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TIME IN *JULIUS CÆSAR*.

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SCHLEGEL, in his lectures on dramatic art, discussing Shakespeare's treatment of the three unities, shows that the dramatist disregarded the unity of place, but that instead of the unity of action he substituted a higher sort of unity. In reference to the third unity, that of time, it may be seen that Shakespeare, while apparently ignoring it, has in reality made an exceedingly careful and elaborate substitution for it. When the time of the stage-representation is not coincident with the time of the occurrence of the events related, an effort must be made to bring these two times into reconciliation. This is accomplished, as will be shown by a reference to *Julius Cæsar*, by the creation of a third time, a period of four or five days into which the action divides itself, and which serves as a basis on which the two divergent times can be reconciled. To understand the time of a play we must consider, therefore, the historical time, the time of stage-representation, the fictitious dramatic time, and the double legerdemain whereby the artist compresses the historical events of years into the occurrences of a few days, and on the other hand expands a half-hour's stage-representation to appear like the happenings of twelve or twenty-four hours.

In *Julius Cæsar* the historical events referred to occupied three years, from the autumn of 45 B.C. to the autumn of 42 B.C. The stage-representation, of course, would occupy about three hours. The dramatic artist, however, has imposed it on the minds of his auditors that the action is divided into three or four days. Let us first examine the means taken to establish this fictitious time. In the first Act, the first scene is in the day, perhaps in the morning, the second scene is in the afternoon, and the third scene is at night. Thus is made up one dramatic day. In the first scene the word *holiday* occurs three times, *day* and *to-day* once each. In the second scene Cassius invites Casca to sup with him. In the third scene we are definitely informed at the conclusion that it is after midnight, and the frequent use of words like *even*, *night*, *to-night*, *good-night*, etc., keep the time prominently before the mind. In the second Act, the first scene occupies the interval from one o'clock in the morning till six, the second ends at eight, the third is at half-past eight, and the fourth is fixed at "about the ninth hour." All the scenes of the third Act are in the day, as are also the first two scenes of the fourth Act. The third scene of the fourth Act, however, runs into, and even through the night,—a fact we are not allowed to lose sight of. The scenes of the fifth Act occupy another day. At the end of the third scene Brutus definitely informs us that it is three o'clock, and the prominent mention of the torchlight at the beginning of the fifth scene apprises us that one more dramatic day has closed. There are three nights, the night of the conspiracy, the night Cæsar's ghost appears at Sardis, and the night of Brutus' death; the scenes are arranged so as to impress the auditors with the sequence of day and night. This of course does not preclude the idea of intervals between the scenes.

Although the idea of intervals is not precluded, and in fact one important means of compressing the action of years into three or four days is to choose representative days, yet an important part of the dramatist's task is to lead the auditors to disregard the lapse of time between many of the events and to regard the action as continuous. The means employed for this purpose are so various that they call for close consideration. How does the artist reconcile the historical time with the dramatic time? In the first scene of the first Act, the historical time is fixed by a speech of the second citizen, who, after considerable badinage, says, "But, indeed, sir, we make holiday to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph." (Compare this artful introduction of a fact essential to the plot with the passage in which we are informed that Hamlet is thirty years old, Juliet fourteen, Miranda fifteen, and Lear eighty or older.) But, although by the second citizen's speech the exact historical time of the scene is fixed at October, 45 B.C.—the date of Cæsar's triumph after the battle of Munda—towards the end of the scene Marullus remarks to Flavius, "You know it is the feast of Lupercal," which prepares the mind for the procession and ceremonies of the second scene, which become in a sense identified with the triumph. The feast of Lupercal would fall on the 15th of February, 44 B.C., but the artist by this speech, and by Casca's reference in the next scene to the removal of scarfs from the images, has spanned the chasm between October and February.

Towards the end of the second scene Cassius says very definitely:—

"I will *this night*,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,
As if they came from several citizens,
Writings, etc."

And towards the end of the next scene he bids Cinna throw a letter in at Brutus' window. This brings us to a very nice question. Is the stormy night of the third scene of the first Act the night of the 15th of February, or the night of the 14th of March? This reference to the letter suggests that it is the former, but it does not preclude the possibility of its being some subsequent night, for Cassius sent several of these writings. The words of Cicero: "Good even, Casca; brought you Cæsar home?" tend to confirm the impression that it is the night after the Lupercalian festivities, especially as we think of Casca as returning from the engagement that in the second scene he had mentioned to Cassius. On the other hand the words, "Comes Cæsar to the Capitol to-morrow?" suggest that it is the eve of the Ides of March, and the storm, which is introduced here, and which is kept so well to the fore in the next two scenes, still further leads us to believe that the time is the night of March 14. Cassius' words at the end of this scene, "Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day see Brutus at his house," and—

"Let us go,
For it is after midnight; and ere day
We will awake him and be sure of him,"

make a very close connection with the first scene of the second Act, especially as there, shortly after midnight, we