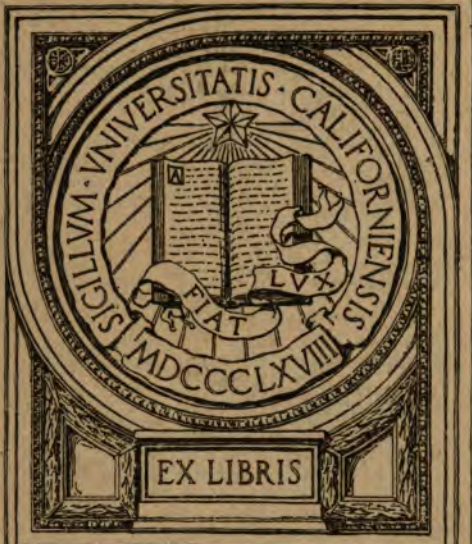

Cibber's Revision

of

Shakespeare's Richard III

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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NOTE

The following pages are an abstract of the author's thesis as presented for the degree of Ph. D., University of Pennsylvania, 1906. In their limited scope, they cannot of course enter into a minute analysis of the material with which they deal: that is not their function. They are meant only to give the reader a bird's-eye view of the subject, the details of which can be found in the thesis MS. filed in the University of Pennsylvania Library. It will be seen, also, that for the sake of further compression all notes except a few necessary references to the Shakespearean text of *Richard III* (Globe ed.) have been omitted.

CIBBER'S REVISION
OF
SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD III

I

INTRODUCTION

The object of the original thesis is to ascertain by comparison the relative values of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and its *Revision* by Colley Cibber, considered solely as plays built for the stage, not as poems nor as closet-plays. Without reference, therefore, to the minutiæ of their making—changes of words, phrases and the like—they will be examined and appraised only in those essentials of practical playwriting that have stood and must always stand for success in the theatre:

1. Plot: the reviser's addition of one motive, exclusion of five, and general handling of such as are common to both texts.

2. Characters: his use of them in dialogue and as carriers of the plot; his correction of inconsistencies in them; and finally, his rejection of thirty-three of Shakespeare's, with different development and interdependence of the nineteen retained.

3. Technique: his contrasted methods in entrances, exits, and other fundamentals of stage-management.

As preliminary to the discussion, the causes of modern critical hostility toward revision of Shakespeare are analyzed in detail and found to be the following:

1. The dictum that every play must be wholly original;

2. The reverence with which the Master Dramatist is now regarded through—

(*a*), the force of antiquity itself with the halo that it gives;

(*b*), the wealth of critical appreciation that its years have brought forth since the commentary of Nicholas Rowe in 1709.

These rules and principles are shown to be strictly modern in their growth: none of them date back to the Restoration Era; none of them can therefore be applied fairly to a group of dramatists to whom they were utterly unknown. They are only laws enacted *ex post facto*.

As a final argument against hostility to Shakespearean revision, the revision practices of Shakespeare himself are cited—his founding of *1* and *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* on *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *King Lear* on *The Chronicle History of King Leir*, *King John* on *The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England*, and *The Taming of The Shrew* on *The Taming of A Shrew;* his frequent copying of Sir Thomas North's phraseology in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans;* and his retention in *2* and *3 Henry VI* of both plot and 3,240 lines from *The First Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard* respectively, while adding only 2,740 lines or less than one-half of the plays in their complete form. Shakespeare is thus seen as the pioneer in appropriating others' work, the Restoration Dramatists only as his disciples; and if the opponent of revision flays the disciples for their doctrines, he must flay as well the master who taught them those doctrines. Both stand in the same dock, on the same charge, with the same evidence for and against them; both must therefore be convicted or acquitted together.

It is evident, then, that hostility toward revision of Shakespeare is nothing more than a convention of modern criticism, and that as such it should not be allowed to prejudice the scholar in his estimate of a Restoration writer's work: let him therefore judge the subject of the present paper—Cibber's *Revision* of *Richard III*—solely upon its merits or demerits as a play, without imputing sacrilege to its author where none was ever meant.

II

CIBBER'S FITNESS AS A REVISER

Of all the emendators of Shakespeare, Cibber alone has succeeded in giving to a revision enough lasting qualities to make it permanently supplant its original for theatrical use. Though his *King John* soon passed away —and deservedly—his *Richard III* not only swung into an instant popularity at its production, but has since survived the weeding-out processes of age after age until to-day, when it still holds its place upon our stage as the best acting version of the tragic story ever constructed.

Beyond his possession of a nature that lived only in and for the theatre, Cibber's most valuable asset for playwriting was a stage experience gathered through years of almost feverish activity. Those phases of it which especially fitted him for the task of revision are listed briefly below:

1. His life as an actor: The large number of his rôles gave him a first-hand knowledge of technique, and enabled him to judge the individual parts of a play from behind the curtain—to estimate the effect of a given line, episode, or scene rendered in a given way.

2. His life as a manager: It was this that enabled him to judge the larger appeal of a play—its appeal as a whole—from before the curtain: witness his almost unbroken record of successes in the Haymarket Theatre and later in Drury Lane whose twenty brightest years were due to his unerring instinct for the popular.

