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OF

SHAKESPEARE'S KING JOHN

Studies of the Historical Plays of Shakespeare

BY

H. A. DAVIDSON, M. A.

The Study-Guide Series

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The Study of the Historical Plays of Shakespeare

H. A. DAVIDSON

This guide for the study of Shakespeare's historical plays is arranged for practical ends. No attempt has been made to specialize the study in any one direction. The aim is rather to secure intelligent reading and thorough familiarity with the text of the plays and at the same time to aid effectively in the study of the drama as a form of literary art.

The objects which have determined the selection and arrangement of topics for study may be summarized as follows:

It is intended to aid students, first, in reading with close attention, and in retaining, from scene to scene, the dramatic significance of all that has preceded, that, as the plot develops it may carry the imagination steadily forward to those complex crises of dramatic action in which many conflicting motives mingle.

Secondly, to aid in understanding the dramatic relation and significance of plot and counter-plot, of mingling tendencies and forces.

Thirdly, to aid readers in catching, in each scene and act the true significance of the characters that carry the action. In the dramas of Shakespeare interest always centers in the

action. Scenes are not arranged for the purpose of presenting characters, but characters are never mere lay figures brought together for the purpose of acting. Words and acts spring profoundly and intimately from what the persons are; acts seem to reveal depths and complexities of human nature such that the qualities of men and women predetermine events.

Fourthly, the topics for study are arranged for the purpose of leading students indirectly, but effectively, to an understanding of the principles of dramatic art as manifest in the writing and arrangement of plays.

Fifthly, little emphasis has been placed, in topics for study, upon reference work. A few books of reference have been suggested in the bibliography; these should be used constantly as aids, whenever the reader's familiarity with the vocabulary, syntax, or widely varied illustrative material in use in Shakespeare's day is insufficient for clear and full apprehension of the dramatist's meaning. A limited vocabulary, or unfamiliarity with the literary conceits and phrases of the Elizabethan period might easily deprive the reader of a just understanding of the text and, certainly, of appreciation of the rich play of fancy, the ready wit, and the glancing intelligence of the master mind of the period. The study of the language and the literary qualities of Shakespeare's text as an end, should be reserved for the class-room, or the seminar, in connection with an adequate library and under competent guidance.

Sixthly, no adequate study of the sources of Shakespeare's plays is possible apart from the resources of libraries. Such references to sources as are found in this Study-Guide are limited in scope and intended only for the illustration of the

dramatist's skill and method in adapting old material so that, in the result, the borrowed parts assume new and more significant meanings and contribute to a whole of high dramatic value. This topic, when pursued as an end by students of competent training and scholarship, is rich in the reward it offers.

The Arden edition of the text suggested for use, contains the material for an elementary study of Shakespeare's rhythm and lines. Further study of this topic is left to the initiative of individual students, or the guidance of instructors. Many subjects of special study, not touched upon in this guide, will suggest themselves to Shakespearean scholars, but they do not fall within the scope and purpose of this little book. For the most part, also, such subjects are profitable only for advanced students who need no other guide than the purpose in hand, and who are abundantly able to avail themselves of the ripe scholarship of those who have given years to the special topic that claims their interest.

It remains to say a word of apology for the mingling of the study of English history with the study of Shakespeare's plays. In a narrow sense, the student of the historical plays of Shakespeare has no concern with the period of English history in which the events of the play belong. He asks from what source Shakespeare drew his material and, when he has found the chronicle, or the earlier play, used by the dramatist, he directs his attention to the discovery of the selection and adaptation by which the new play was arranged. The Shakespearean scholar is, theoretically, impregnable in his position that we should inquire only for the contemporary historical source of

the characters and events used by the dramatist as the basis of the scenes and acts he imagined. In practice, this is usually interpreted narrowly and, as a result, attention is centered upon the Chronicle, or 'Lives,' or earlier play, from which the dramatist borrowed. This examination fails to reveal a most important element in Shakespeare's work, one, in truth, of greater significance than any single source of conversations, or scenes, or stage arrangement. Into his adaptations of old chronicle-plays or histories, Shakespeare infused something derived from no one of them,—a new relation of parts, a deeper understanding of political events, an interpretation of history as he knew it, that seems almost prophetic. To the question of how he came upon this wide comprehension of the meaning and trend of events extending over several generations, it is an easy answer to suggest the genius of the greatest dramatist the world has known, but a closer analysis shows that Shakespeare's special gifts lay, first, in his exceeding readiness and versatility in absorbing phases of the life, belief, and knowledge of his own generation; secondly, in his power of intellectual detachment from his own experiences so that he both shared the emotions and experiences of his fellow men, and also compared, related, and judged; and thirdly, in such gifts of mind or temperament that he unconsciously grasped the fundamental and permanent principles of dramatic art. The first of these qualities made him the great exponent of the minds and passions of all men in all ages; the second made him a practical student of political and historical events, and enabled him to interpret their meaning; the third, his supreme gift as a dramatist, enabled him to present the

rich fruitage of his mental activity in an art-form of permanent and living vitality. The result is that in his interpretation of history, in his understanding of men, or of times, Shakespeare often outruns his own historical knowledge. In *King Richard Second*, for instance, he seizes upon the great transitions taking place in that age and by a stroke of genius he relates them, both to the theories and practices of royal prerogative in the reigns of the Plantaganet kings of England, and to the rise of those forces that, long after, in the reigns of Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth, brought forth the new England of modern times.

