

ment are combined in one great sitting, and also taken in a different order.

(e) v. 2. Richard's and Bolingbroke's entry into London is made part of the same pageant. In Holinshed it occurs on successive days.

(f) We may include under this head certain trifling alterations of *age*. Thus Prince Henry (v. 3) is clearly meant to be beyond his actual age (12).

To give a clearer idea of Shakespeare's procedure we give here the passage of Holinshed referred to in (d), which the student should carefully compare with act iv. We quote from the extracts made by the Clarendon Press Editors:—

“There was also conteyned in the sayde Bill, that Bagot had heard the Duke of Aumarle say, that he had leauer than twentie thousand pounds that the Duke of Hereforde were dead, not for any feare hee had of him, but for the trouble and myschiefe that hee was like to procure within the realme.

“After that the Byll had beene read and heard, the Duke of Aumarle rose vp and sayde, that as touching the poynts conteyned in the bill concerning him, they were vtterly false and vntrue, which he would proue with his body, in what maner soeuer it should be thought requisit...

“This was on a Thursday being the .xv. of October.

“On the Saturday next ensuing,...the Lord FitzWater herewith rose vp, and sayd to the king, that where the duke of Aumarle excuseth himself of the duke of Gloucesters death, I say (quoth he) that he was the very cause of his death, and so hee appealed him of treason, offring by throwing downe his hooode as a gage to proue it with his bodie. There were .xx. other Lordes also that threw downe their hooodes, as pledges to proue ye like matter against the duke of Aumarle.

“The Duke of Aumarle threwe downe hys hooode to trie it agaynst the Lorde FitzWater, as agaynst him that lyed falsly, in that hee charged him with, by that his appeale. These gages were deliuered to the Conestable and Marshal of England, and the parties put vnder arrest.

“The Duke of Surrey stood vp also agaynst the L. Fitzwater, aouching that where he had sayd that the appellants were cause of ye duke of Gloucesters death, it was false, for they were constreyned to sue the same appeale, in like maner as the sayd Lorde FitzWater was compelled to gyue iudgement against the duke of Glocester, and the Earle of Arundell, so that the suing of the appeale was done by cohercion, and if he sayd contrary he lied: and therewith he threw down his hood.

“The Lorde FitzWater answered herevnto, that he was not present in the Parliament house when iudgement was giuen against them, and al the Lordes bear witnesse thereof.

“Morouer, where it was alledged that the duke of Aumarle should send two of his seruants vnto Calais, to murther the duke of Gloucester, ye sayd duke of Aumarle said, that if the duke of Norfolk affyrme it, he lyed falsly, and that he would proue with his bodie, throwing downe an other hooode which he had borrowed.

“The same was likewise deliuered to the Conestable and Marshall of England, and the king licenced the Duke of Norfolk to returne, that hee might arraigne his appeale.

“The speech of the Bishop of Carlisle was delivered on the Wednesday next after these events, and under the circumstances mentioned in the note on iv. 1. 114. The following is Holinshed's version of it: ‘Wherevpon the Bishop of Carleil, a man both learned, wise, & stoute of stomake, boldly shewed forth his opinion concerning that demaunde, affyrming that there was none amongst them worthie or meete to giue iudgement vpon so noble a prince as king Richard was, whom they had taken for their soueraigne and liege Lorde, by the space of .xxij. yeares and more, and I assure you (sayd he) there is not so ranke a traytor, nor so errant a theef, nor yet so cruell a murtherer apprehended or deteyned in prison for his offence, but hee shall be brought before the Iustice to heare his iudgement, and ye will proceede to the iudgement of an annoynted K. hearing neither his answere nor excuse:

and I say, that the duke of Lancaster whom ye cal king, hath more trespassed to king Ric. and his realme, than king Richard hath done either to him, or to vs: for it is manifest and well knowne, that the Duke was banished the realme by king Richard and his counsayle, and by the iudgement of hys owne father, for the space of tenne yeres, for what cause ye know, and yet without licence of King Richard, he is returned againe into the Realme, and that is worse, hath taken vpon him, the name, tytle, and preheminance of a King. And therefore I say, that yee haue done manifest wrong, to proceede in anye thing agaynst king Richarde, without calling him openly to his aunswere and defence.

