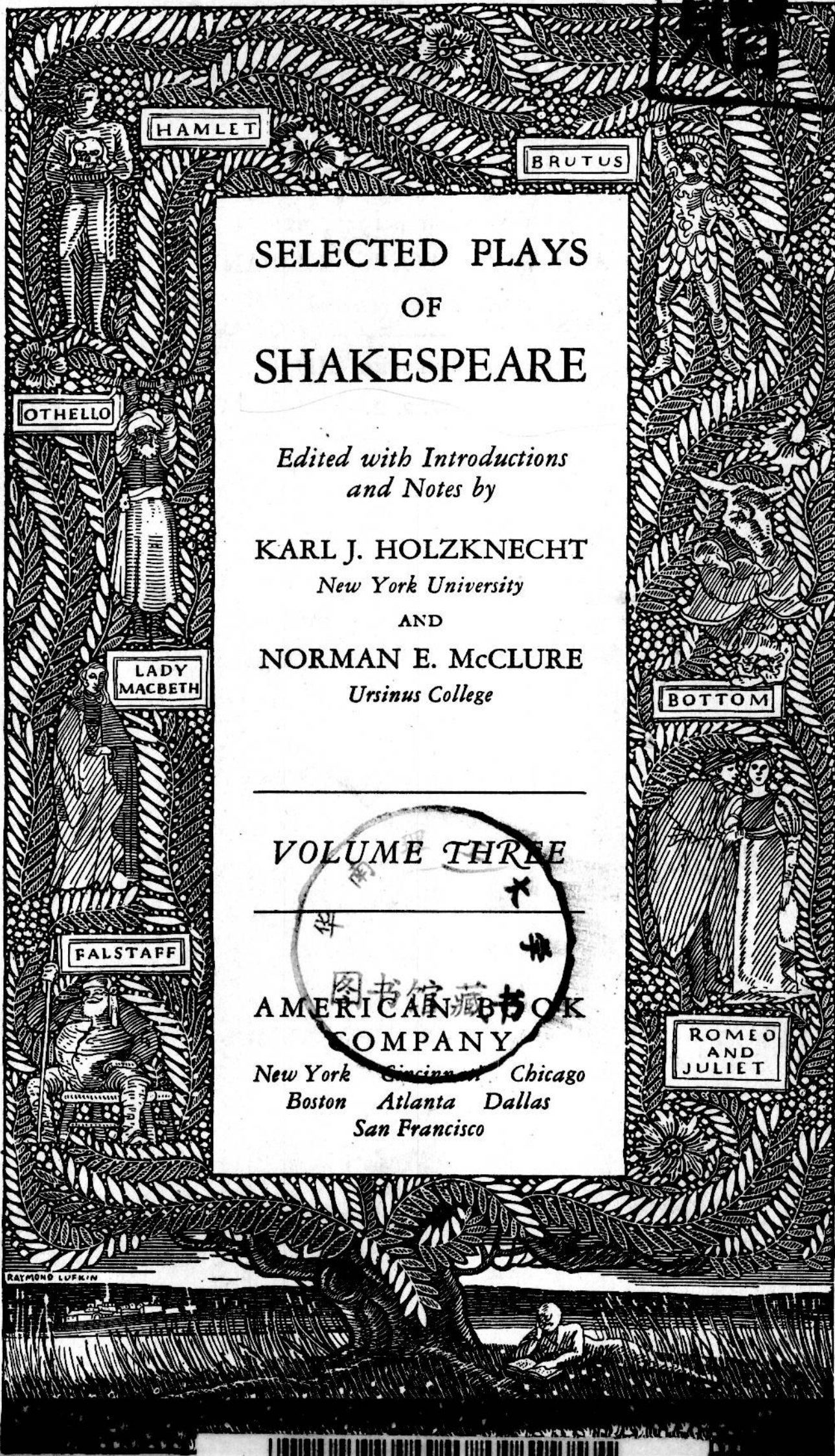


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SELECTED PLAYS
OF
SHAKESPEARE

*Edited with Introductions
and Notes by*

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VOLUME THREE

AMERICAN BOOK
COMPANY

New York Cincinnati Chicago
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SHAKESPEARE, III

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SELECTED PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

SELECTED PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

❧ *Volume I*

KING RICHARD II
KING HENRY IV, PART I
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
JULIUS CÆSAR
HAMLET
THE WINTER'S TALE

