

**KING EDWARD THE THIRD: A
HISTORICAL PLAY. ATTRIBUTED
BY EDWARD CAPELL TO
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND
NOW PROVEN TO BE HIS WORK**

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PREFACE.

THE history of this Play, as far as it is known, may be very briefly told.

The first we hear of it is in the Registers of the Company of Stationers under the date of

"Primo Die Decemb. 1595.

"Cuthbert Burby entred &c. a book intituled Edward the Third and the Blacke Prince, their warres with Kinge John of Fraunce."

Cuthbert Burby was the elder brother of Richard Burbadge, the great actor, and his name, as Cuthbert Burbidge, is sometimes so written in the Stationers' Registers; as, for instance, on 5th May, as early as 1592, when he published a book under the title of "A Direction for Travellers": at a later date his name seems to have been spelt Burby.

The play he entered in December 1595 was published in 1596, under the following title :

"The Raigne of King Edward the third. As it hath bin fundrie times plaied about the Citie of London. London. Printed for Cuthbert Burby. 1596." 4to.

As Cuthbert and Richard were brothers, the one a bookfeller of repute, and the other an actor of eminence, we may not unreasonably suppose that the play found its way to the press through the person who, doubtless, had sustained the principal part in it on the stage : no company nor theatre are mentioned, and we may conclude, as stated on the title-page, that "Edward the Third", printed in 1596, had been performed in various theatres of the metropolis. Richard Burbadge, when he died in 1619, had shares in the Curtain playhouse in Shoreditch, as well as in the Globe in Southwark. After the building of the latter in 1594, he still retained his shares in the "Curtain": it is also very possible that he had an interest in what was specifically called "the Theatre", likewise in Shoreditch. The play-house in Blackfriars was considerably older than the Globe; and we know, from many sources, that inn-yards, as at the Belle Sauvage on Ludgate

Hill, at the Bull in Smithfield, etc., had been often temporarily employed as theatres. These were most likely some of the places "about the city of London" where "Edward the Third" had been acted by Richard Burbadge and others before it was printed for his brother in 1596.

We derive no more distinct information from the second edition of 1599, although at that date, and still earlier, the Globe Theatre was in the hands of the theatrical servants of the Lord Chamberlain; and, in or before 1597, Shakespeare's "Richard the Second" had been produced there. So of his "Richard the Third", printed in the same year, and both, like "Edward the Third", without any author's name on the title-pages. We know of no impression of the last subsequent to that of 1599, but it may nevertheless have been reprinted, for it was more than once re-entered on the books of the Stationers' Company.

On this account it may seem strange that it did not find a place in the folio Shakespeare of 1623. Heminge and Condell must surely have known of its existence; and although it has been suggested, that it was purposely omitted in order not to offend the

king by the ridicule of the Scotch, yet the reason appears inadequate. Still, as the editors of the folio 1623 could hardly have forgotten a drama on such a popular theme, and so often acted and printed, we must, in all probability, continue in the dark upon a point of no little importance: we are to recollect, however, that no early writer has hinted at the authorship of Shakespeare in it; and that "Edward the Third" obtained no place even in the folio of 1664, which professed to supply dramas in the composition of which our great dramatist might have had a share.

When "Edward the Third" was republished in 1599, the name of the printer and the address of the bookfeller (still called Burby, and not Burbidge, as in 1592) were the only material variations in the title-page from the previous impression. On the title-pages of the second editions of Shakespeare's "Richard the Second" and "Richard the Third" in 1598, his names were first inserted; but, even a year afterwards, they are absent from the title-page of "Edward the Third": it ran thus in 1599:

"The Raigne of King Edward the Third. As it hath bene sundry times played about the Citie of London. Im-

printed at London by Simon Stafford for Cuthbert Burby :
And are to be sold at his shop neere the Royall Exchange.
1599." 4to.

We have no proof of the fact, but we may safely infer that the bookfeller's younger brother Richard Burbadge, who never altered his name, was, as already stated, the representative, as one of the Lord Chamberlain's servants, of the leading part in "Edward the Third", in or before 1596: we know that he acted "Richard the Third" in or before 1597. Considering that Cuthbert and Richard were brothers, it is a remarkable fact that the name of the former is never connected with the publication of any plays, avowedly the production of Shakespeare, with the exception of "Love's Labour's Lost", 1598, and "Romeo and Juliet, 1599". It is just possible that he had offended by the republication of "Edward the Third" in 1599, and that he was therefore never again permitted to have any concern in our great dramatist's later works. Cuthbert Burbadge, as we know, survived until after 1634, when arms were granted to him; and in 1623 he might still have retained his property in "Edward the Third", and might refuse

to allow it to be inserted by Heminge and Condell in their folio. This, however, is mere speculation; but even the change of the name by the older of the two may have arisen out of a wish to make and preserve a distinction between the brothers.

As far as we now know, Edward Capell printed "Edward the Third" for *the third time* in 1760, one hundred and sixty-one years after the appearance of the second edition. He deserves all credit for his notion, and for giving effect to it; although he assigns no reason for his opinion that it was by Shakespeare, beyond the general assertion, in which we entirely agree, that in 1596, "there was no other known writer equal to such a play." If it seem strange that every edition of Shakespeare, from the folio of 1623 to the time even of Capell, should be without it, it is still stranger that, after attention had been directed to it in 1760, it was nevertheless thereafter utterly neglected. Even Capell himself did not include it in his ten volumes of 1767; Steevens did not insert it in his "Twenty Quartos" of 1766; and Malone made not the slightest reference to it in his "Supplement" of 1780.

Nobody has yet gone the length of asserting that