“As soone as the Bishop had ended this tale, he was attached by the Earle Marshal, & committed to warde in the Abbey of S. Albons.”

Shakespeare is, in his Histories, far more chary of alterations affecting character. He is on the whole true to the principle laid down by Lessing in a classical passage<sup>1</sup>: “How far may the poet depart from historic truth? In all that does not concern the characters, as far as he pleases. The characters alone are sacred in his eyes: to enforce them, to put them in the most telling light, is all that he is permitted to do. The smallest essential alteration would remove the reason for which he gives them the names they bear.” Shakespeare has certainly in several cases filled in the outlines of tradition with singular daring and freedom (as in the case of Richard); but there seem to be only three cases in which he has deliberately departed from it.

(a) The *Queen*. As a child of nine years, the queen could scarcely be considered as a historic character. In making her a woman (though with the naive ardour of girlhood still about her) Shakespeare was rather creating a new character than modifying an old. The purpose of the change has been already hinted.

<sup>1</sup>Lessing: *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, No. xxiii.

(b) *Mowbray*. The character of Mowbray is somewhat obscure in Holinshed, and Shakespeare has not made it wholly clear. Yet he handles him on the whole more favourably than the chronicler. His reply to Bolingbroke's charge of treason in Holinshed contains two weak points: he excuses the detention of state money with a bad reason, viz. that the king was in his debt; and he ignores altogether the accusation of Gloucester's murder. Shakespeare makes him plead that he had the king's warrant for the former act, and hint vaguely that he had it for the second. And Shakespeare throws over him a glamour of chivalry and patriotism which wins the reader's heart for him,—as in his bitter lament over his banishment, and the recital of his prowess in Palestine. Moreover, we are not allowed to see, what Shakespeare himself tells us in *Henry IV.*, that Mowbray was as bitterly hated in the country as Bolingbroke was loved, and not without deserving it. It is only there we learn (*Henry IV.* iv. 1. 134 f.) that had not Mowbray been banished he would never have left the lists of Coventry alive. Westmoreland addresses Mowbray's son:—

“But if your father had been victor there,  
He ne'er had borne it out of Coventry:  
For all the country in a general voice  
Cried hate upon him; and all their prayers and love  
Were set on Hereford, whom they doted on  
And bless'd and graced indeed, more than the king.”

The effect, and probably the intention, of this more favourable colouring of Mowbray, is to make his banishment seem still more wanton and arbitrary.

(c) *Gaunt*. With scarcely any deviation from definite historical fact (except in the *addition* noticed below), the whole complexion of Gaunt's character is nevertheless changed. A self-seeking, turbulent, and far from patriotic politician is exalted into an embodiment of the love of country in its noblest form;—into the voice through which England speaks. The old play seen by Forman (§ 2 above) was in this respect

truer to history. Shakespeare took a more defensible course in *King John*, where English patriotism is embodied with less real violence to history, in the subordinate figure of Faulconbridge.

The *gardener* and his *servant* (iii. 4) and the *groom* (v. 5) are new characters. The first two show us how the people regard the crisis; and tend to justify Bolingbroke's intervention. The groom adds to our sense of Richard's personal charm and to the pathos of his lonely fate.

The most important new incidents are the great death-scene of Gaunt (ii. 1), and the still greater deposition-scene of

Richard (iv. 1). Both are superb examples of imaginative creation within the lines of historical tradition; for though neither happened, both realize and embody the very spirit of that which did. They give us the soul of the story, that inner truth which the facts left unexpressed.

While Shakespeare has thus altered comparatively little in his record, he has omitted points in it which to the modern student of history seem highly important.