3. His life as a playwright: If there was any branch of dramaturgy in which Cibber lacked a thorough training and practice, it yet remains to be discovered. He wrote a number of original plays: in prose, *Love's Last Shift, Woman's Wit, The Schoolboy, The Careless Husband, and The Rival Queans;* in verse, *Xerxes, Perolla and Izadora, Venus and Adonis,* and *Damon and Phillida.* It was his characteristic, however—and again, one which fitted him peculiarly for the task of revision—that his mind worked more vigorously when given some concrete idea of plot as its centre of energy, and thus naturally turned to alterations of others' plays or ingenious combinations of their elements. Those in prose are:

Love Makes the Man: a welding of two plays of Beaumont and Fletcher—*The Custom of the Country* and *The Elder Brother.*

She Would and She Would Not: taken partly from Leanerd's *Counterfeits.*

The Comical Lovers: combining in part Dryden's *Secret Love* and *Marriage à la Mode.*

The Double Gallant: from Mrs. Centliore's *Love at a Venture* and Burnaby's *Lady's Visiting Day,* and indebted to Thomas Corneille's *Le Galant Double.*

The Lady's Last Stake: indebted to Burnaby's *Reformed Wife.*

The Rival Fools: an alteration of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit at Several Weapons.*

The Non-Juror: taken from Molière's *Tartuffe.*

The Refusal: taken from Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes.*

The Provoked Husband: completed by Cibber from Vanbrugh's MS. of *The Journey to London.*

And in verse:

The Tragical History of King Richard the Third: a revision of Shakespeare's *Richard III.*

Ximena: indebted somewhat to the *Cid.*

Cæsar in Egypt: taken from Beaumont and Fletcher's *The False One* and Pierre Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée.*

Love in a Riddle: an imitation of *The Beggar's Opera.*

Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John: a revision of Shakespeare's *King John.*

Cibber thus had equal experience and facility in prose and verse, whether in original or adaptive work—an instance of combined faculties almost unique. But still more remarkable is the variety of his dramatic productions. No less than six tragedies, thirteen comedies, a comical tragedy, a pastoral, a pastoral interlude, a farce, a masque, and a ballad opera owe their existence to a brain equally fertile and versatile. Many authors have surpassed Cibber in the number of their plays; few, if any, in variety of types. Hardly a note on the histrionic keyboard that he did not touch; hardly a note touched that did not ring in tune with the heart of the people.

III

THE PLOT

Cibber's constructive changes are always radical—so radical, indeed, that his *Richard III* might be described more accurately as a 're-writing' than a 're-vision.' He rebuilt from the bottom the material given him, added one motive from *3 Henry VI* and as many others from his own pen as would link together the much-broken chain of plot, and thus evolved a new dramatic product—one to which he has himself contributed 1,102 of its 2,170 lines—the number to which he has reduced the 3,620 lines of Shakespeare's text.

The first important plot-variant is the different epochs chosen by the authors for their opening scenes—Shakespeare's starting with Edward IV firmly seated on the throne and the Yorkists supreme in the state; Cibber's, with the period of unrest which immediately preceded the battle of Tewksbury and the period of adversity for the Lancastrians which immediately followed it.

After an historical résumé, intended to give the reader a quick but comprehensive view of the time, each of these contrasted settings is analyzed in turn. Shakespeare's is found to be:

(1) a poor choice, since—with the political crisis past—it subtracts all suspense or excitement from the opening of his play and leaves the spectator no interest until the rise of subsequent action;

(2) a poor piece of construction, since this subsequent action is robbed of its speed and reduced to little more than a crawl by the intrusion of a mass of

historical and political details which have nothing organic to do with the plot here or elsewhere—Hastings' imprisonment, Queen Elizabeth's responsibility for it, his later release, the court power of Jane Shore who procured it, etc., etc.

It is shown, on the contrary, that Cibber at once strikes suspense as his keynote by planning a scene which antedates the battle of Tewksbury—the deposed Henry VI imprisoned in the Tower. This suspense he intensifies by four successive steps in the ex-king's anxiety: First, about the battle itself which, won by his Lancastrian allies, will give him a kingdom—lost, will take even his life; this resolved, about the fortune of his wife and son in the battle; this in turn resolved, about their fate after capture; and lastly, about the manner of his son's death, murdered as a prisoner to King Edward.

However deep the scholar's reverence for scholarly tradition, Shakespeare's opening scene in this particular play must be confessed diffuse and even phlegmatic as an historical setting when contrasted with the compactness and emotional intensity of his successor.

Another equally important change of plot which results from Cibber's different method of opening the play is his substitution of King Henry's death for Clarence's as the chief theme for Act I. To determine the truth or falsity of his judgment in this, the Clarence episode is examined in the thesis from different angles. The conclusion reached is that in its Shakespearean form it could not fail to maim the play:

Aesthetically, it is revolting through failure to lead up to its climax, the murder of one brother by another, or otherwise to lessen the horror of such an abnormality.

