

**KING RICHARD THE THIRD: WITH
INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES
EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL.
FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND
FAMILIES**

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King Richard the Third: With Introduction, and Notes Explanatory and Critical. For Use in Schools and Families by William Shakespeare & Henry H. Hudson

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & HENRY H. HUDSON

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SHAKESPEARE'S
KING RICHARD THE THIRD.

WITH

INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL,

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

BY THE

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INTRODUCTION.

History of the Play.

THIS play was preceded by at least two others on the same subject. The first of these was in Latin, written by Dr. Thomas Legge, Master of Caius College, Cambridge, and is said to have been acted at the University as early as 1579. Sir John Harrington, in his *Apology for Poetry*, 1591, speaks of this play as one that "would move Phalaris the tyrant, and terrify all tyrannous-minded men." There is no reason for thinking that Shakespeare ever saw it, or had any knowledge of it. The other was an English drama, printed in 1594, and called "The True Tragedy of Richard the Third: Wherein is shown the death of Edward the Fourth, with the smothering of the two young Princes in the Tower." We have no certain knowledge as to when this piece was written; though no one doubts that the writing was several years previous to 1594. Shakespeare's drama indicates no acquaintance with it except in two or three slight particulars; and even here the similarity infers no more knowledge than might well enough have been caught in the hearing. Other resemblances there are indeed, but only such as would naturally result from using a common authority. The older piece has little that can be deemed worthy of notice. The workmanship, though crude and clumsy enough, displays honesty of mind, and is comparatively free from inflation and bombast. The piece is written partly in prose and partly in

heavy blank-verse, interspersed with pentameter couplets and rhyming stanzas, and with passages of fourteen-syllable lines. It may be well to add, for the curiosity of the thing, that, after Richard is killed, Report enters, and holds a dialogue with a Page, to give information of divers things not exhibited; after which, two Messengers come in, and unfold what is to be done and who is to reign, all the way from Richard to Queen Elizabeth, the whole winding up with an elaborate panegyric on the latter.

Shakespeare's drama was entered in the Stationers' register on the 20th of October, 1597, and was published the same year, but without the author's name. The play was reprinted in 1598, with "by William Shakespeare" added in the title-page. There was a third issue in 1602, a fourth in 1605, and a fifth in 1613; the last three all claiming to be "newly augmented," though in truth merely reprints of the former two. The play reappeared in the folio of 1623, with many slight alterations of text, with some omissions, and with a few additions, the latter extending in one place to fifty-five consecutive lines. Editors differ a good deal as to the comparative merits of the quarto and folio texts; though all admit that each makes some damaging omissions which the other must be drawn upon to supply. Mr. White leans decidedly to the folio; while Dyce, in his latest edition, prefers the quarto text, on the whole. For myself, I can hardly speak further than that my preference goes sometimes with the one, sometimes with the other. As the additions in the folio do not amount to a general enlargement of the piece, it does not well appear what ground or pretext the quarto of 1602 may have had for claiming to be "newly augmented." Perhaps it was but a publisher's trick, to induce a larger sale of the new edition. The play, however,

has very marked diversities of style and workmanship, some parts relishing strongly of the Poet's earlier, others as strongly of his middle period; and I suspect the claim aforesaid may have referred, disingenuously indeed, to changes made in the piece before the issue of 1597.

The great popularity of this play is shown in the number of editions called for, wherein it surpasses any other of the Poet's dramas. For, besides the five quarto issues already mentioned, there were also three others in quarto, after the folio appeared; which proves that there was still a good demand for it in a separate form. It was also honoured beyond any of its fellows by the notice of contemporary writers. It is mentioned by Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. Next, we have a very remarkable allusion to it in a poem published in 1614, and entitled *The Ghost of Richard the Third*. The author of the poem gave only his initials, "C. B.," who he was is not positively known; some say Charles Best, others Christopher Brooke: but the strong commendatory verses upon him, which have come down to us from such pens as Ben Jonson, Chapman, and Wither, show him to have been a writer of no little distinction. The Ghost of Richard is made to speak as follows:

To him that Imp'd my fame with Clio's quill,
Whose magic raised me from Oblivion's den,
That writ my story on the Muses' hill,
And with my actions dignified his pen;
He that from Helicon sends many a rill,
Whose nectar'd veins are drunk by thirsty men;
Crown'd be his style with fame, his head with bays,
And none detract, but gratulate his praise.

