enjoyed, "Amleto" has long since gone to the limbo that was awaiting other operatic "Hamlets."

Leo Slezak as Otello, Frances Alda as Desdemona in Otello
PHOTO BY WHITE

Max Maretzek, still remembered in New York as an operatic manager in the free-booting days of Italian opera, composed a "Hamlet" that was once performed in Germany. The one "Hamlet" that is still known is that of Ambroise Thomas, a French "Hamlet," whose libretto by Barbier and Carré, responsible for many things of the kind, is a shocking and foolish perversion of the great tragedy. It has been heard in New York as lately as 1912, not because any one wanted to hear it, but because Titta Ruffo wanted to sing it, and "baritone's operas" are not abundant. It is a soprano's opera, too, and Emma Calvé, in a still memorable year, found in it a congenial opportunity, as did earlier Christine Nilsson and other great sopranos.

Better known to operagoers of the present day, and somewhat less injurious to the source from which it is derived, is Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette," the libretto of which was written by the same ruthless pair of collaborators, Barbier and Carré. This is not yet ancient history, though it has not been in the list of the Metropolitan Opera House for some four years; but the glory that was shed upon it in the days of Jean and Edouard de Reszke, of Mme. Melba, of Mme. Eames, not to go back further, does not seem likely to be restored.

More than almost any other play of Shakespeare "Romeo and Juliet" offers operatic material appetizing to the composer and librettists; and they have not neglected it. The last "Romeo and Juliet" that preceded Gounod's was "I Capuletti ed i Montecchi" of Bellini, first disclosed in 1830. It soon gained great popularity, owing partly to the singing in it of Giuditta Pasta, for whom, though a soprano, curiously enough as it seems in these days, the part of Romeo was written, and of Grisi as Giulietta and Rubini as Tebaldo, a character considerably more prominent in the opera than in the play. In that historic and momentous operatic season of 1826, when Manuel del Popolo Garcia brought his family to New York, and with them Italian opera for the first time in the New World, he produced, among many other things, a "Romeo e Giulietta" by Bellini's master, Niccolò Zingarelli, one of whose titles to fame is that he was the favorite composer of Napoleon. The libretto of this opera, in accordance with a custom not then entirely obsolete, Bellini afterward made use of, unchanged, for his.

Richard Wagner wrote a Shakespearean opera, though the world has not been allowed to become acquainted with it since its single performance. This opera, "Das Liebesverbot," was a version of "Measure for Measure" freely treated. As in all his other lyric dramas, he himself wrote the libretto. The opera was finished in 1836, when he was 23 years old and was musical director of a theatre at Magdeburg. There was one disastrous performance there, and then the opera was shelved. He himself in later years spoke of its weakness; of the "reflex of modern French"—that is, the modern French of 1836—"and, as concerns the melody, of Italian opera upon my violently excited senses." Of the score only one or two short extracts, and of the libretto nothing, have been published, although most of the scraps, even, of his other early efforts have been religiously put into print. Wagner called "Das Liebesverbot" a "youthful indiscretion." Apparently it was so indiscreet that it cannot be allowed out of the "archives of Wahnfried."

"Macbeth" has attracted many ambitious composers, but not one has been able to make for it a musical setting that has long kept alive. The most significant is Verdi's, which he wrote in 1847 to a libretto by Francesco Piave, who purveyed librettos for a number of his operas, including "Rigoletto" and "La Traviata." Verdi rewrote the opera for performance in Paris in 1865. It had not been very successful before, and was not successful then in its new form.

Among other attempts at a "Macbeth" that of the French composer Chélard in 1827 is notable only because the libretto was written by Rouget de l'Isle, who gained immortality as the author of "La Marseillaise."