Clarence is thrust upon the stage, guarded by officers of arrest, only 41 lines from the play's opening; and worse than this, he is butchered in the fourth scene by his brother Richard's hirelings without reference enough to his fate in either of the intermediate scenes to soften its brutality in the least degree. The aesthetic crudity is obvious.

Logically, Clarence's death is unsound. There are only two premises that could explain it to an audience—adequate motive and plausible means. It has neither of these. Leaving the last till another paragraph, we find for the first, that Shakespeare has failed to have Richard state any motive at all for the crime to and through the time of its commission. Not until III, i, 194—about two acts later—does it appear that the throne is the object of his ambition, and that Clarence alive must have stood between him and it.

For the source and causes of this lack of motive, the reader is referred to our original manuscript where he will find them fully discussed. In the present paper, it is enough to note that the discussion merely explains the how and why of such a singular flaw, but that neither this nor any other explanation can defend the stage mischiefs to which the flaw leads nor free Shakespeare from his responsibility for them. The episode—large as it is—simply stands motiveless.

Dramatically, Clarence's death is incredible; and here is the second premise lack of which has been noted above—plausible means for accomplishing the crime. Richard's sole means for persuading King Edward to order it are "drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams," only one of which—the prophecy about "G"—is given in

the text, and that but currently.[1] The questions that naturally come to mind about the rest—what were they, by what chicanery were they worked, and how did they involve Edward and Clarence in such deadly hate—all these stand unanswered, and so turn the episode into little more than a piece of forced theatricism.

For this defective plot-element, Cibber substitutes the stabbing of King Henry VI, the first scene of which he originated, the second adapted from *3 Henry VI:* V, vi. By this death he avoids all the faults so marked in Clarence's. Aesthetically, it is not revolting; for it is carefully worked up, step by step, through two entire scenes until the auditor is prepared for its bloody climax. Logically, it is true; for Richard has already stated and re-stated his ambition to the throne, and neither he nor any other Yorkist could hold it safely so long as the Lancastrian ex-king lived. Dramatically, both Richard's means for the act and King Edward's acquiescence in it are at no time other than credible; for both, according to their lights, fattened politically upon it: Edward, by a more stable grasp of his throne; Richard, in securing the Yorkist rule in his brother's person as the first step to his own usurpation.

Cibber's third radical change of plot is his total omission of Margaret from his cast of characters. This was perhaps the boldest of his many bold revision-moves, for he must have felt then what all scholars feel now—that Shakespeare's conception of her as an "ancient Nemesis of more than human proportions" is supreme in its grandeur. That he thus loses the fatalistic horror in which his predecessor had enwrapped the action, is cer-

[1] *Richard III:* I, i, 32 ff.

tain; that he gains by it the clearness, compactness, and realism which alone could turn a sublimated poem into a practical play, may easily be seen by an analysis of the rôle itself:

With Margaret included, an intelligent understanding of the plot is out of the question, so hopelessly she tangles the relationships of its characters. She balances and plays upon similar names; she compares and contrasts their owners' fates; she brings in all kinds of irrelevant facts in their careers and their family connections, until, starting with a lineage complex enough to be puzzling, she jumbles it to a point where none but a professed historian of the period could hope to straighten it out. For evidence, see I, iii, 118-138, 174-180, 191-201; IV, iv, 19-25, 39-46, 63-67 *et al.*

Again, Margaret has absolutely no value in forwarding the plot. With or without her, events would have been just the same, for she does nothing to affect them one way or the other. From beginning to end she never commits a single act of any kind: she talks—that is all.

Finally, she imports into the play elements that clash with all reason. Her gibing and jeering at venomous enemies on ground where they controlled everything, she nothing, is wholly unreal if not impossible; while, as the bitterest foe of the Yorkists, her presence in the Yorkist palace, in Yorkist London, or in England at all after being banished by King Edward on pain of death, is quite as impossible in point of historical fact.

His omission of Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan as a dramatic motive forms another vital change in Cibber's reconstruction. According to Shakespeare, this motive includes as prefatory to their deaths: I, iii, 1-16, 36-

154, 210-214, and 309-338; II, i, 7-94 and 134-140; and as directly preparatory II, ii, 112-154, besides the report of their seizure in II, iv, 38-73 and III, i, 1-16, their final earthly exit in III, iii entire, and their reincarnation as Ghosts in V, iii, 139-146—covering 392 lines in these scenes. Cibber omits the whole of this plot-element, and the following arguments should be more than enough to justify him:

1. It repels an audience by adding three more murders to a tale already too large. Together with those of Henry VI, his son and Clarence preceding, and of Hastings, Prince Edward, the Duke of York, Anne and Buckingham following,—Rivers, Grey and Vaughan help to make a carnage in which the different characters are cut down one by one.

2. It mars the unity of the plot. A plethora of subjects alone will destroy unity, for there must be some limit to the number that an author can handle structurally in five acts. That limit reached—as reached it certainly is in this play with the four or five deaths that are really necessary—and with every added crime the author lets his plot degenerate into a mere series of episodes arranged chronologically. This is where Shakespeare's inclusion of Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, *et al.* leads him.

