

Duke of Hereford; rash and fanciful Richard, the emblem of weakness, instability and foolhardiness, whose every act tends to the consummation of his own ruin; the "wretched creatures" Bagot, Busby, Green, the worthless sycophants of the court, who, with deceitful smiles and flatteries incessant, stop the ears and steel the heart of their Sovereign against all wholesome advice; the arrogant, unfeeling, ever-changing Northumberland, who, no doubt, long stood ready to omit the title of the King; the inhuman York, who may sacrifice his son, his wife, or his political friends, but cannot forsake the stronger party; the treacherous Aumerle, Henry Hotspur, Sir Pierce of Exton, Surrey, Fitzwater, and others of like disposition, are the restless spirits and elements of discord with which the poet deals. The redeeming characters are but few. Conspicuous among them stand, like towers, "Old John of Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster," and the Bishop of Carlisle, the embodiment of wisdom and truth, and perhaps we should include the Gardener, whose modest but judicious counsel, had it been received in time, would have preserved both the life and the dignity of the King.

With these characters in the full bloom of zeal and power the play opens. Every moment the tragedy deepens, and anon we catch glimpses of the dark cloud of disaster, as it rises higher and higher above the western horizon. There is trouble in Ireland abroad, and discontent at home. Men rush hither and thither, news flies, nature arms herself against the rash King, and the Queen, wisely foreboding evil, is continually oppressed with a "nameless woe." Does the son of the Black Prince yet hope in an overruling Providence, and trust in guarding angels and a heaven-bestowed title? Does he still flatter himself that "not all the water in the rough rude sea can wash the balm from an anointed king?"

It merely lends additional force to the hint of Carlisle, that if "the means that heaven yields" were not "embraced," but were "neglected," Richard's overthrow must follow. Already the time had come when "the breath of worldly men" could "depose the deputy elected by the Lord."

History informs us that Richard II came to the throne amid the loud and joyful acclamations of an entire kingdom but here we see him die, by an assassin's hand amid the same applause which greeted Hereford King. In the early part of the play the Queen speaks of him as "so sweet a guest" referring to his personal qualities and beauty of form and face, but in the end we are shown that aimability and sociality are no safe-guards to a rash, weak man while beauty, at the farthest, is but evanescent strength. The moral is good. God help those who are inherently just. Right is the true source of power. But we must pause here. Time would fail us in any attempt which we might make to point out all the moral teaching of this play. It is heard in

speeches, it nestles in sentences, smiles in figures, is displayed in person and characters, and hinted at often when not plainly expressed. There are no really immoral suggestions in this tragedy—morality and right-doing it breathes forth continually. Granted if you wish that the names of the Deity,—of hell and heaven and sacred things are sometimes employed when they might have been omitted, that alliteration and a play on words is too frequent, that strained figures, which, by the way, are often strained quite naturally, are scattered here and there throughout the whole, yet we dare believe that both the scholar and the critic, although they may condemn play-writing and stage-acting as now conducted, especially since at the present time there is no necessity in christian lands for resorting to theatres and theatrical representations to gain any wholesome knowledge, will alike cheerfully grant us that in the public presentation of the drama before us, Shakespeare not only did well, but the best thing possible under the circumstances, since he utilized the stage and dignified it while at the same time by rising above the morality of his age, above his competitors and their grovelling motives he became the wise and generous instructor of Old England and shall yet be the benefactor of the many in other lands and times whose minds and whose hearts shall open to receive the teachings of his Richard II.

It is better to *be* loyal and good than to *seem* so.

#### Professor Foster's Lecture.

Dear Editor,

We have not often been so thoroughly well pleased by a public lecture as by the "Plea for the higher Culture" given by Professor Foster on Wednesday evening.

Not that we were just determined to be pleased, and therefore every thing went well. We had an inward consciousness that the wrinkles would have come out, had there been any, in spite of ourselves.

Prof. Foster possesses, indeed, an honest, taking earnestness, that bespeaks attention and interest; but beyond all the interest of appropriate and pleading manner, the value and high claims of the subject stole into our hearts, and took us by storm in like manner as the whole audience were, evidently, we thought, swayed with the feeling of satisfaction and conviction.

But this, it strikes us, was no small thing to effect, and gives strong evidence of the ability of the lecturer.

It is not every man or even woman who has the power to make an unpopular subject popular. Is it then true that "the higher culture" is an unpopular subject? We are afraid so, tho' we