

SHAKESPEARE'S "TEMPEST" FOR CLASS-WORK.

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THERE are many ways of dealing with such a composition as the "Tempest" in the class-room, and it would be absurd to express any opinion as to which way is the best. I have this winter a class taking it up one night each week, and an outline of our plan is subjoined, at the request of many English teachers who have become interested in the matter. This scheme is offered for consideration, not as being specially useful, but to enable others to compare their methods with mine, and I hope some other teachers of the "Tempest" will send you their schemes for publication. Such comparisons can hardly fail to make the teaching better all round by suggesting to all of us new points of view, and new modes of treatment. My syllabus is as follows:—

I. Comprehension of the text, including:—

1. The logical structure of the sentences, poetical inversions, ellipses, etc.

2. The meaning of words that either have passed out of use altogether, or are now used in non-Shakespearian senses.

3. Allusions and references to unfamiliar things and incidents.

4. Figurative language.

5. Obscurities arising from corruptions of the text, with suggested emendations.

II. Motive of the author in producing the play, and the occasion of its production.

III. General form of the play:—

1. As dramatic, noting the essentials of a drama as a work of art, and

2. As poetical, noting (a) the difference between poetry and prose,

and (b) the kind of poetry—epic, lyric, and dramatic.

IV. The plot or story:—

1. As chronologically developed (cf. Lamb's "Tales" based on other plays).

2. As artistically evolved (cf. Wilson's simile of "two clocks" keeping different times, to illustrate Shakespeare's method of keeping the stage action within a reasonable stage limit, while he suggests the longer time required for the evolution of the plot). In this connection note the device of

(a) Prospero's narrative to Miranda (Act I., sc. 2).

(b) Prospero's dialogue with Ariel (Act I., sc. 2).

(c) Prospero's dialogue with Caliban (Act I., sc. 2).

(d) Conversation among members of Alonso's suite (Act II., sc. 1)

V. Structure of the play, as such:—

1. The unities, and how far they are observed; classic and English dramatic ideals; comparison of the "Tempest" with other plays of Shakespeare in this respect.

2. The mechanical division into Acts and Scenes, and the relation of these divisions to the progress of action and narrative.

3. The admixture of prose and verse, and the appropriateness of each form to the persons using it, and to the occasion on which it is used.

4. The admixture of comedy with serious action, the latter amounting to tragedy so far as the feelings of certain persons in certain situations are concerned.

VI. Comparative suitability of the play:—

1. For representation on the stage,

2. For private reading,