Further, unity of plot depends on unity of motive, and the theme of *Richard III* is the attempt of the then Duke of Gloucester to usurp the English throne. Where can Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan be fitted into this theme? Whatever their Court standing as a matter of history, as a matter of Shakespeare's play they are never represented at any time as strong enough to have contested the supremacy of Richard. On the stage, therefore, the

necessity of these deaths to Richard is never apparent, for they were required neither for him to gain the throne, like those of King Henry VI and the two Crown Princes, nor to retain it, like the death of Anne. Their unity of motive with these four, if it exists at all, can be seen only by the scholar in his study, never by a spectator in the stalls.

3. These deaths mar the coherence of the plot no less than its unity. The dialogue and structural material that goes into their making is broken into eleven pieces scattered through seven scenes which in turn are scattered through the twenty scenes of four acts. The effect is therefore that of a side issue too trivial to take a primary place in the plot for itself, yet so frequently recurrent in drawing off attention and breaking up the rapid march of action that it keeps those other elements to which such primary places are due from coming into their own.

To balance these faults, there can be found no adequate virtue in the Rivers-Grey-Vaughan group—in fact, almost none at all. They serve no purpose whatever outside of III, iii, where they are seen on their way to execution, and even this is only a piece of historical accuracy injected into the play at the cost of its real interests. Small wonder that Cibber, who above all others believed in a straight line being the shortest distance between two dramatic points, promptly withdrew them from the plot as unessential to its logical development.

The execution of Hastings is another of Richard's crimes, which, like the last, is compressed in the Revision into a mere mention for the sake of historical accuracy. In Shakespeare, it is schemed in III, i, 157-193; initiated in III, ii entire; accomplished in III, iv entire; spe-

ciously justified to the Mayor in III, v, 1-71; and concluded in the Ghost-scene, V, iii, 146-150—a total of 347 lines. Cibber's reasons for its omission were partly the same as urged him to omit the Rivers-Grey-Vaughan episode:

1. Estrangement of sympathy, both from Richard and from the play, by too ghastly an exhibit of violent deaths.

2. Disruption of unity by the number of killings *per se* and by their failure to seem one in motive.

A third reason that actuated Cibber here, is also examined in the thesis—the logical fallacy of the whole episode. The upshot of the argument is that Shakespeare fails to make good his case of Richard *vs.* Hastings. His historical facts in the quarrel-scene are correct; he gives them as he found them in the chronicles. But in the chronicles there was also a total absence of causes adequate to explain these facts to an audience, and this failure too he took over with the same mechanical fidelity. Thus instead of altering the facts to fit the given dramatic conditions, or altering the dramatic conditions to fit the given facts, he reconciles neither to the other: he found a logical hiatus in the chronicles and he kept it in his play.

Cibber's judgment in cancelling an episode of such doubtful utility can hardly be questioned.

There is one death which Cibber handles differently —that of Buckingham. He could not omit it outright, for it was necessary to the play's retributive justice. But by omitting Shakespeare's V, i, where the victim is led to the block, he suppresses the gory element which he then deftly replaces with the suggestive; for when

Catesby announces Buckingham's capture, "My liege, the Duke of Buckingham is taken," Cibber's Richard bursts out with a flash of power on which all tragedians have made their most brilliant point of the play:

"Off with his head!—So much for Buckingham."

IV

CHARACTERS

I. THEIR SEQUENCE

Characters are the playwright's alphabet with which he spells out his thought and gives it meaning to reader or auditor. They are his chief medium of dramatic expression, and it is only by gathering data upon his use of them in successive dialogues that his method of conducting the action can be ascertained. In the present case, the data are as follow: Shakespeare's text contains 118 dialogues, or "scenes" as the French and German playwright would call them—Cibber's, 94. In Shakespeare's there occur 463 appearances of the various *dramatis personæ;* in Cibber's, only 264. Shakespeare thus uses an average of 75 per cent. more character-appearances than Cibber, and these figures, interpreted, mean that the two differ in the very fundamentals of their art. Shakespeare expands his dialogues, and peoples his stage liberally. He tends to work by successive groups on whose talk he relies to advance the plot; but when ushering in one of these groups, he cares little whether all its members are to sustain organic parts in the scene to come. Cibber, on the contrary, contracts his dialogues and reduces them to their lowest terms by cutting out unsparingly every unnecessary character. The conclusion

reached in the thesis is that, for stage purposes, what Shakespeare gains in breadth, he more than loses in lack of cohesion; what Cibber loses in breadth, he more than gains in a cohesion so firm that his plot unrolls to the audience with far less effort and at far greater speed.

II. MINOR RÔLES

For the sake of definition, the term 'minor' is here restricted to those characters who appear only once or twice. Cibber excludes a large majority of both, wherever found in his predecessor's text. Of the first, he cut down the 27 which Shakespeare introduced, to 6; of the second, 7 to 4: in all, 24 minor rôles omitted from a single play. The bearing of these remarkable figures on the acting properties of original and revision are then deduced:

1. None of the 24 characters omitted can add any emotional value: their appearances are too brief. Yet all of them, by their mere presences on the stage, draw off a certain share of attention from the really important rôles; they diffuse what should be concentrated. By his reduction, therefore, Cibber secures unity of interest.