❧ *Volume II*

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
ROMEO AND JULIET
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
KING HENRY V
KING LEAR
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
THE TEMPEST

❧ *Volume III*

KING RICHARD III
AS YOU LIKE IT
TWELFTH NIGHT
OTHELLO
MACBETH
CYMBELINE

PREFACE

The present edition of Shakespeare, designed for the student and the general reader, provides the plays that are usually read in undergraduate college courses. Each volume includes plays that represent not only the several types of drama that Shakespeare wrote, but also the successive stages of his development as a dramatist. Discussion of textual problems and controversial matters has been reduced to a minimum, and the editorial apparatus has been limited to consideration of the plays as drama, to questions of interpretation, and to the elucidation of Elizabethan language. Notes and glossary appear together at the foot of each page, in order that the reader may not need to turn elsewhere in the book for the interpretation of difficult passages, and in order that he may recognize and understand the many words that since Shakespeare's day have changed their meaning but not their form.

The text of the present edition is based upon an independent examination of the more important Quartos and Folios. Universally accepted emendations are, as a rule, admitted without comment, and the punctuation, which in the early editions is of uncertain value, has been modernized. The *dramatis personæ* lists, which have no Shakespearean authority, and which in most modern editions have been merely reprinted from Rowe's edition of 1709, have been rearranged. Further, since nothing but tradition justifies the retention of the spare, formal stage directions found in the early texts or supplied by Rowe, the editors have felt free to amplify the stage directions wherever the reader might have difficulty in following the action. Finally, for the sake of convenience in reference, the standard Globe line-numbering has been adopted, although the prose passages here occupy somewhat less space than in the Globe edition.

The maps of Shakespeare's England and Shakespeare's London mark all of the places mentioned in the plays. Visscher's *View of London and Westminster*, dating from the year of Shakespeare's death, and the other illustrations bring before the reader scenes which Shakespeare knew, or which are closely associated with his plays.

CONTENTS

THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD III

Introduction, 3

Text, 13

AS YOU LIKE IT

Introduction, 155

Text, 165

TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL

Introduction, 261

Text, 267

OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

Introduction, 357

Text, 363

THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH

Introduction, 483

Text, 491

CYMBELINE, KING OF BRITAIN

Introduction, 579

Text, 589

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Tower of London, 83

Middle Temple Hall, London, 335

Visscher's View of London and Westminster, 464-465

The Tragedy of King Richard III



Introduction

RELATION TO SHAKESPEARE'S OTHER HISTORIES

Of the ten plays written by Shakespeare on English historical subjects, a succession of eight, beginning with *Richard II* and ending with *Richard III*, forms a closely connected whole, covering events roughly from 1398 to 1485. This series of dramas divides naturally into two groups of four plays each: one tetralogy, from *Richard II* to *Henry V*, describing the rise of the House of Lancaster, the stabilization of its rule, and the unification of the realm under an ideal medieval king; the other, from *Henry VI* to *Richard III*, tracing the rapid decline of Lancaster before the rival House of York, the disastrous Wars of the Roses, the final overthrow of a hunchbacked villain who has made himself king, and the union of the Red Rose and the White at the accession of the Lancastrian Henry Tudor and his marriage with Elizabeth of York. As the product of Shakespeare's maturity, the group treating the earlier portions of this history is, as drama, in every way superior to that treating the later; nevertheless, structurally, the two tetralogies have much in common, and the whole has the coherence of a carefully conceived unit. The first tetralogy develops the shrewd prophecy of civil strife which "plume-plucked" Richard II makes to Northumberland, the ladder by which the Lancastrians mounted the throne (*Richard II*, V, i, 59 ff.):

Thou shalt think,
Though he divide the realm and give thee half,
It is too little, helping him to all;
And he shall think that thou, which know'st the way
To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
Being ne'er so little urged, another way
To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne.

The three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* develop from the same play the prophecy of the Bishop of Carlisle concerning dynastic wars:

O, if you raise this house against this house,
It will the woefullest division prove
That ever fell upon this cursed earth.

(IV, i, 145 ff.)

