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A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN PLAYS

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH THEATRE

BY

DAVID ROSTRON, M.A. (Manchester)

A thesis presented for the degree of Master of  
Letters of Durham University

February, 1970.

## ABSTRACT

By drawing on prompt copies, newspaper articles, and the memoirs of actors, producers and theatregoers, this study sets out to supply a more detailed stage history of Shakespeare's three Roman plays between 1800 and 1900 than has hitherto been available. The first chapter asserts that there should be a fruitful partnership between the scholar's study and the actor's stage, but demonstrates that this has not always occurred. A sketch is then supplied of the changing conditions of performance in the London theatre of the nineteenth century. The next three chapters discuss every production of Coriolanus, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra which took place at London and Stratford during this period. Some attempt is incidentally made to explain the rise and fall in popularity of each of these plays, and the relationship of this to the different styles of acting and production favoured by leading actors and by audiences. Prompt copies and acting versions of the plays are examined in some detail, and the stage life of the plays before 1800 and since 1900 is also briefly outlined. A final chapter draws together the threads, and lists some of the points which emerge: among these are the lack of faith in Shakespeare's skill as a dramatist, the actor-managers' need to show a financial profit, the impact on the theatre of prevailing moral climates and political events, the enormous importance of the talents and enthusiasms of leading actors, the influence of the new theatres established after the abolition of the Patent Houses, the increasing importance of dramatic critics, and the metropolitan contempt for Stratford productions.

The aim is essentially narrative and descriptive: the study confirms the familiar picture of the nineteenth century stage, but also corrects some errors in, and supplies some omissions from, the standard works on the staging of Shakespeare's plays.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could never have been composed without the creative criticism and encouragement of Professor T.S. Dorsch, Professor R.A. Foakes and Mr. Richard Proudfoot, or without the consistently kind and patient assistance of Librarians at the Universities of Durham, Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne, at the Reference Libraries of Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne, at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford upon Avon and at the Garrick Club in London.

My grateful thanks are also owed to many colleagues and students at Northern Counties College of Education, Newcastle upon Tyne, and especially to Miss Kathleen Barratt, Mr. Allen Crabb, Mr. Denis Dudley and Mr. Derek Stubbs.

The sympathetic encouragement and interest of my late wife was a constant source of strength during the early days of the work.

All these people have saved me from many errors, inaccuracies and infelicities; those which remain are entirely my responsibility.

D.R.  
Newcastle upon Tyne.



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The following abbreviations will be used:

ANDERSON:	J.R. Anderson:	<u>An Actor's Life</u> (1902)
BUNN:	A. Bunn:	<u>The Stage</u> (3 vols, 1840) (1859)
COLE:	J.W. Cole:	<u>The Life &amp; Theatrical Times of Charles Kean</u>
DAVIES:	T. Davies:	<u>Dramatic Miscellanies</u> (3 vols, 1784)
GENEST:	J. Genest:	<u>Some Account of the English Stage</u> (10 vols, 1832)
HALL:	H.T. Hall:	<u>Shakespeare's Plays</u> (1880)
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INCHBALD:	Mrs. Inchbald (Ed):	<u>The British Theatre</u> (25 vols, 1808)
JOHNSON:	S. Johnson:	<u>Works</u> (12 vols, 1816)
JOSEPH:	B. Joseph:	<u>The Tragic Actor</u> (1959)
KEMBLE:	J. Boaden:	<u>Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble</u> (2 vols, 1825)
MARSTON:	W. Marston:	<u>Our Recent Actors</u> (2 vols, 1888)
ODELL:	G.C.D. Odell:	<u>Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving</u> (2 vols, 1921)
POLLOCK:	W.C. Macready:	<u>Reminiscences</u> (Ed. Pollock, 2 vols, 1879)
RICE:	C. Rice:	<u>The London Theatre in the 1830's</u> (Ed Sprague and Shuttleworth, 1950)
ROBINSON:	H. Crabb Robinson:	<u>The London Theatre 1811-1866</u> (Ed Brown, 1966)
SIDDONS:	J. Boaden:	<u>Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons</u> (2 vols, 1827)
SPRAGUE:	A.C. Sprague:	<u>Shakespeare and the Actors</u> (1945)
TOYNBEE:	W.C. Macready:	<u>The Diaries of W.C. Macready 1833-1851</u> (Ed Toynbee, 2 vols, 1912)

References to periodicals will be abbreviated as follows:

ATHEN:	<u>The Athenaeum</u>
I.L.N.	<u>The Illustrated London News</u>
Q.R.	<u>The Quarterly Review</u>
SAT.R.	<u>The Saturday Review</u>
SPEC.	<u>The Spectator</u>

References to the texts of Shakespeare's plays are to the New Cambridge Shakespeare (Ed. J. Dover Wilson) in the 1968 paperback editions.

A full bibliography will be found at the end of the study.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has seen a growing realisation that the world of literary criticism cannot be healthily divorced from that of the stage.

Theatre audiences in the 1960's are not surprised to find, for example, that the programme for the National Theatre's controversial all-male production of As You Like It in 1967 should contain quotations from more than a dozen works of literature and literary criticism, ranging in period from Thomas Nashe to Jan Kott, or that the Royal Shakespeare Company's programme for the 1969 Pericles at Stratford should include references to no fewer than nineteen academic works together with a large series of extracts from them. It is now axiomatic that plays of any artistic calibre make their greatest impact in performance rather than when read. Stage directors are expected to be familiar with the views of leading literary critics, and no scholar of dramatic literature can be taken entirely seriously unless he bases his literary judgements upon a knowledge of the plays in performance as well as upon a detailed dissection of the text in his study. So many of the subtler effects of grouping, movement, mime, gesture, facial expression, "business", setting, costume and pageantry enhance the sensitive playgoer's understanding of the complexities and overtones of the play that it would be a foolish critic indeed who locked himself in the library and ignored the stage.

Of no playwright is this more true than of Shakespeare, for only in the theatre is it possible to respond in full to his skill in juxtaposition of scenes, his tautening and relaxation of tension, his adept transitions of mood and atmosphere, his almost symbolic use of changes of costume (as when Lear moves from the full panoply of kingship to nakedness on the heath and thence to the fresh clothes which Cordelia places on him in his recovered sanity), and the opportunities he so regularly provides for an enrichment of the play's significances by spectacle, colour, music and other visual and aural effects. All producers of Shakespeare at the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre or Chichester (for example) seek to express a thoughtful and intelligent interpretation of each play they direct, and often turn for some guidance to the literary critics, as did Sir Laurence Olivier when he based his unforgettable 1964 Othello on the Leavisite conception that the protagonist, far from being "the noble Moor" extolled by Bradley, is in fact fatally dominated by self-pity and by "a habit of self-approving self-dramatization".(1) One looks to directors of the integrity and sensitivity of Olivier, Peter Hall, Peter Brook, Tyrone Guthrie and Trevor Nunn for coherent yet individual interpretations of the plays they handle, and for flashes of original illumination of themes and techniques as well as of character and motives.

This link between the scholar and the stage has been strengthened during the twentieth century by the practical and theoretical work of such men as Gordon Craig, William Poel, Harley Granville Barker, A.C. Sprague, George Wilson Knight, John Russell Brown and Bétram Josphe, to name only a few of the distinguished scholars who have also found

found themselves at home in the theatre. It is due to the efforts of men such as these that the eighth volume of the Stratford upon Avon Studies, on Later Shakespeare, published in 1966, contains articles on The Staging of the Last Plays (by Daniel Seltzer), on "Coriolanus"; Shakespeare's Tragedy in Rehearsal and Performance (by Glynne Wickham), and an article by Richard Proudfoot which takes its inception from the records of the King's Men between 1606 and 1613. This cross-pollination between study and stage is now seen as a sensible and moderate - indeed, as an essential - approach, yet such an amicable state of affairs has not always existed, and there has frequently been a considerable tension between the literary critics of Shakespeare and the exponents of his plays on the stage, each belittling the efforts of the other.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was common for the most distinguished literary critics to cast doubt upon the value of stage representations of Shakespeare's plays and to assert that only by a leisurely perusal in the quiet of the booklined study could one attain to a valid and comprehensive understanding of the dramatist's purpose and achievement. Pope, for example, writing in 1725, blamed many of the faults of Shakespeare's plays on the fact that he was an actor and "sharer" and that he was, therefore, always inclined to seek for the easy laugh or the facile climax; in Pope's eyes, the actors concentrated overmuch on ephemeral success, and their ignorance of the classical rules of literary criticism made their interpretations shallow.

They (i.e. the actors) have ever had a Standard to themselves, upon other principles than those of Aristotle. As they live by the Majority, they know no rule but that of pleasing the present humour, and complying with the wit in fashion; a consideration which brings all their judgment to a short point.

Players are just such judges of what is right, as Taylors are of what is graceful. And ..... most of our Author's faults are less to be ascribed to his wrong judgment as a Poet, than to his right judgment as a Player. (2)

Even the most practically minded of all the leading literary critics of the eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson, agreed with Pope that attendance at theatrical representations would give a less truthful impression of a play's merits than could be gained from a reading; whereas a comedy might occasionally be improved by performance, Johnson was adamant that the staging of a tragedy would inevitably detract from the effects which could be achieved by a sympathetic and imaginative reading.

A dramattick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less, (3)

and he therefore concluded that there was nothing to be gained by attending performances of plays, since "a play read, affects the mind like a play acted." (4)

Pope and Johnson were typical of their day in refusing to allow to the stage its proper part in a vigorous recreation of the full impact of a play, and three equally famous writers at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth century remained true - in theory, at least, - to this earlier tradition, although it must be admitted that two of them seemed to abandon it in practice. Coleridge, however, was quite intransigently of the opinion that his study of the plays of Shakespeare could in no way be assisted or reinforced by seeing them in performance. He asserted that Shakespeare's appeal was principally to the intellect and the imagination rather than to



the senses, and he said of theatres that

while the performances at them may be said, in some sense, to improve the heart, there is no doubt that they vitiate the taste. The effect is bad, however good the cause. (5)

This bias against the stage of his day is partly explained by his feeling that, in its growing insistence on machinery and setting, it was moving ever farther from the comparatively non-realistic productions of Shakespeare's own day and ever closer to mere visual and sensual titillation, to

that strong excitement of the senses, that inward endeavour to make everything appear reality, which is deemed excellent as to the effort of the present day. (6)

Consequently, he was pleased that what he saw as the inadequacy of the acting of the early years of the nineteenth century "drove Shakespeare from the stage, to find his proper place in the heart and in the closet;"(7) for his own limited experience of seeing the plays staged had led Coleridge to claim that he "never saw any of Shakespeare's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation." (8)

He therefore believed that Shakespeare's true achievement had been to "rely on his own imagination, and to speak not to the senses, as was now done, but to the mind" (9) and that the retiring scholar would approach closest to the greatness of Shakespeare in his closet, since "in the closet only could it be fully and completely enjoyed." (10)

Coleridge represents the tension between the stage and study at its most extreme, but even Charles Lamb, a great enthusiast for the theatre and himself a dramatist, had reservations about the value and wisdom of staging Shakespeare's plays. The tendency in Lamb's time to present these plays in sadly mutilated forms may well have played its part in causing his assertion that "the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated

for performance on a stage, that those of almost any other dramatist whatever," (11) and his famous condemnation of King Lear in the theatre ("to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick ... has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting") (12) may well have been prompted by the dominance of Nahum Tate's bastard and sentimentalised version of the play which held the stage for so long. But Lamb carried his attack on the staging of Shakespeare to the point at which he claimed that it dragged down a reader's conception of the play from the highest level of the imagination to the more lowly and imperfect realm of flesh and blood; he admitted that performers of the genius of Kemble and Mrs. Siddens could provide a vivid representation, but

dearly do we pay all our life after for this juvenile pleasure, this sense of distinctness. When the novelty is past, we find to our cost that instead of realising an idea, we have only materialized and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood. We have let go a dream, in quest of an unattainable substance, (13)

and he therefore found a perpetual freshness about "those plays of Shakspeare which have escaped being performed." (14)

So strong was the hold of this traditional antipathy to the staging of Shakespeare's plays that even Hazlitt, whose serious Shakespearean literary criticism was informed throughout by his love of the theatre and by his day-to-day work as a dramatic critic, paid lip service to it and stated that "We do not like to see our author's plays acted," (15) while as late as 1826 The Quarterly Review was also aligning itself with the closet critics as it directed a broadside against the frivolity of theatregoers:

The theatre may be too much frequented, and attentions to more serious concerns drowned amid its fascination. We also frankly confess that we may be better employed than in witnessing the best and most moral play that ever was acted. (16)

These quotations testify to the fairly widespread hostility of the literary critics to the stage but they were not solely responsible for the tension between the study and the stage, for certain actors and actresses were far from silent about the inadequacies of the scholars: Helen Faucit, for example, thought that they

constantly encumbered (Shakespeare's) texts where no explanation was needed, and missed the indications which only a sympathetic imagination could observe, and the action of the stage could alone develope. (17)

Most actors, however, were content to emphasise the care and excellence of their productions, and to claim that the interpretative skill of the actor was as valid a commentary on Shakespeare as the more academic view of the literary critic; Kemble, indeed, anticipated the modern attitude that these two interpretations would frequently be complementary:

What philosophical criticism had discovered to be the properties of Shakespeare's characters, the actor now endeavoured to show. To be a just representative of the part, he was to become a living commentary on the poet, (18)

and Macready was also convinced that "to illustrate and to interpret the poet's thought is the player's province." (19) Both these outstanding actors strove to study the text of Shakespeare, and to become familiar with the views of the literary critics, while Kemble even went so far as to write his own volume of literary criticism on Macbeth and Richard III, thus being one of the first actors to make a written contribution to the understanding of characters, motives and emotional dynamics within a play.

Gradually, as actors became increasingly anxious to appear in textually accurate versions, and as the social status and respectability of the stage was raised, this tension between actors and literary critics became less acute, and each was able to admit the validity of the other's role, until the present state of harmonious co-operation was at last evolved. No one would now deny that Shakespeare's plays gained life and vigour because they were written by a practical man of the theatre, immersed in his craft and constantly using his intellect and imagination in terms not only of poetry but also of stage representation, and those scholars who consistently attempt to remember this have found a fruitful field of study in tracing the stage histories of Shakespeare's plays. G.C.D. Odell's Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving, A.C. Sprague's Shakespeare and the Actors, Bertram Joseph's The Tragic Actor, and the stage histories contributed by Harold Child and C.B. Young to each volume of John Dover Wilson's New Cambridge Shakespeare all testify to the value of such work, and form a rewarding link between the practical world of the theatre and the more theoretical world of the study. Strangely, however, there has so far been an absence of really detailed studies of the stage histories of individual plays within specific periods, and this study has been written in an attempt to document three of Shakespeare's plays in the nineteenth century theatre.

