

**CHRISTOPHER  
MARLOWE'S TRAGEDY  
OF EDWARD THE SECOND**

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Christopher Marlowe's Tragedy of Edward the Second by Wilhelm Wagner

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**WILHELM WAGNER**

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S  
TRAGEDY OF  
EDWARD THE SECOND

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

WILHELM WAGNER, PH. D.



HAMBURG:

BOYES AND GEISLER (A. GEISLER)

1871.

DEDICATED

TO

DR. ERNEST ADAMS

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE WALKS AND TALKS IN THE  
GARDEN OF VICTORIA PARK SCHOOL 1864—1867.

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## PREFACE.

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The present publication is intended to serve as an introduction, or rather preparation, to the future student of the works of Shakespeare, its principal aim being to acquaint him with the most important dramatic production of the years immediately preceding the first recognition or even mention of the great dramatist (1593). Hallam<sup>1)</sup> justly says that Marlowe's 'Edward II.' is by far the best historical play after those of Shakespeare, and other authorities mentioned in the Introduction agree in assigning it a high place among the dramatic works of the Elizabethan era. We shall not, therefore, be thought wrong in bringing a play like this under the notice of even a young reader, in order to assist him in forming a certain idea of the basis on which the productions of so great a genius as Shakespeare were founded. It will be interesting to draw his attention to the great resemblance between 'Edward II.' and 'Richard II.', and the clear, though powerful style of Marlowe's play with its genuine and idiomatic English will be eminently suited to familiarize a young student with the peculiarities of Elizabethan English and its deviations from modern usage. It is for this reason that our notes are written in English, and it is hoped that they will be found useful in furnishing the modern equivalents for rare, poetical or antiquated expressions, and pointing out constructions and grammatical formations peculiar to the Elizabethan period. In so doing, reference has been made to Mätzner's English Grammar<sup>2)</sup>, a work of German industry which will remain the standard work for many years to come and is just being translated into English; to Abbott's 'Shakespearean Grammar', though I have not been able to avail myself of the third edition which, I am told, is quite a different work from the first; and to my friend Dr. E. Adams' excellent 'Elements of the English language',

<sup>1)</sup> *Introd. to the Lit. of Europe* (Paris, Baudry) vol. 2 p. 283.

<sup>2)</sup> I have quoted I. II. III., instead of IIa or II, 1 and IIb (II, 2).

a work remarkable for clearness, conciseness, and accuracy, and greatly to be recommended to the German student.

It is also hoped that the present work will be welcome to the numerous friends of English literature and especially of the old English drama on the Continent. Marlowe is mentioned among us chiefly as the author of the first dramatic version of the history of Dr. Faustus<sup>1)</sup> and that play has, I believe, occasionally been given to the pupils of the highest form of our College<sup>2)</sup>, but the state of the text (which I believe to be far more interpolated than Dr. v. d. Velde would have it) renders it unadvisable to select it as a specimen of what Marlowe could and did achieve. 'Faustus' abounds in fine things, but as a play it is inferior to 'Edward II.'

In conclusion, the Editor begs his readers to excuse some unpleasant irregularities in the numeration of the lines and in the division of words which have remained in spite of his repeated protests against the arbitrary decision of the compositors.

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<sup>1)</sup> See "Marlowe's Faust . . . Uebersetzt und mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen versehen von Dr. Alfred v. d. Velde", Breslau, 1870.

<sup>2)</sup> See the Program of the Gelehrtenschule, 1866, p. 56.



## INTRODUCTION.

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A. W. von Schlegel in his famous 'Lectures on Dramatic Art'<sup>1)</sup> maintains that 'Shakespeare owed almost nothing to his predecessors, while on the other hand he exercised the greatest influence on his successors.' In support of this extravagant assertion, Schlegel might have appealed to the authority of Dryden who, in the prologue to his version of Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida' (1679), makes Shakespeare's ghost pronounce the following lines —

Untaught, unpracticed, in a barbarous age,  
I found not, but created first the stage.

