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1894. "JULIUS CÆSAR" BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

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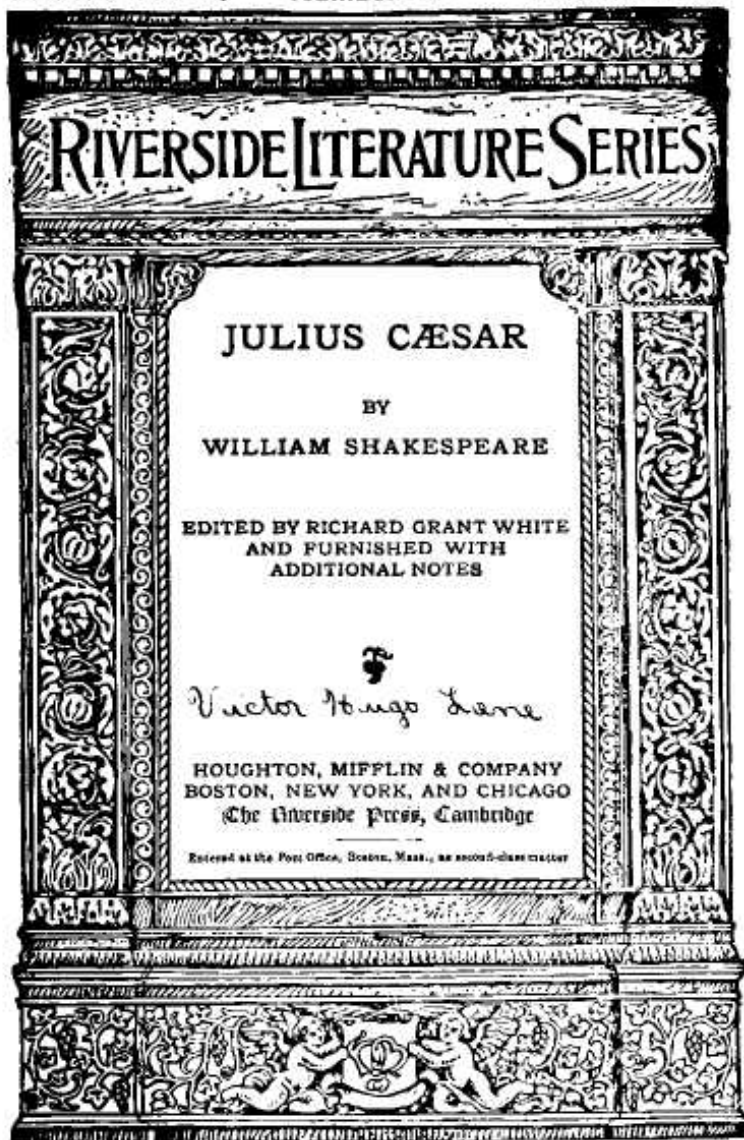
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JULIUS CÆSAR

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

FROM THE RIVERSIDE EDITION EDITED BY
RICHARD GRANT WHITE

WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES



HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION.

MR. RICHARD GRANT WHITE was a masterly editor of Shakespeare; he had an equipment by nature in a fine ear and delicate power of discrimination, and his Shakespearean studies began early and continued through a lifetime with concomitant studies in music, language, and history which constantly reinforced these. One of the latest labors of his mature years was the careful preparation of the Riverside Edition of Shakespeare, and he showed his judgment not only in the great care with which he sought to establish the text, but in the reserve with which he annotated it. He desired to produce an edition of Shakespeare which would be read by an intelligent reader, and his aim therefore was gently to part the bushes when the way was not perfectly clear, not to raise an ingenious thicket of comment about the dramas.

His edition therefore affords an admirable one for those who are making their first acquaintance with Shakespeare, since such readers are impatient to get at Shakespeare himself by the most direct approach, and are not yet ready to make his works an exercise in criticism. It may be added that the spirit in which Mr. White edited Shakespeare in the Riverside Edition is precisely that which has been followed in the numbers of the Riverside Literature Series, so that the editor of that series finds himself reinforced by Mr. White, and able gladly to avail himself of Mr. White's labors.

At the same time it cannot be forgotten that these little volumes are used often under conditions which do not permit of a free use of aids to the fuller understanding of Shakespeare, and that a schoolboy or schoolgirl though intelligent lacks the familiar experience which serves as an interpreter of some of Shakespeare's more difficult phrases.

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The editor, therefore, though assuming that every school-house will be supplied with a good dictionary, which will answer a great many of the questions arising in a careful reading of Shakespeare, has undertaken to add to Mr. White's brief notes, where it seemed desirable. For the most part he has concerned himself with words and phrases, believing that the one study which the reader may most profitably pursue when first reading Shakespeare is that which springs from an attention to the English of Shakespeare. All his additions are indicated by being inclosed in brackets [].

There are of course various inquiries which Shakespeare sets on foot, and teacher and scholar will find no difficulty in branching out from their first delightful reading of *Julius Cæsar* in many directions. It would be, for example, a profitable study which should take up the reading of Plutarch's lives of Cæsar, Brutus, and Antony, with a view to seeing how far Shakespeare, who relied much on Plutarch, shaped these characters to his own ends. It would be especially interesting if one could make the comparison with North's translation which Shakespeare used. Again, one might test Shakespeare's conception with that which scientific Roman history supplies, but one should never lose sight of the fact that human nature is paramount with Shakespeare, whereas the facts of history and the laws of development are professedly the ruling force with scientific historians.

As a play to be acted, *Julius Cæsar* offers less impediment to school use than any other of Shakespeare's, and the study of it in this form would be of great value not only as a subtle criticism of the play itself, but as an illustration of studies in Roman costume; for though Shakespeare writes always as an Englishman, he has introduced fewer anti-ancient elements into the setting of the play than common, and the distinct Anglicisms are not many. The chapter on costume in connection with this play in Knight's *Pictorial*

Shakespeare is a convenient repertory from which to draw hints.

“Among the plays that bear Shakespeare’s name,” says Mr. White in his brief introduction, “this is one of the comparatively few which are purely Shakespearean. It is not founded upon any other, nor is there in it a trace of any hand but Shakespeare’s. The substance of its story is taken from the lives of Cæsar, Brutus, Antony, and Cicero in North’s *Plutarch*. In *Plutarch*, also, Shakespeare found the traits of character that distinguish its various personages. It is, strictly speaking, a tragical dramatic history, rather than a tragedy pure and simple, like *King Lear* or *Hamlet*; for it has no plot, and no other dramatic movement than the simple succession of historical events. These are not grouped or modified by an informing tragic ideal; they are merely compressed. *Julius Cæsar* was first published in the folio of 1623, where it is printed with noteworthy correctness; but there are a few passages the confusion of which it seems impossible to restore to order. This tragedy, as we have it, is notably short, — the shortest of all its writer’s serious works except *Macbeth*; and it is probable that the text of the folio was printed from a stage copy, and gives us the acting version, cut down for stage purposes. Yet its easy continuity and its correctness favor the conjecture of the Cambridge editors that it was printed from the author’s own manuscript. A *Julius Cæsar* in Latin, by Richard Eedes, had been played at Oxford in 1582; and it is probable that this is referred to when Polonius says, in *Hamlet*, Act III. Sc. 2, that he ‘did enact Julius Cæsar in the University,’ and was ‘killed in the Capitol.’ Yet possibly in writing this passage Shakespeare may have had in mind his own tragedy, the composition of which external and internal evidence unite to assign to the year 1600 or 1601. The events which it presents in a dramatic form took place between the feast of Lupercal, B. C. 45, and the battle of Philippi, B. C. 42.”