2. In stating a fact—be it verbal or dramatic—the greater an author's compression, the greater his power. Shakespeare, to state his dramatic fact, enrolls a legion of characters—he is structurally verbose; Cibber enrolls a picked company which he restricts to the last degree consistent with giving his thought adequately—he is structurally concise, trenchant, crisp. It is not hard to surmise which of these methods would prove the more effective with an auditor.

III. UTILITY OF MINOR RÔLES

Here are shown the results of the authors' systems of construction, as contrasted above. Shakespeare's expansiveness, regal but formless, leads him to simply reach out and take whatever character-means of expression lie readiest to hand. If it is never used again and so proves an encumbrance to the action—that matters nothing to him: it has served his turn. On the other hand, Cibber's instinct for the structural makes him take the utmost care to call on the characters already at his command before casting about for others, and to weave them into the plot as organic parts by frequent use. To determine their status, the minor rôles of both authors have been examined individually with the results tabulated as follows:

Twenty-four of Shakespeare's twenty-seven that appear once and two of his seven that appear twice are relatively valueless to the plot: they could either have been omitted altogether without loss or their slender functions could have been transferred to other more important agents; while only one of Cibber's six single-appearing rôles and none of his four double-appearing rôles are doubtful in their utility. Sum these figures, and Shakespeare's total of useless characters is twenty-six—Cibber's, one. Now a histrionic personage can never be negative in its effect: if it fail to aid the action, it must necessarily encumber it; and since every such encumbrance always helps to retard the plot, we may safely extend the generalization to this—if a character fail to advance the action, it must necessarily retard it. Cibber's one instance is not enough to work any material harm; but when twenty-six such retardations occur within Shakespeare's five acts, each one adds its share to the rest

until conjoined they make brevity or rapidity of plot impossible.

IV. NEW RÔLES INTRODUCED

Shakespeare left his successor small chance for character-creation, so exhaustively had he himself covered the field. The new rôles which Cibber originated are therefore only two—Forest and Tressel. Their offices in the Revision are found to be these: Forest, an interlocutor for Tyrrel when Cibber wished to replace Shakespeare's long epical soliloquy after the two Princes' murder with a short scene of action and dialogue before it; Tressel, a counterbalance to Stanley—each of them typifying the followers of their respective houses of Lancaster and York.

V. INCONSISTENCIES OF CHARACTER EXPUNGED IN THE REVISION

It would seem from the uniform accuracy of his corrections, that Cibber must have subjected all the rôles of his predecessor's play to a scene-by-scene scrutiny, testing each for its logical truth or error. Among them he discovered three in which occurred ambiguities or actual inconsistencies, summarized in the thesis as follows:

The first is Stanley; and it is Shakespeare's erratic handling of the politics of this noble which is open to criticism. Compare Stanley's non-partisan attitude in I, iii; II, v; and III, iv; with his pro-Richard attitude in IV, ii and iv; his anti-Richard attitude in III, ii and IV, v; and his mixture of the pro and anti attitudes in IV, i. It is all an amazing entanglement; but one, be it noted, that never springs from any intent of the author to sketch

a vacillating nature, only from his failure to make clear Stanley's steady fidelity to Richmond even while enforced to play a pro-Richard part in the Court.

Cibber's remedy was simply to correlate all the words and deeds of the character with one uniform thought—hostility to Richard veneered with pseudo-loyalty. His Stanley's political relations admit of no misconstruction at any time or in any act.

In Buckingham there is another Shakespearean inconsistency that turns on a character's political relation to Richard. Up to II, ii, 146, Buckingham is strictly the non-partisan courtier, with no hint—even the remotest—of a traitorous bond to any one, least of all to Richard who includes him specifically as one of his pitiful dupes in I, iii, 327-331. It is then rather a surprising apostasy when in II, ii, 146 ff., this non-partisan bursts out as a fiery follower of Richard, a sharer of his inmost heart, an accomplice in his most hazardous ventures. In other words, an auditor is blinded as to Buckingham's real status in the plot from his first entrance at I, iii, almost to the end of II, ii—a total of 932 lines.

Cibber starts to solve the problem by interpolating an episode in which he deftly implies Buckingham's tie to Richard. He continues by defining it boldly in the first dialogue that these two hold in private; and thus succeeds in presenting Buckingham consistently as Richard's fellow-conspirator and tool till their open rupture in Act IV.

In Queen Elizabeth, the discrepancy involves only a single passage, but perhaps the most inscrutable of the older play. In IV, iv, Richard pleads with the Queen to win her daughter's consent to marriage with him. As the climax to more than two hundred lines of argument, per-

suasion and promises, she finally yields, and exits apparently with the full intention of carrying out his request; yet, in the very next scene, it is discovered that though she has just practically betrothed the girl to Richard, she has already agreed to marry her to Richmond. Now if Elizabeth's pledge to Richard was a trick, it should have been so indicated in the text to justify the conclusion; if it was good faith, the subsequent betrothal of her daughter to Richmond is a bald contradiction. In either case the dramatist is equally at fault.

