

New Clarendon Shakespeare

Julius Caesar



THE NEW CLARENDON SHAKESPEARE

JULIUS CAESAR

Edited by

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GENERAL PREFACE

THIS edition of Shakespeare aims primarily at presenting the text in such a way that it can be easily read and understood. The language of Shakespeare presents considerable difficulties to the beginner, difficulties which are soon forgotten and overlooked by readers who are familiar with the plays. The answers of examination candidates often reveal unexpected ignorance of quite ordinary Shakespearian phraseology and vocabulary. In the notes, therefore, the main emphasis has been placed on the interpretation of words and phrases. Textual and linguistic matter, to which much space was given in the old Clarendon Press editions of Wright and Clark, has been kept in the background, but explanation is prominent. The notes have been divided; words and phrases capable of a short explanation are glossed at the foot of the page, while the more difficult passages are treated after the text in the general commentary.

In the commentary alternative explanations and the mention of critics by name have been avoided as far as possible; on the other hand there are a number of less elementary notes on textual points and other matters not strictly necessary for younger students, and these appear in smaller type and within square brackets.

The editor's introduction is intentionally brief and usually confined to a statement of facts; but, taken in conjunction with what follows the commentary, it will provide pupils in colleges as well as in schools with all that is necessary to a complete study of the play.

After the commentary is printed a substantial selection from the best criticism of the play, old and new; a feature in which this edition of Shakespeare follows the plan set by the Clarendon English series. Here some matter will be

found suitable for more advanced students; and the inclusion of varying opinions will provide material for reflection and comparison. It is the editor's belief that students can best be taught to criticize by the provision of material which they may use as a starting-point as well as a model.

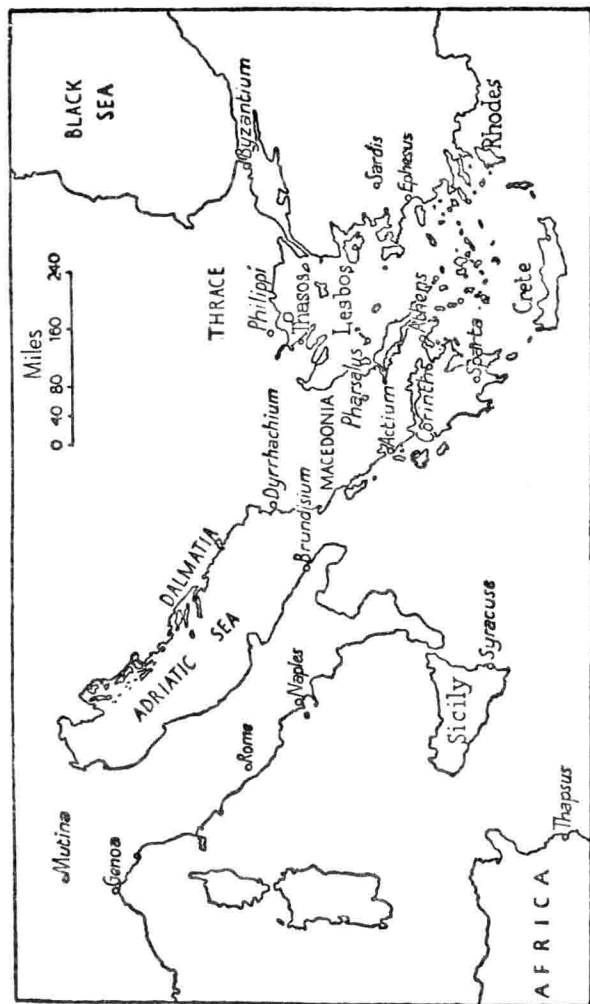
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The text of Julius Caesar here printed is free from omission or alteration.

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INTRODUCTION

DATE AND CHARACTER OF THE PLAY

THE play of *Julius Caesar* has always been popular both as a reading and as an acting play. There have been rare dissentients like Coleridge who found it 'frigid and dull', but for the most part it has had a wide public. Few passages in Shakespeare are more famous than Antony's speech in the Forum scene, or the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius. When the members of the King's Company gathered together Shakespeare's plays in 1623, *Julius Caesar* was printed among the tragedies. It is a tragedy, but it has none of the grandeur and darkness which overshadows plays like *Othello* and *Macbeth*. It belongs rather, with *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, to a group of Roman plays in which there is a restraint that is almost classical. Shakespeare's antiquity is life-like enough, but the 'high Roman fashion' in which these men and women lived, keeps their actions quietly proportioned.