The three Roman plays form an interesting group for they are almost incredibly different from each other: in Coriolanus, Shakespeare presented a one-man tragedy almost entirely lacking in humour and portraying a cold, austere protagonist set against a baldly military and political backcloth in which few private scenes are permitted and from which introspection is totally banished; in Julius Caesar, the

interest is fairly evenly split among three major characters and it is difficult to decide whether Shakespeare was intending to compose a tragedy or the kind of history which he had recently been writing, in which plots and military encounters swing the plot along at a clipping pace; in Antony and Cleopatra, he poured out some of his richest verse in the depiction of a pair of characters whose great love oscillates between the romantic and the sordid, and which springs from a decadent and luxury-ridden society. Here are three great plays, linked by their reincarnation of the ancient Roman world and by their indebtedness to Plutarch, yet offering a panoramic variety of themes and environments, and provoking widely different critical estimates. Furthermore, their stage lives lend themselves to detailed study because they have all attracted the attention of actors and actresses of the most strikingly disparate talents, and because few plays have experienced such violent fluctuations in theatrical popularity and success. After being almost utterly ignored for more than a hundred years after Shakespeare's death, Coriolanus achieved a moderate popularity in the mid-eighteenth century only to leap into pyrotechnic success between 1806 and 1817, before sinking back into comparative obscurity for another decade, being revived in the 1830's and 1840's, and then relapsing into oblivion until the very end of the century. Julius Caesar, on the other hand, was performed with more consistent regularity than either of the other Roman plays, but suffered two periods of eclipse (1780-1810 and 1870-1890) while vaulting into sudden and startling prominence between 1810 and 1820 and again between 1890 and 1900. The stage performances of Antony and Cleopatra followed a very different pattern for it received only one

production in the entire eighteenth century but reached a peak of popularity in the later years of the nineteenth century. A table to illustrate performances of these three plays between 1800 and 1900 will be found in the Appendix.

This book will tell the story of these plays in the nineteenth century London theatre, glancing also at the Stratford productions which began to bloom at the end of that period. Eighteenth century periodicals devoted little space to reviews of drama, and C.B. Hogan in his monumentally scholarly work on Shakespeare in the London Theatre 1701-1800 has definitively charted the dates of performances, the cast lists and the box office takings of that period. Performances this century have been covered - albeit somewhat sketchily - by J.C. Trewin's Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964 and reviews of these performances are readily available in modern journals, as well as in the memories of elderly playgoers and actors, to say nothing of the admirable annual review of major Shakespeare productions in Shakespeare Survey. So far, the nineteenth century has received scant attention and this study will therefore concentrate basically on that area. The unfolding of the progress of these three plays from 1800 to 1900 will be drawn from contemporary prompt copies, periodicals and reviews and from the memoirs of actors and playgoers who lived through these productions, thus providing a more detailed stage history of the Roman plays than is yet available, and also incidentally supplying specific examples of the general trends of development in stage presentation and acting techniques throughout the nineteenth century.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LONDON THEATRE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Theatres

Public Taste and the Repertoire

Conditions of Performance

The Audience

Conclusion.



CHAPTER TWO

THE LONDON THEATRE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

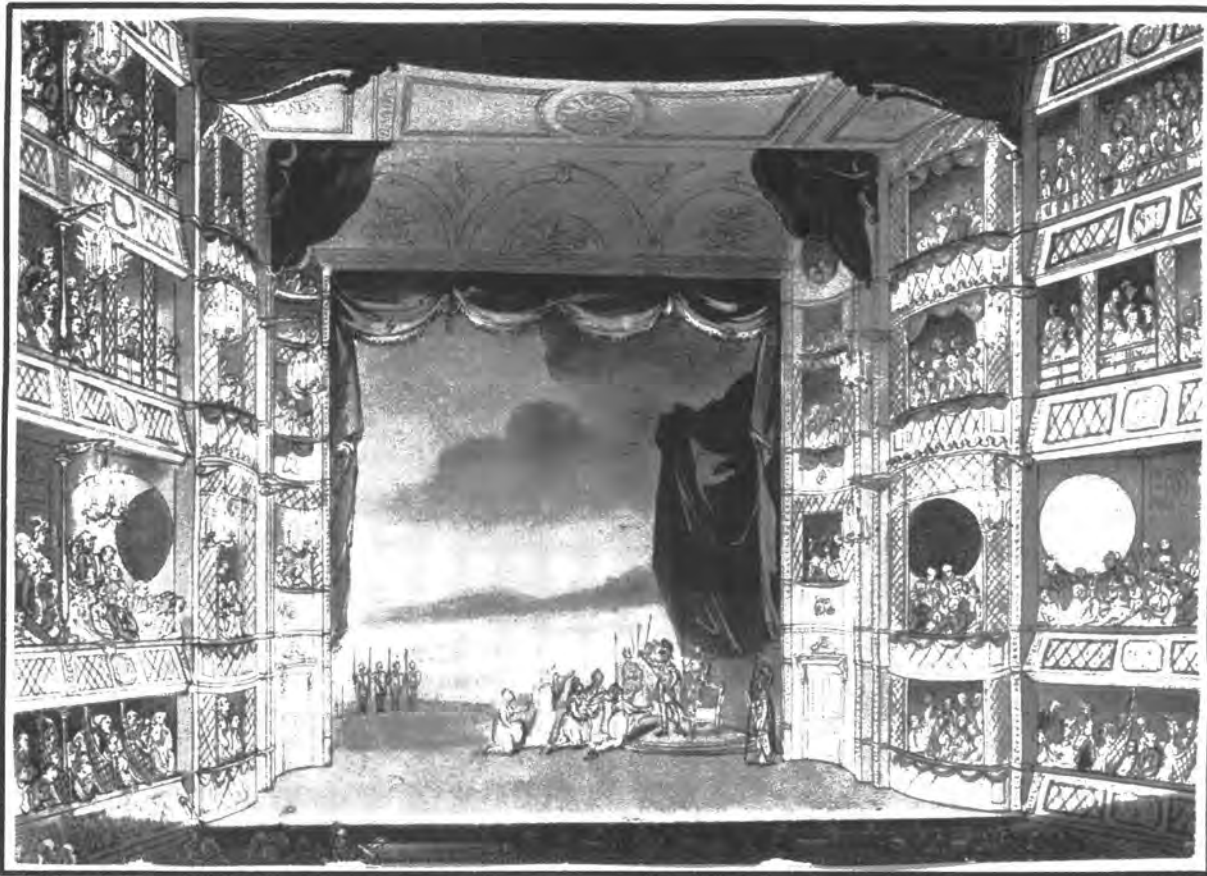
(1)

The Theatres.

The stage histories of Shakespeare's plays in the nineteenth century can only be coherently understood if they are set against a background of theatre conditions at the time, for the organisation of dramatic presentations was markedly different from the current situation, and, of course, was far from static between 1800 and 1900.

Until 1843, the London theatre was dominated by the Patent System which legally decreed that only the two great theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden could be licensed for the production of serious drama. As early as the middle of the eighteenth century there had been stirrings against the constricting principle of the patent monopoly, and a small bending of the rules at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries had permitted the occasional licensing of the Haymarket Theatre, especially after the destruction by fire of the two patent houses. An attempt was made in 1832 to abolish patents, the Bill being passed by the Commons, only to be defeated in the Lords, <sup>and</sup> but it was not until the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 that the legal basis of the patent theatres was finally abolished and that Shakespeare could be seen elsewhere in London. Accordingly, for the first forty-four years of the nineteenth century the story of serious drama is essentially restricted to Covent Garden and Drury Lane, whose fluctuating fortunes illustrate something of theatre conditions and conventions at that time. Drury Lane had been Garrick's great empire from 1746 to 1776 and he had

set himself the task of ending the slackness and indifference which had for so long been the keynote there: among other innovations, he had enforced punctuality at rehearsals, had suspended players who dived up in performance, or who acted their roles lackadaisically, and had attempted to abolish the practice of allowing members of the audience to sit on the stage. His well-disciplined company appeared in no fewer than 28 of Shakespeare's plays during his control of the theatre. In 1776, he had been followed by R.B. Sheridan, to whom the theatre was no more than an amusing sideline, but who was fortunate to employ as his stage manager, from 1788 to 1803, the great John Philip Kemble, who was effectively in charge of productions at Drury Lane. Kemble suffered from the shameful neglect with which Sheridan treated his theatre, and had constantly to complain that the actors were unpaid, the wardrobe neglected and the scenery shabby. During Kemble's stage-management, the theatre had been demolished (in 1791) and the new building was opened in April 1794. It was a vast and magnificent edifice, holding some 3,611 people in great galleries and tiers upon tiers of boxes, while its spacious amphitheatre near the roof helped to confirm its already established position as one of the two leading metropolitan theatres. Sheridan, however, remained as unco-operative as ever and in 1803 Kemble disgustedly abandoned Drury Lane and transferred to the rival house of Covent Garden, which he was to dominate until his retirement in 1817. The new Drury Lane did not long survive his departure, for it was burned to the ground on 24th February 1809 and the company had to move temporarily to the Lyceum until another ornate Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, planned on the model of the great theatre in



DRURY LANE THEATRE AFTER SHERIDAN'S REBUILDING IN 1794  
WITH "CORIOLANUS" IN PERFORMANCE

Although the picture was not published until 1808 (in Ackermann's Microcosm of London), the performance it depicts must have taken place in 1796 or 1797, for "Coriolanus" was not presented at Drury Lane between 1798 and 1823.

Bordeaux and costing £151,672, arose on the same spot in time to open on 10th October 1812 with a seating capacity of 3,060. This new building was to be Kean's domain, but in spite of his great talents and the skill of Elliston (who became manager in 1819), the new theatre failed to make a profit as it steadfastly continued to present "legitimate" drama. When the first seven years had brought a loss of some £80,000, Elliston began to concentrate on Italian opera and on spectacle rather than on Shakespeare, and initiated extensive alterations in 1822 which were designed to improve the acoustics. When Macready became manager in the 1840's, Drury Lane recovered some of its former glory, returning to serious drama and being renovated with new red cloth on the pit seats which were now separated from each other instead of being in the old-fashioned "bench" form. Macready lost money on the enterprise, and his managership virtually marked the end of Shakespearean endeavour at this famous theatre.

The history of Covent Garden before 1843 had been equally chequered. Until Kemble's arrival in 1803, Drury Lane had seemed to win the palm for serious drama, but his management, from 1803 to 1817, raised its fortunes and artistic reputation, even if it also included the appearances of the child actor, Master Betty, in 1804-5. To keep pace with the growing size of its rival, Covent Garden had been altered in 1782 and rebuilt in 1792 on a larger scale than before. On September 2nd 1808, however, it was destroyed by fire and no effort was spared to construct an imposing new theatre which held nearly 3,000 spectators and cost some £156,000. The roof of the new building was higher than in the old and the seats were more steeply raked; boxes were divided by Corinthian

columns with gilt flutings and ornaments which, though magnificent and opulent in appearance and modelled on the Temple of Minerva on the Acropolis, nonetheless tended to interrupt a clear view of the stage. This was the theatre in which Kemble was to score his greatest triumph as actor and as producer, and in which Young was the leading tragedian for several years after the retirement of Kemble.

Only the Haymarket, before 1843, attempted to encroach on the territory of the two patent houses, but this was only in a meagre way: in 1797, for example, it presented two performances of Catharine and Petruchio (a version of The Taming of the Shrew), two of The Merchant of Venice and one of Othello, while Drury Lane had thirty-six Shakespearean performances spread over thirteen different plays, and Covent Gardens twenty-one nights of Shakespeare drew on ten different plays. (1) The furnishings were also somewhat meagre for when, on 4th July 1821, a new Haymarket Theatre was opened, holding 880 spectators and designed by Nash at a cost of only £20,600, the audiences quickly found that the financial economy observed in its construction had led to certain deficiencies:

The interior of this new building was apparently uninviting and was variously described contemporarily as "rude", "naked", "chilling", and even "petrifying". One contemporary account says that the theatre was "in point of architectural beauty the most elegant in London, but for the convenience of seeing and hearing the worst contrived". (2)

It is basically true to say that only these three theatres mounted Shakespearean productions before 1843, but this did not mean that London's theatrical fare was limited to their stages. Until about 1820, they held their own against the tawdry music-hall type of entertainment proffered elsewhere, but with the retirement of Kemble in 1817 and with

Kean's increasing inability to draw the crowds, especially after the disgrace he suffered when cited in a divorce case, the receipts at Drury Lane and Covent Garden declined seriously because many of the public were frequenting the rash of new theatres which had begun to appear. In 1806, the Olympic had been opened as an extension of the music-hall empire of Astley's, and the same year saw the arrival in the Strand of the Sans Pareil, which was later to proclaim its pretensions to increased status by changing its name to the Adelphi. In 1810, Astley's Royal Circus, home of performing animals and music hall, became the Surrey, and other theatres already established before the abolition of the patent system were the Coburg (1816, renamed the Royal Victoria in 1833), the Pavilion, Whitechapel (1828), the Strand (1832), the Standard, Shoreditch (1835) and the St. James' (1835). The importance of these new theatres was that the entertainment they purveyed tended to vitiate public taste and to create an assumption in the minds of respectable citizens that the theatre was vulgar, low and disorderly. The middle class between 1830 and 1875 tended to turn against the legitimate theatre, substituting for it the more dignified world of Italian opera. In the period 1830-1850, the King's Theatre (later Her Majesty's) catered to this taste for opera and

became the resort of the most brilliant and fashionable audiences. Throughout Europe it was venerated as the most brilliant of social spectacles, (3)

and visitors to all parts of the theatre except the gallery were expected to wear evening dress - frock coats and coloured trousers and cravats not being admissible. Ladies would often appear at the opera there in court dresses, after a royal "Drawing Room", and the interior

was in no way unworthy of such sartorial splendour, as may be deduced from the ecstatic tone of the following description of the interior of Her Majesty's which was included in London as it is To-day, a guide book published by H.G. Clarke and Company of Exeter Change to celebrate the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851:

The style of decoration is Italian, of the time of Raphael, and Julie Romano; the Vatican, and other palaces of Italy, furnishing the designs. Each tier of boxes is differently ornamented with arabesque scrolls, interspersed with medallions of figures, on gold or coloured grounds; pictures and ornaments in imitation of relief; enriched with burnished gold mouldings, and subdued by amber draperies. The profusion of bright yellow silk hangings, and the golden gloss - iness of their satin surface, lighted by a brilliant chandelier, shed such a flood of lustre around, that the gay tints of the paintings are toned down to a chaste and delicate harmony of quiet hues ... the effect is lively as well as rich, and so far from fatiguing the sense, it is delightful to dwell upon; whilst the longer we look, the more vivacity do the pictorial decorations appear to possess. Pale blue and brown, enlivened with red, prevail. Red predominates in the ceiling, to which the eye is gradually led by a progressive diminution in the quantity of intense hues from the lower tier, where it is freely used, to the upper, where there is little positive colour, and none in masses ... the opening over the gallery is admirably contrived to produce a novel and agreeable effect: the ceiling and walls are coloured sky blue, and this mass of retiring coolness is very refreshing to the eye. (4)

Polite society rallied to the operas presented in these sumptuous surroundings and their success was such that in 1847 Covent Garden's interior was entirely reconstructed in prevailing colours of white and blue and with magnificent gilt mouldings, after which it turned its back on the legitimate drama, changed its name to The Royal Italian Opera and devoted itself to opera, even after its destruction by fire in 1856 and its replacement by the current building in 1858. By the 1850's the King's, Covent Garden and the St. James' were all devoted almost entirely to opera and musicals, Astley's continued with equestrian and other animal acts, the Haymarket, Adelphi, Olympic, Strand and Theatre Royal,

Marylebone presented mainly melodrama, Mme. Vestris had left the Olympic and was holding forth in comediettas, farces and burlesques at the Lyceum, so that attempts at serious drama could be found only at Anderson's Drury Lane, Creswick's Surrey, Charles Kean's Princess's and - above all - at Sadler's Wells.