Such a student wonders to find no reference to the process by which Richard had acquired the despotic power which he is found exercising from the first: to the packed parliament of Shrewsbury (1398), to the nomination by it of the Council of his own partisans which thenceforth virtually assumed the functions of parliament. He wonders, too, to find Gloucester's murder used as one of the chief motives of the action without a hint of the causes which provoked it. But Shakespeare thought little of parliamentary functions; and it is not surprising that the dramatist who gives us the struggle of King John and his Barons without a word of Magna Charta, should have ignored the sham formalities which gave a show of legality to the despotism of Richard. Nor does he in the Histories care to account for events which lie before the opening of the drama, any more than to account

for the character which his persons exhibit. We accept Richard as we accept Lear or Hamlet, as *being* what they prove to be, without learning how they have come to be it. The obscurity of the murder of Gloucester is part of the general obscurity in which Shakespeare is content to leave Richard's early career;—or, to be more accurate, it is one of the mass of antecedent facts which he could take for granted before an audience familiar with the older play.

#### IV. CRITICAL APPRECIATION.

§ 10. In the last section we have attended merely to the points in which Shakespeare as a dramatic artist actually diverges from his source. We have now to study the art quality of the play as a whole. We have to watch the artist at work, to note where his imagination is busy and where it rests, which parts it loads with poetic gold, and which it leaves bare; and thus to arrive at his interpretation of the story he tells, and his intentions in telling it. Only so can we pretend to judge his work.

It is plain that the imaginative work is, to an unusual degree in Shakespeare, unequal. We have a number of figures which did not greatly interest him, and on which he has bestowed little pains. The royal favourites, Bushy, Green, and Bagot; the group of lords, Surrey, Fitzwater, Northumberland, Percy, Ross, Willoughby, Salisbury, Berkeley; the Abbot and Marshal; Scroop and Exton; and the Duchesses of York and Gloucester, are either mere shadows or are defined only with a single dominant trait. Aumerle, Mowbray, and Carlisle stand on a higher plane of interest; but play only secondary or futile parts. York and Gaunt are drawn with far greater refinement and wealth of detail; but also rather enter into, than *compose*, the action. Two figures stand out from all the rest both by their supreme importance in the story, and by the extraordinary care with which they are wrought. In these two we shall probably find the best clue to the comprehension of the whole.

§ 11. The character of Richard is only gradually disclosed. No opening monologue announces his policy, like that in which Richard the Third sets before us his appalling programme of evil deeds. Little by little the materials for judging him are brought into view; and this reserve is the more remarkable, since no previous drama of Shakespeare's had led up to this, as *Henry VI.* led up to *Richard III.*, or as *Richard II.* itself was to lead up to *Henry IV.* Shakespeare will not allow us to prejudge Richard. We see him at the outset in the situation where he shows to most advantage—on the throne, wearing with grace and ease the ceremonial dignity of kingship. His authoritativeness is not yet petulant, his eloquence not yet fantastic or trivial. Presently we get a hint of rifts in this melodious lute, but the hint is so unobtrusive as to be easily ignored. First, the vague suggestion of his complicity in Gloucester's murder (directly asserted only in i. 2); then, his helplessness before the strong wills of Bolingbroke and Mowbray, which is rather illustrated than disguised by the skilful phrase with which he covers his retreat: "We were not born to sue, but to command", &c. (i. 1. 196 f.). The third scene shows him at once arbitrarily harsh and weakly relenting. In the fourth we get the first glimpse of his reckless misgovernment of the country, and his wanton plundering of the rich is set significantly beside Bolingbroke's astute courtesy to the poor; both causes were to contribute to his ruin. Yet, as we have seen, Shakespeare refrains from picturing Richard even here, among his favourites, in the grossly undignified guise which he wears in the scornful recollection of Henry IV. On the contrary, as we obtain insight into his crimes and follies, we are made also to feel his beauty and his charm; and the crowning exposure in the second act, where we hear of England bartered "like to a tenement or pelting farm", "the commons pill'd with grievous taxes, the nobles fined for ancient quarrels", and where all this is made credible by the shameless confiscation of Bolingbroke's inheritance