Of all this, the student of Holinshed's *Chronicle* or of *The Troublesome Raigne*, or of Marlowe's *Edward Second*, learns little; but if, presently, he turn to modern histories and, by means of the best, inquires what the underground forces were that shaped the destinies of the English people between the time of King John and that of Richard Second, he will find later, on comparison, that Shakespeare has included in his play almost every one. The demands of the laborers, the far reaching results of the Black Death, the changes in industry, the rise of a commercial class, the passing of the power of the armed knight and the decay of the walled town, the new demands of the Commons, the attitude of the church, are all touched upon. To the careful student of history, the play seems to embody the complex elements of unrest that marked the age, while Richard and Hereford respectively stand for the earlier and the later conceptions of kingship in England. The critic and the historian seem to be writing from essentially similar points of view when Professor Hereford speaks

of "the political problem of the history,—that struggle between legitimacy and aptitude which the nation so rapidly settled in favor of the latter," as the key note of the situation in the play, and the historian, Bishop Stubbs, in his discussion of the causes of Richard's downfall, uses these words, "Henry IV. coming to the throne as he did, made the validity of a parliamentary title indispensable to royalty; and Richard II., in vacating the throne, withdrew the theory, on which he had tried to act and by which he had been wrecked, of the supremacy of prerogative."¹

Shakespeare was familiar with the administration of affairs and the relation of classes in the age of Elizabeth and drew, at any moment, unconsciously, upon a fund of knowledge which could be paralleled in our time only by most thorough and painstaking study of the history, ideas, and political events of the age in which he lived. In a day when scenic presentation was a chief means of communicating ideas and information passed from group to group by word of mouth, it seems probable that the public may have been more familiar with the important events of national history than in the present age of many books. This common fund of knowledge, familiarly held in mind, Shakespeare counted upon in his audience, and it is precisely this background for the appreciation and enjoyment of the historical plays that the modern reader lacks. It seems certain, then, that such a study of history as will in a measure provide a substitute for this vital, sub-conscious familiarity of the men and women who first saw these plays with the present and the traditional past of their

¹ Sec. 269, chap. xvi., v. 2, Stubbs', *Constitutional History of England*.

own age, must contribute much to a better understanding of the dramas.

It is also frankly admitted that this guide is intended to serve a double purpose. Shakespeare's profound insight and his gift of interpretation suggest the wisdom of combining the study of his dramas with study of the history and times of which he wrote. For readers who seek culture and a better understanding of history and of literature, rather than special scholarship, the study, *pari-passu*, of literature and of the ages of which it is the most intimate, often the most reliable expression, is an incomparable means of attainment.

THE STUDY OF THE DRAMA

Aristotle defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude." The definition, with modifications, will serve for other plays than tragedies. A drama must present an imitation of an action which is complete, well arranged, and of purport calculated to impress or interest. Aristotle's definitions are, historically, the sources from which our theories of dramatic art have been derived, and there is still no better beginning of study of the form and structure of the drama than parts of the *Poetics*. The following definitions, briefly quoted from Butcher's translation, are fundamental in an understanding of the principles of dramatic sequence and unity of action:

"A beginning is that which does not itself follow any thing by causal necessity, but after which something is or naturally comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity or in

the regular course of events, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to the type here described." * * *

* * * "The plot being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For that which may be present or absent without being perceived, is not an organic part of the whole."

The following suggestions are designed for the women of study clubs, readers, and isolated students who seek aid in critical study. Students working in classes with an instructor and having access to discussions of dramatic art should follow other methods, or use these suggestions as an adjunct to broader and more analytic work.

After the preliminary study indicated for each play:

I. For each act, fix firmly in mind the leading characters and note for each,—

- a. Name and relationship.
- b. Leading facts in the life of the person, if historical, antecedent to the beginning of the play.
- c. Character and role among comrades, antecedent to the beginning of the play.

Note.—The reader should become so familiar with these before entering on the study of the act that, in answer to the calling of names, she can make ready response with brief descriptions and character sketches.

II. At the beginning of each act, fix firmly in the mind

time and place, and for every act after the first, notice the time interval between the close of the previous act and the beginning of the next; ask (a) What is supposed to have occurred in this interval? (b) How is this interval managed, or accounted for, in the setting, or acting of the play?

III. At the conclusion of the reading or study of each act make a plot outline which will show,—

- a. By scenes, the purpose of each.
- b. The main purpose or subject of the act, as a division of the play.
- c. The beginning of the plot, if the act is the first; in later acts, the situation which serves as beginning of the act.
- d. The relation of each scene, in order, to the main purpose, or plot of the act; that is, the part, or step in the plot of the act fulfilled by the scene.
- e. In each act, the most significant moment, corresponding in a general way to climax in the play.
- f. The conclusion of the act.
- g. The threads of interest, or *unfinished sequelae*, at the conclusion of the act; these will be clues to follow, and a main source of interest in succeeding acts. The development of the *unfinished sequelae* will also be a test of the unity of the play and reveal the skill of the dramatist.

NOTE.—The “Topics for Study” for each act will guide to the selection of the true plot sequence, and the “General Topics” are arranged to give a similar summary and critical estimate for the play as a whole.

The following brief statement of the theoretical organization of tragic drama is not intended to take the place of books

on this subject, or as a guide for special students. For readers who have no books on the theory of dramatic art, it will be an aid. Historical plays are not necessarily organized in the form of the tragic drama, but this type has so manifestly influenced the form and arrangement of all plays that the understanding of it is essential for study of dramatic structure in any of its varied forms.

In the theoretical drama it is supposed:

I. That in act 1 we should find an introduction to the main group of the *dramatis personae*, including the central figure or hero; a clear indication of essential facts such as time, place, and antecedent events necessary for understanding present action; the beginning of the plot, or dramatic action, and an indication of the problem, including some hint of every element working in this main plot toward an end.

II. That in act 2 the counter-plot should develop; that is, complications, difficulties, and dangers impending to thwart the action initiated in act 1 should be fully indicated, together with the *dramatis personae* among whom they originate.

III. That in act 3 we should have the bringing together of these two groups of persons, of these opposing plots, and a struggle of forces, not apparently decisive, but indicating with certainty to all except the participants the final result.

NOTE.—In a five-act tragedy, the climax is usually in the third act. It is not difficult to give a theoretical definition of the climax but the determination of the climax, or moment of finality, in a given action is often puzzling. Climax may be tested by the question whether every element of determining force in the result has yet come into full play; for, if new elements are still to enter, then the issue is not yet fully joined,—a moment still more doubtful may arrive, or reversal may take place; but if determining elements have not yet become effective, then the issue still hangs in the balance, and the

action has not yet come to a true climax. The term climax is often used for the dramatic scene in which the final issue is joined, for the moments of intense suspense preceding the arbitration of fate, but the true climax lies in the brief space of time that marks the final turning; before that breathless instant, diminishing effort still rests upon some unexhausted source of hope; after it, though battle rages and counter-plots arise, the end is sure, and when it comes, one looking back sees in what moment it was written down in the book of fate and realizes that since that time action has been no more than the subsidence of expended forces, the after results flowing from decisive acts or incidents.