Cibber cancelled the inconsistency easily by writing in a seven-line Aside in which he shows the Queen's seeming concurrence as a trick to insure her own safety and her child's until they can flee the Court. It is the skilful device of a practical playwright to save an unskilful piece of construction.

VI. CHARACTERIZATION

In the main, Cibber naturally followed the lines of character-evolution laid down by his predecessor. Here and there, however, he found points where Shakespeare either had not developed a rôle quite fully or had not grasped all its possibilities of contrast with other rôles, and in these cases he rarely failed to fill in the picture by an apt emendation or interpolation of his own. Nor was his range restricted to mere retouching. If his originals looked weak as causes to account for the histrionic effects that were due, or if—as in a few isolated cases—they seemed actually to belie their functions in the plot, Cibber had both the will and the skill to dig down to the roots of things and to alter materially the Shakespearean concepts, even if he had to reverse them. Especially is this

true of Richard himself, on whose rebuilding the success of the Revision so largely rests.

For a detailed exposition of Cibber's character-changes, the reader is referred to the original manuscript from which the present abstract is compiled. There he will find a full analysis of them—the reasons for their making, the results of their making, etc. Here, no more than a résumé of the conclusions drawn from that analysis can be given, and given only without citations from the texts to guarantee them. Reduced to the ultimate, then, Cibber's changes are these:

1. Prince Edward's youth is accentuated and his Shakespearean lapses into semi-maturity stricken out; but a peculiar stamp is impressed upon his childhood—boyish bravery, wholly unconscious of fear—in contrast with his brother,

2. The Duke of York, whose still greater youth is of the timorous sort, quailing at imaginary terrors with a child's fear of the unknown.

3. Queen Elizabeth's mother-love for these boys is turned into a passion of maternity, with a corresponding strength of appeal to the heart. On the other hand, her mental character is made less forceful—a change for purposes of contrast with

4. The Duchess of York, whom Cibber has built into a figure of commanding presence and aggressive will, imperial and imperious.

5. The moral function of Richmond in the plot is systematized and developed; he is always the righteous avenger, of course, but with his function so strikingly enforced that he really resolves the play into a symbolic struggle of good versus evil. It is this enforcement of

the altruism and patriotism of himself and his followers that converts their success at Bosworth Field from an incredible victory of a small army over a large one into an inspiring victory of spirit over matter, of the true over the false.

6. The character of Richard is practically taken apart and re-made by Cibber. He alters, adds, subtracts, and even inverts at will, until, from his Shakespearean prototype of almost unmixed horror, he evolves a personality which at once attracts and repels, fascinates and appalls. His various changes to this end, developed by collation of the two texts, may be epitomized as follows:

His first step was to increase Richard's executive ability. Shakespeare's character is not consistently held in the foreground as generator of the play's activities; for Buckingham eclipses him so far as almost to push him out of sight in such crises as the plot to bring Prince Edward to London in the conspirators' power[2]; to separate his mother's relatives from him[3]; to cozen the Queen and her other son from sanctuary[4]; to sound Hastings' political views, etc.[5] All this interchange of office Cibber cancels. He maintains Richard's supremacy throughout —sometimes by omitting wholly those episodes in which Shakespeare's Buckingham moulds the plot; sometimes by transferring Buckingham's lines of aggression to his chief. At no time does he shift the burden of the play from the leading rôle or fix it, even transiently, on a minor rôle; at all times he thrusts Richard to the front of the stage not only as the centre of action but of motive as well, not only the pivotal point around which the plot revolves but the inciting impulse of that plot.

[2] *Richard III:* II, ii, 112-131.
[3] *Ibid.*, II, ii, 146 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, III, i, 31-57.
[5] *Ibid.*, III, i, 151-186.

Cibber's next step was to co-ordinate all lines of the character so as to enforce and make consistent one of its most effective faculties—that of instant decision. In this way he ruled out such curious mental phenomena as Richard's nervous collapse toward the end of Act IV,[6] which, when thrust into a character elsewhere so sternly self-controlled, could never be other than a gross inconsistency to a playgoer, even if psychologically true to an analyst. His examples of instant decision serve, also, to give Cibber scope for various elocutionary climaxes like his brilliant ending to the dream-scene in Act V. Add to these an equal development of Richard's inborn craft and hypocrisy, with his sardonic strain magnified at many points,—and it is perfectly clear why the magnetic force of his mentality holds the stage from entrance to exit.

It has already been seen that Shakespeare's Richard states no definite motive to account for his deeds until half the play is past and half its criminal plans matured. Cibber's goes to the opposite pole by avowing his greed for the crown when he first steps on the stage, a prompt assignment of motive which at once frees him from the charge of wanton animalism in his killings; and he amplifies it into the one great theme of his life by the reviser's many interpolations. His conversion from a motiveless dealer in lives to a conspirator whose every crime is a subtly calculated move toward the throne, saves the first two and a half acts from a befogging sure to doom them with an audience, and fills in successfully an otherwise fatal hiatus in the rationale of the character.