Rarely can a theatre have undergone such a dramatic change as occurred at Sadler's Wells in 1844. Entertainment of various types had been presented on that site since the end of the seventeenth century and under Dibdin's management after 1804 nautical dramas with real water were mounted with such monotonous regularity that it was widely known by the title of the Aquatic Theatre. Under the aegis of Grimaldi from 1817-28, melodramas in the aquatic tradition (many of them by Douglas Jerrold) were the order of the day, The Chieftain's Oath, for example, being embellished with a lake of real water and with a depiction of the destruction by fire of the camp of Maclean. Such spectacle brought to Sadler's Wells the roughest and noisiest audiences in London, and Dickens, writing in 1851, looked back twenty years to the time when it had been

entirely delivered over to as ruffianly an audience as London could shake together. Without, the theatre by night was like the worst of the worst kind of fair in the worst kind of town. Within, it was a bear-garden, resounding with foul language, oaths, cat-call shrieks, yells, blasphemy, obscenity - a truly diabolical clamour. Fights took place anywhere, at any period of the performance. (5)

The abolition of the patent system enabled Phelps to set out on his successful task of raising the reputation of Sadler's Wells and asserting its position as the heir of the patent houses and as the true home of Shakespearean drama in London from 1844 to 1860. It required over a month of unremitting labour to establish decorum and



order, for he was forced to banish fish friers and cestermongers from the doors, to remove sellers of beer from inside the theatre, to refuse admission to children in arms who had hitherto squalled through the performances, and to call for the police to enforce an old Act of Parliament which forbade the use of bad language in a public place. With the decks thus cleared, he launched into the systematic presentation of a seriously intentioned repertoire rooted firmly in the plays of Shakespeare, turning Sadler's Wells for nearly twenty years into the home of the most intelligent and honest productions to be found in London. His company aimed at a homogeneity of approach and at teamwork rather than at individual displays of bravura skill; it was

a company not distinguished for particular individual eminence, but for the general intelligence which pervades the whole, and for the heartiness with which each member aids the general effect. (6)

Unfortunately, this was entirely a one-man venture and after Phelps' retirement Sadler's Wells sank once more into decline, becoming successively a skating rink and a pickle factory before being reopened in 1893 as a music hall. Phelps was the last of the actor-managers to make a really determined effort to retain a London based company presenting a repertoire of intelligent plays, and although Irving at the Lyceum and Tree at Her Majesty's mounted spectacular Shakespearean productions later in the century, it is true to say that no London

theatre after 1862 followed a policy of regularly bringing Shakespeare to the public.

In 1800, London could boast three "respectable" theatres which all took pride in the regular presentation of Shakespeare, but in 1900, with twenty-four theatres regularly advertising in The Times, it was possible for Shakespeare to be entirely absent from the London stage for extremely long periods, and for the public's attention to be engaged almost entirely with melodrama, farce, pantomime, opera and music hall. Attracted by these more ephemeral and less demanding delights, theatre-goers' interest in Shakespeare underwent a startling decline in the course of the century.

(ii)

#### Public Taste and the Repertoire

In 1799, audiences at Drury Lane had been able to see Kemble in three performances of Measure for Measure, four of Much Ado About Nothing, eight of Hamlet, ten of As You Like It, one of Macbeth, two of Richard III, and one of The Merchant of Venice; in addition, at the same theatre, but without Kemble, there had been six performances of Catherine and Petruchio, one of Twelfth Night and three of The Tempest. At the other patent house, Covent Garden audiences during 1799 could have attended three performances of Catherine and Petruchio, two of Richard III, four of Romeo and Juliet

three of Macbeth and one each of Henry VIII, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, King Lear and Henry IV, Part One, while the Haymarket made a single contribution to the year's Shakespearean productions with a Merchant of Venice performed for the benefit of an infant orphan family. Altogether, fifteen different plays by Shakespeare were presented at the two patent houses, taking tolerably large sums at the box offices, and it was understood to be part of a manager's duty and pleasure to provide the public with a varied Shakespearean diet.

This situation was not to remain stable for long, however, and a decline in public taste set in after the retirement of Kemble in 1817 and after Kean's powers began to fade in the later 1820's. By 1829, the serious drama was so little to public taste that there was even talk of turning the once mighty Covent Garden into a circus or bear-garden, and, in a bitterly ironic attack on the low standard of contemporary public taste, Hazlitt asserted that, if this were to happen,

People would go fast enough, the house would be crammed-full night after night, and the delight in the noise of cat-calls, the sound of our own voices, and the chance of a public-spirited bruising match, would bring an overflow, which the Muses and the Graces- which wit and genius had in vain endeavoured to effect ... we have no such thing as a theatrical public. (7)

As the public attendance began to fall at serious plays, the actors and managers blamed each other in a series of tense quarrels and rivalry, and then adopted the panacea of banishing Shakespeare's plays from the repertoire, assuming that they would be of interest only to a cultural élite. In describing this situation, Hazlitt blunted the edge

of his irony and grew more melancholy:

We have then a national drama, affording scenes for a display of the most exquisite theatrical powers; but nobody (except a few old fashioned dilettanti) knows or cares anything about them; we have actors capable of doing justice to these rich and varied scenes; but we quarrel with them, or they quarrel with the manager or with one another ... Instead of groups of excellence on the stage ... we have only the disjecta membra poetae, shattered fragments and vile disproportions: instead of a cordial cooperation and laudable ambition to gratify the public, each is bent on pushing himself forward or on keeping others back. (8)

In such an atmosphere of public apathy and professional jealousy, even the great actors of the 1830's turned away from Shakespeare to some extent, appearing instead in more modern plays and in adaptations of the novels of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. Much of Macready's time in the early 1830's, for example, was devoted to performances of The Stranger, Werner, Rob Roy and William Tell as well as his Shakespearean roles, while men of lesser talent scarcely ventured to tackle Shakespeare at all. Throughout 1834, The Times consistently bewailed the decline in standards of tragic acting since the days of Kemble and Kean, saying of Vandenhoff, for instance,

There have been times when the accession of such an actor to our stage would not have formed any great cause of congratulation; but parmi les aveugles les borgnes sont rois, and situated as we now are, if tragedies are not wholly to be laid aside, Mr. Vandenhoff appears likely to be a very serviceable auxiliary. (9)

Four months later, The Times spoke in disconsolate tones of a stage on which such an actor, for all his essential mediocrity, was one of the brighter luminaries:

It would be an unfair as well as a most unprofitable kind of criticism to estimate the value of this performance by a comparison with those of a former and not very remote period, when the stage was rich in tragic actors of as high and rare talent as ever graced the drama. The truth cannot be concealed that we have fallen on very different days. (10)

If the somewhat minimal talents of Vandenhoff placed him in the

higher ranks of Shakespearean interpreters in 1834, what of the other actors? Alfred Bunn, the acid-tongued manager of Drury Lane, asserted that London now possessed "the most anti-Shakespearian set of actors that (save and except in an instance or two) ever crossed the London stage", (11) and in 1837 he felt compelled to abandon Shakespeare (and tragedy in general) at his theatre on the grounds that the public vastly preferred musical works, such as the wildly successful Bohemian Girl by Balfe, and that he had no actors capable of playing Shakespeare as he should be played. Charles Rice commented on this policy:

When Bunn commenced his present season at Drury Lane, he was attacked by a disease somewhat similar to that of the dog's in the manger; he engaged a company for Tragedy, Comedy, Opera, Ballet and every other species of entertainment, English and Foreign. Tragedy, with its inefficient hero, Mr. Edwin Forrest, drew for a few nights, but the public having been used to Tragedy played as it should be, they could not be lead to stomach a series of Shakespeare's plays whose principal characters were so thoroughly misrepresented, and the legitimate drama was forsaken, on the ground of there being no one at Drury Lane fit to lead the business in tragedy. (12)

The vicious circle revolved at an ever-increasing pace: the public stayed away from Shakespeare because the actors were not of the calibre of Kemble and Kean; the managers began to steer clear of Shakespearean productions because they were liable to lead to financial disaster and because the public could be diverted with lesser works. At Covent Garden, the Haymarket and - in the later 1840's - at the Princess', Macready discovered that he could make a profit only from the most sure-fire successes among his Shakespearean interpretations, such as Machbeth and Hamlet, and so he began to concentrate on historical tragedies such as Glencoe and Master Clark (in which he played Richard Cromwell) and on his

established roles in The Stranger and Werner. One of his biggest successes was in Bulwer-Lytton's Money, a rather crude play mingling comedy and melodrama whose "immediate and sustained success was due to its novelty rather than to its achievement," (13) and another was in Sheridan Knowles' Roman drama, Virginus. Thus, the only outstanding Shakespearean actor in the England of the 1840's found greater popularity and financial success in these currently fashionable mediocrities than in his Shakespearean interpretations; lip service was paid to his more serious performances, but on the whole public taste had moved away from Shakespeare, as The Spectator drily chronicled:

We have twenty playhouses in London and the suburbs. Yet not one of them advertises Shakspeare or tragedy ... Opera and spectacle, melodrama and farce, are the popular entertainments. (14)

When this gloomy statement was made, in 1843, the manager of Covent Garden was Wallack whose valiant attempt to reinstate Shakespeare and revive the former glories of his theatre's golden age illustrates the change in climate since 1800. He had assembled a strong company, including Phelps, Vandenhoff, Anderson and Mrs. Warner, and he proudly announced the inauguration of a grand season of plays by Shakespeare. To his chagrin (and expense), the public would not attend, the company proved rebellious, and Wallack, finding himself involved in a "ruinous nightly loss", (15) discharged his first company of tragedians, recruited another one of lighter weight, ended his still-born first season and within a fortnight announced the opening of a second non-Shakespearean one. The Spectator intoned the funeral service over the grave of Shakespeare with sup<sup>r</sup>prising relish as it supported the cause of opera and spectacle against that of the legitimate drama:

Mr. H. Wallack's attempt to give the Shaksperian drama a local habitation in Covent Garden has been attended with signal and speedy failure: two or three nights' trial sufficed to demonstrate the hopelessness of the experiment; and the doors were shut upon Shakspeare at once - let us hope for ever. The exclusion of the "legitimate drama" from the two patent theatres is "a consummation devoutly to be wished" by every lover of Shakspeare and fine acting: their huge area is fit only for opera and spectacle. (16)

Unfortunately, The Spectator was merely echoing the pronouncements of public taste which demanded farces, melodrama and musical entertainments and could digest Shakespeare only when presented with the full panoply of stage spectacle. There was even a fondness for rather inaccurate adaptations of trivial French plays which aroused the ire of Henry James who inveighed against the intellectual and artistic desert into which the London theatre had wandered by 1877:

The English stage of today ... certainly holds the mirror as little as possible up to nature - to any nature, at least, usually recognised in the British Islands. Nine-tenths of the plays performed upon it are French originals, subjected to the mysterious process of "adaptation", marred as French pieces and certainly not mended as English ... They cease to have any representative value as regards French manners, and they acquire none as regards English .. He would be wise who should be able to indicate the ideal, artistic and intellectual of the English drama today. It is violently and hopelessly irresponsible. (17)

After the retirement of Kemble, managers gradually discovered that the public would flock to those plays which made only slight emotional and intellectual demands upon the audience, and which contained fewer subtleties for the actors to master. This was a movement of ever-increasing momentum, and by the 1870's it had become almost axiomatic that productions of Shakespeare automatically led to financial disaster. When managers of the high Victorian period looked back to the days in which Drury Lane had pinned its faith largely to the plays of Shakespeare, they remembered that in 1814 Samuel Whitbread (the

manager) had committed suicide, that Elliston had gone bankrupt in 1826 that Alfred Bunn had retired - practically ruined - in 1840 and had then lost all his money in 1850 after a second attempt. They could also call to mind that Macready had felt forced to give up as manager in 1843, and that some of his successors had lasted no longer than a week. In 1861, Edward T. Smith, the Drury Lane manager, had ended in a bankruptcy court, and had been succeeded by Edmund Falconer, who had amassed a fortune as manager of the Lyceum. By 1869, Falconer had lost this fortune, and was replaced by Frederick Chatterton, who proclaimed in his prospectus that he would place his reliance upon a series of Shakespearean performances; he hoped that the combination of star actors and Shakespeare's plays would raise the cultural standard and also assist him to achieve financial stability. His productions of King John and Macbeth lost money; Chatterton therefore abandoned Shakespeare, presented Boucicault's Formosa, or The Railroad to Ruin, and within five months (by Christmas 1869) had achieved a profit of £10,000. To justify his betrayal of Shakespeare, Chatterton made his famous pronouncement, "Shakespeare spells ruin". His experiences caused this dictum to be accepted by virtually every theatre manager in London until the 1890's, and appeared to provide cogent reasons for failing to present the plays of Shakespeare. Nor were there many complaints from the theatregoing public, who had turned to the stage for light-heartedness, excitement and escapism to such an extent that as early as 1855 The Athenaeum had referred to the poetic drama as "rejected by the frivolous and the fashionable" (18) who made up the greater part of theatre audiences.



This decline in the literary standards of the London theatre reached its nadir in the 1860's, 1870's and 1880's, affecting the three Roman plays to such an extent that London saw no production of Coriolanus between 1867 and 1901, or of Julius Caesar (in English) between 1865 and 1892; since spectacle was increasingly popular, Antony and Cleopatra achieved a certain measure of popularity during this decline of serious drama, but, even so, was not seen in London between 1873 and 1890.

Meanwhile, more ephemeral works filled the London stage, and early in the 1860's The Spectator ceased to review plays; no explanation was given, but a consideration of the Index of the plays they had reviewed in 1858 swiftly shows that the material offered to the dramatic critic can hardly have made many demands upon his professional skill. At the Adelphi, five plays were reviewed in 1858, and their titles (Poor Strollers; Yankee Courtship; An Hour in Seville; Caliph of Bagdad; Our French Ladies Maid) seem to indicate a penchant for foreign settings. Drury Lane, turning its back resolutely upon its earlier days of greatness, appears to have been enveloped in a mist of romanticism, if the two plays reviewed by the Spectator in 1858 (Cloud and Sunshine; The Love-Knot) are any guide. Melodrama was rampant at the Haymarket, for The Spectator's dramatic critic attended The Hunchback, Pluto and Proserpine, A Striking Widow, The Way to Keep Him, The Tale of a Coat and The Tide of Time. The Olympic's presentations in 1858 were Ticklish Times, A Doubtful Victory, Going to the Bad, A Twice-Told Tale, The Red Vial, A Thumping Legacy and The Porter's Knot, none of which can be said to have made a permanent mark on literary or dramatic history.

The Strand had more plays reviewed than any other London theatre, but can hardly be complimented upon a discerning choice: Nothing Venture Nothing Have, Fra Diavolo, Marriage a Lottery, Bride of Abydos, Last of the Pigtales, The Bonnie Fishwife, My Aunt's Husband, The Maid and the Magpie, The Heiress and The Little Savage were its offerings for 1858. Elsewhere in London, there were also frequent presentations of French plays, more than a dozen of which were reviewed by The Spectator in 1858.

Where, then, was the national dramatist in all this? At the Lyceum, there was a production of Macbeth, all but submerged amid the multifarious offerings of Lovers' Amazements, A Hard Struggle, Double Dummy, Birthplace of Podgers, The Lady of the Camelias, Extremes and Too Much for Good Nature. Similarly at Sadler's Wells there was a single Shakespearean production - Henry V. Only at the Princess's, where Charles Kean reigned, was the standard of Shakespeare unfurled more than tentatively in 1858: productions of Hamlet, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice, King John, Macbeth, and Much Ado About Nothing were interspersed with less memorable plays such as Louis XI, Dying for Love, Thirty-three next Birthday and The Jealous Wife.

Such a situation, in which there were more productions of plays in French than of plays by Shakespeare must have been an important factor in persuading The Spectator to abandon the unrewarding task of reviewing the London theatrical scene as the whole ethos of the following decade swung against Shakespearean drama. Nor was there an improvement in the 1870's, in which Shakespearean productions were still listlessly in the doldrums. In 1877, The Athenaeum, which was still manfully sending its dramatic critic to opening nights, reviewed 85 plays at 22

London theatres, to say nothing of the operas which now held complete sway at Her Majesty's and Covent Garden. Nineteen of these plays were in French. The remaining plays appear (from their titles) to have fallen into certain categories: some dealt with marriage and family life (The Inconstant at the Aquarium, Engaged at the Haymarket and Family Ties at the Strand, for example); others were blood-and-thunder melodramas such as Forbidden Love (The Duke's), Miriam's Crime and Night of Terror (The Folly), The Lyons Mail (The Lyceum) and Lady Audley's Secret (The Olympic); another popular type was the historical play represented (among others) by The House of Darnley at the Court, England in the Days of King Charles II at Drury Lane, Sardanapalus at the Duke's, and Queen of Connaught and Violin Maker of Cremona at the Olympic.