But even in Schlegel's time this view was no longer maintained by men who had gone into the subject and whose judgment might be thought to possess some weight in this question. Ch. Lamb, the famous author of the 'Essays of Elia' had, as early as 1808, published his 'Specimens of English Dramatic Poets'<sup>2)</sup> in order to show that in this department much had been slighted, 'while beyond all proportion one or two favorite names had been cried up.' A little later, William Hazlitt, in his 'Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth' delivered in 1820, justly asserted that Shakespeare was by no means isolated in his time: that there was scarcely any other time

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<sup>1)</sup> Vol. 3. p. 243 in the second edition, 1817.

<sup>2)</sup> Reprinted in H. Bohn's Antiquarian Library, London 1854.

## II

'more populous of intellect, or more prolific of intellectual wealth' than the age of Elizabeth. Shakespeare, he says, 'towered above his fellows, "in shape and gesture proudly eminent"; but he was one of a race of giants — the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful and beautiful of them; but it was a common and a noble brood.'<sup>1)</sup> This opinion was fully borne out and further strengthened by the careful researches of modern scholars, among whom the first place is due to J. Payne Collier and the late Alexander Dyce. It has been shown that, far from standing aloof from his contemporaries, Shakespeare was on the contrary considerably influenced by them, his genius growing and developing itself on the foundation laid by his predecessors and fully availing itself of all the advantages previously gained by them. Nor does this view tend to diminish our admiration for Shakespeare, though we can no longer look upon him as an isolated majestic peak rising from a level plain and hiding its summit in the clouds —: quite the contrary, we learn to admire him all the more by gaining a clearer insight into the merits of his predecessors and convincing ourselves that in spite of the many obligations he owed them, he yet surpassed them all in his immortal dramas.

In opposition to Schlegel's view this may now be said to be the opinion of the Shakespearian critics both in England and in Germany. It cannot be better expressed than in the words of J. Payne Collier.<sup>2)</sup>

'It is not necessary to the just admiration of our noble dramatist, that we should do injustice to his predecessors or earlier contemporaries: on the contrary, his miraculous powers are best to be estimated by a comparison with his ablest rivals; and if he appear not greatest when his works are placed beside those of Marlowe, Greene, Peele or Lodge, however distin-

<sup>1)</sup> p. 19 of the new edition, London 1870. (Bell & Daldy.)

<sup>2)</sup> Introduction to his edition of Shakespeare of 1844, p. LVII.

guished their rank as dramatists, and however deserved their popularity, we shall be content to think, that for more than two centuries, the world has been under a delusion as to his claims. He rose to eminence, and he maintained it, amid struggles for equality by men of high genius and varied talents.'

By far the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors in dramatic literature was CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE; from his example the great dramatist may be supposed to have learnt most in imitating his good sides and in avoiding and remedying his faults and defects. Marlowe was born at Canterbury on Feb. 26, 1564, exactly two months before Shakespeare; and though his parents were but poor, he was by the kindness of some generous patron enabled to obtain a learned education at Cambridge. There is a Latin poem by him still extant, and this as well as the numerous allusions to classical literature and mythology in his plays prove him to have been no contemptible scholar. He seems to have left the university in 1588 and for about 4 years we have no trace of his life and occupations; but in 1587 we find him in London, and in that year his powerful tragedy of 'Tamburlaine the Great' made its appearance.<sup>1)</sup> This was the first play in which the blank verse was introduced on a public stage, all other plays intended for the town having until then been written in a kind of irregular long rhymed line. It is true that this metre, originally introduced into English by the Earl of Surrey in his translation of the second and fourth books of the Aeneid, had been used for dramatic purposes even before Marlowe, in 'Gorboduc', the earliest known tragedy of the English literature, by Sackville (Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Earl of Dorset) and T. Norton. But 'Gorboduc' was originally acted before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall in 1561, by the Members of the Inner Temple, and it is very doubtful whether it ever found its way to the public play-

<sup>1)</sup> Collier, History of Dramatic Poetry vol. 3 p. 113.