

Suspense. In the first half of the play, after the conspiracy has been formed, the audience is kept in suspense as to whether the plot will be discovered or whether something may happen to prevent the conspirators from carrying out their plans. We are told that it is doubtful whether Cæsar will go to the senate house, and even after he has decided to go we are in constant anxiety lest the plot may be betrayed.

The Oracular Element in the Play. In the ancient classical drama one of the chief sources of interest was supplied by revelations or prophecies, which were known as *oracles*; and the modern dramatist very frequently makes use of this oracular element. In *Julius Cæsar* each half of the play contains a warning or prophecy. In the beginning of the play, the soothsayer bids Cæsar "beware the Ides of March"; but Cæsar refuses to heed the warning even though it is repeated on the very day that "the Ides of March are come." In the second half of the play Antony prophesies over the dead body of Cæsar, and before the conclusion of the play we find that the spirit of his prophecy has come true.

The Supernatural. The audience is easily impressed by anything which appears to be unusual in character, and the supernatural always suggests a mysterious and unseen power over which human beings have no control. In *Julius Cæsar*, Shakespeare makes use of the supernatural for dramatic effect in at least three important situations,—in the stormy night in Rome, in the scene at Cæsar's house, and in the ghost scene in Brutus' tent at Sardis. Although the prodigies of the stormy night can easily be explained, yet to superstitious people like Casca it appears that they are "portentous things," sent by the gods as "instruments of fear and warning unto some monstrous state." In Act II. the scene at Cæsar's house is set in a background of supernatural suggestion. The thunder and lightning still continue; "there's one within recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch." The augurers in doing sacrifice "cannot find a heart within the beast"; and Calpurnia has dreamed of Cæsar's statue "which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, did run pure blood." In Act IV., the appearance of the ghost of Cæsar is merely the dramatist's way of making clear to us that in the struggle which is about to follow, the spirit of Cæsar will triumph. In Act V. still another suggestion of the supernatural is found in the speech of Cassius, in which he tells of the "ravens, crows and kites," which form a "canopy most fatal under which their army lies ready to give up the ghost."