Let us first consider the place of *Julius Caesar* in the development of Shakespeare's art. All recent editors agree that it was probably written and acted in 1599 or 1600. For this date there is some external evidence:

(1) *Julius Caesar* is *not* mentioned in the list of Shakespeare's plays given by Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (Wit's Treasurehouse) in September 1598. It was, therefore, probably later than this.

(2) A certain Thomas Platter records that on September 21, 1599, he saw 'the tragedy of the first emperor Julius . . . very well acted' (probably, but not certainly, Shakespeare's play).

(3) In *Every Man out of His Humour*, which was performed in 1599, Ben Jonson has this sentence (Act III, scene i): 'reason long since is fled to animals, you know', which may be an allusion to *Julius Caesar*, III. ii. 104-5:

O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason.

(4) Weever's *Mirror of Martyrs* (printed 1601, but ready for the press, according to its dedication, 'some two years ago', i.e. 1599) has the following echo:

The many-headed multitude were drawne
By Brutus speech, that Caesar was ambitious,
When eloquent Mark Antonie had showne
His vertues, who but Brutus then was vicious.

allusions in other works confirm a date at least before 1603.

If we accept the date 1599-1600, and also the order of his plays given in the first Appendix, *Julius Caesar* comes between *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. With each of these plays it has affinities of style and subject. It has still something of the historical play about it, yet the character of Brutus is a foretaste of the irresolute Hamlet. This was also the period of his most mature comedies, of *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As you Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. Like his own Antony,

He was disposed to mirth, but on the sudden
A Roman thought hath struck him,

and he employs his new medium of tragedy tentatively, showing perhaps some uncertainty in the presentation of Caesar himself. Moreover, even if the play is almost the tragedy of Brutus, it must, like the English history plays, bear the title of the chief man in it. For the subject was already common on the stage when Shakespeare took it up.

OTHER PLAYS ON JULIUS CAESAR

As early as 1562 a play named *Julys Sesar* appears to have been performed at Court; at least two others are mentioned before 1582 when a Latin play, *Caesar interfectus*, with an Epilogue by Eedes, which alone survives, was performed at Christ Church, Oxford (cf. note to III. i. 77). Polonius, it may be recalled, 'did enact Julius Caesar' at his university. The diary of the manager Henslowe mentions a *Seser and Pompie* as performed by the Admiral's men in 1594; and the performance of Shakespeare's play was followed in 1607 by the publication of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* by Sir W. Alexander, Earl of Stirling, a passage from which is quoted on p. 12. The four *Monarchicke Tragedies* of the Earl of Stirling are constructed strictly on the model of Seneca, and their 'philosophising or feeble rant' only serve to show up by contrast the dramatic genius of Shakespeare.

OTHER REFERENCES TO JULIUS CAESAR
BY SHAKESPEARE

If this play had contained all Shakespeare's references to the Dictator, we might have been tempted to conclude that Shakespeare did not appreciate his greatness; so that, in order to estimate Shakespeare's view of Caesar, it is well to consider the allusions he makes to him elsewhere. Julius Caesar is mentioned in more than half the plays before *Julius Caesar*. The references which follow are arranged in the probable order of composition, and the more interesting are quoted in full:

2 *Henry VI*, IV. i. 137 and IV. vii. 65.

3 *Henry VI*, III. i. 18 and V. v. 53 (Margaret has lost her son at Tewkesbury):

They that stabb'd Caesar shed no blood at all
 Did not offend, nor were not worthy blame,
 If this foul deed were by, to equal it.

1 *Henry VI*, I. i. 56:

A far more glorious star thy soul will make,
 Than Julius Caesar,

and I. ii. 139.

Richard III, III. i. 69–88, especially 84, &c.:

That Julius Caesar was a famous man;
 With what his valour did enrich his wit,
 His wit set down to make his valour live:
 Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
 For now he lives in fame, though not in life.

and IV. iv. 837.

Love's Labour's Lost, V. ii. 615.

Richard II, V. i. 2.

2 *Henry IV*, I. i. 20:

Ol such a day,
 So fought, so follow'd, and so fairly won,
 Came not till now to dignify the times
 Since Caesar's fortunes.

Henry V, Prol. to Act V. 25.

The mayor and all his brethren in best sort,
 Like to the senators of the antique Rome,
 With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
 Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in.