Very occasionally, amid this welter of ephemeral mediocrity, there is a glimpse of a new production of a drama of more permanent merit: School for Scandal was presented at the Aquarium, and A New Way to Pay Old Debts at the St. James'. In 1877, The Athenaeum reviewed 85 productions, but the only Shakespearean performance was Irving's Richard III at the Lyceum, so that Henry James, visiting London that year, was moved to write:

The English stage has probably never been so bad as it is at present, and at the same time there has probably never been so much care about it. (19)

The sad truth was that, for some thirty years, until the rise of Stratford in the late 1880's and the advent of Benson and Tree, Shakespeare in general and the Roman plays in particular, almost totally vanished from the English professional stage.

By the end of the nineteenth century the situation was radically

different from the days in which Kemble and Macready had striven to bring to the public a range of Shakespearean productions of integrity, and an examination of the theatrical fare offered in London in 1816, 1850 and 1899 will graphically illustrate both the alteration in the type of play performed and also the changing pattern of presentation. Advertisements in The Times for the fortnight 22 January - 3 February 1816 indicate that four "respectable" theatres were functioning in London:

Covent Garden, with Conway and Miss O'Neill at the head of the company in the absence of Kemble, presented a repertoire of six major plays, each followed by an afterpiece, as follows:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>MAIN PLAY</u>	<u>AFTERPIECE</u>
22/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
23/1/1816	Venice Preserved	Harlequin and Fortune
24/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
25/1/1816	The Orphan	Harlequin and Fortune
26/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
27/1/1816	Jan Shore	Harlequin and Fortune
29/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
30/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
31/1/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	Harlequin and Fortune
1/2/1816	Isabella	The Portfolio
2/2/1816	Midsummer Night's Dream	The Portfolio
3/2/1816	The Orphan	The Portfolio

During the same period, Drury Lane presented a similar mixture of the classics and more modern plays, each succeeded by an afterpiece and organised on the eighteenth century pattern, as follows:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>MAIN PLAY</u>	<u>AFTERPIECE</u>
	(with Kean)	
22/1/1816	A New Way to Pay Old Debts	Harlequin and Fancy
23/1/1816	Love for Love	Harlequin and Fancy
24/1/1816	The Merchant of Bruges	Harlequin and Fancy
25/1/1816	Love for Love	Harlequin and Fancy
26/1/1816	A New Way to Pay Old Debts	Harlequin and Fancy

<u>DATE.</u>	<u>MAIN PLAY</u>	<u>AFTERPIECE</u>
27/1/1816	Busy Body	Harlequin and Fancy
29/1/1816	A New Way to Pay Old Debts	My Spouse and I
30/1/1816	The Merchant of Bruges	Harlequin and Fancy
31/1/1816	The Merchant of Bruges	Harlequin and Fancy
1/2/1816	Accusation (first performance)	Who's Who?
2/2/1816	A New Way to Pay Old Debts	My Spouse and I
3/2/1816	Accusation	Harlequin and Fancy

Between then, in this fortnight, the two patent houses presented seven performances of a Shakespearean comedy, four of Massinger's most famous play, one performance of a Restoration tragedy and two of a Restoration comedy, so that fourteen out of twenty-four performances were devoted to plays of great literary merit.

The other two theatres, however, were already showing significant signs of the changes which were before long to overtake the theatre. The Strand presented the same programme throughout the fortnight, and The King's mounted its entertainments for a week at a time, thus anticipating the movement towards "runs" and the abandonment of the old repertory system; The King's with Griselda (22-27 January) and Il Ratto di Proserpina (29 January - 3 February) foreshadowed the popularity of musicals and opera, while the Strand's The Inscription (or Indian Hunters) made full use of scenic effects and the new stage machinery. Each of these theatres provided a very full evening's entertainment, for Griselda was followed by a divertissement and then a ballet, while the Strand's programme consisted of a curtain raiser (The Young Serenader) before The Inscription, and concluded with The Witch and the Owl, a pantomime.

Many theatres quickly followed this lead and it became common to mount a production for a "run" rather than retaining it as one element in a repertoire; Tom and Jerry at the Adelphi was the first play in

London to run for one hundred consecutive performances (26 November 1821 - 30 March 1822), making a profit of £25,000 for the manager, Rodwell, and quickly followed by The Pilot (adapted from Fenimore Cooper) which ran for two hundred nights at the same theatre. By 1850, the new fashions of 1816 were the established mode of procedure: twelve theatres were advertising in The Times and they all presented curtain raisers or afterpieces (usually both, in fact) in addition to the main play. In the fortnight 21 January - 2 February 1850, six theatres retained the same programme throughout:

1. Haymarket: Lead Year (with Charles Kean) preceded by The Ninth Statue followed by The Guardian Angel.
2. Lyceum: The Island of Jewels (with Mme. Vestris) with a wide variety of curtain raisers and afterpieces.
3. Adelphi: The Willow Copse followed by Frankenstein and Mrs. Bunbury's Spoons
4. St. James': A season of French plays and opera comique under the direction of Frederic Le Maitre.
5. Strand: The Love Chase (by Sheridan Knowles) preceded by Punch in Italy followed by Diogenes and his Lantern
6. Astley's: The Knight of the Eagle Crest (or The Journey of Love) also the most talented equestrian and gymnastic artistes in Europe, and Harlequin Yankee Doodle Came to Town upon his Little Pony

Three other theatres followed the same basic principle, but allowed a slight variations:

1. Olympic: Fashion (or Life in New York), with a variety of curtain raisers and afterpieces, was varied on two nights only, 28 and 31 January, by Ariadne
2. Surrey: Money (by Bulwer Lytton and starring Creswick), followed by The Moon Queen and King Night (or Harlequin Twilight), varied by The Lady of Lyons on 22 January and by William Tell on 30 January
3. Theatre Royal: Marylebone: a weekly repertory, consisting of The Road of Life (preceded by Wild Ducks and followed by Harlequin's Fairy Land) for the first week of the period, and The Mendicant Son (preceded by Pork Chops and followed by Harlequin's Fairy Land) from 28 January-2 February.

Only three theatres retained the old fashioned system of a varied repertoire:

1. Princess': a mixed bag of Valley of Andorre, King Charles the Second, La Sonnambula and Mina, all followed by King Jamie (or Harlequin and the Magic Fiddle)
2. Drury Lane: three performances of the Strand's success The Love Chase, three of Sheridan Knowles' The Hunchback (with Vandenhoff), one of The Lady of Lyons (with Anderson) two of an adaptation of Scott's Rob Roy one of As You Like It (with Vandenhoff and Cathcart) two of Othello (with Anderson and Vandenhoff) Curtain raisers and afterpieces were presented at all performances.
3. Sadler's Wells: Four performances of Henry VIII (with Phelps as Wolsey) two of Merchant of Venice (with Phelps as Shylock) two of Calynos two of Garcia (or The Noble Error) two of The Honeymoon, a comedy by Tobin, which reworked the story of the Taming of the Shrew

These lists show that all drama with any pretensions to literary eminence was concentrated at Phelps', Sadler's Wells and Anderson's Drury Lane, and that Shakespeare's contribution was restricted to two performances of Merchant of Venice and Othello, four of Henry VIII and one of As You Like It; only nine performances out of one hundred and forty-four were plays with any permanent literary interest.

By 1899, twenty-four theatres were advertising in The Times and in the parallel period (23 January - 4 February 1899) although the stages were graced with the presence of actors of the calibre of Beerbohm Tree, Louis Calvert, Gerald du Maurier, Cyril Maude, George Alexander, Charles Aubrey Smith, Weedon Grossmith, George Arliss, Henry Lytton, Charles Hawtrey and Marie Tempest, there was not a single performance in London of a play by Shakespeare, and no play of any accepted literary merit was in production. (20) All theatres were now organised on the system of long "runs" but the curtain raisers

and afterpieces were beginning to die away, being found at only eleven theatres out of twenty-four. By 1899, the theatre was essentially seen as mere escapist entertainment for audiences and as a money-spinning venture by impresarios and managers. There were, of course, honourable exceptions to this rule, but it is basically true to say that during the nineteenth century the method of organisation changed from a stock company presenting items from its repertoire to the specially-cast long "run"; that the type of play produced grew ever more spectacular, exciting or amusing, and ever less significant in literary terms; that Shakespeare made less and less appeal to audiences whose taste had been diluted, and that he could only survive by being "spectacularised"; and that the main play was only one item in a vast evening of mixed entertainments sometimes extending - at the height of this fashion - over as much as six hours.

(iii)

#### Conditions of Performance

The nineteenth century saw vast changes in the staging of plays, for the conditions of performance were directly influenced by a variety of factors: by the rebuilding of the theatres, the increased number of mechanical devices available to actor-managers, the public's fondness for spectacle, a growing desire among more serious stage directors to attain authenticity of costume and setting.

The eighteenth century stage had retained vestiges of the Elizabethan "apron", with doors either side and in front of the proscenium. With the rebuilding of the older theatres and the construction of many new ones, this convention was abandoned, and the increasing dominance of the proscenium arch tended to push the actors



further away from the audience, breaking the close contact which had existed since Elizabethan times. The actor was now isolated behind the "picture frame" of the proscenium arch, and pit benches filled the space released by the disappearance of the "apron". Consequently, actors were compelled by the vastness of the new theatres to modify their technique, and more thought was given, for example, to entrances and moves because at first, as Beaden commented of Covent Garden in 1808,

The actors seemed to feel embarrassed by the more extended area of the stage. There was no springing off with the established glance at the pit, and projected right arm. The actor was obliged to edge away in his retreat towards the far wings. (21)

Feeling remote from their audiences, and attempting to re-establish contact with them, many of the actors developed a broader and often coarser manner, in which their gestures and poses grew less spontaneous but bolder and more theatrical. As the pattern of the repertoire altered, so the "stock company" declined in favour of separately cast plays on long runs and the "family" or "team" spirit was undermined to such an extent that homogeneity of style disappeared and one play could contain actors exemplifying many different schools of acting. During the middle years of the century, "though there were still outstanding performers, there can be little doubt that the general level of acting suffered," (22) though towards the end of the century there were signs of improvement and attempts were made to establish unity of style within each production.

One of the most influential innovations in the nineteenth century stage conditions was the replacement of tallow candles by the easily controlled and flexible gas lighting. The auditorium of Covent

Garden was first illuminated by gas in 1817, but the smell and an explosion in a small gasholder in the theatre in 1828 led to a degree of panic and the temporary return to wax and oil. Drury Lane also adopted gas in 1817, while the Haymarket was the last theatre in London to retain candles, which were dispensed with as late as 1843. Another valuable effect was the concentration of light, which could be varied in intensity and colour, upon one actor or area of the stage. This was made possible by the device of limelight, introduced at Covent Garden as early as the 1837-8 season by Macready, although not becoming commonplace until more than two decades later. The most important effect of the new skill in lighting was that it drew attention to backcloths and scenery, thus leading to a greater emphasis on the work of the scene painters whose creations were proudly announced in handbills and advertisements, and discussed in detail when productions were reviewed in the press, so that it is much easier to visualise the setting of performances after about 1830 than those of an earlier date. Macready's Covent Garden productions of the late 1830's and - even more - Charles Kean's work at the Princess's in the 1850's, were marked by great richness and complexity of set and an accuracy to historical and even archaeological truth which would have amazed the eighteenth century. Whereas in 1760 an observer could complain that

The scene-shifters often present us with dull clouds hanging in a lady's dressing-room, trees intermingled with the disunited portions of a portico, a vaulted roof unsupported, ... actors making their entrances through plastered walls and wainscots instead of through doors, (23)

Macready and Charles Kean followed and significantly developed the Kemble tradition of impressive and detailed heavy scenery, and picturesque backcloths constructed after consultations with historians

and antiquaries: Kean's 1858 Merchant of Venice, for example, derived its architecture from actual Venetian buildings, including the Square of St. Mark with campanile and clock tower, the cathedral and the three standards, and views of canals, bridges and gondolas. In the second half of the century, Mme. Vestris played an important part in the creation of more convincingly designed and furnished interior scenes.

A similar movement may be noted in costume, in which there was also a clearly discernible trend towards accuracy. Garrick had been satisfied to play many Shakespearean characters in eighteenth century costumes: as Macbeth, for instance, he took the stage in bob wig, vivid scarlet breeches laced with gold, and a gray coat, looking more like the Lord Mayor's coachman than a Scottish thane; his Hamlet was clothed in an eighteenth century court suit of black, with coat, waistcoat and knee-breeches, a short wig, buckled shoes, ruffled shirt and the flowing ends of an ample cravat over the chest. James Quin's costume as Coriolanus in Thomson's version of 1749 provokes mirth rather than admiration and awe: he is shown as a severe man of portly build, whose military pretensions are expressed by a marshal's baton firmly grasped in the right hand, a rather diminutive sword in its scabbard, and a helmet topped by a flurry of feathers. Contrasting grotesquely with these warlike accoutrements is an effeminate costume with long hanging sleeves and a wide, ballerina-like skirt worn over panniers. Quin's stance, with left arm on hip and head rather quizzically on one side as he gazes at the kneeling figures of his wife and mother, makes it difficult to take this Coriolanus seriously as a patrician or as a general, while his long curling tresses seem distinctly unRoman. The



JAMES QUIN IN THOMSON'S "CORIOLANUS" 1749

backcloth displays a medieval castle with a disproportionately large flag flying from its central tower, and Coriolanus himself has just descended from a raised chair of eighteenth century design to confront the ladies, whose costumes have Stuart or Tudor overtones. The whole picture is a striking indication of the eighteenth century's lack of interest in accurate historical staging and its willingness to accept a mélange of costumes and furnishings which spanned several centuries.

Nineteenth century productions moved, if anything, too far in the opposite direction, a great deal of misdirected energy being absorbed in the lengthy search for an accurate hilt to a dagger, or the historically correct strap to a sandal worn by an extra. Kemble attempted to bring a more "Roman" atmosphere to the Roman plays, but Macready and Charles Kean - who became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries - went much further, and the scholarly designer James Robinson Planché was an influential figure in this field. Kean's theatre programmes would contain lengthy disquisitions on the historical reasons for mounting a production in a certain way, of which the following extract from his notes on the King John of 1852 may serve as an example:

There is little difficulty in collecting safe authority for the costume of King John's reign. Tapestry, illuminated manuscripts, and tombs supply abundant evidence. The habits of many of the principal characters are copied from monumental effigies, care having been taken that those who outlived King John, and were buried under the sovereignty of Henry the Third, are not clothed in emblazoned surcoats, such as appear on their respective tombs, since no instance of such ornament occurs before the year 1250. (24)

Such elaboration of accuracy has been described by Bamber Gascoigne as "laughable excesses" (25) and it is certainly true to say that this concentration on accuracy of set and costume tended to lead also to a

fondness for spectacle and pageantry, and to an overuse of mechanical devices which grew ever more sophisticated and in which some managers showed a naive delight.