Verdi's "Otello" seems to have had only one predecessor, also emanating from Italy and enjoying a large measure of favor in its day. That was Rossini's. It was first produced in Naples in 1816, less than a year after "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." The principal soprano part was written for Mme. Colbran, whom he afterward married. The opera became greatly popular and seemed destined at one time to outlive "The Barber," which has just celebrated its hundredth birthday. It was considered to have "very dramatic music"; some compared it favorably, in part at least, with "Don Giovanni" and "Fidelio" but it differed—how much operas are apt to differ!—from Shakespeare. Iago was a quite subordinate character and Roderigo a prominent one. The instrumentation was thought to be shockingly noisy; and the easygoing dramatic standards of its time are illustrated by the anecdote of a listener whom the dénouement of the opera caused to cry out in excitement, "Good God! the tenor is murdering the soprano!"

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" has appealed strongly to constructors of opera in the comic vein, many of whom have attempted it. The liveliest of all of "Falstaff's" predecessors is Otto Nicolai's the "Merry Wives of Windsor," which can almost lay claim to the title of a real Shakespearean opera. It is not unknown to New York in recent years.

We are to have this season at the Metropolitan, if promises are kept, an opera based on "The Taming of the Shrew": Hermann Goetz's "Der Widerspänstigen Zähmung," which has also been heard in New York already. The title of another one is preserved, "La Capricciosa Corretta," composed in 1785 by one Martin y Soler, once considered a rival of Mozart, of which the chief point of interest is that the libretto was by Lorenzo da Ponte, who tasted of immortality through the three librettos he wrote for Mozart, and who lived his last years, died, and was buried in New York.

A certain interest attaches to Hector Berlioz's one Shakespearean opera, "Béatrice et Bénédict." It is, of course, based on "Much Ado About Nothing." Berlioz was one of the few Frenchmen of his time who really understood and admired Shakespeare. Shakespeare was, indeed, one of his passions; and to be one of Berlioz's passions meant something. He himself arranged the libretto. It must be said, however, that, notwithstanding his reverence for Shakespeare, he departed widely from his play. He reduced all the subordinate characters to mere "feeders" for the two principals, and introduced a new one, intended to burlesque his redoubtable enemy, Fétis. But the opera has made very little stir upon the musical waters, even in the great patriotic Berlioz cult that has arisen in France since 1871. Sir Charles V. Stanford has added to the Shakespeare operas a "Much Ado About Nothing" that was produced at Covent Garden, in London, some years ago, and has left no sign. At least twenty "Tempest" operas, all forgotten, might be enumerated.

The orchestral works, overtures, tone poems, and other symphonic illustrations of Shakespeare that have had a more or less prominent place in modern music are many. Some of the most familiar may be named, as Tschaikowsky's "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet" overtures, (also incidental music to "Hamlet";) his "Tempest" fantasia; Berlioz's "King Lear" overture and his elaborate "Romeo and Juliet" symphony, with solos and choruses; Liszt's symphonic poem "Hamlet," Dvorak's "Othello" overture, Elgar's "Falstaff," Joachim's "Hamlet" overture, MacDowell's "Hamlet" and "Ophelia" symphonic poems, David Stanley Smith's "Prince Hal" that has been played here this Winter; John K. Paine's "As You Like It" overture and his symphonic poem on "The Tempest," Richard Strauss's symphonic poem on "Macbeth," Felix Weingartner's on "King Lear," and Coleridge-Taylor's on "Othello." Among the curiosities, scarcely more, may be mentioned the fact that "William Shakespeare" wrote an orchestral overture called "After Seeing Rossi Play 'Hamlet.'" William Shakespeare is a well-known teacher of singing in London.