IV. In act 4 the *dramatis personae*, often unaware, themselves, that the decision of fate has been reached, take heart of courage to renew the struggle. The on-looker, although he has understood the trend of events more clearly than those who take part in them, must still be almost persuaded when he sees the reviving courage and strength of the protagonists that they have yet a fighting chance. Upon this act depends, in great part, the high character of the tragedy in the end. The braver the effort, the more unsubdued the spirit, the better the muster against fate, the more pitiful the downfall which reveals the overwhelming odds, the predetermined event, the irremediable ruin.

V. The final act of the tragic drama returns, from its first moment, to the expectation of catastrophe with which the third act closed and is, in reality, the bringing to view of the ruin then wrought, in all its results.

NOTE-BOOK WORK

In the study of the drama the note-book is for the purpose of preserving for constant use outlines, tables, and references. Information found in books should be cross-referenced in the text of the plays, but collections of facts gathered from many

sources are more accessible and useful when organized in the form of brief outlines in note-books. The editor of the Arden edition of King John has included a most useful leaf from his own note-book, p. 143.—*Chronicle of the Reign of King John*.

To be useful, the note-book must be paged, and cross references to it placed in the text. Note-book work of a more extended kind should be required of students working in classes with the aid of special libraries and instruction.

A. PRELIMINARY TOPICS

I. A list of the Norman and Plantagenet Kings of England, with dates of reigns.

II. Geneological tables arranged as in Green's Shorter History of England.

- a. Showing the descent of the Kings of England, from William I., to Henry IV.
- b. Of the family of Henry II., showing children, marriages, and descendants, as far as necessary, for the *dramatis personae* of these plays.
- c. Of the family of Edward III., in the same way.
- d. Of the family of John of Gaunt, showing the children of Blanche of Lancaster, and also the children of Katharine Swynford; that is, the family of the Beauforts.

III. Preliminary to the study of King Richard Second, make a chronicle of the important events of his reign similar to the one given in the Arden edition for the reign of John.

1V. Biographical notes of characters:

These are for historical characters found among the *dramatis personae* and are a means of securing that familiar acquaintance with them as individuals which is essential to imaginative reading of the drama.

V. In the text of King John, mark in each act all passages which show the indebtedness of Shakespeare to the earlier play, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*. This will be preparation for the topics of Section IX, p. 43.

B. TOPICS FOR THE STUDY OF THE PLAY

I. Keep, by acts, from stage directions, notes, etc., a time analysis, and statement of place, etc., for each act of each play. This may be kept in the text by noting at the beginning of each act:

- a. The date of the beginning, or the interval since the last act closed.
- b. The time of the act, as far as given.
- c. The place where the scenes are supposed to be. For instance, *Richard Second*, act 1. *Time*, April 28, 1398; *place*, Richard's palace, Windsor.

II. Cross-referencing and annotating:

Essential facts which should be borne in mind may be added by note or reference, in the text; for instance, act 1, *Richard Second*, note in the margin for name of John of Gaunt *born in 1340*; note for King Richard, *act. 31 years*, etc. Whenever an item is found by searching, a reference to book and page should be added in the text, even if it be to the notes of the edition in use.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL TOPICS.

The general topics for the study of the historical plays of Shakespeare have a double object. They are intended as a summary and review of the detailed study just concluded, and they should serve to emphasize the relation of parts, and give a broad view of the dramatic significance, power and charm of the play. Topics for these purposes will be found under "A."

Critical study must derive its value from intimate knowledge of detail and close study of parts, but unless, after a time, the fragmentary results of such study are used in pursuit of some definite end as the basis of comparison, inference, conclusion, the student is little advanced intellectually, by all his toil. The second division of general topics is added for the use of students and classes having access to special libraries and time for extended and critical study. These topics are suitable either for written papers or for brief discussions in which carefully organized material gathered from previous reading and study is used as data. Topics requiring special library facilities may be omitted when these are lacking, or when the study of *King John* is undertaken in clubs for purposes of general culture.

The topics suggested for critical study do not include even a small part of the many interesting subjects suggested by each one of Shakespeare's plays. A few have been selected which seem especially pertinent and fruitful. Others, it is hoped, may appear in later editions of *The Study of Shakespeare's King John*; such are, The stage presentation of the play

in Shakespeare's time, Shakespeare's usage in verse, rime, etc., Study of the literary qualities of Shakespeare's plays in relation to the conceits, forms of expression, etc., of the age of Elizabeth. Topics for critical study of the dramatist's work as author, stage manager, etc., for study of the sources of his play, and for advanced study of the drama of Shakespeare in its great qualities have not been included; such study is, in its nature, comparative, and should be undertaken only after careful study of a considerable number of plays.

REFERENCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE *

REQUIRED BOOKS FOR THE STUDY OF KING JOHN

Shakespeare, W. King John. Arden edition. Heath, 25c.

The Arden edition is chosen because the notes and introductions give especial attention to plot and dramatic arrangement.

Wendell, B. William Shakespeare. Scribner, \$1.75.

Warner, B. E. English History in Shakespeare's Plays. Longmans, \$1.75.

BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

ENGLISH HISTORY

Norgate, K. John Lackland. (Heroes of the Nations) Putnam, \$1.50.

Stubbs, W. The Early Plantagenets. (Epochs of History) Scribner, \$1.

*Prices quoted are list prices. Libraries secure the usual discounts on these prices, and individuals can sometimes obtain reduction. Books not available through regular dealers are marked *Out of print*. These may be found in the public library, or may be picked up second hand.

