

Whether fighting for the extension and safeguarding of the realm against brave foreign races like the Gauls and the Germans, or waging a great civil war against Pompey's legions for the control of the Roman world, he proved himself a great conqueror. In contrast with Sulla, who, when victorious, had been ruthlessly savage in his treatment of his enemies, Cæsar displayed a conciliatory temper, a magnanimous clemency that was truly admirable and remarkable for his times and his race. He became supreme. He was made dictator for life. He was a mighty prince, king in all but name. If not infallible or perfect, he began to rule ably and wisely. What he did in a short time excites our wonder. He was doubtless not without ambition, that "infirmity of noble minds." He was not the last to feel that to save or serve the state he himself must be great. Cromwell felt this; others have done so. However, his fall was at hand. *Failing to realise the inevitable* certain senators formed a plot to assassinate him.

In this play Shakespeare brings the action before us. He has drawn upon Plutarch's lives for the historical background of the play. While this is the case he has given to the actors in a marked degree that individuality mentioned before, which only the true dramatist can create. As the plot advances swiftly from the early hints of coming trouble to the conspiracy and the murder of Cæsar, then on to the downfall of his murderers and the *triumph of Cæsarism*, the young student will be filled with interest in these men, their motives and their deeds.

The Cæsar of the play is hardly the mighty Cæsar of history. It is thought by some that his character may have changed somewhat for the worse in these latter days. We should remember, however, that *up to the moment of his death* we see him at his worst. He is not to claim too much of our sympathy. He is to die; and we are largely under the influence, as it were, of those who, approaching the deed, justify it to each other and to us. We hear Cæsar belittled. This great war-lord is a man of feeble temper, behaving, when ill, like a sick girl. The man whose iron will had brought the world to his feet is superstitious grown and vacillating, and can be led by shallow flattery. He is higher in place than others, not in merit.