After *Julius Caesar* references are less common, except in plays connected with Rome, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline*. There is one each in *As You Like It* (V. ii. 25), *Merry Wives* (I. iii. 9), *Measure for Measure* (II. i. 269), *Othello* (II. iii. 128), and *Macbeth* (III. i. 57), but these are mere

passing references, while those in *Hamlet* show the subject still fresh in his memory (I. i. 113–20; III. ii. 108; v. i. 235):

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.

A discussion of Shakespeare's picture of Caesar in our play will be found on pp. 161–5.

SOURCES OF THE PLAY

In his plays from English History Shakespeare chiefly followed Holinshed. In his three plays on Roman subjects—*Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*—he made still greater use of Plutarch. Plutarch wrote his *Parallel Lives* of noble Greeks and Romans in Greek about the end of the first century A.D.; they were translated into French by Amyot in 1560, and from the French version into English by Sir Thomas North in 1579. The printer, Field, was a native of Stratford-on-Avon and may possibly have put his fellow townsman in the way of acquiring the book either in its first or second edition (1595). North's translation is one of the greatest monuments of Elizabethan prose, and it is not surprising that Shakespeare often followed it even verbally. For *Julius Caesar* he used the lives of Caesar and of Brutus, and, to a slight degree, that of Antony. It is not certain that Shakespeare used any other source for this play. He may have drawn slightly on Appian's history of the Civil War (translated 1578) for Antony's speech to the crowd, and on Garnier's *Cornélie* (1574, translated by Kyd, 1594) for the first conversation of Brutus and Cassius, and even on

Belleforest's *History of Hamlet* for the speech of Brutus to the crowd (though this remained in French till 1608).

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF PLUTARCH

Shakespeare's debt to Plutarch in his three Roman plays far exceeds his debt to his sources in any of his other plays; and the reason is not difficult to find. North's Plutarch is itself great literature. No one reads Holinshed's chronicle for its own sake, but Plutarch's lives have fascinated men of all countries, and North would be read even if Shakespeare had never used him. Shakespeare followed North's Plutarch still more closely in *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* than in *Julius Caesar*, but the extent of Shakespeare's borrowings even here can be judged from the specimen passages printed in Appendix IV to this edition. Shakespeare, however, never uses his source slavishly, and it is instructive to contrast the more literal adherence to Plutarch of the Earl of Stirling, for example in Portia's speech to Brutus:

I was not (Brutus) match'd with thee, to be
A partner onely of thy boord, and bed:
Each servile whore in those might equall me,
Who but for pleasure, or for wealth did wed;
No, Portia spous'd thee minding to remaine
Thy Fortunes partner, whether good or ill. . . ;
If thus thou seek thy sorrows to conceale
Through a disdaine, or a mistrust of me,
Then to the world what way can I reveale,
How great a matter I would do for thee?
And though our sexe too talkative be deem'd,
As those whose tongues import our greatest pow'rs,
For secrets still bad Treasurers esteem'd,
Of others greedy, prodigall of ours:
'Good education may reforme defects'

And this may leade me to a virtuous life,
(Whil'st such rare patterns generous worth respects)
I Cato's daughter am, and Brutus wife.

Cf. North's *Plutarch*, as quoted on p. 188 in the Appendix, and *Julius Caesar*, II. i. 279-95.

Plutarch wrote biography; Shakespeare wrote plays. Narrative must be turned into drama. Shakespeare fuses material from three separate lives; he throws much of the narrative into action and dialogue (e.g. the death of Cassius); and, most important of all, he has to seize upon what he considers the central situations, the high lights of the story, and group other events round them. He may have, for dramatic purposes, to enlarge on or to pass over some aspects of a character. He carries farther, for example, the idealization of Brutus, ignoring a fault which Plutarch mentioned only to excuse, and omitting to mention that Brutus had been pardoned by Caesar for taking part with Pompey against him.

The dramatist naturally adds many touches of detail, such as the naked sword in Casca's hand in Act I, scene iii, or the presence of Calphurnia in Act I, scene ii. Or, again, a whole scene may be built up out of one sentence in Plutarch, as is the opening scene of the play. It is because the process throws so much light on Shakespeare's art, and not in order that the student may be concerned with trifling departures from history, that material for further comparison is printed at the end of this volume. Divergences from Plutarch of any interest are mentioned in the notes.

