

ROUND THE TABLE.

One would have thought that the critics had long ago written all that could be written about Shakespeare and his plays. Rich as the bibliography of Shakspeariana is, in critical analysis and comment, it is about to be supplemented by a unique edition of his plays, edited by Henry Irving, the tragedian, and Frank A. Marshall, an English journalist and Shakspearian scholar of repute. Among other valuable features of the forthcoming edition, the most practical part is Mr. Irving's revision and emendation of the text. He has presented each play in a form best suited for acting or reading aloud. In other words, the work supplies not only an ungarbled transcript of the author's text, but also an acting edition of each play, which stage-managers, actors, and the public generally will study with interest. Mr. Irving has done his work in this way: he has gone through each play, indicating by heavy brackets, and by a vertical waving line on the margin of the page, such lines as in his judgment should be omitted in order to bring the play within a reasonable time limit, and to adapt it to the taste of the age. He retains, of course, everything necessary for the preservation of intelligibility, continuity of thought and dramatic spirit.

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Each play has an introduction, in which are discussed, first, its literary history, and secondly, its stage history—notable first performances, anecdotes connected therewith, etc.; and the third division consists of original critical remarks on the subject and characters of the play, with an estimate of its merits as compared with others of Shakspeare's dramas. There are two classes of notes connected with each play—footnotes at the bottom of each page defining unfamiliar words and short phrases, and, in an appendix, full critical comments upon passages or words that need elucidation. Peculiarities of pronunciation are often pointed out in the footnotes, special attention being devoted to the requisites of rhythm and metre.

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In the case of the historical plays, or the plays in which a few historical characters appear, the critical and explanatory notes are prefaced with biographical sketches of the personages figuring in the drama, the reader thus acquiring a good historical basis for his study of the author's use of this material. There are, for instance, about three and a half pages devoted to sketches of the characters in *King John*. As a further aid to the reader in understanding fully the movement of this drama, each play is supplied with a map showing the country, cities, etc., in which the scenes are laid.

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To each play is appended a list of words that occur only in that play; a feature that has an interesting bearing in regard to Shakspeare's language and to the literature with which his mind was imbued at different periods of his career. Each play is also supplied with a time analysis, giving carefully prepared estimates of the time required for the performance of each scene and act, and the length of the intervals supposed to elapse in the course of stage representation. The eight volumes will contain thirty-seven etchings and upwards of six hundred other illustrations from designs by Mr. Gordon Browne—a son, by the way, of "Phiz." It is the intention, I believe, of the publishers to secure the co-operation of some American Shakspearian scholars in the preparation of the work. The expectation now is that the first volume will be published simultaneously, probably in the middle of November, in this city and in London by Scribner & Welford and Blackie & Son respectively. The first volume will contain five plays—"Love's Labor's Lost," "The Comedy of Errors," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Romeo and Juliet," and the first part of "Henry VI.," and also Mr. Irving's general introduction. The other volumes will follow at intervals of three months.

Apropos of things theatrical, one of the Knights of the Round Table, while putting on his overcoat in the foyer of the Grand Opera House, the other evening, after witnessing Mr. Edward Henley's strong impersonation of Deacon Brodie, overheard the manager of that company remark to a friend, "The Toronto people don't want a play of this kind; what they want is a song and dance show." That the manager was not very far wrong in his estimate of the Toronto theatre-going populace was exemplified two evenings after the above-mentioned remark was made. The Round Table Representative again found himself in the Grand—for he is a humble disciple of Thespis—at a veritable "song and dance show," to wit: a minstrel performance. As he looked around upon the crowded and enthusiastic house, he sadly remembered the words of Manager Peter Blow, and reflected upon the critical taste of the Toronto amusement-loving public, as evidenced by the crowds that filled orchestra, parquette and galleries to see burnt-cork "artists," and the comparatively empty benches that had two evenings before greeted Mr. Henley and his talented company. Verily the legitimate drama languishes, and Toronto is ruled by the "gallery!"

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"The 'Whig' and 'Clio' societies at Princeton expect to build new halls, to cost \$5,000 each. The 'Whig' society was founded by James Madison, the 'Clio' by Aaron Burr."

The above clipping causes the Round Table to reflect that it would not be out of order for "club-scheme" advocates to open a correspondence with the authorities of the Whig and Clio societies of Princeton. Valuable hints might be obtained, which might be of great service in reducing to sober black and white the various floating ideas with regard to a student club-house on the University grounds. If club-houses can be erected at Princeton for \$5,000 a piece, there is no good reason why similar buildings could not be erected here for that figure, or even less. *Verb. sat. sap.*

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The mind of a young person who has read omnivorously contains a tremendous mass of undigested information, and though there may be beautiful and useful things amid the confusion, they are hard to discern. The young genius has but recently come into a world full of marvels, and does not realize that it is he that is new, and not the things he sees. His artless outcries of wonder and delight and pain are very natural; but not entertaining to the public. Full of the impatience of youth, he seems incapable of understanding that the thought must enter the mind and remain buried there—that it must germinate and take root before it pierces to the light, as the seed needs the dark delay of winter hours to make it bloom. It would be to his advantage to realize that, when one says of any piece of literature, "this is good, considering the age of the writer," the stamp of inferiority has been set upon it. A work of art needs to have no allowances made for it; for art has neither sex nor age. Left to himself, the young writer produces works that will cause him, in his maturity, the most painful blushes. In his childhood, he will not chronicle the things about him—they are too common—but will choose to portray the glittering lives of dukes and princes, with a child's love of the unknown and marvelous. When he reaches the Dickens stage of his existence, he will write a novel possessing all the worst points of his idol. Then, as he grows into the Thackeray stage, he will send forth into the world a book full of trite moralizing that trips up the narrative—such as it is—at every turn. His poor, weak little ideas fairly stagger under the weight of words imposed upon them. Finally, he settles down into his own style, which is as different from these as starlight from sunshine, or the electric light. All this is very natural, and even necessary, as a process of his mental development; but why should the absurdities of his youth be made public, to remain forever a sore spot in his self-esteem? Let him "learn to labour and to wait." This lesson mastered, he will go on from strength to strength.

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