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HOW HE PORTRAYED THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

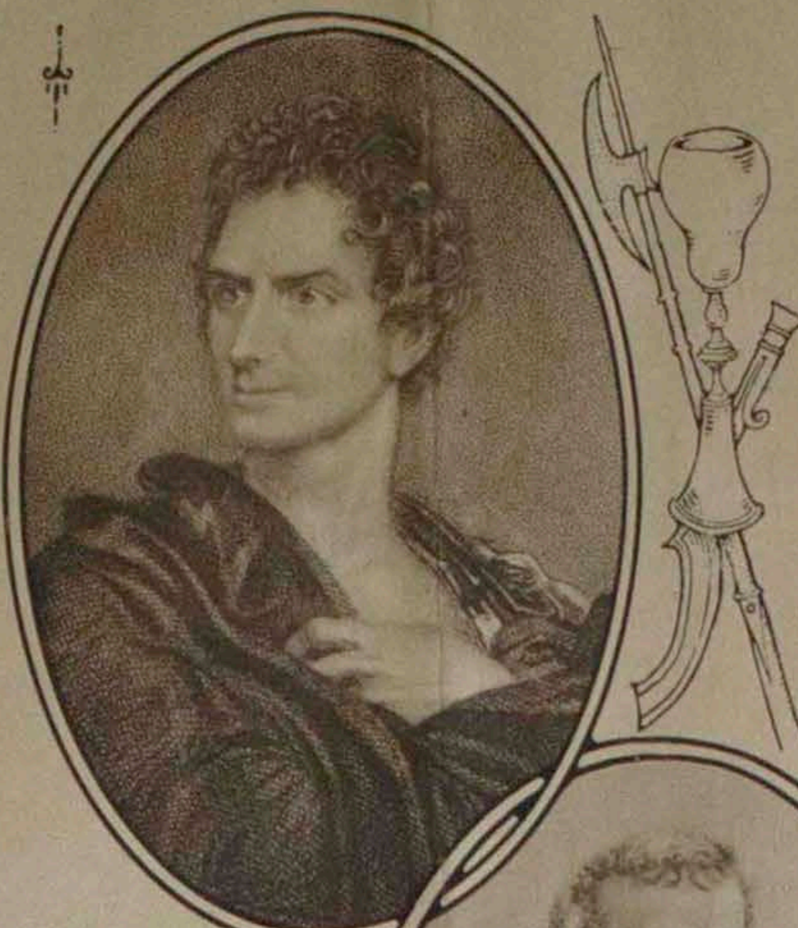
In "Coriolanus" Are All the Arguments for and Against It, Especially Against

From William Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays."

SHAKESPEARE has in this play shown himself well versed in history and state affairs. "Coriolanus" is a storehouse of political commonplaces. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading Burke's "Reflections," or Paine's "Rights of Man," or the Debates in Both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own. The arguments for and against aristocracy or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakespeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin, and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true; what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it. The cause of the people is indeed but ill-calculated as a subject for poetry; it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, "no jutting, frieze, buttress, or coign of vantage" for poetry "to make its pendent and procreant cradle in." The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power. The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty; it takes from one thing to add to another; it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favorite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty; it judges of things, not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another.

The one is a monopolizing faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of present excitement by inequality and disproportion; the other is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good by justice and proportion. The one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is a very anti-leveling principle. It aims at effect; it exists by contrast. It admits of no medium. It is everything by excess. It rises above the ordinary standard of sufferings and crimes. It presents an imposing appearance. It shows its head turreted, crowned, and crested. Its front is gilt and blood-stained. Before it, "it carries noise, and behind it, it leaves tears." It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices. Kings, priests, nobles are its train-bearers; tyrants and slaves its executioners. "Carnage is its daughter." Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual before the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or herd of wild asses is a more poetical object than his prey; and we even take part with the lordly beasts, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the poor citizens of Rome when they meet together to compare their wants and grievances, till Coriolanus comes in, and with blows and big words drives this set of "poor rats," this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary before him. There is nothing heroical in a multitude of miserable rogues wishing not to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so; but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries, and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, or admiration of his prowess, is immediately coupled with contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority, or even the natural resistance to it, has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination; it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others, that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed.