The Tragedy of King Richard III, therefore, must be regarded not as an individual play or merely as the last of a series dealing with the wounds of civil war, but as a climax of a longer story which had its origin in Richard II's reign. To understand *Richard III* some knowledge of earlier political and social events is essential.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To the modern historian, the fifteenth century is remarkable chiefly for the decline of the feudal system and the temporary, costly failure of an interesting experiment in constitutional government. The revolution of 1399, which resulted in the deposition of Richard II and the accession of Henry of Lancaster, exalted Parliament to a position it was not again to assume until the seventeenth century. Government by a Parliamentary nominee presupposes not merely a high degree of administrative efficiency, but also habits of order in the country and stability of power among the nobles. But conditions such as these did not prevail in the fifteenth century. By force Henry IV contrived to subdue the factions that opposed him, and Henry V inaugurated an ambitious policy of conquest abroad. The reign of Henry VI, his weak, monklike son, however, is a complete illustration of the peril growing to a prince who has subjects more powerful than himself. Rivalry between self-seeking nobles, each supported by an army of liveried retainers, resulted in the chaos of insurrection and a war of factions.

Northumberland found his counterpart in Warwick the King-maker, and a movement parallel to that which had placed Bolingbroke on the throne now replaced Lancaster by York. In the words of Bishop Stubbs:

The house of Lancaster had reigned constitutionally, but had fallen by lack of governance. The house of York followed, and, although they ruled with a stronger will, failed altogether to remedy the evils to which they succeeded and contributed in no small degree to destroy all that was destructible in the constitution. . . . England learned a lesson from both, and owes a sort of debt to both: the rule of the house of Lancaster proved that the nation was not ready for the efficient use of the liberties it had won, and that of the house of York proved that the nation was too full grown to be fettered again with the bonds from which it had escaped (*Constitutional History of England*, III, 293 and 251).

With the constitutional significances of these events Shakespeare the dramatist is unconcerned. For him, history is but the play of personal forces, and in the opening sentence of Hall's chronicle he found the theme of his historical dramas:

What mischief hath insurged in realms by intestine division, what depopulation hath ensued in countries by civil dissension, what detestable murder hath been committed in cities by separate factions, and what calamity hath ensued in famous regions by domestical discord and unnatural controversy: Rome hath felt, Italy can testify, France can bear witness, Beaume can tell, Scotland may write, Denmark can show, and especially this noble realm of England can apparently declare and make demonstration.

In *Richard III*, through the perspective of peace and stability that had been achieved by the firm rule of the Tudors, Shakespeare writes on the theme that the monarch who puts his personal ambitions before the national good destroys both England and himself.

SOURCE

As in all of his English history plays, Shakespeare follows closely in *Richard III* what he found written about this troublesome reign in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (second edition, 1587). Holinshed's account, however, is based upon earlier chroniclers: for the reign of Edward IV he relied upon Edward Hall's *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548-50), and for the biography of Richard upon Polydore Vergil's *Historia Angliæ* (1534) and *The History of King Richard the Third* (1557), attributed to Sir Thomas More, who had been brought up in the household of Thomas Morton, the Bishop of Ely of this play. To the works of Hall and More Shakespeare may have had direct recourse, but the principal authority for his historical facts is Holinshed.

Yet, when all is said, it is only an outline that Shakespeare found in the chronicles. The emphasis and the significance of his story, as well as the interrelations of persons and events, are entirely his, and always he felt himself free to select. He condenses happenings and, when it suits his purposes, occasionally invents a scene, like that of Richard's wooing the Lady Anne. In order that Richard's career may stand out sharply as both the logical climax and the epitome of the whole selfish conflict between Lancaster and York, he freely alters history as he received it. Even when the chroniclers are content merely to hint, Shakespeare makes Richard responsible for all of the crimes laid to his charge and traces everything to his one controlling passion for the crown. When historical time interferes with his interpretation, he alters it. Born in 1452, the Richard of this play takes part in the first campaign of the Wars of the Roses and fights valiantly at St. Albans on May 22, 1455. (Cf. *2 Henry VI*, V, i, ii, iii.) Henceforth it is Richard's dream that is responsible for both his father's and his brother's struggle

for the crown. In *3 Henry VI*, his thirst for vengeance and his passion for power are studied in detail; in *Richard III* he ceases to be the servant of his house and thinks only of himself. For Shakespeare both dynastic and moral issues were involved on Bosworth Field, and Richard's death at the hands of Henry of Richmond is justified on grounds of dramatic propriety, not of authentic history. Finally, to deduce the woes of York from the crimes against Lancaster, as well as to assert the justice of Fate upon both factions, Shakespeare keeps alive Queen Margaret, once the infatuating evil genius of Lancaster, now a tragic Senecan hag who utters horrible prophecies. Around her inescapable curses he constructs his play.