Fuller, also, in his *Church History*, and Milton, in one of his political eruptions, refer to the play as well known; and Bishop Corbet, writing in 1617, gives a quaint description

of his host at Bosworth, which is highly curious as witnessing both what an impression the play had made on the popular mind, and also how thoroughly the hero's part had become identified with Richard Burbage, the original performer of it :

Mine host was full of ale and history ;
 And in the morning, when he brought us nigh
 Where the two Roses join'd, you would suppose
 Chaucer ne'er made *The Romaunt of the Rose*.
 Hear him : *See you yon wood ? there Richard lay*
With his whole army. Look the other way,
And, lo ! where Richmond in a bed of gorse
Encamp'd himself all night, and all his force :
Upon this hill they met. Why, he could tell
 The inch where Richmond stood, where Richard fell.
 Besides what of his knowledge he could say,
 He had authentic notice from the play ;
 Which I might guess by's mastering up the ghosts,
 And policies not incident to hosts ;
 But chiefly by that one perspicuous thing
 Where he mistook a player for a king :
 For, when he would have said, King Richard died,
 And call'd, *A horse, a horse !* he Burbage cried !

Time of the Writing.

As regards the date of the composition, the entry at the Stationers' is the only clear item of external evidence that we have. The internal evidence makes strongly for as early a date as 1592 or 1593. The general style, though showing a decided advance on that of the Second and Third Parts of *King Henry the Sixth*, is strictly continuous with it, while the history and characterization of the three plays so knit in together as to make them all of one piece and texture. And it is all but certain that the Poet's *King Henry the Sixth* was finished as early as 1592. In Clarence's account of his dream,

and in Tyrrel's description of the murder of the young Princes, Shakespeare is out in his plenitude of poetical wealth ; and the delineation of Richard is indeed a marvel of sustained vigour and versatile aptness : nevertheless the play, as a whole, evinces somewhat less maturity of power than *King Richard the Second* : in several cases there is great insubordination of the details to the general plan : the points of tragic stress are more frequent, and the dramatic motives more on the surface and more obvious, not to say obtrusive, than may well consist with the reason and law of Art : there is also too much piling-up of curses, or too much ringing of changes in imprecation ; and in Richard's wooing of Lady Anne and of Queen Elizabeth there is an excess of dialogical epigram and antiphrastic point, with challenge and retort alternating through a prolonged series of stichometrical speeches : all which shows indeed a prodigious fertility of thought, but betrays withal a sort of mental incontinence, or a want of that self-restraining judgment which, in the Poet's later dramas, tempers all the parts and elements into artistic harmony and proportion. Then too the ethical idea or sense, instead of being duly poised or interfused with the dramatic current, comes too near overriding and displacing it ; the pressure of a special purpose marring the organic symmetry of the work.

The close connection between this play and the Third Part of *King Henry the Sixth* is so evident as to leave no occasion for tracing it out in detail. At the opening of the one we have Richard flouting in soliloquy at the "stately triumphs" and "mirthful comic shows" with which, at the close of the other, King Edward had proposed to celebrate the final and full establishment of his cause. It was indeed fitting that, on Richard's first appearance as a dramatic hero, we should overhear him at his old practice of ruminating aloud, and

thus familiarizing his thoughts with the villainies which he has it in purpose to enact. Everybody may well be presumed to know how Colley Cibber, being seized with a fit of progress, took upon him to reform Shakespeare's *King Richard the Third* into fitness for the stage. As the original play was too long for representation, his mode of retrenching it to the proper compass was, in part, by transporting into it a scene or two from the foregoing play. I notice the fact, now, merely as showing that he saw the perfect continuity of the two pieces; though, as would seem, he did not perceive the absurdity of thus setting the catastrophe of one at the opening of the other.

Date and Period of the Action.

Historically considered, the play in hand embraces a period of something over fourteen years, namely, from the death of Henry, in May, 1471, to the fall of Richard, in August, 1485. Half of this period, however, is dispatched in the first Act; the funeral of Henry, the marriage of Richard with Lady Anne, and the death of Clarence being represented as occurring all about the same time; whereas in fact they were separated by considerable intervals, the latter not taking place till February, 1478. And there is a similar abridgment, or rather suppression of time between the first Act and the second; as the latter opens with the sickness of King Edward, his seeming reconciliation of the peers, and his death; all which occurred in April, 1483. Thenceforward the events of the drama are mainly disposed in the order of their actual occurrence; the drama being perhaps as true to the history as were practicable or desirable in a work so different in its nature and use.

This drawing together and massing of the scattered events