The love of power in ourselves and the admiration of it in others are both natural to man: the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp, and circumstance has more attraction than abstract right. Coriolanus complains of the fickleness of the people; yet the instant he cannot gratify his pride and obstinacy at their expense he turns his arms against his country. If his country was not worth defending, why did he build his pride on its defense? He is a conqueror and a hero; he conquers other countries, and makes this a plea for enslaving his own; and when he is prevented from doing so he leagues with the enemies to destroy his country. He rates the people "as if he were a god to punish, and not a man of their infirmity." He scoffs at one of their tribunes for maintaining their rights and franchises. "Mark you his absolute shall?" not marking his own absolute will to take everything from them; his impatience of the slightest opposition to his own pretensions being in proportion to their arrogance and absurdity. If the great and powerful had the beneficence and wisdom of gods, then all this would have been well; if with greater knowledge of what is good for the people, they had as great a care for their interest as they have for their own, if they were seated above the world, sympathizing with the welfare but not feeling the passions of men, receiving neither good nor hurt from them, but bestowing their benefits as free gifts on them, they might then rule over them like another Providence. But this is not the case. Coriolanus is unwilling that the Senate should show their "cares" for



Edmund Kean as Coriolanus (1820)

Titus Andronicus, Act IV, Scene I.
Marcus. Stand by me, Lucius; do not fear thine aunt
PAINTED BY THOMAS KIRK — FROM THE COLLECTION OF EMIL F. BEGIEBING

Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene II.
Cassandra. Cry, Trojans, cry! practice your eyes with tears!
PAINTED BY GEORGE ROMNEY

Lawrence Barrett as Cassius in Julius Caesar
FROM THE COLLECTION OF EVERT JANSEN WENDELL

the people, lest their "cares" should be construed into "fears," to the subversion of all due authority; and he is no sooner disappointed in his schemes to deprive the people not only of the cares of the State, but of all power to redress themselves, than Volumnia is made madly to exclaim:

> Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
> And occupations perish.

This is but natural; it is but natural for a mother to have more regard for her son than for a whole city; but then the city should be left to take some care of itself. The care of the State cannot, we here see, be safely intrusted to maternal affection, or to the domestic charities of high life. The great have private feelings of their own, to which the interests of humanity and justice must courtesy. Their interests are so far from being the same as those of the community that they are in direct and necessary opposition to them; their power is at the expense of our weakness; their riches, of our poverty; their pride, of our degradation; their splendor, of our wretchedness; their tyranny, of our servitude. If they had the superior intelligence ascribed to them (which they have not) it would only render them so much more formidable and from gods would convert them into devils. The whole dramatic moral of Coriolanus is that those who have little shall have less, and that those who have much shall take all that others have left. The people are poor, therefore they ought to be starved. They are slaves, therefore they ought to be beaten. They are ignorant, therefore they ought not to be allowed to feel that they want food, or clothing, or rest; that they are enslaved, oppressed, and miserable. This is the logic of the imagination and the passions, which seek to aggrandize what excites admiration, and to heap contempt on misery; to raise power into tyranny, and to make tyranny absolute; to thrust down that which is low still lower, and to make wretches desperate; to exalt Magistrates into Kings, Kings into gods; to degrade subjects to the rank of slaves, and slaves to the condition of brutes. The history of mankind is a romance, a mask, a tragedy constructed upon the principles of poetical justice; it is a noble or royal hunt, in which what is sport to the few is death to the many, and in which the spectators halloo and encourage the strong to set upon the weak, and cry havoc in the chase, which they do not share in the spoil. We may depend upon it that what men delight to read in books they will put in practice in reality.

One of the most natural traits in this play is the difference of the interest taken in the success of Coriolanus by his wife and mother. The one is only anxious for his honor; the other is fearful for his life.

> Volumnia—Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum;
> I see him pluck Aufidius down by the hair;
> Methinks I see him stamp thus—and call thus—
> Come on, ye cowards; ye were got in fear
> Though you were born in Rome, his bloody brow
> With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes
> Like to a harvest man, that's task'd to mow
> Or all, or lose his hire.
> Virgilia—His bloody brow! Oh, Jupiter, no blood.
> Volumnia—Away, you fool; it more becomes a man
> Than gilt his trophy. The breast of Hecuba
> When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier
> Than Hector's forehead, when it spit forth blood
> At Grecian swords contending.