- Green, www.libraryoftheology.com Mrs. J. R. Henry the Second. (Twelve English Statesmen) Macmillan, 75c.
- Maurice, C. E. Stephen Langton. (English Popular Leaders) King, 7s. 6d. (Out of print.)
- Bateson, M. Mediæval England. (Story of the Nations) Putnam, \$1.35.
- Gairdner, J. & Spedding, J. Studies in English History. Douglas, 12s. (Out of print.)
For the chapters on the Lollards.
- Bright, J. F. English History. v. 1. Longmans, \$1.50.
- Green, Mrs. J. R. English Towns in the Fifteenth Century. 2v. Macmillan, \$5.
- Trevelyan, G. M. England in the Age of Wycliffe. Longmans, \$4.
- Wylie, J. H. English History under Henry the Fourth. 4v. Longmans, \$20.
For the trial and deposition of Richard II.
- Pearson, C. H. History of England During the Early and Middle Ages. 2v. Bell, 30s. (Out of print.)
- Stubbs, W. Constitutional History of England. 3v. Longmans, *each* \$2.60.
- Ramsay, J. H. The Angevin Empire. Macmillan, \$3.25.
- Gairdner, J. The Houses of Lancaster and York. (Epochs of History) Scribner, \$1.
- Oman, C. W. C. Warwick, the Kingmaker. (English Men of Action) Macmillan, 75c.
- Stone, W. G. B. Shakespeare's Holinshed. Longmans, \$5. (Out of print.)
- Hall, H. Court Life under the Plantagenets. Dutton, \$2.50.
- Cutts, E. L. Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages. Virtue, 15s. (Out of print.)
- Gardiner, S. R. Atlas of English History. Longmans, \$1.50.
A good wall map of England.
- W. & A. K. Johnson's is the best and may now be obtained in this country for a moderate price.
- Traill, H. D. & Mann, J. S. *ed.* Social England. 6v. Putnam, *each* \$5.

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LIFE AND TIMES OF SHAKESPEARE

- Lee, S. Life of Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.75.
 Raleigh, W. A. Shakespeare (English Men of Letters.)
 Macmillan, 75c.
 Brandes, G. William Shakespeare, a Critical Study. Mac-
 millan, \$2.60.
 Wendell, B. William Shakespeare. Scribners, \$1.75.
 Mabie, H. W. William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist and
 Man. Macmillan, \$2.
 Bagehot, W. Shakespeare, the Man. McClure, 50c.
 Ward, H. S. & C. Shakespeare's Town and Times. Lane, \$3.
 Ordish, T. F. Shakespeare's London. Macmillan, \$1.25.
 Stephenson, H. T. Shakespeare's London. Holt, \$2.
 Winter, W. Shakespeare's England. Macmillan, 75c.
 Hales, J. W. The Age of Shakespeare. Macmillan.
 Warner, C. D. The People for Whom Shakespeare Wrote.
 Harper, \$1.25.
 Creighton, M. Queen Elizabeth. (Epochs of History)
 Scribner, \$1.
 Wheatley, H. B. The Story of London. (Mediæval Towns)
 Macmillan, \$1.75.
 One of the best books on London at the time of the his-
 torical events represented in these plays.
 Hall, H. Society in the Elizabethan Age. Ed. 3. Dutton,
 \$2.50.
 Ordish, T. F. Early London Theaters. Macmillan, \$2.
 Morley, H. English Writers. v. 10. Cassell, \$1.50.
 Lee, S. Stratford-on-Avon. New illus. ed. Lippincott, \$1.50.

THE DRAMATIC ART OF SHAKESPEARE

- Lounsbury, T. R. Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist. Scrib-
 ner, \$3.
 Moulton, R. G. Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist. Ed. 3.
 Clarendon Press, \$1.90.
 Bradley, A. C. Shakespearean Tragedy. Macmillan, \$3.25.
 Brink, B. T. Five Lectures on Shakespeare. Holt, \$1.25.

- Coleridge, S. T. Lectures on Shakespeare. (Bohn's Standard Library.) Macmillan, \$1.
- Ulrici, H. A. Shakespeare's Dramatic art. 2v. Macmillan, *each* \$2.
- Smith, D. N. Eighteenth Century Essayists on Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$3.
Contains Morgann's essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff.
- Snider, D. J. Shakespeare's Histories. Sigma Pub. Co., \$1.50.
- Corson, H. An Introduction to the Study of Shakespeare. Heath, \$1.
- Hazlitt, W. Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays. (Bohn's Standard Library) Macmillan, \$1.
- Hudson, H. N. Shakespeare, his Life, Art, and Characters. 2v. Ginn, \$4.
- Baker, G. P. The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Warner, B. E. Famous Introductions to Shakespeare's Plays. Dodd, \$2.50.

THEORY OF DRAMATIC ART

- Schelling, F. The English Chronicle Play. Macmillan, \$2.
- Freytag, G. The Technique of the Drama. Scott, \$1.50.
- Price, W. T. The Technique of the Drama. Brentano, \$1.50.
- Hennequin, A. The Art of Play Writing. Houghton, \$1.25.
- Butcher, S. H. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics. Ed. 3. Macmillan, \$4.
For advanced students.

REFERENCE BOOKS

- Clarke, M. C. & C. C. The Shakespeare Key. Scribner, \$7.50.
- Bartlett, J. Concordance to Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Abbott, E. A. Shakespearean Grammar. New ed. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Schmidt, A. Shakespeare Lexicon. 2v. Lemcke, \$8.
- Dowden, E. Introduction to Shakespeare. Scribner, 75c.

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- Fleming, W. H. How to Study Shakespeare. 4v. Doubleday, *each* \$1.
- Corson, H. Introduction to the Study of Shakespeare. Heath, \$1.
- Dyer, T. F. T. Folk-lore of Shakespeare. Harper, \$2.50.
- Barnard, F. P. Companion to English History in the Middle Ages. Clarendon Press, \$2.90.
- Oman, C. The Art of War in the Middle Ages. Putnam, \$4.50.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Clarke, M. C. The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines. Scribner, \$3.
- Rolfe, W. J. Shakespeare the Boy. Harper, \$1.25.
- Black, C. W. Judith Shakespeare. Harper, \$1.25.
- Bennet, J. Master Skylark. Century, \$1.50.
- Abbey, E. A. Illustrations of Shakespeare's Richard Second. Harper's Magazine, v. 106, p. 505-511. (March, 1902.)
- Abbey, E. A. Illustrations of Shakespeare's King John. Harper's Magazine, v. 106, p. 505-511. (March, 1902.)
- Hewlett, M. Richard Yea-and-Nay. Macmillan, \$1.50.
- Scott, W. Ivanhoe. Any good edition.
For the character of King John.
- Jameson, A. B. Characteristics of Women. Houghton, \$1.25.
- Lamb, C. & M. Tales from Shakespeare. Macmillan, \$1.
- Marlowe, C. Edward Second. (Temple Dramatists.) Macmillan, \$4.