before our eyes—this terrible exposure is with fine tact immediately followed by the pathetic picture of the queen's wistful forebodings for her 'sweet Richard'; while York's indignant comparison between him and his father, the Black Prince, is pointed by the admission that outwardly he resembled that paragon of English chivalry—"His face thou hast, for even so look'd he". The impression is enforced with strokes of brilliant imagery throughout the play: "the fiery discontented sun", "yet looks he like a king", "his eye as bright as is the eagle's", "like glistening Phaeton", "my fair rose wither'd". It is notable too that the popular indignation is only brought into prominence at a later stage, when it serves to quicken pity rather than resentment. In the second act it is a hearsay; in the third, after his capture, it finds expression in the grave dialogue of the gardener and his servant; in the fifth (v. 2) it becomes virulent and ferocious, but the 'dust thrown upon his sacred head' by the London mob tempts us to forget in the spectacle of his 'gentle sorrow' what exceedingly good reason London had for throwing it. His return from Ireland (iii. 2) discloses a new aspect of his character, which belongs essentially to Shakespeare's imaginative reading of him. Adversity, to use a favourite Elizabethan image, brings out the perfume of his nature; only, be it well noted, it is a perfume of brain and fancy, not of heart and conscience. He is humiliated, dethroned, imprisoned; and every trifling incident serves now as a nucleus about which he wreathes the beautiful tangles of his arabesque wit; but he shows no touch of true remorse. He recognizes his follies, but only in order to turn them into agreeable imagery. His own fate preoccupies him, yet chiefly on its picturesque side; he is dazzled by the spectacle of his own tragedy. He sees himself as 'glistening Phaeton' fallen—nay, as Christ, whom "you Pilates have here delivered ... to my sour cross". With great skill, this trait is made to work into and further the plot. By throwing himself into the rôle of the 'fallen king', he precipitates his fall.

Yet his fall itself, tame and unkingly though it be, acquires distinction and dignity from the poetic glamour which he sheds about it. His eloquence grows more dazzling as his situation grows more hopeless. Mr. Pater (in the essay already quoted) has specially emphasized this aspect of Richard—"an exquisite poet if he is nothing else,<sup>1</sup>...with a felicity of poetic invention which puts these pages (the deposition scene) into a very select class, with the finest 'vermeil and ivory' work of Chatterton or Keats".<sup>2</sup> Yet if an exquisite, he is not a great, poet. Even his finest touches, such as, "A brittle glory shineth in that face, | As brittle as the glory is the face", are not laden with that lightning of imagination which penetrates to the heart of things, like the outbursts of Lear or Hamlet; they are beautiful fancies beautifully phrased. The name *dilettante*, felicitously suggested by Kreyssig<sup>3</sup> and adopted by Dowden,<sup>4</sup> best fits his literary as his kingly character. He is a dilettante in poetry as well as in kingship. "Let no one say", adds Kreyssig, "that a gifted artist-nature goes to ruin in Richard: the same unbridled fancy, the same boundless but superficial sensibility which wrecks the king would also have ruined the poet."

§ 12. In bold yet subtle contrast to Richard is his rival Bolingbroke. He, like Richard, is only gradually disclosed to us; a series of fine touches lets us see by degrees the man he is, and, without exactly foreshadowing the sequel, makes it intelligible when it comes. From the first he imposes by a quiet power, which pursues its ends under constitutional forms, knows how to bide its time, uses violence only to avenge wrong, and carries out a great revolution with the air of accepting a position left vacant. Nor are we allowed to think of him as a mere usurper. The time calls for a strong king. The country, exasperated by Richard's mad and lawless rule, is ready to override the claims of legitimacy if it can get merit. If

<sup>1</sup> Pater: *Appreciations*, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Kreyssig, *Vorlesungen über Sh.*, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> *Shakspeare*, p. 195.

