

**HISTORY OF KING
HENRY THE EIGHTH,
WITH NOTES**

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History of King Henry the Eighth, with Notes by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE

**HISTORY OF KING
HENRY THE EIGHTH,
WITH NOTES**



SHAKESPEARE'S
HISTORY OF
KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT. D.,

FORMERLY HEAD MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

WITH ENGRAVINGS.



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THE GLOBE THEATRE.



KING HENRY VIII.

INTRODUCTION
TO
KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

THIS drama, under the title of "The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight," was first published in the Folio of 1623, where it occupies pages 205-232 in the division of "Histories." It is printed with remarkable ac-

curacy, and the doubtful or disputed readings are comparatively few.

The date of the play has been the subject of much discussion. The earlier editors and commentators, with the single exception of Chalmers, believed that it was written before the death of Elizabeth (March, 1603), and that the allusion to her successor, "Nor shall this peace sleep with her," etc. (v. 4), did not form a part of Cranmer's speech as originally composed, but was interpolated by Ben Jonson after James had come to the throne. But, as White remarks, "the speech in question is homogeneous and Shakespearian; the subsequent allusion to Elizabeth as 'an aged princess' would not have been ventured during her life; and the exhibition of Henry's selfish passion for Anne Bullen, and of her lightness of character, would have been hardly less offensive to the Virgin Queen, her daughter." Knight, Collier, Dyce, Hudson, and other recent editors, take the same view.

But how early in the reign of James was the play written?

In the Stationers' Registers, under the date of February 12th, 1604[-5], we find the following memorandum:—"Nath. Butter] Yf he get good allowance for the Enterlude of K. Henry 8th before he begyn to print it, and then procure the wardens hands to yt for the entrance of yt, he is to have the same for his copy;" and Collier "feels no hesitation in concluding that it referred to Shakespeare's drama, which had probably been brought out at the Globe Theatre in the summer of 1604." Dyce is inclined to agree with Collier; but it is probable that Chalmers was right in assuming that the reference is to a play of Samuel Rowley's, "When you See me you Know me, or the Famous Chronicle History of King Henry the Eighth," which was published in 1605.

Knight, White, and Hudson believe that the play was written at Stratford in 1612 or 1613, and that it was the poet's last work. The weight of evidence, both external and internal, seems to be in favour of this opinion.