Note:—This play is easily found. Its importance lies in the fact that Marlowe was the first to adapt the material found in chronicles, history-plays, etc., to the form of dramatic art. This play, probably produced in 1590, seems to be the model from which Shakespeare first learned his own greater art.

THE READING OF CRITICISM

Students are earnestly requested not to read discussions of the plot or structure of these plays or of the characters in them, until the conclusion of the work suggested in Topics

for Study. www.filipino-student.com After the student has become familiar with the text of the play and has by study and comparison defined her own impressions of characters or plot, the reading of critical essays will suggest other opinions for comparison with those gained at first hand from the text. The reading of discussions of literature of which one is ignorant makes little impression on the mind, and succeeding opinions, if different, displace those first read, since the reader has no reliable means of judging between them.

THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S KING JOHN

TOPICS FOR STUDY

SECTION I. PRELIMINARY TOPICS

1. Make in the note book, or on the fly leaf of Shakespeare's text, a list of the kings of England from William I. to James I., showing dates of reigns, and groups. In this table, underline heavily each king made the subject of a drama by Shakespeare.
2. Make a genealogical table showing the descent of John from William the Conqueror, and his relationship to the other descendants of William I.
3. Which claim to the throne of England was the better, John's, or Arthur's? Why? Why did John succeed in maintaining his claim?
Was the blood of the Saxon royal family represented in any degree in John?
4. What were the race characteristics of the Plantagenet kings of England?
How did they differ in character from the Norman kings?

How did their rule over England differ from the Norman rule?

NOTE:—Henry II. may be called the greatest of the Plantagenets. Their characteristics and activity are described in Mrs. J. R. Green's *Henry the Second*. Of him, his secretary wrote, "Solomon saith there be three things difficult to be found out, and a fourth which may hardly be discovered; the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a ship in the sea; the way of a serpent on the ground; and the way of a man in his youth. I can add a fifth: the way of the king in England."

5. What had been John's personal relations with his father, Henry the Second?
6. With his brother, Richard?
7. With Philip, King of France?

NOTE.—In Hewlett's *Richard Yea and Nay* and in Scott's novels will be found descriptions of the personal relations of these men, not always accurate in historical detail, but essentially correct in spirit.

SECTION II. THE DIFFICULTIES

ACT 1¹

8. What is the time, and where is the place of the opening scene of *King John*?
9. In what part of act 1 lies the beginning of the dramatic action, or plot, of the play?
10. How many essential steps in this beginning?
11. What had been John's inheritance at his coronation?
From whom had each part of this inheritance come?
12. What parts of John's inheritance did Arthur claim?
On what ground?
13. Show by genealogical tree the basis of Arthur's claim to the English crown.

¹ See section ix, p. 1, for suggestion for marking in the text Shakespeare's indebtedness, to *The Troublesome Raigne*.

14. Why did the French king espouse Arthur's cause?
15. Why did Elinor take John's part rather than Arthur's?
16. Did John think Arthur's claim better than his own, or on what ground did he fear him?

Enter the Bastard:

17. What is the purpose in act 1 of the scene in which Robert and Philip Faulconbridge play parts?
18. In what ways is the Bastard identified with Richard 'Cordelion'?
19. What are the personal qualities and characteristics of the Bastard, as shown in this act?
20. What was the Bastard's philosophy of life? On what did he depend for success?
21. What are the relations of the Bastard with other characters? What role does he seem likely to play in the drama? }
22. Compare Philip Faulconbridge with King John in such a way as to show which of the two characters Shakespeare wished to be the central figure on the stage in this act? }
23. According to indications in act 1, what is to be the real subject of the play, the key to the dramatic action? ✓
24. What indications of John's character are to be found in act 1?
25. What seems to be John's purpose and part in the action beginning in act 1?
26. What knowledge of antecedent events is necessary for the understanding of act 1?

27. On page 143, Arden edition of *King John*, is a chronicle, in outline, of the reign of John, and a discussion of the chronology of the play will be found on pp. x.—xviii.

- a. In this outline, state the time of the opening scene in the play and, by comparison with act 1, note every introduction of facts antecedent to this date, and every historical reference.
- b. For each antecedent fact or reference, show (1) on what excuse it is introduced, and (2) for what reason the knowledge of it was necessary, just at this point, to the dramatist's purpose.

NOTE.—The resources of the dramatist for conveying to the audience information about persons, or antecedent history, or knowledge of contemporary action not co-incident with that upon the stage, is extremely limited. The novelist may fill many pages, at intervals in the narrative, with this sort of material,—a privilege often abused; but the dramatist must seek excuses which would be plausible in the rapid transitions of action or conversation transpiring in the mixed company upon the boards. The old device of "asides" addressed to an invisible confidant, and supposed to be inaudible to the company of which the speaker forms a part, has been practically discarded as unworthy of the skillful dramatist.

SECTION III. PLOT AND COUNTER PLOT

ACT 2

28. How long after the close of act 1 is the opening of act 2? Where and when does act 2 open?
29. In the age of John, how long a time in reality, was necessary to transport the king and his army from England to Angiers?

Note.—See Traill & Mann *Social England*, v. 1, Oman's *Art of War*, etc.

30. What has happened in the interval?
31. How is the information conveyed?
32. Is any part of these events essential to the plot?
33. What connects the opening scene of act 2 with act 1 in the mind of the reader?
34. At the close of act 1 with whom was the interest of the reader?
35. In the opening of act 2, what interests the reader most?
36. a. Why did Shakespeare introduce the reference to the old enmity between the Duke of Austria and Richard 'Cordelion'?
- b. Does he make a dramatic motive out of this hereditary enmity? What is the historical basis for it?

See notes in Arden edition, and introduction, p. xxv.

