

justice to himself, the other *dramatis personæ* ever render him nearer the truth. Moreover, many passages in other of his plays show that the poet did full mental justice to the great and varied ability of Cæsar. Why then does he present him uncorrectly in this play which bears his name? On this question centres much dispute. Knight has it, we think, when commenting on a remark of Hazlitt to the effect that "The fault of the character is the fault of the plot," he says, "the character is determined by the plot." It is probably true that at this time Cæsar was unable to control a restless ambition for the name of king. The poet shows principally the working of this "covetous desire," and thus gives some artistic ground to the conspiracy against him. Had Cæsar been pictured in all his greatness, not only would his assassination have appeared altogether murderous and unjustifiable, but there would have been no room for any one else, and thus the balance of the drama would have been lost. In other words, Cæsar as he was, could not even by Shakespeare, have been truthfully represented in such a plot. Brutus is the hero, but the play is not incorrectly named, for though in physical influence weak, the spirit of great Julius rules the action, and after his death is ten-fold more potent than before. Brutus, standing beside the dead body of Cassius, with the black shadows of his own doom pressing thick and close upon him, recognizes Cæsar as the Nemesis that is tracking him to his fate.

"O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
In our own proper entrails."

Brutus and Cassius are the leading figures. Their characters are most interesting, hard often to correctly analyze, and in many respects diametrically opposed. Brutus is noble-souled, conscientious, thoughtful, humane and affectionate; but he is in no way fitted for a practical worker. A deep lover of books, a believer in philosophical dogmas whose truth has never been proved to him by experience, ruled by intellectual doctrines and ideals, he is emphatically a theorist, and as such is unsuccessful in an enterprise which demands every quality of which he stands in lack. His private life is brightly illumined by his noble, tender, and generous spirit: his public career is a series of disastrous mistakes because of his want of true insight, tact, and practical power. Blinded by his own false reasoning and the flatteries of Cassius, not gauging at all the spirit of the time, he strikes

to the earth his best-beloved friend, and, striking, thinks he draws the life-blood from the uprising form of tyranny which is menacing the freedom of Rome. His high and overweening confidence in the "even virtue of the enterprise" is the result of his honesty of purpose. Loving Cæsar dearly, and standing high in his regard, he has no selfish or personal motive, save perhaps a spice of unconscious vanity, for his course. "Not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more." Vainly weening that immortal Cæsar can be killed by a dagger, he dreams not that in grasping for a phantom freedom Rome has bound to her feet the weight which will quickly bear her to perdition.

Cassius is as much his superior in executive ability as he is morally beneath him. When they disagree his counsels are in every case right, and those of Brutus wrong. Nevertheless, Brutus possesses, as it seems, such arrogance of opinion, and a calm sort of moral force that he overcomes the better judgment of his friend. For example, Cassius is willing to do anything to promote the success of their conspiracy, and, although Brutus, shrinking from the unnecessary shedding of blood, thinks that "Mark Antony can do no more than Cæsar's arm when Cæsar's head is off," Cassius knows better, and rightly fears the friend of Cæsar. Cassius is avaricious, revengeful, and often unscrupulous, but he possesses noble traits. While we love Brutus, we admire Cassius. He loves Brutus well, is brave, faithful, a strong character.

The play abounds in passages well-famed for their dramatic beauty and strength. The speech of Antony over the body of Cæsar, trite though it now may be, is perhaps the finest exhibition of masterly power in the play. The Roman blood must have been cold indeed had it not leaped up and fired with its glowing pathos. Its artifice gave it an irresistible force with the unperceiving throng, while it enchanted the intellectual, who saw it and rendered homage. The beautiful picture of Portia and Brutus, the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius, the hatching of the conspiracy by Cassius, and the appearance of the ghost are especially admired. The tenderness of Brutus shows nowhere more beautifully than in his unwillingness to wake the boy Lucius, who, through excess of fatigue has fallen asleep over his instrument. "I will not do thee so much harm to wake thee." The final parting of Brutus and Cassius is most touching.

Brutus. For ever, and forever, farewell, Cassius!
If we do meet again, why we shall smile;
If not, why then, this parting was well made.

Cassius. For ever, and for ever, farewell Brutus!
If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;
If not, 'tis true, this parting was well made.