

In "Richard III.," the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of Ely are characters more prominent in the pageantry than in the play.

'Tis not easy to conceive a more delicate subject for the pen of Shakespeare to have attacked than that portion of Henry Eighth's life which covered the repudiation of his marriage with Queen Katherine of Arragon, and his espousals with Anne Boleyn. Had the poet wished to pay court to the reigning sovereign, he could have thrown around the affair less of the historic and more of a fanciful coloring.

It was easy to have minimized the argument in favor of the validity of Katherine's marriage or the nobleness of her personal character; to have blackened the character of Cardinal Wolseley; brought into more brilliant prominence the conduct of the subservient Cranmer; to add poetical embellishment to the conduct of Anne Boleyn, and to have given more plausibility to the imperious Henry's reasons for placing her beside him on the throne. This method of dealing with the principal personages of his drama would have been pleasing and complimentary to Elizabeth, and would have suited the temper and spirit of the times.

Shakespeare, however, preferred to illustrate, not to distort history. For, from the reading of the play, the pivotal point of which is the divorce of the King from his lawful wife, which subsequently led to the separation of England from Rome, we are impressed with admiration and compassion for the injured Katherine and contempt for the meanness of her despotic husband.

How magnificent is her defence, when cited before the Papal Legate and assembled prelates, and how noble are the sentiments of the language of the deposed Cardinal in his fallen estate. Our deepest sympathy and commiseration go out to him in his humiliation, as we read his advice to Cromwell:

Wolseley:

"When I am forgotten, as I shall be.

And sleep in dull, cold marble, where no mention