Bolingbroke uses the needs of the time for his own purpose, he is the man to fulfil them. If he is ambitious to rule, there is in him the stuff of a great ruler. The state of England is 'out of joint'; he is the man to 'set it right'. No *crime-interest* is allowed to arise in regard to him such as from the first fascinates us in the career of Richard III. His only act of violence is to sentence, with the sternness of the judge rather than of the conqueror, the favourites of Richard to the death they deserved. His first act as king is to inquire into the murder of Gloucester. The play closes upon his remorse for the murder he had wished, but not designed. He loves England too, as Gaunt, as Richard, as Mowbray, love it, each in his way. If he does not waste precious time after landing, like Richard, in an eloquent address to his 'dear earth', his brief farewell, as he goes into banishment, to the "sweet soil, my mother and my nurse", is full of restrained passion and pathos. Thus Bolingbroke blends the characters of the ambitious adventurer and the national deliverer—the man of the hour. But, though never lacking the dignity of kingship, he wants the personal charm of Richard. Richard is hated by the people he misrules, but captivates his intimates—from the queen and Aumerle down to the unnamed and unseen singer, who unbidden makes music for his disport in prison; nay, even Bolingbroke "loves him, dead". Bolingbroke himself, on the contrary, owes his popularity partly to his warlike prestige, partly to a deliberate combination of habitual reserve with occasional condescension.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the striking passage in *1 Henry IV.* iii. 2. 39 f., where he schools the prince in the proper bearing of a king—

"By being seldom seen, I could not stir  
But like a comet I was wonder'd at:  
That men would tell their children, 'This is he';  
Others would say, 'Where? which is Bolingbroke?'  
And then I stole all courtesy from Heaven,  
And dress'd myself in such humility  
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,  
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,  
Even in the presence of a crowned king".

The whole of this speech should be familiar to the student of *Richard II.*

§ 13. In the contrast of Richard and Bolingbroke lies, as has been said, the key-note of the play. Now that contrast seems to be worked out from two points of view, which belong to different phases of Shakespeare's thought. On the one hand, it represents the struggle between two opposite political principles—kingship by inheritance and kingship by faculty—which has several times involved the destinies of England. It reflects Shakespeare's political thinking, his passion for his country, his loving study of her past. On the other hand, it represents a conflict between two antagonistic types of soul, the rude collision of fantastic inefficiency with practical power—the tragedy of a royal dilettante confronted with a King. It reflects Shakespeare's growing absorption in the profound study of human character and in the vaster issues of life which lie outside the domain of politics and country. In a word, though *Richard II.* is still called a 'History', it is history shaping itself towards tragedy, without having yet lost the relation to political issues and to historical tradition which marks Shakespeare's English histories as a whole. Let us look at the play more closely from these two points of view.

§ 14. Regarded as a 'History', *Richard II.* is the first act in that greater drama closing with *Richard III.*, of which it has been aptly said that the 'hero' is not any English king, but England. In so far, it is a product of that prolonged outburst of national enthusiasm which, fed from many sources, was stimulated to the highest pitch by the ruin of the Armada, and among other literary fruit, produced, besides Shakespeare's great series, Marlowe's *Edward II.* (about 1590), Peele's *Edward I.* (1593), and the anonymous pseudo-Shakespearian *Edward III.* (probably 1596). The history aspect of the play is most prominent in the earlier acts. We are shown the passionate devotion of all the main actors in the story to their country, just raised to European renown by the outwardly glorious reign of Edward III. The magnificent ceremonial of chivalry, which Edward

Two Aspects of  
their Contrast

encouraged, is paraded in unshorn state before us; the visible sign of the great yesterday of conquest, still apparently commemorated in the grand figure of the Shakespearian John of Gaunt. The peculiar sting of Richard's exactions, to the mind of his angry nobles, is that they have been squandered in peaceful luxury—

"Wars have not wasted it, for warr'd he hath not,  
But basely yielded upon compromise  
That which his noble ancestors achieved with blows".

