

## INTRODUCTION.

### I. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

§ 1. *The Life of King Henry the Fifth* was written by Shakespeare almost certainly in the year 1599, and probably acted in the same year: it was first printed, and then only in an imperfect form, in 1600. The date at which the play was written is fixed by an allusion in the Prologue of act v. lines 30-35,

“Were now the general of our gracious empress,  
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,  
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,  
How many would the peaceful city quit,  
To welcome him! much more, and much more cause,  
Did they this Harry”.

By the ‘general of our gracious empress’ is meant Essex, who was employed in Ireland in the summer of 1599 in suppressing Tyrone’s rebellion; leaving London on March 27, and returning on September 28. It is clear that the words of the Prologue were written within these dates, and, as Mr. Wright says, ‘probably nearer the beginning than the end of the period’, for it soon became clear that Essex was not likely to have a triumphant return. We therefore conclude that the play was written in the early part of 1599.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that *Henry V.* is not included in the list of Shakespeare’s plays given by Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* in 1598. It also agrees with what we should presume from the evidence of verse-tests. See Mr. Herford’s edition of *Richard II.* pp. 11-14.

The Quarto edition of 1600 bears the following title: “THE | CHRONICLE | History of Henry the fift | With his battle fought at *Agin Court* in | *France*. Together with