

The Title of the Play.

Although the most important character in the play of *Julius Cæsar* is not Cæsar himself, but Brutus, it is generally agreed that the title *Julius Cæsar* is more appropriate than the title *Brutus* would have been. It is the assassination of Cæsar that supplies the motive for the play, and although the death of Cæsar takes place before the middle of the play is reached, yet his spirit dominates the play as a whole. It is Cæsar, whether living or dead, that represents the spirit of the times against which Brutus and his fellow-conspirators struggle in vain.

Julius Cæsar as a Tragedy.

The tragedy of *Julius Cæsar* lies not in the death of Cæsar, but in the failure of Brutus and Cassius to adapt themselves to the conditions in which they find themselves. Cassius fails, not because he is unpractical, but because he is carried away by his prejudice against Cæsar, and because he allows his friendship for Brutus to overrule his better judgment. Brutus fails because he is an idealist, who is unable to understand the conditions of his time, and because he lacks the practical judgment which is essential to a successful leader of men.

The Structure of the Play.

The play of *Julius Cæsar* is constructed according to a definite plan. The first half of the play deals with the conspiracy against Cæsar. The success of the conspirators reaches its highest point in the middle of the play, when, after the assassination they "stoop and wash" in Cæsar's blood. In the midst of this scene, however, a servant of Antony enters with a message from his master, and his entrance marks the turning point in the play. From this time forward, the fortunes of the conspirators decline. In his first half of the play Cæsar appeared as a weakling, and Antony was described as one who was "given to sports, to wildness, and much company." But Antony proves himself to be "a shrewd contriver," and Cæsar now appears to us as "the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times." The place of the dead Cæsar is taken by the living Octavius, who represents the spirit of the times against which the conspirators struggle in vain.

Sources of Interest in the Play.

Throughout the play of *Julius Cæsar*, Shakespeare has made use of various means commonly employed by dramatists to heighten the interest in the play. The following are some of the most important: