

ticipants having been left alone, Brutus addresses Strato in these words :

“ I prithee, Strato, stay thou by thy lord ;
 Thou art a fellow of a good respect ;
 — Thy life had had some smatch of honour in it ;
 Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,
 While I do run upon it. Wilt thou, Strato ? ”
 Strato—“ Give me your hand first. Fare you well, my
 lord.”
 Brutus—“ Farewell, good Strato. Caesar, now be
 still ;
 I killed not thee with half so good a will.”
 (He runs on his sword, and dies.)

It cannot be determined, with any approach to certainty, whether the accomplice in this gloomy transaction was a slave, under the régime prevailing in the republic, and marking the sharply-defined cleavage between orders of its people, or a simple domestic retainer, not oppressed by the yoke ; if the community—a suspicion, albeit, for which history yields but small warrant—found room in its economy for such a grade. In the cast of characters provided, he and the rest of those in Brutus' retinue are denominated servants, a somewhat ambiguous title, one must admit, on which to base a conclusion. What, nevertheless, gives distinct colour to the persuasion that he was naught else than a bondman is recollection of the prominent article in the code that soldiery might not lawfully be drawn from this rank of society.

Naturally, a seeker in the drama for enlightenment as to any fact treads infirm ground. Shakespeare may, availing himself of poetic license, have transformed him into a soldier, or may, with as much likelihood, since there is no evidence that he actually took part in any fighting, mean to introduce him as belonging to the class, already shewn to be precluded from engaging in war. The circumstance, furthermore, that Brutus calls upon Strato to hold his (Brutus') sword, indicating, as it might be supposed to do, that the former did not himself possess one, lends countenance to the view that he was not, at the time, discharging a military function. Many of the histories however, justify the opinion that he was a soldier, and repudiate the Shakespearian account by the assertion that it was his sword which inflicted the deadly wound.

The bearing of all this on the controversy may not be evident to such as have not drunk from the spring of antiquity.