Of this indignant patriotism, in its loftiest form, Gaunt is made the mouthpiece (without a hint from the *Chronicle*). He thus may be said to stand, in our play, as Faulconbridge does in *King John*, as the younger Henry in some sort does in *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.*, for England herself. The closing lines of *King John* breathe a spirit identical with that of Gaunt's prophecy, and have become hardly less famous. Gaunt represents that loyalty, which, with all devotion to the king as the 'deputy of God', yet puts the country before the king. He will not lift his arm against him, but he will speak the daggers he may not use. How subtly is the relation between father and son drawn! In both we discern, though in different proportions, loyalty to law and vision for facts. The father votes his son's banishment; the son obeys. The father, wrung by the misery of England, utters the protest which the son effects. But with Gaunt ideal loyalty preponderates; in Bolingbroke, practical sagacity. Gaunt has more imagination, Bolingbroke more shrewdness. Note how finely this trait is suggested in their parting dialogue (i. 3), where the father's store of imaginative resources in suffering—

"Look, what thy soul holds dear, imagine it  
To lie that way thou go'st, not whence thou comest", &c.

is met with the reply of sorrowful common sense:

"O, who can hold a fire in his hand  
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?" &c.

York and Aumerle belong also essentially to the political

drama, and their relation, though far less subtly drawn, likewise repays study. They are types of that grosser kind of loyalty which is little more than a refined form of cowardice. York, whose submissiveness to Richard is tempered only by one senile protest, surrenders, after a little bluster, to Bolingbroke, and is soon his abject tool; Aumerle, though he remains longer true, saves his life by lying (iv. 1), and by betraying his friends (v. 2).

Lastly, it may be asked, how did Shakespeare view the political problem of the History,—that struggle between *legitimacy* and *aptitude* which the nation so rapidly settled in favour of the latter? That he felt the element of violence in Bolingbroke's procedure is plain from the confession he afterwards attributes to Henry IV. ("How I came by the crown, O God, forgive!" *2 Henry IV.* iv. 5. 219) and to Henry V. ("Not to-day, O Lord, O not to-day, think not upon the fault My father made in compassing the crown!" *Henry V.* iv. 1. 277); but he probably felt no less keenly that the situation admitted of no other solution. He neither excused the act nor ignored its consequences. The usurpation was necessary for England, but it was not the less necessary that England should suffer for it.<sup>1</sup>

§ 15. Secondly, under the aspect of *tragedy*. In Shakespearian tragedy two types of tragic effect appear to be fused:

(1) Tragedy of Nemesis following Guilt or Error; (2) Richard II. Character at discord with Circumstance.

The first is the classical conception of tragedy. It is the note of Shakespeare, that he habitually grounds both guilt and error on character. He rarely indeed, as in *Macbeth*, builds tragedy upon crime; commonly, as in *Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, the crime and its punishment affect only the secondary actors, and the real tragedy belongs to those who err only through some fatal discord between their character and the circumstances in which they are set, but are none the less ruined by their error. There is here no question of *Nemesis*,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kreyssig, *u. s.* p. 200.

of proportion between suffering and fault; Othello is not, in any intelligible sense, *punished* for his credulity, nor Lear for his blindness, nor Hamlet for his thought-sickness.

