SHAKSPEARE'S TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD III, WITH EXPLANATORY AND ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES AND NUMEROUS EXTRACTS FROM THE HISTORY ON WHICH THE PLAY IS FOUNDED

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Shakspeare's Tragedy of King Richard III, with Explanatory and Illustrative Notes and Numerous Extracts from the History on Which the Play Is Founded by William Shakespeare & John Hunter

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & JOHN HUNTER

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OF

KING RICHARD III.

WITH EXPLANATORY AND ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES

AND

NUMEROUS EXTRACTS FROM THE HISTORY ON WHICH THE PLAY IS FOUNDED.

Adapted for Scholastic or Private Study.

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PREFACE.

Five quarto editions of this tragedy preceded its appearance in the folio collection of 1623. The first of these was in 1597, and was entitled—'The Tragedy of King Richard the Third. Containing his treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence: the pittiefull Murther of his innocent Nephewes: his tyrannical Usurpation: with the whole course of his detested Life and most deserved Death. As it hath been lately acted by the Right honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. London, Printed by Valentine Sims, for Andrew Wise, dwelling in Paules Church-yard, at the sign of the Angell, 1597.' The succeeding quarto editions anterior to the folio bear the respective dates 1598, 1602, 1605, and 1613.

A play, probably earlier than Shakspeare's, was published in 1594, entitled 'The True Tragedy of Richard the Third:' but of this composition Shakspeare appears to have made no use: he seems to have derived all his material from the old chronicles.

'In this play,' says Malone, 'the variations between the original copy in quarto and the folio are more numerous than, I believe, in any other of our author's pieces. The

alterations, it is highly probable, were made, not by Shakspeare, but by the players, many of them being very injudicious.' We agree, however, with Staunton in supposing that those passages which are found only in the folio, such as the long speech of Richard in Act IV. Scene 4, (p. 114), formed original portions of the text, and that they were omitted in representation to accelerate the action.

REMARKS OF VARIOUS AUTHORS

ON

SHAKSPEARE'S 'RICHARD THE THIRD.'

'The part of *Richard the Third* has become highly celebrated in England from its having been filled by excellent performers, and this has naturally had an influence on the admiration of the piece itself, for many readers of Shakspeare stand in want of good interpreters of the poet to understand him properly. This admiration is certainly in every respect well founded, though I cannot help thinking there is an injustice in considering the three parts of *Henry the Sixth* as of little value compared with *Richard the Third*. These four plays were undoubtedly composed in succession, as is proved by the style and the spirit in the handling of the subject: the last is definitely announced in the one which precedes it, and is also full of references to it: the same views run through the series; in a word, the whole make together only one single work. Even the deep characterisation of Richard is by no means the exclusive property of the piece which bears his name: his character is very distinctly drawn in the two last parts of *Henry the Sixth*; nay, even his first speeches lead us already to form the most unfavourable anticipations of his future conduct. He lowers obliquely like a dark thunder-cloud on the horizon, which gradually approaches nearer and nearer, and first pours out the devastating elements with which it is charged when it hangs over the heads of mortals. Two of Richard's most significant soliloquies which enable us to draw the most important

conclusions with regard to his mental temperament, are to be found in the Last Part of *Henry the Sixth*. As to the value and the justice of the actions to which passion impels us, we may be blind, but wickedness cannot mistake its own nature; Richard, as well as Iago, is a villain with full consciousness. That they should say this in so many words, is not perhaps in human nature: but the poet has the right in soliloquies to lend a voice to the most hidden thoughts, otherwise the form of the monologue would, generally speaking, be censurable. Richard's deformity is the expression of his internal malice, and perhaps in part the effect of it: for where is the ugliness that would not be softened by benevolence and openness? He, however, considers it as an iniquitous neglect of nature, which justifies him in taking his revenge on that human society from which it is the means of excluding him. Hence these sublime lines:

> And this word love, which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another,
> And not in me; I am myself alone.

Wickedness is nothing but selfishness designedly unconscientious; however it can never do altogether without the form at least of morality, as this is the law of all thinking beings,—it must seek to found its depraved way of acting on something like principles. Although Richard is thoroughly acquainted with the blackness of his mind and his hellish mission, he yet endeavours to justify this to himself by a sophism: the happiness of being beloved is denied to him; what then remains to him but the happiness of ruling? All that stands in the way of this must be removed. This envy of the enjoyment of love is so much the more natural in Richard, as his brother Edward, who besides preceded him in the possession of the crown, was distinguished by the nobleness and beauty of his figure, and was an almost irresistible conqueror of female hearts. Notwithstanding his pretended renunciation, Richard places his chief vanity in being able to please and win over the women, if not by his figure, at least by his insinuating discourse. Shakspeare here shows us, with his accustomed acuteness of observation, that human nature, even when it is altogether decided in goodness or wickedness, is still subject to petty infirmities.

Richard's favourite amusement is to ridicule others, and he possesses an eminent satirical wit. He entertains at bottom a contempt for all mankind: for he is confident of his ability to deceive them, whether as his instruments or his adversaries. In hypocrisy he is particularly fond of using religious forms, as if actuated by a desire of profaning in the service of hell the religion whose blessings he had inwardly abjured.

'The catastrophe of *Richard the Third* is, in respect of the external events, very like that of *Macbeth*: we have only to compare the thorough difference of handling them to be convinced that Shakspeare has most accurately observed poetical justice in the genuine sense of the word, that is, as signifying the revelation of an invisible blessing or curse which hangs over human sentiments and actions.'—SCHLEGEL.

'The character of *Richard the Third*, which had been opened in so masterly a manner in the Concluding Part of *Henry the Sixth*, is, in this play, developed in all its horrible grandeur. It is, in fact, the picture of a demoniacal incarnation, moulding the passions and foibles of mankind, with superhuman precision, to its own iniquitous purposes. Of this isolated and peculiar state of being Richard himself seems sensible, when he declares—

> I have no brother, I am like no brother:
> And this word love, which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another,
> And not in me; I am myself alone.

'From a delineation like this, Milton must have caught many of the most striking features of his Satanic portrait. The same union of unmitigated depravity and consummate intellectual energy characterises both, and renders what would otherwise be loathsome and disgusting an object of sublimity and shuddering admiration.

'The task, however, which Shakspeare undertook was, in one instance, more arduous than that which Milton subsequently attempted; for, in addition to the hateful constitution of Richard's moral character, he had to contend also against the prejudices arising from personal deformity, from a figure