37. Why did Blanche take John's part?
38. To whom did the city of Angiers, the place of meeting, owe fealty?
39. How had Anjou, Maine, and Touraine come to the crown of England? What other possessions had England in France?
40. Were cannon and bullets in use at the time of John?
41. Explain l. 170, "which heaven shall take in nature of a fee;" l. 135, Faulconbridge's words, "Hear the crier."
42. l. 192, "Is this will historic?" Had a king of England the right to make a will bequeathing the crown? How did the law of inheritance of royal titles in England differ from the law of inheritance on the Continent? (see Salic Law.)

43. Give the argument of England addressed to Angiers.
44. Give the argument of France addressed to Angiers.
45. Why did Angiers refuse to take either side of the quarrel? Did this device protect the city?
46. How is the time between the *exeunt* of the armies to fight and the second summons to Angiers managed?

The Proposal of the Marriage:

47. Show by geneological tree the relation of Blanch to King John, and to Arthur.
48. What was the inheritance by birth of each one of these two persons?
49. What was to be added to this inheritance by each party interested?
50. What did the citizens of Angiers expect to gain by a marriage between the Dauphin and Blanch?
51. Why did John favor this proposal?
52. Why did Philip favor the plan?
53. Who were opposed to the marriage?
54. Give the motives influencing each.
55. Why does Elinor advise giving over so many provinces to the French?
56. If John should die without issue who would inherit these provinces? Who would inherit the crown of England?
57. Why are Faulconbridge's comments given?
58. How does Shakespeare center attention on Faulconbridge in these scenes?

The Dramatic Plot in Act 2:

59. What steps in the development of the plot are made in scene 1, act 2?
60. What indications of the future course of the action do you find in act 2?
61. What new motives, facts, conditions, etc., are introduced in scene 1, act 2, which have determining influence in the plot?
62. What is the dramatic situation at the close of act 2?

Note.—A careful statement of the dramatic situation at a given moment must take account of all unexpended forces, all elements of importance in determining action, and must indicate the different developments possible. That is, an equation of the center of interest and suspense must be taken which will indicate, analytically, all *unfinished sequelae*, and the alternatives, in the plot, that may arise from each.

63. a. In what does interest center at the close of act 2?
b. What issues are pressing?

Note.—Show for each, influences and motives working for or against, and indicate probable issue as the case now stands.

SECTION IV. THE PAPAL LEGATE

ACT 3

64. Where, when, does act 3 open? What has occurred in the interval?
65. What unfinished threads of motive, plot, etc., from the previous acts has the author at the beginning of act 3?
66. Why does the Bastard, apparently, try to quarrel with Austria?

67. What is emphasized in the first part of act 3, scene 1?
Why?

Enter Pandulph:

68. What was the authority and position of a Papal Legate in this century?

NOTE.—The long contest between John and Pope Innocent III. in regard to the candidate for the vacant bishopric of Canterbury was a matter of political importance in Europe. Shakespeare seizes upon the significance of this struggle for the English people and summarizes for dramatic purposes events which had dragged on through years.

69. What was Pandulph's mission in England? How did John receive him?
70. When had the last archbishop of Canterbury died?
71. To whom did the revenues of the cathedral and see of Canterbury go while the primacy remained vacant?
72. Give a brief topical statement of the history and character of Stephen Langton.
73. Who were the other candidates for the position?
74. What was the objection to Stephen in England?
75. What was the point at issue between King John and the Pope? Which one was in the right?

Note.—The chapter of the cathedral claimed an ill-defined right of electing the primate, since he was also head of the chapter; this right was not admitted by the king whose nomination was practically imperative. The elective body, ordinarily, was made of royal commissioners, bishops,—likely to be subservient to the royal will,—and of the chapter of the cathedral. Hence, there were three candidates for the vacant primacy,—one, hastily and secretly chosen by the chapter and despatched to Rome; another, nominated by the King; and Stephen Langton, the Pope's candidate, whom he sought to force upon the electors. Stephen Langton was a notable man, chancellor of the University of Paris, and Cardinal, a great man also in his personal qualifications, as his later career proves, but at the moment he stood

for the right of Innocent III. to force his own creatures upon the free electors of the English church, and the contest over the election soon became a struggle [for supremacy] between the head of the church and the head of the nation.

76. What had been the policy of former kings of England in similar situations?

NOTE.—Answer should be definite and include instances.

77. Was it for John's interest to defy the Pope? Why did he take this course?

78. What was the effect of Pandulph's message upon Philip? In what course did the interest of France lie? Why? What did Philip do?

Pandulph's answer to John's defiance:

79. a. What were the particulars of an excommunication?

b. What were the immediate results of this excommunication of John?

c. What was the practical effect of the excommunication and of the interdict which accompanied it in England?

NOTE.—See Bright's *History of England*, v. 1, p. 131, Pearson's *History of England*, v. 2, chap. 2, etc.

80. What is the effect of Pandulph's message in the plot of the play?

81. How is the position of John in the play, altered by the introduction of this new issue?

82. Which side did Constance take? Why?

Scenes 3 and 4.

83. What was Hubert's "voluntary oath?"

What rank and position did Hubert hold in England?

What was the secret of his influence over John?

84. In what does scene 3 advance the plot?
85. Show the successive insinuations by which John at length suggested his wish to Hubert without committing himself in words.
86. Write, or give, stage directions for the acting of this scene with a view to making it most effective.
87. In what points does scene 4 advance the plot?

Scene 4 and plot in act 3.

88. What new factors in the development of the plot have been introduced in this act?
89. Which are the central figures in act 3? Compare the relation of the reader to these characters in act 3 with his attitude toward the same characters in act 2?
90. What is the situation of the main dramatic action at the close of act 3:
- a. On the English side.
 - b. On the French side.
91. How many issues command attention at the close of act 3?
92. What unfinished threads of plot are you most anxious to follow in act 4?
93. Is there a single main issue involving all others?
94. In what lies the beginning of John's downfall?
95. What roles are played by King John in act 3?
96. What is the weakness of act 3 in the development of the dramatic action of the play, *King John*?
97. Which, thus far in the play, is the finest scene for acting? Why?