THE CENTRAL CHARACTER

The myth of Richard Crookback is one of the most amazing growths of the sixteenth century. Not only More and Polydore Vergil, but other chroniclers, zealously bent upon justifying the Tudor accession and proving Richard a villain and a usurper, so blackened the character of this last of the Plantagenet kings that today it is impossible to learn the truth about him. Moreover, the diabolical Renaissance villain that they created, deformed in body and haunted by horrible dreams, passed readily into popular tradition and was confirmed in numerous literary productions. *A Mirror for Magistrates* in its various editions from 1559 to 1610 related no less than eleven legends about Richard; a Latin play, *Richardus Tertius*, by Thomas Legge, a Cambridge don, transformed him into a Senecan tyrant; and the anonymous *True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, another Senecan drama printed in 1594, introduced him to the public stage. The account-book of Philip Henslowe, who owned several Elizabethan theatres, mentions a number of plays on Richard, Edward IV, Jane Shore, Buckingham, and Henry Richmond, most of which are lost. By the end of the century this mythical figure was well rounded, and, because it passed into Shake-

Shakespeare's play, it has remained to the present time the popularly accepted portrait of Richard.

Naturally, estimates of the king by modern historians are frequently at variance with Shakespeare's picture. Some writers, like Sir George Buck (1646) and Horace Walpole (1768), have raised "historic doubts" and pronounced the sixteenth-century biographies of Richard—and Shakespeare's play—sheer "invention and romance." Shakespeare merely accepted without question the Richard he found in chronicle and tradition, but had he, like the modern historian, searched for evidence and weighed it critically, it is doubtful that he would have changed his character in any essential way. As dramatist, rather than politician or historian, Shakespeare had no interest in the petty propaganda of early Tudor times.

THE PLAY AS A TRAGEDY

Once he had been attracted to the character of Richard in the chronicles, Shakespeare's portrayal of him was to a certain extent dictated by the dramatic fashions of his day. To the Elizabethans, as to the men of the Middle Ages, tragedy was a reversal of fortune, the story of one who stood in high estate and ended wretchedly. But, partly because of the influence of the Latin dramatist Seneca the Younger (4 B.C.—65 A.D.), and partly because of a basic philosophical change in the sixteenth century, tragedy had become primarily concerned with crime and its retribution, the working out of an inscrutable Providence, and, in effect, a justification of the ways of God to man. Each of Seneca's rhetorical dramas shows the nemesis that follows the wicked life of some legendary or historical character, and the Elizabethan dramatist who sought similar themes treated them in the Senecan manner. Directly, or indirectly through French or Italian, Seneca's influence was an important one upon the English tragedy of the 1580's, and one variety of Senecan play, the revenge melodrama adapted to the public

stage by Thomas Kyd, was occasionally revived during the next quarter of a century. Strictly speaking, *Richard III* is not a revenge tragedy, but reminiscences of the Senecan vogue may be found in the bloodshed and the broken oaths, the inspired curses, the dreams, the portents, and the ghosts of this play. Particularly Senecan is the fatal symbolism of Margaret and the frank self-analysis of Richard.

Further, the type of hero which Christopher Marlowe had made popular, as well as an imitation of Marlowe's grand style, may be found in Shakespeare's play. Like Marlowe's tragedies, *Richard III* is unified by a central dynamic personality, a sinister, melodramatic spirit, dominated by a single, unswerving passion for sovereign power. Like most of Marlowe's heroes—like Richard II who still retains a trace of the influence—Richard III contends mainly with outward forces and very little with himself. His nature is not divided, and there is in him little of the absorbing inner conflict of the maturer Shakespearean tragic hero—of Brutus, “with himself at war,” of Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Antony, or Coriolanus, each of whom is the victim of a struggle in his own soul.

In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

Unlike Shakespeare's other villain-hero, Macbeth, Richard has no regrets and reveals no goodness of heart that contributes to his undoing; he is overwhelmed solely by the righteous power which rises to oppose him.

“*Richard III* may be considered as properly a stage-play,” wrote Hazlitt; “it belongs to the theatre, rather than to the closet,” and, on the whole, students of the play have confirmed his opinion. From the days of Richard Burbage the play has been one of the most popular with actors and with audiences alike. “Yet,” sighed Dr. Johnson, “I know not whether it has not happened to [Shakespeare] as to others, to be praised most