Now in *Richard II.* the germs of both these types of tragedy are distinctly traceable, but apart. We have the framework of a tragedy of *Guilt* and *Nemesis* in the dark tale of Gloucester's murder, the starting-point of the whole action, which Bolingbroke makes it his mission to avenge. On the other hand, and far more prominently, we have a tragedy of *Character* and *Circumstance*. As handled by Shakespeare, the story of Richard exemplifies a kind of tragic subject which towards the middle of his career obviously interested him,—the discord between the life of thought and feeling pursued for themselves, and the life of practical interests between the poet or the thinker, the philosopher, the lover, and the world in which he assumes, or has thrust upon him, a part he is not fitted to play. Brutus and Hamlet are forced to play parts for which the one is unfitted by his abstract academic creed, the other by his ingrained habits of thought. The love of Romeo and Juliet is fatal to them, because it has to be evolved in a society consumed by mean and purposeless hate. An unmistakable trait of kinship connects these tragic figures with Shakespeare's Richard. He is a creature of thought and emotion, though his thought is not reflective like Hamlet's, but fanciful, his emotion not passionate like Romeo's, but sentimental. He follows momentary impulse, like a brilliant wayward dreamer, taking no account of the laws and limits of the real world, and turning each rude collision with them merely into the starting-point of a new dream. And these laws and limits are for him personified in Bolingbroke, the representative of the people he misruled; the embodiment of that genius for action which enables a man to get the iron will of facts on his side, to make the silent forces of law and custom, of national needs and claims, work for him by making himself their symbol. We shall not overstate the degree of resemblance between Richard and the tragic figures we have

compared with his, if we say that Shakespeare has imagined his character in a way that seems natural and obvious for the poet who within a year or two (earlier or later) created Romeo and Juliet, and who was, some six or eight years later, to create Brutus and Hamlet.

§ 16. *Richard the Second* is not one of the greatest of Shakespeare's plays. But it is one of the most instructive. It does not enlarge our conception of his powers,—of some of them (*e.g.* his humour) it hardly contains a trace. But it gives us valuable insight into their development, at one of

Conclusion. those moments between youth and maturity when the work of any great and progressive artist is apt to be loaded with subtle suggestions of both. This period was apparently not, with Shakespeare, one of those epochs of Titanic storm and stress, in which all the latent potencies of a man's nature are brought confusedly to the surface. It was rather a time of relative clearness and calmness, of measure and reserve, of balance and serenity, intervening between the buoyant extravagances and daring experiments of the young man, and the colossal adventures of the mature Shakespeare 'into strange seas of thought alone'. For a piece of Shakespearian work *Richard II.* seems at first strikingly simple and bare. It has an imposing unity and singleness of plot. It suggests a careful pruning of excrescences rather than that reaching out after various kinds of effect which produces many-sided affinities. Yet, as we have seen, this apparent simpleness and singleness is found, on closer view, compatible with a blending of distinct artistic aims. We watch the procedure of a great tragic poet, emancipating himself from the methods of the national history, and conceiving his work, both on the historical and on the tragical side, under the influence of a reaction from the methods of Marlowe. Of all the political tragedies it is the least Marlowesque. The reaction was in part temporary, in part final and progressive. The infusion of lyrical sweetness and lyrical rhyme is rapidly abandoned for a blank

verse more nervous and masculine than Marlowe's own. The interest of character on which the play is so largely built remains a cardinal point of Shakespeare's art; but interest of *plot* emerges from the complete subordination which marks it here. And the tragedy which arises rather out of character than out of crime becomes the absorbing theme of Shakespeare's maturity. In *Richard* we have one of the earliest notes of that profound Shakespearian *pity* which has little relation to the personal compassion excited by the sufferings of Marlowe's Edward; pity which penetrates beyond the doom of an individual to the social *milieu* by which the doom was provoked; and reflects a sad recognition of what Mr. Pater has called "the unkindness of things themselves",—the tragedy of the world itself. Such pity, like every emotion that lifts beyond personal misfortune, has its 'purifying' power upon meaner forms of pity, and by drawing us into conscious contact with the universal issues of life, exalts while it saddens. It is the test of great tragedies not to fail of this exalting power upon the spectator, however harrowing the sufferings which evolve it; so that, in the noble words of one of the great moral teachers of our time,—“though a man's sojourn in this region be short, yet when he falls again the smell of the divine fire has passed upon him, and he bears about him, for a time at least, among the rank vapours of the earth something of the freshness and fragrance of the higher air.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>T. H. Green: *An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times*, p. 9. I borrow this quotation from Mr. H. C. Beeching's admirable edition of *Julius Caesar* (p. vii), the more willingly, since Mr. Beeching's view of Shakespearian tragedy is not precisely my own.