When she hears the trumpets that proclaim her son's return she says in the true spirit of a Roman matron:

> These are the ushers of Martius; before him
> He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears.
> Death, that dark spirit, in's nervy arm doth lie,
> Which being advanc'd, declines, and then men die.

Coriolanus himself is a complete character; his love of reputation, his contempt of popular opinion, his pride and modesty are consequences of each other. His pride consists in the inflexible sternness of his will; his love of glory in a determined desire to bear down all opposition and to extort the admiration both of friends and foes. His contempt for popular favor, his unwillingness to hear his own praises, spring from the same source. He cannot contradict the praises that are bestowed upon him; therefore he is impatient at hearing them. He would enforce the good opinion of others by his actions, but does not want their acknowledgments in words.

> Pray now, no more: my mother,
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me, grieves me.

MALVOLIO AS CHARLES LAMB SAW THE PART PLAYED

"A Sort of Greatness" in Him, and a "Kind of Tragic Interest" in His Fall

From Charles Lamb's Essay "On Some of the Old Actors."

THE part of Malvolio has in my judgment been so often misunderstood, and the general merits of the actor who then played it so unduly appreciated, that I shall hope for pardon if I am a little prolix upon these points.

Of all the actors who flourished in my time—a melancholy phrase if taken aright, reader—Bensley had most of the swell of soul, was greatest in the delivery of heroic conceptions, the emotions consequent upon the presentment of a great idea to the fancy

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The part of Malvolio in the "Twelfth Night" was performed by Bensley with a richness and a dignity of which (to judge from some recent castings of that character) the very traditions must be worn out from the stage. No manager in those days would have dreamed of giving it to Mr. Baddeley or Mr. Parsons; when Bensley was occasionally absent from the theatre John Kemble thought it no derogation to succeed to the part.

Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous. He becomes comic by accident. He is cold, austere, repelling; but dignified, consistent, and, for what appears, rather of an overstretched morality. Maria describes him as a sort of Puritan; and he might have worn his gold chain with honor in one of our old Roundhead families, in the service of a Lambert or a Lady Fairfax.

But his morality and his manners are misplaced in Illyria. He is opposed to the proper levities of the piece, and falls in the unequal contest. Still his pride, or his gravity, (call it which you will,) is inherent, and native to the man, not mock or affected, which latter only are the fit objects to excite laughter. His quality is at the best unlovely, but neither buffoon nor contemptible. His bearing is lofty, a little above his station, but probably not much above his deserts. We see no reason why he should not have been brave, honorable, accomplished. His careless committal of the ring to the ground (which he was commissioned to restore to Cesario) bespeaks a generosity of birth and feeling. His dialect on all occasions is that of a gentleman and a man of education.

We must not confound him with the eternal old, low steward of comedy. He is master of the household to a great Princess; a dignity probably conferred upon him for other respects than age or length of service. Olivia, at the first indication of his supposed madness, declares that she "would not have him miscarry for half of her dowry." Does this look as if the character was meant to appear little or insignificant? Once, indeed, she accuses him to his face—of what?—of being "sick of self-love," but with a gentleness and considerateness which could not have been, if she had not thought that this particular infirmity shaded some virtues.

His rebuke to the knight, and his sottish revelers, is sensible and spirited; and when we take into consideration the unprotected condition of his mistress, and the strict regard with which her state of real or dissembled mourning would draw the eyes of the world upon her house affairs, Malvolio might feel the honor of the family in some sort in his keeping, as it appears not that Olivia had any more brothers, or kinsmen, to look to it—for Sir Toby had dropped all such nice respects at the buttery hatch. That Malvolio was meant to be represented as possessing estimable qualities, the expression of the Duke in his anxiety to have him reconciled almost infers, "Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace."