The new Drury Lane theatre, opened in 1794, was equipped with the latest safety devices against fire, which were turned to spectacular effect at the opening performance (of Macbeth) at the start of the performance, a huge iron curtain was lowered and struck with a hammer to illustrate its solidity; it was then raised to reveal a lake of real water on which a man rowed in a boat, with a cascade of water tumbling down at the rear of the stage. It became quite fashionable to select plays for performance because they provided opportunities for displaying the new equipment, and water was much in evidence in the 1813 Covent Garden Antony and Cleopatra and in the aqua-dramas which Dibdin introduced at Sadler's Wells where water was brought from below the theatre to fill a tank covering the entire stage and in which model frigates, moved by hidden boys, displayed such scenes as the siege of Gibraltar, or heroines plunged into lakes and were rescued by a noble and well-trained dog. Among other mechanical effects which were enthusiastically added to existing plays or written into new ones were snow storms produced from the flies, lifts and traps for sudden appearances and vanishings, running streams, galloping animals (very popular in Mazeppa), flying effects for supernatural moments, boats and ships in storms at sea, steam produced under the stage to represent smoke, magic supplies of wine, and ghost appearances. One of Kemble's most successful plays was Pizarro, a dashing, spectacular piece full of claptrap declamation and show, and later managers pandered much less

controlledly to the public desire for spectacle and gimmicks so that, as G. Rowall states in his Victorian Theatre, "the staple fare of the early Victorian theatre was spectacle ... in the form of melodrama, opera, ballet extravaganza, or Shakespearean pageant," (26) and the later period sacrificed everything for solidity, realism (real trees, real balconies, real animals) and spectacle, forgetting the theatre's ability to communicate through suggestion and symbol as well as through actuality. The Drury Lane production of The World, mounted in 1880 by the manager Augustus Harris (popularly known as Druriolamus) included depictions of the explosion of a ship, and of a snowstorm in Piccadilly Circus at midnight, thus delighting a large and appreciative audience.

(iv)

#### The Audience

Audiences have always been an important contributory factor in the repertoire of the theatre and have helped to mould not only the style of production but also the reputation of the theatre in the eyes of polite society. In the mid-twentieth century, it is hard to realise that at one time a visit to a play could be a hazardous undertaking in which strong limbs and a loud voice were useful assets. Theatre audiences of the eighteenth century were perhaps a little more genteel than some of their predecessors, but they were far from docile, and the right of the spectators to make an uproar if they disliked a piece was legally established and freely exercised. Members of an eighteenth century audience were quite likely to pull the noses of any neighbours who disagreed with their opinions, and the people in boxes

had sometimes taken pleasure in spitting into the pit. Altogether, the atmosphere was more conducive to a football match than to the presentation of serious drama, and in 1747 Garrick had been so infuriated by the rioting and noise of the young bloods at Drury Lane that he had attempted to banish them from the theatre. However, stormy incidents continued to occur and during a performance of The Way of the World in September 1751 two gallants in the audience quarrelled so severely that they felt compelled to withdraw to the lobby to fight a duel with swords. (27) In 1755, while the King was at Covent Garden for a command performance of The Chinese Festival by Noverre, a riot broke out in pit and gallery objecting to the foreign dancers employed by Garrick; great damage was done to the theatre and Garrick's town house was attacked by rioters, the situation being saved only when he threatened to retire from the stage for ever if there were another such outbreak. In January 1763 there was even greater uproar when both patent houses tried to withdraw the concession whereby patrons paid half price if they wished to see only one of the two plays presented; the audience tore up the benches and smashed the chandeliers to such effect that it took four or five days to repair the damage to the theatre fabric; even then, the spectators continued to hiss and laugh and interrupt all subsequent performances until the managers restored the half price concession. It was after these stirring events that the actors were protected by the addition of a row of sharp iron stakes set along the front of the stage.

To some extent, as the nineteenth century opened, the behaviour of theatre audiences grew more decorous, but in 1805 troops were called to the Haymarket to disperse hundreds of tailors who barracked a



a performance of Foote's satire The Tailors, and the most famous riots of all occurred as late as 1809 when Kemble raised the price of seats in order to help to pay for the new theatre at Covent Garden. The audience turned their backs on the stage and greeted the performance of the Kemble family with such hisses and hoots that not a word of the play could be heard. This continued for several nights, reaching its peak at a performance of Macbeth on 18 September 1809 at which the audience sang and shouted, waved placards and banners protesting at the enormous salaries of the Kembles, and listened to inflammatory speeches in the best tradition of the sit-in. Five hundred soldiers were on duty in the theatre and they rushed to the upper gallery to quell the rioters, who resourcefully let themselves down to the lower gallery where they were hospitably received by other spectators. At last, the ringleaders were arrested, and magistrates read the Riot Act from the stage, which so incensed the audience that an attempt was made to rush the stage and was only thwarted by the coolheadedness of the stage staff who suddenly opened all the traps. Greater pandemonium then broke out as post horns were sounded, pigeons were released, and workmen's whistles and rattles added to the din so that "for sixty-seven nights not a word of the entertainment offered by the Company could be heard in the theatre" (28) and Kemble was forced to reinstate the old prices.

With so volatile an audience, it is understandable that actors should take thought before presenting plays of political import, and there can be little doubt that the lack of performances of Julius Caesar during the period of the French Revolution is directly attributable to the

fear that such an inflammation of the passions of an excitable audience might spark off a revolution in London. Kemble, indeed, partially remoulded the theatre to protect the gentry, converting the third tier into boxes for the élite, who had been forced to abandon the pit, now taken over by the "lower orders". After a visit to France, Hazlitt returned to Covent Garden in 1829 to be disgusted by the philistinism of the English

box-lobby loungers lolling and yawning to show their superiority to the play and the players, slamming to the doors in the middle of the finest passage, and much more ready to pick a quarrel with their next neighbour than to interchange opinions with him, or to join in admiring the performance. This, they think, will show a want of spirit and independence, and would be unworthy of the manly character of John Bull, (29)

while as late as 1844 Phelps' first night of managership at Sadler's Wells was devoted to a performance of Macbeth which took place

amidst the usual hideous medley of fights, foul language, catcalls, shrieks, yells, oaths, blasphemy, obscenity, apples, oranges, nuts, biscuits, ginger-beer, porter and pipes .... Cans of beer, each with a pint measure to drink from ... were carried through the dense crowd at all stages of the tragedy. Sickly children in arms were squeezed out of shape in all parts of the house. Fish was fried at the entrance doors. Barricades of oyster-shells encumbered the pavement. Expectant half-price visitors to the gallery howled defiant impatience up the stairs, and danced a sort of carmag-nole all round the building. (30)

Small wonder that the theatre smacked of immorality and uncouthness, and that polite society either ignored the legitimate drama altogether, or attended opera instead. The arrival of greater decorum in the 1850's and 1860's, signalled by the introduction of comfortable carpeting in the stalls, began to inveigle the respectable middle class back to straight plays, but it was a long slow process and it was not until the 1870's that genteel behaviour could be expected of

audiences at the majority of London theatres, the "trouble-makers" having by then transferred their allegiance to the music-halls.

(v)

Conclusion.

Nineteenth century productions of Shakespeare's Roman plays must therefore be set against a background of an ever-increasing number of theatres, moving gradually from the patent system and the established company with a large repertoire to the convention of the specially cast run for a large number of consecutive performances. While texts, costumes and sets became ever more accurate and elaborate and there was a growing movement towards realism of scenery and furniture, the public demanded an escapist entertainment compounded of music, spectacle, splendour and novelty. These were supplied by means of an increase in mechanical devices, by the enormous improvement in lighting which followed the arrival of gas and of limelight, by a splendour of production which turned some of Shakespeare's plays into mere pageants, and by the composition of a vast number of trivial dramas exploiting melodrama, farce or aquatic and equestrian feats.

At the start of the century, Kemble bent every nerve to bring Shakespeare's plays to a vigorous life, and Elliston (as manager) strove to present texts of greater authenticity; in the 1830's Macready's stated aim was as follows:

The revival of the standard plays of Shakespeare in the genuine text of the Poet will be persevered in with increased activity, and without regard to expense in attaining the utmost fidelity of historic illustration, (31)

and in the 1850's Phelps tried to produce at Sadler's Wells a repertory company of the old style, with Shakespeare as its principal

inspiration. Thereafter, until the despised Benson began to inaugurate the theatre at Stratford in the late 1880's, Shakespeare on the stage fell into a catastrophic decline in which the plays were either ignored, or used merely as skeletons to be decked with the gorgeous panoply of spectacle and colour.

Performances of the three Roman plays illustrate this general trend: as long as actor-managers saw it as their responsibility to present as wide a range as possible of Shakespearean drama, Coriolanus was fairly steadily performed, rising to a peak with the interpretation of J.P. Kemble between 1806 and 1817, but declining utterly under the new situation after the 1860's; Antony and Cleopatra was virtually ignored until after 1870, when its potential for splendour of production brought it into prominence, and Julius Caesar, unperformed during the stressful years of the French Revolution, again rose to particular favour in the spectacle-ridden later Victorian epoch.

A detailed examination of the stage life of the Roman plays throughout the nineteenth century will incidentally illustrate the general pattern sketched in this chapter, but will concentrate a fiercer light upon the fortunes of just three of Shakespeare's plays in that period.

## CHAPTER TWO

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4. Anon. London as it is To-day: Where to Go, and What to See, During the Great Exhibition (1851) P. 208.
5. Quoted in J. Coleman: Memoirs of Samuel Phelps (1886), Pp. 201-2
6. London as it is To-day, P. 218
7. Hazlitt: XX, 284.
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9. Times, 17/6/1834
10. Ibid, 3/10/1834
11. Bunn, III, 232
12. Rice: P. 55
13. G. Rowell: The Victorian Theatre (1956), P. 52.
14. 15 & 16. Spec. No. 799, 21/10/1843.
17. H. James: The Scenic Art (Ed. Wade, 1949), Pp. 93-94.
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19. H. James op.cit. P. 119
20. The attractions were as follows between 23 January and 4 February 1899:

Drury Lane  
Her Majesty's  
Haymarket

Adalphi  
Lyceum  
St. James'  
Criterion  
Gaiety  
Strand

Globe  
Vaudeville

Savoy  
Opera Comique

Royalty

Avenue

Prince of Wales  
Shaftesbury  
Lyric

The Forty Thieves (Dan Leno)

The Musketeers (Tree, Calvert & du Maurier)

The Manoeuvres of Jane by Henry Arthur Jones  
with A Golden Wedding as curtain raiser

Dick Whittington

A season of opera by the Carl Rosa Company

The Ambassador (George Alexander & C. Aubrey Smith)

My "Soldier" Boy with Nicolette as curtain raiser

A Runaway Girl

What Happened to Jones with An Empty Stocking as  
curtain raiser

School with Six and Eightpence as curtain raiser

On and Off (George Arliss) with A Bad Penny as  
curtain raiser

The Lucky Star (Henry Lytton)

Alice in Wonderland with The Harlequinade as  
afterpiece

A Little Ray of Sunshine with Confederates as  
curtain raiser

Lord and Lady Algy (C. Hawtrey) with Constancy  
as curtain raiser until 26 January, and the

Rift in the Lute thereafter

La Poupée

The Belle of New York

Little Miss Nobody with La Loie Fuller as  
afterpiece

Contd.

Garrick	<u>The Three Musketeers</u>
Daly's	<u>A Greek Slave</u> (Marie Tempest)
Duke of York's	<u>The Adventure of Lady Ursula</u> with <u>Red Roses</u> as curtain raiser

Palace Music Hall

The Court opened on 24 January with Seymour Hicks and Allan Aynesworth in A Court Scandal with For Love of Prim as curtain raiser, and Terry's opened on 26 January with What will the World Say.

21. Siddons: II, 276
22. G. Rowell: op cit., P. 23
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29. Hazlitt: XX, 284
30. J. Coleman: op cit., Pp. 202-3
31. Toynbee: I, 471

CHAPTER THREE

"CORIOLANUS"

Performances before  
1800.

COOKE, KEMBLE, YOUNG AND CONWAY, 1800-1817.

MACREADY, KEAN, VANDENHOFF AND OTHERS, 1817-1848.

PHELPS AND OTHERS, AND THE DECLINE.

BENSON.

CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER THREE

"CORIOLANUS"

(1)

Performances Before 1800.

In 1800, the Caius Marcius Coriolanus of John Philip Kemble was one of the dominant glories of the English stage. In the eleven years since he had first played this role, dramatic critics had consistently paid tribute to Kemble's ability to identify himself with the lofty and inflexible Roman patrician, and it was already inconceivable that the Coriolanus of other actors should be placed in as high a category as that of Kemble. In October 1796, The Monthly Mirror had claimed that

Coriolanus, by Kemble, is a wonder of dramatic art; if he could play nothing else, it is sufficient to exalt him many degrees above every actor living, (1)

while the response of The Times to the same revival of Kemble's Coriolanus had been the dogmatic assertion that

If the Proprietors have any taste left, or a regard for their own interest, this Play will be often repeated. (2)

This austere, metallic and shapely tragedy, compared by a modern critic to "a great bronze statue", (3) was - in 1800 - a firm favourite with Kemble's audiences wherever he performed it, and had been established by his efforts as a notable stage success.

It had not always been so. From the time of its first stage appearance in London about 1608 until Kemble's production in 1789, Shakespeare's final tragedy had consistently failed to find much favour with the theatre-going public and, as C.B. Young states, "No record is known of the earliest performances." (4) The first performance to be definitely recorded was not until 1682, and this was in a risibly



melodramatic and overwritten adaptation by Nahum Tate which "died a natural death in infancy". (5)

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, there were ten performances of Coriolanus in the somewhat "fringe" area of Lincoln's Inn Fields, but from 1700 to 1754 the major theatres of London mounted only one production. This was at Drury Lane in 1719, with Booth as Caius Marcius, though once again the text was not Shakespearean: inspired by the events of the 1715 uprising in favour of the Old Pretender, the literary critic, John Dennis, composed his own adaptation entitled "The Invader of his Country" which held the stage for only three performances.

For over twenty-five years, from 1722 to 1749, the play (in any form) lay neglected and unperformed until its subject matter attracted the attention of James Thomson, the poet of The Seasons, who completely reworked the whole drama, commencing with the defection of Coriolanus to the Volscians. His version retains nothing of Shakespeare's <sup>idea</sup> dictum, and even alters the names of some of the major characters. Conventionally following the eighteenth century fondness for unity of place, all the action of Thomson's version is restricted to the Volscian camp, although some attempt is made to inject an appearance of variety by stage directions such as

The back scene opens, and discovers Coriolanus (6)  
and

The back scene opens, and discovers the deputies of the Volscian states, assembled in council. (7)

The plot of this adaptation is clumsily handled in a very static manner, and the following extract, which describes the meeting of Coriolanus

with his family after the announcement of his exile, will illustrate the lack of dramatic immediacy, the sentimentality, and the prosaic banality which are the keynotes of so much of Thomson's version:

I follow'd Marcius home - His mother, there,  
Veturia, the most venerable matron  
These eyes have e'er beheld, and soft Volumnia,  
His lovely virtuous wife amidst his children,  
Spread on the ground, lay lost in dumb despair.  
He swelling stood awhile, and could not speak,  
Th'affronted hero struggling with the man;  
Then thus at last he broke the gloomy silence;  
"Tis done. The guilty sentence is pronounc'd.  
"Ungrateful Rome has cast me from her bosom.  
"Support this blow with fortitude and courage,  
"As it becomes two generous Roman matrons.  
"I recommend my children to your care.  
"Farewel. I go, I quit, without regret,  
"A city grown an enemy to virtue." (8)

Apart from a few melodramatic moments - as when Caius Marcius' mother threatens to stab herself in the final scene - Thomson's play consists essentially of this sort of turgid declamation; the characters remain cold, and it is difficult to be moved by their crises of loyalty and honour.