98. Which scene of the written drama, thus far, has the finest literary qualities? Illustrate each by citing passages.

SECTION V. THE LITTLE PRINCE

ACT 4

99. When and where does act 4 open?
 100. How long an interval was there between the events of act 3 and those of act 4?
 101. What occurred in the interval? Is any part of these occurrences essential to the plot? How do you determine?
 102. What unfinished threads of motive, plot, etc., has the author at the beginning of act 4?

Scene I.

103. What plot elements do you find in scene 1?
 104. Was Hubert's purpose overcome by the child, or why did he yield?
 105. What has given this scene an interest independent of the drama in which it is placed?

NOTE.—The form of this little scene is in itself a miniature drama of perfect unity; from the beginning, there is one vital question at issue, the danger, so imminent, of the loss of sight, and not for a moment is it forgotten until the innocent boy wins his reprieve—a true climax. The appeal to the human heart, however, lies in the characters drawn with such skill that they are typically true in all time, and in many different circumstances.

106. What is the age of Arthur as represented on the stage?
 107. What was the age of the historical Arthur at the time of his death?

NOTE.—In a well arranged tragic drama the culmination of difficulties pressing upon the hero and forecasting his downfall and ruin would appear earlier, and the fourth act would either be given to such means of resistance as the king could yet command, that the ruin pressing upon him, when it falls in the fifth act, may seem inevitable and without remedy; or, as sometimes in modern drama, acts four and five would be condensed to express the swiftness of on-coming destiny. *King John* is adapted from one of the old chronicle-history plays, and is not arranged strictly in the typical form of the tragic drama.

The Re-crowning of King John:

108. How many times, historically, was John crowned?
109. Why did John wish to be re-crowned at this time? In what year did it occur?
110. Why did Pembroke object?
111. What argument did Pembroke and Salisbury urge for the release of Arthur?
112. What is the effect of the news brought by Hubert upon John's affairs?
113. What other items of news were brought by other messengers? Explain the relation of each item to John's affairs at this particular time.

NOTE.—The point of view from which the news is told is, here, that of the common listener in the street; we feel the superstition, vague alarm, and prejudice that move the populace in times of commotion when conflicting rumors fly about.

114. Was John really glad, or sorry, to learn of Arthur's death? Later, to learn that he was not really dead? Give reasons.

Note.—Shakespeare uses Arthur's death as cause of ills that follow, since John willed it, and was credited by his subjects with the accomplishment of his purpose; but he relieves the scene of the murder of an innocent child by this device, although Arthur, in reality, dies pursued by a relentless uncle. He also mitigates in almost imperceptible

degree the obliquity of John's character and softens a little the judgment of the most unsympathetic, for there is in the minds of men a certain fine distinction between the intention of murder and the commission of the deed. Historically, the manner of Arthur's death is uncertain. Historians believe, however, that John either committed the murder with his own hand or caused it to be done. The order for blinding the prince and other barbarities,—one tradition,—the softening of his guards by his own entreaties, and the false rumor of his death, eagerly accepted, then denied, may all be found in the old narratives of the reign of John. Shakespeare simply selected whatever suited best his dramatic purpose, without conscientious scruples in regard to historical accuracy.

115. How many plot elements do you find in scene 2, act 4?

To what conclusions do these all tend?

116. Does Shakespeare represent the English people as believing in Arthur's right of succession, or in John's right?

117. Is it necessary or unnecessary in the plot that Arthur should die just at that time?

118. How does this death affect the main plot?

119. At the close of act 4, what difficulties press upon John?

120. What is the situation of the main plot at the close of act 4? What seems to be the main issue and the center of interest at the close of act 4?

SECTION VI. THE NATIONAL SPIRIT

ACT 5

Scene 1.

121. Was submission to Pandulph the only course open to King John at this time?

122. Answer from the preceding acts of the play.

123. When and why did John make up his mind to yield?

124. What were the conditions, on both sides, of the formal surrender?

Note.—A full account of the contest between Pope Clement III and John, and of John's surrender, is given in Pearson's *History of England during the Early Middle Ages*, v. 2, chap. 2. In surrendering his crown to Pandulph, John took the position of a feudatory of the Pope, and the annual tribute to be paid by the crown of England was set at £1,000. This was in addition to the Romescot and other church dues sent from England to swell the revenues of the church. For many reigns, this tribute continued to be paid.

125. How did John's submission to the papal legate affect his relations,—
- a. With his own subjects, the English people?
 - b. With his barons?
 - c. With France?
126. Was the death of Arthur, at this moment, an added misfortune, or the reverse?
127. What is the part of the Bastard in scene 1, act 5?
128. What is the attitude of the audience towards John in this scene?
129. a. In what lay the weakness of the compact between Lewis and the English barons?
- b. What means does Shakespeare use to make this evident to an audience?
130. What motives influenced the Dauphin to refuse to lay down arms at the summons of Pandulph?
131. How did John's surrender change the status of France in relation to the war with England?
132. a. What is the role of the bastard in this scene?
- b. What do you think of his speech?
- c. Does it serve any effective purpose at this point in the play?

133. What is the most important event in scene 2?
134. What is the purpose of scene 3, act 5, in the development of the drama?
135. Why did not Salisbury and Pembroke withdraw from the French compact after the announcement of John's surrender by Pandulph?
136. What is the dominant note in scene 4?
137. What did the dramatist intend should be the moral effect of scene 4 on the stage when played for an English audience?
138. Is it necessary that the very brief matter of scene 5 should be set off as a separate scene?
139. Find your argument in the plan and arrangement of act 5 as a whole.
140. Why did Shakespeare bring Hubert and the Bastard together before the audience at this moment?
141. For what did each stand?
142. To what was the downfall and death of John really due?
143. Is the death of King John the conclusion of the plot, or no more than an incident in act 5?
144. In which of the issues in suspense in different parts of the play is the main motive of act 5 and the conclusion of the play found?
145. Present the proof on which your opinion rests.

GENERAL TOPICS

SECTION VII. THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

I. What expression of English spirit is most emphasized in the play, *King John*?

II. Which character in the play is most typically that of an Englishman?

III. Which characters, if any, represent, in their personality, the moods, beliefs, and ideals of the 12th century?

IV. Which characters are most markedly presentations of human nature, such as belong through common characteristics or manifestations to all lands and all centuries?