Beside a more ample royalty which naturally follows so frequent an iteration of the crown-motive, rigid enforcement of Richard's martial courage is a further step

[6] *Richard III:* IV, iv, 432 ff.

of Cibber's to keep an emotional balance between the attractive and the repellent. While only in evidence at a few points, this would thoroughly justify itself if for nothing but its exclusion of the Shakespearean Richard's cowering exit from the Ghost-scene and its substitution of one wherein Richard, after his first ghastly awakening, rallies swiftly to his normal self and rushes off to the battle. Cibber's is an exit remarkable for its rugged strength and its vivid alternation of the extremes of emotion; and, whether right or wrong in its psychology, it is the only exit that could hold or intensify a spectator's interest in the character.

Cibber's addenda to Richard, as just outlined, are generally aimed at the correction or amplification of his predecessor's material. Those springs of character which he himself originated and wrote into the rôle are comparatively few, yet well worthy an extended treatment were it possible to quote freely from the text in their support. With this means of bringing them before a reader barred from a paper of limited length, they can here be only indicated; but even so, their harmony with Richard's other traits and their large theatrical effectiveness will still be marked enough to prove the reviser's wisdom in choosing and his skill in unfolding them. They are chiefly two. The first is an all-pervading cynicism, the natural outcome of a career steeped in such universal treachery as Richard's—treachery by him toward others, by others toward him. None believed in him; and—the reflex of this—he believed in none. It is a type of philosophy which, developed chiefly in soliloquy, proves itself invaluable in giving an audience a glimpse of the real Richard, as well as in giving to the character itself a fuller mental coloring and shaping.

Cibber's last addendum is perhaps the boldest of his

changes in Richard, for it flatly contradicts Shakespeare's conception of the rôle. It is no less than a certain spark of humanity in the heretofore unhuman Richard,—not enough to swerve him from his crimes, yet enough to make him sometimes shrink from them even while he commits them under the goad of an ambition that he cannot escape. A reversal in the character, certainly, and yet is it not a logical one; for absence of humanity means in the individual nothing but a monster human only in form, and for such the stage can have no place until it shifts its province from the photography to the distortion of life. But whatever the psychology of Cibber's innovation, there can hardly be more than one opinion upon its success as a piece of practical playwriting. It binds the auditor to Richard with the strongest yet subtlest tie in the world, a common humanity, and so turns the relations between them from the coldness of the purely mental into the warmth of the emotional. It can readily be seen which of these two ideals of Richard would attract interest the more quickly and hold it the more firmly.

V.

TECHNIQUE

Given material of the proper dramatic quality on which to work—the theme; given tools of the proper dramatic tempering with which to work—construction, characterization and the like; and there still remains one more adjunct to the art of the successful playwright, the one which alone enables him to use his tools efficiently upon the theme—technique. A detailed discussion of this cannot be included here, for the fullness of the subject itself forbids. Technique is the mathematics of stage scholarship. It treats of Entrances, Exits, Stage-management;

the handling of speaking parts, "thinking" parts or Mutes; the types of dialogue and their values in tuning scenes to different emotional keys; in fine, whatever special knowledge a playwright may need in order to suppress all creakings in his play's machinery. Data of this kind can be given only by comparative figures, tables, and percentages; none of these can either be condensed or abridged like the expository matter that has gone before, and, since their reprint in full would far exceed the limits of the present paper, they must all be omitted. The necessity is especially unfortunate here; for it is in this, the field of the practical histrionic workman, that Cibber shows his ability to the best advantage. As a technician he is abreast of the ablest. He has every resource of the playwright's craft at his fingers' ends. He knows what to use, and just how, when, and where to use it, with an unerring precision. He leaves almost nothing undone; almost nothing ill-done. And it would be a gross injustice to him in his strongest point not to note here the bare fact of this mastery of material, referring the reader to Part V of the author's original manuscript for the figures in proof.

VI.

CONCLUSION

In the thesis, the ideals of Shakespeare and Cibber in the structure of historical tragedy are here analyzed:

I. SELECTION OF MATERIAL

An Historical Play in Its Relation to Historical Fact.

In *Richard III,* Shakespeare is strictly the transcriber of history. It was not his, as he conceived it, to pick and

choose from the given facts, nor yet to mould them into the needs of his play—however unfit for stage use they might be in their recorded form. Fit or unfit, on the stage he puts them with hardly a finger's touch to smooth, adapt, amend, harmonize. He simply transfers the events of Richard's rise and fall from three prose chronicles (Holinshed, Hall, and More) into one verse play, even to such details as Buckingham's argument on "sanctuary children" (Hall) in III, i; the despatch of the Bishop of Ely for strawberries (More) in III, iv, etc., etc.

To the older dramatist, history was an end in itself; to the younger, only a means to an end—material from which to evolve a play. If the facts aided Cibber in reaching the needed stage effects, he retained them intact; if they failed to better the action through dramatic unfitness in their historical form, he freely altered them; if they actually retarded the action, he omitted them ruthlessly without the least regard for the old chroniclers.