In spite of its essentially non-dramatic nature, this adaptation was staged at Covent Garden for ten performances early in 1749 with the undoubted advantage of the famous Peg Woffington as Veturia (Thomson's new name for Volumnia) and with the great actor, James Quin, as Coriolanus. Perhaps the most impressive stage coup of this production was the arrival of Minucius and Cominius on their embassy to Coriolanus:

The back scene opens, and discovers Coriolanus sitting on his tribunal, attended by his lictors, and a croud of Volscian officers. Files of troops drawn up on either hand. In the depth of the scene appear the deputies from the Roman Senate, M. Minucius, Posthumus Cominius, Sp. Lartius, P. Pinnarius, and Q. Sulpitius, all consular senators, who had been his most zealous friends. And behind them march the priests, the sacrificers, the augurs, and the guardians of the sacred things,

dress in their ceremonial habits. These advance slowly betwixt the files of soldiers, under arms, (9)

but this was insufficient to endear Thomson's Coriolanus to the public and it has never been revived. However, it did not totally lose its influence for, almost immediately, Thomas Sheridan, author of an early English dictionary and father of the creator of The School for Scandal, found himself so drawn to the characters of Caius Marcius and his stern mother that he decided to

preserve to the theatre two characters which seemed to be drawn in as masterly a manner as any that came from the pen of the inimitable Shakespear. (10)

With this aim in mind, Sheridan reworked Shakespear's play, fusing it with Thomson's version, which - in Sheridan's words - "wanted business." (11)

Sheridan's unhappy amalgamation of the disparate talents of Shakespeare and Thomson was ridiculed in The Monthly Review as "a motley tragedy" which

has jointed Shakespear and Thomson as awkwardly together, as if a man should tack, to the body of one picture, the limbs of another, without considering what an uncouth figure they might make together, how well soever they appeared separate, (12)

but it was to remain the standard stage version until 1789 and, having tried it out in Dublin in February 1752, Sheridan had high hopes for the success of his production at Covent Garden in December 1754. He was to play the leading role himself and his preparations were well advanced when, to his horror, he learned that the greatest actor of the age, David Garrick, was arranging a production of Shakespeare's Coriolanus at the rival theatre of Drury Lane in November 1754 - one month before Sheridan could bring his own adaptation to the stage. Garrick duly presented his shortened, but Shakespearean, text with Moscrop as Caius Marcius for eight

performances which were sufficiently successful to prove to at least one spectator that the original Coriolanus was

the most mobbing, muzzaining, shewy, boasting, drumming, trumpeting Tragedy I ever saw. (13)

Somewhat disconsolately, Sheridan pushed on with his preparations and "puffed" his play to the town in anticipation of his own appearance on 10 December 1754, only twelve days after the end of the Drury Lane "run". But even a spectacular procession, called The Order of the Ovation, the talents of Peg Woffington as Veturia (i.e. Volumnia) and an exhibition of dancing by a Mr. Poitier could not buttress this production against failure, so that, in the contemptuous words of a contemporary review, it merely "crawled for six nights, to no extraordinary audiences". (14)

Perhaps Sheridan consoled himself in later years with the fact that whereas Garrick's production saw the stage only once more, in April 1755, his version was to be performed on ten further occasions in the next thirteen years. He himself vainly tried once more to engage the public's interest in what - with due deference to the forceful character of Veturia-Volumnia - he had sub-titled The Roman Matron, but his appearances on 27 January and 31 March 1755 made only the slightest of impressions. Between 1758 and 1768, Smith, who had been trained by Garrick, tried to rouse Sheridan's soporific version into liveliness by eight more appearances at Covent Garden, but the public remained steadfastly unimpressed.

The comparative lack of success of Coriolanus on the stage - until Kemble's life-breathing production of 1789 - can easily be seen by setting it in the context of performances of other Shakespeare plays between 1701 and 1789. A table will clearly indicate its poor showings

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>NUMBER OF LONDON PERFORMANCES 1701-1788</u>
Hamlet	525
Macbeth	486
Richard III	468
Romeo and Juliet	444
King Lear	346
Henry IV, Part One	332
Merry Wives of Windsor	322
Merchant of Venice	319
The Tempest	313
Coriolanus	38 (15)

Indeed to judge from the number of stage performances, Coriolanus came a lowly 26th out of 36 in the order of popularity of Shakespeare's plays during this period.

At first sight, this would perhaps appear to be surprising: it might be expected that eighteenth century taste would respond with enthusiasm to a play set in classical times and with a strong political content. This was, after all, the neo-classical age, and a period of keen - if satirical - interest in politics, and G.M. Trevelyan has stated that

The men of this "classical" age looked back with a sense of kinship to the far-off ancient world. The upper class regarded the Greeks and Romans as honorary Englishmen, their precursors in liberty and culture, and the Roman Senate as the prototype of the British Parliament. The medieval period ... sank for a while below the horizon of study and sympathy, so that the eye of taste could range back without hindrance across the gulf of time, and contemplate on its further shore the only civilization which could claim to be as classical, as poised, as enlightened, and as artistic as the fortunate present. (16)

But, of course, Shakespeare's Coriolanus gives a very different picture of ancient Rome: far from presenting the early classical world as "poised ... enlightened, and.....artistic", he portrays inflexibility, harshness and a sense of constriction in two parallel societies (Rome and Antium) which both strive to inculcate in their loyal members a

distorted and inhuman attitude towards honour and war. There could have been little comfort for the Augustan man of taste in Volumnia's delight in butchery, or for the man of sentiment in what Ian D. Suttie has called her "taboo on tenderness". (17) Neither would the aristocracy and squirearchy have had much respect for the claims of Shakespeare's Roman mob to parliamentary representation, or for their willingness to rise against their social superiors. Even on purely literary grounds, Coriolanus could not really appeal to the eighteenth century: before 1750 or so, its defiant refusal to observe the so-called "classical rule" of the unities of time, place and action put it beyond the pale; it also manifestly failed to perform the didactic function - allocating reward to the virtuous and punishment to the wicked - which many eighteenth century writers saw as an essential element in the drama. In 1712, John Dennis had underlined his age's liking for the presentation of "Justice" in drama, and had used Coriolanus as an illustration of Shakespeare's failure in this direction:

The Good must never fail to prosper, and the Bad must be always punish'd: Otherwise the Incidents, and particularly the Catastrophe which is the great Incident, are liable to be imputed rather to Chance, than to Almighty Conduct and to Sovereign Justice. The want of this impartial Distribution of Justice makes the Coriolanus of Shakespear to be without Moral. (18)

Other low estimates of Shakespeare's achievement in Coriolanus came from two potent figures who complained about the play's weakness of plot and structure: Thomas Sheridan felt impelled to alter the play because it "in general, seemed but ill calculated to representation" and it had "little or no plot", (19) while the eighteenth century's most respected and influential Shakespearean scholar included the following dictum in his Notes on Shakespeare

There is, perhaps, too much bustle in the first act, and too little in the last. (20)

Coriolanus, then, offended eighteenth century taste by presenting a barbaric Rome and a power-hungry citizenry, by failing to live up to some of the rules adumbrated by the literary critics of the period, and by appearing to be deficient in dramatic and structural skill. Consequently, it had never had much chance of seizing the imagination of a theatre audience during the first eighty-nine years of the century. By 1789, however, any attentive eighteenth century gentleman could hear the unmistakably ominous rumblings of revolution on the political scene and of romanticism in the artistic world, and Coriolanus suddenly assumed a greater relevance to the ethos which was approaching than it had possessed for the one which was about to be eroded. At this very moment, the stage was fortunately able to provide an actor whose talents, appearance and technique suited him - as no previous actor had been suited - to undertake a supremely satisfying interpretation of the cold but taxing role of Caius Marcius Coriolanus.

Nature had endowed John Philip Kemble with an imposing physical presence which combined a graceful classical dignity with a romantic fire, energy and passion. At the height of his fame, Kemble's commanding and stately physique was extolled in The Lady's Magazine in the following reverential words:

Kemble has a very graceful, manly figure, is perfectly wellmade, and his naturally commanding stature appears extremely dignified ... His face is one of the noblest I ever saw on any stage, being a fine oval, exhibiting a handsome Roman nose, a well-formed and closed mouth: his fiery and somewhat romantic eyes retreat, as it were, and are shadowed by bushy eyebrows: his front is open and little vaulted; his chin prominent and rather pointed ... his physiognomy, indeed, commands at first sight. (21)

It is tempting to dismiss this adulatory account as merely so much hero-worship, but confirmatory evidence of Kemble's power to reincarnate a sense of the greatness of the past comes both verbally and pictorially from elsewhere.

Hazlitt, a most experienced dramatic critic who sat night after night in his beloved corner in the second circle at Covent Garden, saw in Kemble

a stately hieroglyphic of humanity; a living monument of departed greatness; a sombre comment on the rise and fall of kings. We look after him till he is out of sight. (22)

and Meadows' famous engraving of Kemble as Coriolanus (based on Sir Thomas Lawrence's life size painting) also conveys the patrician dignity and aloofness which the actor brought to his most famous role. He stands commandingly, tall and firm, gazing idealistically into the distance. He is alone, and the picture gives a strong sense of that isolation with which Shakespeare surrounds Caius Marcius. Kemble is portrayed as muffled in a dark toga or military cloak, beneath which (at the shoulder) gleams the warlike metal of a breastplate. Through the murk of the shadowy background can be dimly distinguished the shape of a building or memorial, while tongues of fire - doubtless suggested by the growing insistence on flame and fire in the last two acts of the play - menacingly erupt from behind Kemble's dominating figure. The artist has captured the sense of superiority, of nobility, of inflexibility and of solitariness which may be deduced from Shakespeare's text and which theatre audiences between 1789 and 1817 saw kindled into glowing life by Kemble. Withal, there is also a sense of pathos - a certain sadness in the eyes, a feeling (engendered, perhaps, by the sandalled foot pointing purposefully forwards) of a man steadfastly heading towards





JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE AS CORIOLANUS

1789 - 1817

Engraved by Meadows after the  
life-size painting by Sir  
Thomas Lawrence

destruction. The intensity of Kemble's performance is strongly communicated by this picture, especially by the passion of the eyes and by the sense of barely controlled tautness in the erect body.

Meadows' engraving clearly shows that Kemble's physique was an important element in his portrayal of the aloof Roman patrician, but it cannot, of course, indicate that his particular technique of acting was also of powerful assistance in his interpretation. Kemble's other great successes - as Penruddock, Cato, the Stranger and Rolla - were all characters dominated by a single unswerving central passion, and Coriolanus was another in the same mould. Caius Marcius is reared by his mother in a ruthless and possessive way so that he worships the ideas of strength, of toughness, and of a direct and simple honesty which is repelled by political expediency and double-dealing. In battle, he launches himself directly at the enemy and hurls himself along within the city walls of Corioli; in politics, he betrays a similar self-assertive intransigence and is determined to remain true to his beliefs and ideals even if this will involve the destruction of Rome.

Let them pull all about mine ears; present me  
Death on the wheel or at wild horses' heels;  
Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock,  
That the precipitation might down stretch  
Below the beam of sight; yet will I still  
Be thus to them. (III ii 1-6)

His pride and inflexibility cause him to remain consistent in his responses to stimuli: when his soldiers disappoint him, he curses them

All the contagion of the south light on you,  
You shames of Rome! (I iv 30-31)

and when the citizens reject his consulship, he again resorts to oaths

and to magnificently alliterative abuse

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate  
As reek o'th' rotten fens. (III iii 120-121)

Throughout the play, his temper rises uncontrollably whenever his enemies dextrously prod him with certain inflammatory words: "Shall" (III i), "Traitor" (III iii) and "Boy" (V vi). Above all, he is consistent in his devotion to his mother, whether, as in III ii, she is shattering his integrity or, as in V iii, she is impelling him towards death.

Such a character was tailor-made for Kemble's own technique because as The Lady's Magazine commented at the time of his retirement,

The range of characters in which Mr. Kemble more particularly shone, and was superior to every other actor, were those which consisted in the development of some one solitary sentiment of exclusive passion ... Where all the passions move round a central point, he stood unrivalled. (23)

The actor's technical ability to drive unswervingly, yet with growing intensity, through the unfolding events of the play was one of the main reasons why his *Coriolanus* carried such conviction.

Another was the skill which he had shown in adapting his text to the stage, for Kemble remained true to the gradually dying tradition of radically altering the Shakespearean text. He had taken as his starting point Sheridan's version of 1754, which was itself an amalgamation of plays by Shakespeare and Thomson, and he had worked hard at the task of increasing the Shakespearean content of Sheridan's text, and of assisting ease and smoothness of performance. For the first three acts, Kemble drew only on Shakespeare, and he seems to have had four things in mind, first, he wished to reduce the large number of speaking characters, and to this end he excised several parts (for

example, Titus Lartius vanishes altogether and Cominius in I i speaks not only his own lines but also those of the First Senator); secondly, in order to allow time for spectacular processions, he shortened the play by pruning a large number of speeches (for example, the fable of the belly in I i is omitted, and Menenius' conversation with the Tribunes in the second act is cut from 84 lines to 43); thirdly, for ease of staging, Kemble amalgamated several scenes, especially those depicting the battle in Act One; fourthly, he was concerned to direct attention to the star role by, for example, advancing his own initial entry from line 154 to line 30 of the first act, and by bringing down the curtain at the end of Act Three on his resonant exit line, "There is a world elsewhere!"

For the first three acts, Kemble's version of Coriolanus, though by no means a scholarly text, is remarkably faithful to Shakespeare, is notably dramatic and swift-moving and

the liberties which he took with the original were far inferior to those which had been formerly taken with it. (24)

It catches the spirit and intention of Shakespeare's play, if not every detail of its organisation and expression, and has drawn praise from G.C.D. Odell:

Seldom has a play been so bountifully, so lavishly cut to the quick; the kernel is retained with intensity supreme. (25)

The fourth and fifth acts, however, fail to maintain this standard as they draw on Thomson's flaccid verse to introduce the character of Aufidius, to chart the Volscian plot against Caius Marcius, and to portray the death of the protagonist. Their weakness lies not only in the juxtaposition of Shakespeare's mature and economical poetry with the

mellow and undistinguished declamation of Thomson, but also in the retention of some of Thomson's absurd melodrama, as when the stately Volumnia threatens to stab herself.

In defence of Kemble, it must be urged that his ravages were less extreme than those of other eighteenth century adaptors, and that, although his "scissors and paste" version shows some insensitivity to the subtle rhythms of Shakespeare's verse, it swiftly brought Coriolanus into an enthusiastic theatrical popularity which it had never hitherto experienced. In the eleven years before the first performance of Kemble's version in 1789, Coriolanus had not once been performed; during the last eleven years of the century, Kemble's fourteen performances raised it to 18th in the order of popularity of Shakespeare's plays in the theatre: no other play enjoyed such a spectacular rise in popularity during the same period.

Kemble first presented his production at Drury Lane on 7 February 1789, and it would undoubtedly have received many more than fourteen performances before 1800 had it not so closely ante-dated the start of the French Revolution. Within a few weeks of the first seven successful appearances of Kemble as Caius Marcius, the citizens of Paris rose in revolt, stormed the Bastille and effectively reduced the power of the monarchy. The story of Coriolanus bore too close a relation to these events, and was too capable of fomenting revolutionary feelings in the citizens of London, to make it a wise choice for the stage at this time, and Kemble discreetly retired from his new success, turning his attention for the next three years to the less political roles of Orlando, Benedick, Othello and Richard III. Significantly,

between 1789 and 1792, he also appeared sixteen times in the intensely patriotic role of Henry V.