SHAKESPEARE AND HISTORY

It is the dramatist's business to sustain interest; he must ignore the delays and dull patches of ordinary life. This usually involves in a play based on history some speeding up of events. Shakespeare ignores, for example, the

meeting of the senate on the day after Caesar's murder, and takes us straight forward to the funeral speech which was really several days later. Between the events portrayed in scene ii and scene iii of Act i a month elapsed in reality; the two battles at Philippi were separated by an interval of twenty days; and so on. The events described in the play occurred over a period of more than two years. The following chronological summary is intended to give the historical facts most relevant to the play. To appreciate the position of Caesar and his work for Rome, some acquaintance with the causes of the break-down of the Republican system of government is necessary, and these, if not already familiar to the student, may be found discussed in all books on Roman history.

B.C.

100. Birth of C. Julius Caesar.
- 58-49. Caesar's conquest of Gaul.
- 52-50. Pompey holds chief power in Rome, but does not abolish the republic.
49. Civil war between Caesar and Pompey; Pompey, accompanied by most of the senators, evacuates Italy.
48. Caesar defeats Pompey at Pharsalus (Pharsalia). Flight and death of Pompey. Caesar dictator.
47. Caesar wins a battle at Zela and settles Asia (Minor).
46. Caesar defeats Pompeians in Africa at Thapsus. Death of Cato.
45. Caesar defeats Pompeians in Spain at Munda. Various administrative reforms at Rome.
44. Caesar enters Rome in triumph (*January 26*) and at the Lupercalia (*February 5*) rejects the crown; prepares to leave Rome for Parthian war. A conspiracy of 60 republicans results in **MURDER**

B.C.

- OF CAESAR (*March 15*) in Pompey's senate house.
44. *March 15.* Antony secures Caesar's treasure and public and private papers.
March 17. The Senate enacts an amnesty for Caesar's murderers but confirms Caesar's acts.
March 20. Antony's funeral speech over Caesar, Brutus and Cassius leave Rome.
April. Octavius arrives in Rome; the senate turns to him.
 Antony besieges D. Brutus in Mutina.
43. The Senate declares war against Antony. Octavius and the consuls raise the siege of Mutina.
 Brutus occupies Macedonia, and Cassius Syria.
 Breach of Octavius with the Senate and coalition with Antony and Lepidus.
 Brutus and Cassius in Asia prepare for war.
42. Antony and Octavius cross to Greece, leaving Lepidus in Rome.
 Campaign of PHILIPPI; in the first battle Brutus is victorious, but Cassius kills himself; in the second (twenty days later) Brutus is defeated and kills himself.
- (31. In the battle of Actium Octavius defeats Antony and is left master of the Roman world.)

THE TEXT OF THE PLAY

Julius Caesar was first printed in 1623 in the collected edition of Shakespeare's plays known as the First Folio.

We have no earlier Quarto edition of this play by itself, as we have for sixteen of the plays of Shakespeare. But the absence of any other authority for our text than the Folio is hardly a matter for regret, since that which has come down to us is so good. The editors of the (older)

Cambridge Shakespeare found it necessary to admit into the text only nine conjectures departing at all seriously from the Folio reading, apart from corrections of spelling or punctuation. They have in these been followed by most modern editors (see the notes in this edition on I. ii. 72; I. ii. 155; I. iii. 65; I. iii. 129; II. i. 40; II. ii. 46; III. i. 39; III. ii. 225; IV. i. 37). This edition follows the text of the *Oxford Shakespeare*, except that the Folio is restored in I. ii. 154; I. iii. 21; II. i. 59, 72, and 283; II. ii. 76; IV. i. 44; IV. iii. 28, and an emendation accepted in I. ii. 72.

The editors of the First Folio claimed to have given the plays according to the 'True Originall Copies'. This claim cannot be granted for all the plays, but in no case does the argument from an uncorrupted text justify us in feeling nearer to Shakespeare's autograph than in *Julius Caesar*. The cleanness of the text perhaps points to a scribe's fair copy as being the direct ancestor of the Folio; for Shakespeare's own handwriting usually seems to have given the printer more difficulty than did the copy for *Julius Caesar*.

But if the text of *Julius Caesar* is uncorrupt in wording, that does not exclude the possibility that Shakespeare himself revised it between its original writing or presentation and the version we now have. We have conclusive evidence of revision in the case of some plays, e.g. *Love's Labour's Lost*; and such revision in *Julius Caesar* would explain most easily the difficulties discussed in the notes to III. i. 47 and IV. iii. 185. But it cannot be regarded as more than possible.

Some critics, however, are not content with this and have held *Julius Caesar* to be a combination of two plays into one. By others *Julius Caesar* has been regarded as 'a play of two dates'. Such a passage as V. iii. 47-58, 'So I am free . . . O my heart', has been cited to prove by its style an earlier date than 1599. Such