Even in his abused state of chains and darkness, a sort of greatness seems never to desert him. He argues highly and well with the supposed Sir Topas, and philosophizes gallantly upon his straw. There must have been some shadow of worth about the man: he must have been something more than a mere vapor—a thing of straw, or Jack in office—before Fabian and Maria could have ventured sending him upon a courting errand to Olivia. There was some consonancy (as he would say) in the undertaking, or the jest would have been too bold even for that house of misrule.

Act V. TIMON of ATHENS. Scene III

Mr. KEMBLE in TIMON.
London Printed for J. Bell British Library Strand Sept. 21st 1785.

Bensley, accordingly, threw over the part an air of Spanish loftiness. He looked, spake, and moved like an old Castilian. He was starch, spruce, opinionated, but his superstructure of pride seemed bottomed upon a sense of worth. There was something in it beyond the coxcomb. It was big and swelling, but you could not be sure that it was hollow. You might wish to see it taken down, but you felt that it was upon an elevation.

He was magnificent from the outset; but when the decent sobrieties of the character began to give way and the poison of self-love, in his conceit of the Countess's affection, gradually began to work, you would have thought that the hero of La Mancha in person stood before you. How he went smiling to himself! with what ineffable carelessness would he twirl his gold chain! what a dream it was! you were infected with the illusion, and did not wish that it should be removed! you had no room for laughter! If an unseasonable reflection of morality obtruded itself, it was a deep sense of the pitiable infirmity of man's nature that can lay him open to such frenzies—but in truth you rather admired than pitied the lunacy while it lasted—you felt that an hour of such mistake was worth an age with the eyes open. Who would not wish to live but for a day in the conceit of such a lady's love as Olivia? Why, the Duke would have given his principality but for a quarter of a minute, sleeping or waking, to have been so deluded. The man seemed to tread upon air, to taste manna, to walk with his head in the clouds, to mate Hyperion.

Oh! shake not the castles of his pride—endure yet for a season bright moments of confidence—"stand still ye watches of the element," that Malvolio may be still in fancy fair Olivia's lord—but fate and retribution say no—I hear the mischievous titter of Maria—the witty taunts of Sir Toby—the still more insupportable triumph of the foolish knight—the counterfeit Sir Topas is unmasked—and "thus the whirligig of time," as the true clown hath it, "brings in his revenges." I confess that I never saw the catastrophe of this character, while Bensley played it, without a kind of tragic interest.

A Polish View of Hamlet

Translated for The New York Times from "Hamlet," by Stanislav Vispanski

THE reason for the poor playing of Hamlet rests in the impossibility of interpreting this character.

Is it possible to play the true Hamlet at all?

And what is this true Hamlet?

Must he be a university student or a Prince seeking the crown?

Is Hamlet a philosopher who cares not for the crown and would not know how to make use of it in case it fell into his hands?

Or, is he an artist, a thinker, an analyzer of human nature, a judge of human falsehood?

Was Hamlet destined to reform the world? Is he the only one worthy of taking over the reins of government held by unworthy persons?

Who is Hamlet? Is he a youngster, crushed in his bud by the death of his father and thrown in the midst of ill-wishers? Is he a youth, who understands and feels the outrage perpetrated upon him and cannot demand his rights?

Or, is he a man of action, who meets incumbrances and prevails over them, till he is exhausted before their ever-rising tide?

Is Hamlet a quick-tempered man, acting spasmodically, making endless mistakes, ever losing his path and direction?

Or, is he void of the power of will, and this be his secret?

What is Hamlet? Is his function but to "Hamletize," philosophize, bombard with words, words, words, true, beautiful, and intelligent words?

Whoever played Hamlet interpreted him in his own way, whoever could not interpret him—failed.

Why?

Because not one of these Hamlets represents and could be recognized in the complete, colossal Hamlet that has since the days of Shakespeare grown gigantically in the traditions of humanity.