By the Spring of 1792, the situation in France appeared rather more stable, and Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were emboldened to revive Coriolanus for two performances before "crowded and brilliant" (26) audiences at the Haymarket. The box office recorded very much higher takings than for any performance of the play in 1789 (£377 13s. as opposed to £230 6s. in 1789)(27) and it seemed that Coriolanus might now safely return to the repertoire. But luck was against Kemble, for in August of 1792, when he was preparing for a fresh season of plays, news reached England that the French mob had risen once more and, storming the royal palace and overthrowing the monarchy, had issued a rallying call to the other people of Europe to follow their example; clearly, in such a situation, any further performances of Coriolanus would have been political stupidity, and Kemble's own royalist sympathies may be deduced from the fact that he closed his theatre when he received news on 24 January 1793 of the guillotining of Louis XVI. The false calm which temporarily followed this decisive act seems to have lulled to sleep Kemble's fears that Coriolanus might inflame the anti-monarchical element of the London population, for on 23 February 1793 he risked one repeat performance with a further single performance on 21 May, but the start of the real Reign of Terror in France only two months later appears effectively to have frightened Kemble away from this role for the next three years.

By April 1796, he was determined to present Coriolanus once more, and he had found a way to ensure that it would not inflame revolutionary feeling in England: by deliberately portraying the Roman mob as

contemptible turncoats and by treating mob violence as a ridiculous foreign barbarism to which English common sense could never stoop, he was able to use the play as a vehicle for expressing the justice of the established structure of society and the foolishness of mass revolutionary movements. While twentieth century readers might be more inclined to agree with Coleridge that Shakespeare had impartially shown the rights and wrongs of both patrician and plebeian standpoints, Kemble could have defended his biased presentation by reference to such comments on Shakespeare's play as

the plebeian malignity, and tribunitian insolence in  
Brutus and Sicinius, (Johnson) (28)

and

when we see in what colours he paints the tribunes of  
the people: he seems to have no other idea of them than  
as a mob of Wat Tylers and Jack Cades. (Upton) (29)

Kemble's adaptation of Coriolanus had already weakened the case for the citizens by omitting the scene in which the patricians use force to beat in the people and their tribunes, but he now "slanted" the production even further to depict

the haughty mind of a hero nobly born, who had served  
and saved his country, \* and the contracted, selfish,  
cowardly species of public spirit, which characterises  
an assembly of ... ungrateful, and self-conceited  
electors. (30)

He debased the citizens to "an indiscriminating rabble" full of "unmeaning criticisms and boisterous clamours" (31) and emphasised what The Times called "the mutable adulation of popular clamour" (32) This was to the liking of the Drury Lane audience who swiftly took his point and, allying themselves with the patrician values, gave immediate proof of their patriotic scorn for the French revolutionaries:

There never was a higher test of English sense than that laugh of contempt which accompanied every appearance of the rabble, "that would ~~soon~~<sup>soon</sup> to clip the wings of eagle authority", and Tullus Aufidius's description of the Romans, bore so strong a likeness to the savage barbarity of modern France, that it rushed through the House like lightning. (33)

The success of this approach, which drew £475 5s to the box office, (34) had caused Kemble to give two repeat performances in October 1796 and February 1797, but then the sternness of Britain's struggle with revolutionary France had effectively dissuaded him from presenting *Coriolanus* in London for nearly ten years. Mrs. Inchbald's introduction to her 1808 edition of *Coriolanus* (in the fifth volume of her mammoth 25 volume *British Theatre*) expressly stated the reasons which had caused Kemble to withdraw from his most promising role

This noble drama, in which Mr. Kemble reaches the utmost summit of the actor's art, has been withdrawn from the theatre of late years, for some reasons of state. When the lower order of people are in good plight, they will bear contempt with cheerfulness, and even with mirth; but poverty puts them out of humour at the slightest disrespect. Certain sentences in this play are therefore of dangerous tendency at certain times. (35)

Had the political situation been less dangerous, there is little doubt that the opening years of the nineteenth century would have seen a long succession of performances of the role in which - in Hazlitt's words - Kemble consistently

exhibited the same ruling passion with the same unshaken firmness, he preserved the same haughty dignity of demeanour, the same energy of will, and unbending sternness of temper throughout. He was swayed by a single impulse. His tenaciousness of purpose was only irritated by opposition; he turned neither to the right nor to the left; the vehemence with which he moved forward increasing every instant till it hurried him on to the catastrophe. (36)



But, as it was, the nineteenth century theatregoer had to wait until the Winter season of 1806-7 before he had an opportunity of thrilling to Kemble's histrionic powers in Coriolanus.

(ii)

Cooke, Kemble, Young and Conway, 1800-1817

However, before Kemble resuscitated his Coriolanus, another actor proved less sensitive to the dictates of political expediency: among Kemble's Covent Garden company in the early years of the new century was George Cooke, who played Falstaff to Kemble's Henry IV, Iago to his Othello, and Macduff to his Macbeth. Cooke was a man of strong constitution and impulsive energy, who made a notable Richard III, but he undermined his talents by an opinionated, hyper-critical and sarcastic approach to life and by systematic intemperance which reduced him to "a noisy, brutish bacchanal". (37) When sober, he exhibited all the attributes of a perfect gentleman, yet

let him swallow but one drop beyond the wholesome limit, and the honey was turned to gall; the Bottle Imp mastered his better nature; and he became vulgar, noisy, intolerant, and intolerable. (38)

Cooke appears to have been jealous of Kemble's primacy in the theatre and, being particularly proud of his powerful voice, felt a corresponding contempt for Kemble's comparative deficiency in this department. Cooke's strength of voice was "a pre-eminence over his rival in which he absolutely revelled, and never omitted to exercise when he found an opportunity," (39) and Kemble's lengthy withdrawal

from Coriolanus provided just the opportunity in which Cooke delighted: in May 1804 - seven years after Kemble's previous performance - Cooke ventured to appear as Caius Marcius at a benefit performance at Drury Lane. Predictably, this first production of the play in the nineteenth century was not a success: although Cooke was excellent in portraying "the storm of a violent passion", (40) he was found to be less elegant and distinguished than Kemble who "displays, comparatively, a much superior degree of delicacy throughout his acting than Cooke". (41) Comparison with the vivid memories which were retained of Kemble's interpretation proved fatal to Cooke's attempt to supersede his manager's Coriolanus, and, as Genest drily commented, "Cooke never acted Coriolanus a 2nd time in London," (42) so that the field was left clear for Kemble's return.

By drawing on Kemble's prompt books and on contemporary reviews, it is possible to convey some idea of what was to be the most brilliantly successful interpretation of Coriolanus during the nineteenth century. The curtain rose to disclose the mutinous citizens whom Kemble directed to give three shouts (43) at the outset of the scene. A few lines later, during and at the end of the First Citizen's last speech before the entry of the patricians, these shouts were re-echoed off stage by the soldiers who were waiting in the wings, and an impression was created of a turbulent city. Caius Marcius, entering from the left, then met Menenius who had come from the opposite direction. Kemble strode across the stage, glaring with patrician pride at the crowd of Roman plebeians, and expressing strength, courage and haughtiness with every inch of his body, so that on his opening line ("What is the matter, you

dissentious rogues?")

"the crowd of mob-Romans fell back as though they had run against a mad bull, and he dashed in amongst them in scarlet pride, and looked, even in the eyes of the audience, sufficient 'to beat forty of them'." It was "impossible", we read, "not to admire the noble proportions and majestic contours of his figure; the expression of his face ... his right arm erected in conscious authority; his chest thrown forward, and his head slightly back; his right leg fearlessly advanced, and firmness in all his attitude." (44)

As Caius Marcius completed what Derek Traversi has called his "characteristic outburst of uncontrolled and misdirected energy" (45) with the line "As high as I could pick my lance", the plebeian fear of Caius' formidably expressed scorn was underlined by the crowd's withdrawal away from him, further emphasised by the simultaneous advance of Menenius towards his friend. Having thus highlighted the internal struggle within Rome, Kemble next introduced a small example of the sort of spectacle for which he was famous: where the First Folio stage direction reads simply "Enter Sicinius Velutus, Annius Brutus Cominius, Titus Lartius with Other Senatours", Kemble supplied an impressive processional entry and stately progress across the stage. His manuscript comments indicate that Cominius entered from the stage right, followed by twelve Lictors bearing fasces without axes. This small procession moved across the stage, and the Lictors established themselves behind the Roman Officer, who was almost in the wings on stage left: thus military authority and magisterial dignity were seen to range themselves behind the patrician Consul, on that side of the stage from which Caius Marcius himself had entered only a few moments earlier. The political clash in Rome was further underlined in a visual manner as Brutus and Sicinius remained stage right after their entrance, and joined the crowd of

plebeians which was already grouped in that area.

The audience's attention had been seized, the tragic hero had been introduced in vehement mood, and some processional splendour had been introduced. Now it was the turn of Kemble's sister, the world-famous Mrs. Siddons, to dominate the stage in the second scene (Shakespeare's I iii) which provides such a revealing glimpse of the Spartan austerity of the home which Coriolanus' mother had turned into "a parade ground for training in leadership". (46) Sarah Siddons, the greatest actress of the age, possessed a physical appearance which eminently suited her to the portrayal of dominating tragic roles such as that of Volumnia: the very qualities of dignity, energy, power and hardness which had made her interpretation of Lady Macbeth one of the theatrical wonders of the years since 1785 were just those which also created a Volumnia worthy of Kemble's Caius Marcius. Boaden's description of the appearance of Mrs. Siddons in October 1782 emphasises not only her gracefulness and the force of her stage presence, but also the flexibility of her facial expression and the wonderful range of her voices:

There never perhaps was a better stage figure than that of Mrs. Siddons. Her height is above the middle size ... and her attitudes are distinguished equally by energy and grace. The symmetry of her person is exact and captivating ... So great, too is the flexibility of her countenance, that the rapid transitions of passion are given with a variety and effect that never tire upon the eye ... Her voice ... denotes a being devoted to tragedy; yet becomes at will sonorous or piercing, overwhelms with rage, or in its wild shriek absolutely harrows up the soul. Her sorrow, too, is never childish, her lamentation has a dignity which belongs, I think, to no other woman. (47)

After this quiet yet strong domestic scene, Kemble completed his first act by running together the I vi and ix of Shakespeare as a

continuous battle scene, linked with the added stage direction

Exeunt - A loud Flourish. - A Battle. - A Retreat sounded.

It was stirringly introduced with shouts, drums, trumpets and wind instruments from the theatre orchestra, and the entry of Cominius' army, consisting of two standards of S.P.Q.R., two standards of Eagles, twelve Lictors, six soldiers bearing spears and shields and a further six bearing swords and shields. Kemble directed in his notes that "they all range R" to indicate retreat in front of a backcloth representing a wood. No sooner had the audience absorbed this piece of pageantry than Kemble made another dramatic entry, covered with gore, launching himself eagerly on to the stage from upstage left, and giving full vocal value of Coriolanus' thrilling cry, "Come I too late?" His conversation with Cominius, after the second section of the battle, was set in open country and was embellished with no fewer than four formal flourishes of trumpets and wind instruments - each signalled by the raised hand of the Roman Officer - before the first act concluded spectacularly with a march.

Kemble's second act - like Shakespeare's - opened with the preparations in Rome for the return of its latest military hero and soon reached its peak of excitement and splendour. Determined to please his audience with scenes of pageantry, Kemble retained the lengthy and eye-catching procession with which Sheridan had garnished his 1754 version of the play. Proudly entitled The Order of the Ovation, it consisted first of ~~the~~ Civil Procession of priests, flamens, choristers, senators, tribunes, virgins, matrons, and the mother, wife and child of Coriolanus, all marching in procession to the

sounds of flutes and soft instruments before taking up their positions to line the route of the military procession. This was merely an hors d'oeuvre, however, to the sumptuous main course of the grand military procession, which demanded the services of approximately two hundred extras and actors: first came the twelve Lictors and two Aediles; then fourteen musicians; next, a religious section incorporating six priests, four incense burners and a ram adorned for sacrifice. A Roman Eagle heralded the military centre of the procession which included twenty-four soldiers, thirty-two standard bearers, twelve slaves, six gladiators, a mass of spoils and booty, and a large number of Volscian prisoners. At the culminating point of the Order of the Ovation, Coriolanus himself entered the scene, preceded by an eighteen-piece military band and flanked by an Eagle, two standards and the two consuls; miscellaneous soldiers and mob completed this memorable Triumph, which provided the general public with music, colour, movement and pageantry.

Mrs. Siddons seized her opportunity in this great scene and, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the blatant exaggeration of her movements and reactions, exercised a remarkable influence over the audience, as John Forster testified when recapitulating a conversation which he had held with Charles Kemble (John Philip's younger brother), Charles Dickens and a Mr. Harness:

Her Volumnia escaped being vulgar only by being so excessively grand. But it was just what was so-called "vulgarity" that made its appeal to the vulgar in a better meaning of the word. When she first entered, Harness said, swaying from side to side with every movement of the Roman crowd itself, as it went out and returned in confusion, she so absorbed her son into herself as she looked at him, so swelled and amplified in her pride and glory for him, that "the people in the pit blubbered all

round," and he could no more help it than the rest. (48)

Harness' recollections in 1849 corroborate the earlier memories of the leading actor, Young, in a letter addressed to Mrs. Siddons' second biographer, Campbell:

"I remember her," he says, "coming down the stage in the triumphal entry of her son, Coriolanus, when her dumb-show drew plaudits that shook the building. She came down, marching and beating time to the music; rolling .... from side to side, swelling with the triumph of her son. Such was the intoxication of joy which flashed from her eye, and lit up her whole face, that the effect was irresistible ... I could not take my eye from her. Coriolanus, banner and pageant, all went for nothing to me, after she had walked to her place." (49)

The trumpets blazed forth in flourishing style and, as Kemble halted, three shouts rang out. Boaden, the first biographer of both Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, was particularly impressed by Volumnia's expression of puzzlement at her son's new name as she raised him from his kneeling posture before her, and he strove to indicate her stressing of the line by italics:

What is't? Coriolanus must I call thee? (50)

As the great procession re-formed for the end of the scene, Kemble used auditory effects to the full, as his manuscript notes indicate:

Let the Musick continue some time after the Scene closes on the Ovation - then three Shouts, with all the Drums and Trumpets.

The other memorable scene in the second act of Kemble's Coriolanus was scene iv (taken from Shakespeare's II ii). As the curtain rose, Coriolanus, Menenius, Cominius, the two Tribunes, six Senators and two Officers were "discovered" in the Capitol. The spectacle was heightened by the Consul's chair raised on a pedestal, by benches for the Senators, and by the colourful backing of an Eagle, Banners and twelve Lictors. One of Kemble's aims in his Shakespearean productions had always been

"to bend every nerve to make them perfect beyond all previous example," (51) and he was eager to achieve greater historical accuracy in costuming his actors than had hitherto been the case; to this end, he even consulted the antiquary, Douce, while preparing his productions of the Roman plays, and brought to the English stage a closer approximation to the Roman toga than it had yet seen. The costume in this Senate scene made an impressive impact and

his togas.....<sup>became</sup> the theme of universal admiration. They were pronounced faultless, minutely classical, even to the long disputed latus clavus, severely correct, and beautifully graceful beyond precedent. (52)

During his scene in the garb of humility, pleading for the "voices" of the citizens, and in the tempestuous third act portraying the struggle between Coriolanus and the plebeians, Kemble seemed to become the character created by Shakespeare, and the dramatic critic of The Times saw his performance as definitive and inimitable

He does not act - he is - the Coriolanus conceived by Shakespeare. It is impossible to imagine a more heroic presence - a purer patrician dignity - a military fire more irritable - more unquenchable - a filial reverence more true to the nature of a Roman - or sarcasm more biting - or irony more lofty, contemptuous, and provoking. (53)

The tension generated by Kemble's interpretation was enhanced by an astute handling of the crowd in the third act: for example, the inflammatory effect of the Tribunes' speeches was emphasised just after Brutus' line

Pursue him to his house and pluck him thence,  
by the menacing, move "All rush tumultuously towards I". The curtain descended to great applause on the shattered Coriolanus' "There is a world elsewhere", delivered with a mixture of defiance and pathos as his lonely figure moved off stage Right, to be followed by the



triumphantly shouting populace.