II. TREATMENT OF MATERIAL

Here again is found the same antagonism between the two authors. Shakespeare's objective was a world-picture of the events of Richard's reign. To this mammoth size he scaled his canvas, his figures, scenes, and all else that it was to hold. Thus he peoples the Court with nobles and attendants enough to suggest the amplitude of regal power, and shifts the scene of action swiftly and frequently enough to call up to the mind those vast world-interests on which the fate of nations hung; raising the number of speaking parts in his play to fifty-three, the number of scenes to twenty-four.

A more practical playwright would have foreseen the constructive mischief of this deluge of people and places. As to the people, the majority of them are nothing but

drags upon the plot, as we have seen; as to the places, their incessant shifting of locale breaks up the action into so many minute pieces that it robs the play as a whole of both its coherence and its unity. But, in the ebullience of his genius, Shakespeare was thinking of more than the workaday stage with its needs and its strictures. He was intent on his world-picture, and was recklessly but magnificently extravagant in the number of brushes and colors used—caring nothing for how much went to waste, since he could draw on an inexhaustible mental palette for more.

Cibber held an opposite view of the function of historical tragedy. He did not wish or try to paint a world-picture of the Court and Civil Wars. He centered his energies in painting a stage-picture of one man—Richard—in his ambitious fight for the throne, his temporary success in the struggle, and his final disaster and death. He voluntarily took a smaller canvas for his work in order to compact his subject into a space wherein he could pose each figure in some definite relation to its fellows and to the central theme. For this he reduced the number of speaking parts from fifty-three, where interaction and cohesion are impossible, to twenty-four, where they are not only possible but assured with any reasonable degree of care; the number of scenes from twenty-four, where coherence and unity are impossible, to eleven, where the knack of a technician far less expert than Cibber would still be enough to connect them progressively and to bind them together into a structural whole.

III. BUILDING OF THE PLOT

Resulting directly from the authors' different ideas regarding a playwright's freedom in adapting history and a play's scope in presenting it, their upbuilding of their

material differs quite as radically. To describe the events of *Richard III* with historical accuracy and world-breadth was readily possible to the youthful Shakespeare; but to combine them so as to give the play an organic motive and an organic setting was entirely beyond his skill at that time of his life. He can therefore conduct his plot only by successive episodes, and the nine crimes of his story all seem entities with no tie but their commission by one man—admirable sometimes in themselves, but not in their unity of relation.

That any of these can be dropped at will—and that without injury to the plot—Cibber has proved conclusively in the Revision by omitting the deaths of Clarence, Hastings, Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan. So far from injuring the plot, he makes a fusion of its parts possible for the first time. Realizing that to weld together Shakespeare's nine separate links of crime was a task which no playwright could compass, he cut them down to four—a number which by skillful handling might be corporately joined. By enforcing Richard's inherent royalty of nature and the stringent necessity of each crime retained in order to achieve his ambition, he succeeds in making every step of the character appear as the logical sequence of steps already taken—a plan which Shakespeare himself in his maturity followed with equal success in Macbeth. Shakespeare's plot, made up of isolated elements, gives the effect of an epical narration of events in installments spaced wide apart; Cibber's, of a dramatic action without break either in its motives or in its logical and emotional development.

IV. DICTION

There is little use in ever expounding the obvious, and the obvious in this case is Shakespeare's supremacy in diction, undisputed and indisputable. He was not, to

be sure, the Shakespeare of *King Lear, Hamlet,* or *Macbeth.* He was still too young, too new to the business of casting poetry in the mould of drama. But he was certainly on the way there—and a swift way, too. In *Richard III* he shows half-grown the seed of language planted in the earlier plays and destined to its full flower in the later. At times, he reaches an eloquence never surpassed in all his career; but he could not so soon hold evenly the grandeur that was the normal stride of his maturity. Yet however much the violence of his own feeling masters him and sweeps him away now and then into juvenile crudities, he never loses either the poetry or the power that have raised him above all other verse-dramatists as their King.

While Cibber has often risen to a large accent above the ruck of his fellows, he has nevertheless shared the general fate of all Shakespeare's would-be rivals in language. His gift was not that of concrete poetic phrase. His dialogue is eminently fit for the practical stage in swift conduct of a play's action—clear, concise, direct; but it never shakes itself entirely free from the commonplace, never reaches to more than a certain elocutionary swing, and never for a moment vies with the Master's in any of those qualities that make him supreme.

V. ATMOSPHERE OF THE PLAYS

Usually a branch of criticism almost intangible, the atmospheres of our two *Richard Thirds* are so sharply defined in contrast as to assure us against any fear of doubt in our deductions. Shakespeare's always makes for the idealistic. His conduct of the plot is idealistic; so is his staging throughout, his disregard of discrepancies, his dialogue. Margaret stalks through the Yorkist

2. That while Shakespeare's youthful ideals of historical tragedy readily create in *Richard III* a Titanic poem which the world could not afford to lose, Cibber's prove themselves indisputably superior for evolving an actable drama—constructive, organic, unified. In a word, Shakespeare uses a play to present history; Cibber uses history to present a play.

FINIS.