

further proof that his labours are well appreciated in England, he has recently been elected Vice-President of the New Shakspeare Society. Having said this much of Mr. Rolfe's success as an editor, we will turn to the particular play, that is the latest from the press of the Harpers, and will draw the attention of the youthful student to one or two points. First, the textual difficulties here encountered are comparatively few and slight. Secondly, the long quotations from North's "Plutarch," which illustrate the play, will amaze any reader, who has never been introduced to them before. And here, as our object is to benefit the student rather than to display any original research, we will quote the remarks of a recent writer on the subject of Shakespeare's linguistic acquirements. The following passage is taken from p. 338, Vol. I of Professor Ward's "History of English Dramatic Literature": "The often quoted and often misunderstood remark of Ben Jonson, 'Though thou hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke,' proves not that Shakespeare had never learnt either of these languages, but that he had not kept up a proficiency in them, or, at all events, was careless about displaying it after the fashion of Ben Jonson himself, and of many of the other dramatists. This vexed question as to Shakespeare's classical attainments is, in reality, not worth discussing. Shakespeare, it is said, could not have been a classical scholar—he could not have had a classical training—or he would not have read Plutarch in a translation. In the first place, as Mr. Dyce observes, he might, even with competent scholarship, be excused for preferring a translation to the original: in the second place, if he was unable to read the latter, how many of those educated in our own day at Grammar Schools and Colleges, possess in after-life a greater degree of familiarity with the text-books of their old studies, unless they have chanced to pursue these for special reasons? Shakespeare, it is clear, retained through life as much knowledge of Latin as is ordinarily retained by those who have in their youth learnt something of that tongue, as a matter of course, but who have not afterwards made it a special study. Greek he had probably never learnt at school, and there is no proof as there is no probability, that he ever learnt it afterwards."

Professor Skeat in his edition of what he calls "Shakespeare's Plutarch," has shewn how deeply the poet was indebted to the old biographer: but the remarks of Archbishop Trench on the same topic, in his "Four Lectures on Plutarch," should be borne in mind by every reader of the Roman dramas. After declaring that the whole plays of Julius Cæsar and Coriolanus are to be found in Plutarch, the Archbishop offers some valuable observations on *Antony and Cleopatra*. For these, unfortunately, we have no room, but we feel compelled to quote his remarks on the subject of Shakespeare's obligations to Plutarch. "Nowhere," he says, "as is abundantly clear, does our English poet make any pretence of concealing these, but adopts all, even the very words of Sir Thomas