V. Which woman had the greater ability, Elinor or Constance?

VI. Which woman was the more moved by strong passions and emotions?

VII. Had Constance, or Elinor, any real influence, in conferences of kings and prelates, in determining political action?

VIII. Are women on the stage essential parts of the dramatic action of this play?

IX. What special reasons determined their introduction, and the time and place of their appearances?

X. Was John as presented by Shakespeare a man of ability? Present evidence.

XI. What is the key, or clue, to John's course of action in the drama?

SECTION VIII. ~~THE PLOT AND~~ CHRONOLOGY OF THE PLAY

XII. THE PLOT:

- a. What do you consider the central purpose, plan, or theme, of the play, *King John*?
- b. Where is the climax, dramatically?
- c. Where is the conclusion of the action?
- d. Discuss the unity of the play:
 - (1) Define what you mean by unity in a play of this kind.
 - (2) If this play has unity, in any sense, show how it is secured, and the relation of leading and subordinate parts to this end.
 - (3) If the play lacks unity, show why, and, in your discussion, prove from the play, to what the dispersion of interest and dramatic strength is due.
 - (3) In *The Troublesome Raigne* there was no hero who carried the sympathy of the audience through to the end; how did Shakespeare attempt to remedy this difficulty in his own play?

XIII. DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- a. Why were the Magna Charter and the difficulties connected with it entirely omitted from Shakespeare's play?
- b. To what extent were the form and substance of this play determined by the sources from which Shakespeare drew his historical material?

- c. To what extent did state affairs and matters contemporary with the stage presentation of the play, determine the selection of characters, or matter, or purport, in this play?

NOTE.—The materials for this discussion, which should be written must be sought in detailed study of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and of the condition accompanying the re-organization social, political, and religious, following the separation from the hierarchy of the Roman Church.

XIV. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PLAY:

On page 143, Arden edition, is a chronicle, in outline, of the reign of *King John*. In this outline, star the time of the opening scene in the play, and by comparison with act i, note every introduction of facts antecedent to this date, and every historical reference. A discussion of the chronology of the play will be found in the introduction of the same volume, pp. x-xviii. A time analysis of the play is also given, p. xxxvi. Add to this time analysis events used by Shakespeare, with dates.

a. Star in the outline of John's reign, all events used by Shakespeare in his play, and inquire in accordance with what unity, sequence, or association, the selection was made.

b. In instances of marked inaccuracy in dates of events, time intervals, etc., inquire what Shakespeare's reason for the variation was, and whether it justifies the historical inaccuracy. Inquire, also, whether the inaccuracy is one of data and statement, or whether it

is misleading in the impression made on the audience, or in the relation and proportion of events intimately connected.

SECTION IX. SHAKESPEARE'S INDEBTEDNESS TO "THE
TROUBLESOME RAIGNE"

FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

*In the introduction of the Arden edition of *King John* is found a brief resumé of *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, from which Shakespeare adapted his own play, *King John*. The following topics are intended as an aid in the comparison of Shakespeare's play with the earlier one. The dramatist's skill and power is often revealed by the devices, re-creations of characters, or changes in the significance of scenes, through which an old chronicle play, no better than others of its class, was transformed into a historical drama which by its own vitality and human interest has successfully claimed the attention of readers to the present day. The comparison might be made more effectively were copies of the original play easily accessible to all students.

I. Each one should mark, throughout Shakespeare's play, in the margin, every passage which is derived in any way from *The Troublesome Raigne*; in the same manner, lines, or passages of which Holinshed's *Chronicle* is the source, may also be marked. By the use of "Tr. R." and "H.," etc., a graphic guide will indicate to the eye Shakespeare's indebtedness to his sources.

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II. CHANGES IN THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

- a. What characters did Shakespeare re-create and develop from the old play? Show how he did this in detail, as far as the notes furnished for the comparison admit.
- b. For each one, discuss whether the reason for this re-creation was in the drama; that is, in a necessity of the action; or, in the artistic need of presenting well-drawn characters for the parts.
- c. What *new* characters did Shakespeare create?

For each, discuss in detail the reason for which the character was introduced, and trace throughout the play the effectiveness of the part.

III. THE MOTIVING OF ACTION:

The chief dramatic skill of the play-writer lies in the motiving of action. Compare the outline of *The Troublesome Raigne*, as given, with the plot of Shakespeare's *King John*, and ask what changes Shakespeare intended to make. Critics say that in the re-arrangement, the dramatist four times left incidents, or parts, without sufficient motive. Discuss these especially, and in the case of each show whether the omission seems intentional, and whether the plot is weakened by it.

The omission of the struggle against the supremacy of the church organization in England, leaves a succession of minor motives.

- a. What are they? How many and what distinct issues come up in different parts of the play? Show for each in which act, or acts it is dominant.

- b. Could each of these have been made subordinate to a larger issue?
- c. Could John have been made the central figure, or hero, of the play, and unity thus secured?

NOTE.—There are strong reasons for and against; present both. The arguments against must lie in the impossibility of creating the role of hero for King John, and requires cogent reasons to carry conviction. In presenting the argument for the role of hero for the King, it is necessary to show what the heart of the struggle between John and opposing forces would be in the play.

IV. CONDENSATIONS AND OMISSIONS:

Examine all places in which condensations and omissions are noted, and inquire,—

- a. What the condensation, or omission really is,—whether of matter taking up *time*, or of information, of incident, or of emphasis upon personality.
- b. In what ways and to what extent is the omitted matter represented in the text of the play?
- c. What change in the significance of the scene, or the act, results?

V. NEW MATTER ADDED, OR OLD MATTER EXPANDED BY SHAKESPEARE:

- a. In each instance, ask what the nature of the added matter is.
- b. Also ask what is the purpose of the addition or expansion in the act or scene in which it is found:
 - (1) Does it enrich the play in literary qualities?

(2) Does it strengthen the play in dramatic
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(3) Does it contribute to the interest of the
audience, or to the permanence of the
drama in literature?

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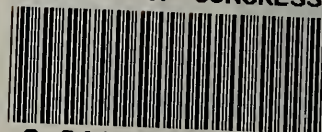
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