The fourth act, alternating between Rome and Antium as well as between the diction of Shakespeare and Thomson, contained only one moment to which contemporary writers paid especial tribute: this was the first appearance of Caius Marcius, (54) "discovered" standing in solemn silence in the house of Aufidius

at the foot of the statue of Mars, himself another Mars (55) - a tableau which excited the admiration of no less a critic than Hazlitt.

In the final act - that mighty conflict between two resolute characters - the talents of Kemble and his sister almost overcame the ludicrous amalgam of Shakespeare and Thomson and transmuted it into great "theatre". The scene was the Volscian camp, with two chairs raised on a pedestal, and to a flourish of drums and trumpets Coriolanus, Aufidius and Volusius led in a procession of Senators, Officers, Soldiers and Standards. Immediately, to "soft music, at first distant but growing louder by degrees," the embassy of Roman ladies came slowly into view from upstage Right, advancing towards the pedestal and bowing in turn. As Virgilia acknowledged her "Lord and husband" she advanced a timorous step and Coriolanus - aware that he is "not of stronger earth than others" left the rostrum and ran down to her, his pent-up emotions breaking uncontrollably forth. Then Mrs. Siddons took command of the scene, her supreme moments coming in the lines which Kemble had extracted from Shakespeare's "Nay, go not from us thus"; Boaden referred to her delivery of

There's no man i'th' world  
More bound to's mother: yet here he lets me prate

Like one i'th' stocks,

and

When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,  
Has cluck'd thee to the wars, and safely home,

and

I'm hush'd until our city be afire,  
And then I'll speak a little,

as the "ne plus ultra of dramatic power". (56) The scene then degenerated into Thomson's declamatory verse which Kemble enlivened with a great deal of action. As Virgilia pleaded with her husband

O permit me,  
To shed my gushing tears upon thy hand,

Kemble instructed her to express her emotion by advancing "fearfully"; his response to her plea was the stern command, "Leave me", at which Virgilia starts, like one who never heard such a word before, and, although obeying her husband, she heart-rendingly, "Going - looks back" at him. Volumnia then advanced before Virgilia and crossed left to the pedestal, causing Coriolanus to rise on his speech.

Cease, cease, to torture me!  
You only tear my heart, but cannot shake it.-  
By the immortal gods, -.

Having raised Virgilia "sternly" from her imploring posture on her knees, Mrs. Siddons gave full melodramatic force to the lines with which she prefaced her attempted suicide:

Go, bar'brous son; go, double parricide;  
Rush o'er my corse to thy belov'd revenge!  
Tread on the bleeding breast of her, to whom  
Thou ows't thy life! - Lo, thy first victim.  
(She draws a dagger.)

The spectators then watched with pity as the Volscians developed their plot against Coriolanus, and they thrilled to hear Kemble's

slightly asthmatic voice rise to majestic power as he lashed Aufidius with the words of scorn which Thomson had written. Boaden claimed that Kemble delivered this passage with "sublime effect" and attempted to convey, by means of capitals and italics, the words to which the actor devoted special emphasis:

'Tis not for such as thou-so often spared  
By her victorious sword, to speak of ROME,  
But with respect, and awful veneration,  
Whate'er her blots, whate'er her giddy factions,  
There is more VIRTUE in one single year  
Of Roman story, than your Voscian annals  
Can boast through ALL your creeping dark duration. (57)

As Kemble drew to the climax of this quarrel with Aufidius and reverted to Shakespeare's text, the intensity of arrogance and vituperation increased, and he accompanied the famous lines

Like an eagle in a dove-cote, I  
Flutter'd your Voscians, in Corioli;  
Alone I did it - !

with a moving and graceful gesture which, according to Hazlitt, "gave double force and beauty to the image". (58)

Caius Marcius is doomed by this tirade, but one of Kemble's finest moments was still to come: Bertram Joseph, drawing on Scott's article about Kemble in the Quarterly Review of 1826, indicates that Kemble's outstanding physical control made the sudden and brutal death of Coriolanus a truly memorable event:

A fine example of the muscular control was Kemble's death as Coriolanus. Scott considered it one of the most striking examples of his command of muscle and limb; the three Volscian assassins seemed to pass their swords through the body of Coriolanus. "There was no precaution, no support; he dropped as dead and as flat on the stage as if the swords had really met within his body." ... Although it had "the most striking resemblance to actual and instant death we have ever witnessed", it was restrained at the same time, it "saved all that rolling, gasping and groaning which generally takes place in our theatres." (59)

As the body of Coriolanus dropped to the floor, the Senators "started up - R", but were calmed by Aufidius' last speech. Finally, the solemnity of the funeral procession was marked by more than the drum referred to by Aufidius in the printed text; as the Volscian general spoke Thomson's line

As the most noble corse, that ever herald  
Did follow to his urn,

Kemble required "Muffled drums and Trumpets"; then, as the text returned to Shakespeare's "Beat, beat the drum", Kemble asked for a "roll and blow" and then ordered the muffled drums and trumpets to continue to the end of Aufidius' speech, at which point the theatre orchestra struck up a Dead March to form a musically, as well as visually, moving climax to the production.

This was the interpretation which, at considerable expense, Kemble restored to the stage of Covent Garden in his first nineteenth century appearance as Coriolanus on 3 November 1806. In spite of nearly ten years' absence from the play, Kemble's old magic and accustomed skill still shone forth, and, as the drama advanced towards its climax on the first night, so Kemble's acting increased in intensity and helped to establish Coriolanus as Covent Garden's most popular offering during the next month. A tribute by The Monthly Mirror was characteristic of the praise which was lavished upon the return of a play which was

revived with prodigious pomp and expense. Kemble's Caius Marcius is a chef d'oeuvre. He might build his fame on this character, if he had never played any other.... Here he is "HIMSELF ALONE". If there is a sublime in acting, as there is in poetry, Kemble's Coriolanus certainly merits that epithet. (60)

**THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN,**  
 This present SATURDAY, Nov. 22, 1806, will be acted (8th time) the Tragedy of  
**CORIOLANUS;**  
 Or, The ROMAN MATRON.

Caius Marcius Coriolanus by Mr. KEMBLE.  
 Cominius, Mr. CRESWELL, Menenius, Mr. MUNDEN,  
 First Officer, Mr. Jefferies, Second Officer, Mr. Field,  
 Tribune, and Plebeians by  
 Mr. CHAPMAN, Mr. MURRAY,  
 Mr. SIMMONS, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. BEVERLY, Mr. ATKINS,  
 Mefl. Abbot, T. Blanchard, L. Bologna, Menage, W. Murray, Platt, Powers,  
 Rimdyck, Sarjant, Truman, Whitmell, Wilde.  
 Volumnia by Mrs. SIDDONS,  
 The Child by Master PRICE,  
 Virgilius, Miss BRUNTON, Valeria, Mrs. HUMPHRIES, Servilia, Miss LOGAN.  
 Marons.  
 Mrs. Emery, Mrs. Follett, Mrs. Whitmore.  
 Virgins.  
 Miss Cox, Miss Cranfield, Miss Searle, Miss Taylor, Miss Waddy, Mrs. Watts.  
 In *Act II.*

**An OVATION.**

The *ODE* by Mefl. Denman, King, Lee, Mara, Monk, Smalley, Street, Thomas, Burden, Everard, Fairclough,  
 Homeyard, Linton, Meyers, Odwell, Parsons, Tett, B. Tett, Whitehorn—Meflames Benson, Bologna,  
 I. Bologna, Briflow, Fawcett, Findlay, Grimaldi, Ilist, Martyr, Masters, Price, Slader.

*Volfians.*  
 Tullus Aufidius Mr. POPE,  
 Volunius, Mr. CLAREMONT,

*Ofiers.*  
 Mr. King, Mr. Treby, Mr. Fairbrother, Mr. Brown, Mr. Reeve.  
 The *Overture* and *Ad-Symphonies* are composed by Mr. W. WARE.  
 To which will be added, in two acts, (third time) a New Grand Operatical Entertainment, called

**The DESERTS of ARABIA.**

(The SCENES, DRESSES, and DECORATIONS are entirely NEW.)

The Musick composed by Mr. G. LANZA, jun.

The principal characters by

Mr. LISTON,  
 Mr. INCLE DON,  
 Mr. CRESWELL, Mr. EMERY,  
 Mr. FAWCETT,  
 Mr. CHAPMAN, Mr. BELLAMY, Mr. DAVENPORT, Mr. TREBY.

*Arabs.*  
 Mefl. Abbot, T. Blanchard, Burden, Denman, Everard, Fairclough, Homeyard, King, Lee, Linton,  
 Meyers, Monk, Odwell, Parsons, Street, Tett, B. Tett, C. Tett, Thomas, Whitehorn.

*Persians.*  
 Mefl. L. Bologna, Brown, Goodwin, Fairbrother, Platt, Powers, Rimdyck, Sarjant, Wilde.  
 Attendants, Mefl. Banks, Dick, Field, Goodwin, Hoddinot W. Murray, Rye, Sturgeon, Telfer, Thurston.  
 Mrs. C. KEMBLE.

Miss BRUNTON, Miss WADDY,  
*Arabians*—Meflames Benson, Briflow, Fawcett, Findlay, Grimaldi, Ilist, Leferve, Price, Whitmore.  
*Persians*—Meflames Bologna, I. Bologna, Cox, Cranfield, Follett, Masters, Slader, Watts.

**CARAVAN.**

composed of *Persians, Arabians, Christians, &c.* with their *Elephants, Camels, Pack-horses, Cars,*  
 and various *Merchandise*, as crossing

**The DESERTS.**

The *SCENES* designed and painted by Mefl. Phillips, Whitmore, Hollogan, and their *Affians.*  
 The *Architettura* and *Decorations* executed by Mefl. Sloper, Creswell, and Goodtree.

The *Dresses* by Mr. Dick and Mrs. Egan. *Books of the Songs, Choruses, &c.* to be had in the Theatre.  
 E. Macintosh, Printer, 2, Bow-dock.

The new Operatical Entertainment of The DESERTS of ARABIA, continuing to be received with  
 the most unbounded applause by brilliant and overflowing audiences, will be repeated every  
 Evening till further notice.

The new Play of ADRIAN and ORRILA; or, A MOTHER'S VENGEANCE, will be  
 repeated for the 5th, 6th & 7th times on Monday, Wednesday & Friday next.  
 KING HENRY the EIGHTH—MACBETH—and CORIOLANUS.

Rischgitz

THEATRE ROYAL PLAYBILL 1806

One of the Autumn performances ( 18 November ) was marred by an unfortunate incident during an impassioned section of the play: while Mrs. Siddons was supplicating her son to save his country, an apple was thrown upon the stage, falling between Coriolanus and his mother. Kemble was so incensed that he broke off the performance, stepped out of character, and in his capacity as manager offered one hundred guineas "to any man who will disclose the ruffian who has been guilty of this act". (61) His pride was salved when he was assured that no insult had been intended to himself or to his sister - the apple had been hurled from the gallery at some disorderly females in the boxes who had been distracting attention from the play, and it had only by accident fallen on the stage; on Kemble's assurance to the gallery that the riotous women would be kept in order, peace was restored and the play resumed.

Fortunately, other performances managed to maintain a more Roman dignity and Boaden saw this revival as the high point of the 1806-7 season - perhaps, of modern theatrical times:

THE WINTER SEASON OF 1806-7 had one proud distinction, great beyond all modern rivalry, the revival by Mr. Kemble, of Coriolanus. It has given a cognomen to Kemble; and remains at the head of his performances, and of the art itself, as one of those felicitous things where the actor is absolutely identified with the part, and it becomes impossible to think of either the character or the man without reference to each other. (62)

Safe from revolutionary disturbances in France, Kemble's Coriolanus proudly marched across the boards of Covent Garden throughout 1807. After an illness in the Spring, he played Caius Marcius again on 18 May 1807, with reduced strength but with no impairment of his histrionic powers. Its final performance for the season, on 25 May, roused Kemble to such an emotional pitch that he showed disgust and abhorrence for

the plebeians rather than a cold contempt. The Monthly Mirror paid tribute to the "classical taste" of the settings and costumes, to the "large share of grand and interesting effects", to Mrs. Siddons' "extremely fine" Volumnia, and to Kemble's deportment which afforded "a characteristic dignity to his personification of Coriolanus not to be excelled"; nevertheless, it also expressed the view that Kemble's display of excessive repugnance for the mob

takes away from that nobility of mind possessed by  
Coriolanus (63)

At the start of the Winter season of 1807-8, Coriolanus was once more receiving critical acclaim:

"With the Coriolanus of Mr. Kemble the eye is perpetually delighted," (64) and it would doubtless have been repeated in each succeeding season of Kemble's management had not Covent Garden Theatre burned down on 19 November 1808; since this calamitous event was followed three months later by the similar destruction of Drury Lane (24 February 1809), the serious drama in London was almost simultaneously deprived of its two leading theatres, and of most of its costumes and scenery. The new Covent Garden opened within a year; (65) but it was not until 14 December 1811 that Kemble felt ready to present a new production of Coriolanus which demanded the expense and trouble of entirely new scenery and dresses. Since Coriolanus was his most famous production, Kemble expended considerable time and energy on this revival, and his new scenery impressed The Times by its representation of "a succession of Roman architecture, which exceeds any we have witnessed: the triumphal arch scene in particular". (66) Kemble's attempt at greater historical accuracy was in keeping with the general movement of that time in the

theatre and the settings were undeniably Roman; they were thus much truer to historical fact than the majority of "Roman" settings perpetrated in the eighteenth century, but they still lacked absolute accuracy and were "made up of buildings of every style and period, which had hardly any feature in common save that none of them existed at the time of the Volscian wars". (67)

Audience and critics in 1811, however, were not inclined to carp at historical inaccuracy, and they thankfully united in praising Kemble for the return of this much-loved production:

There is perhaps, no part for which Mr. Kemble is more fitted than this Roman hero. His features, his figure, his gestures, and his attitude, all combine, in an eminent degree, towards the representation of such a character. Even his voice, which is frequently faulty, is not so unfavourable to him here, and it was with much pleasure, that we found it so much more readily and efficiently at his command that it sometimes is. (68)

Mrs. Siddons' Volumnia found similar favour, and the Order of the Ovation continued to delight. Kemble, indeed, had made only one miscalculation: in an attempt to restrain expenditure he had cast very minor actors in all other roles, temporarily dispensing with the second-in-command, Young, and with his brother, Charles. Poorly supported by Egerton as a weak Aufidius and by Claremont as a truly dreadful Volusius, the famous brother and sister were unable - despite the excellence of their own interpretations - to make an artistic success of the production as a whole. Nonetheless, it found popular approval, being performed five times in December 1811 and being repeated a number of times in the first half of 1812. The last of these performances (22 June 1812) was a rather sad occasion for it was the final appearance of Mrs. Siddons as Volumnia. She was replaced in most of her roles - including this one -



by Miss O'Neill who fell far below the level of the more famous actress. That inveterate theatregoer, H. Crabb Robinson, seeing Miss O'Neill replace Mrs. Siddons in a minor play called Isabella in December 1814, commented:

I wished not to see Miss O'Neill first in a character in which I had seen Mrs. Siddons for who could bear such a trial? ... She wants the indispensable charms of a powerful and sweet voice, (which she renders melodious only by effort and for a short time only) And of an expressive face. (69)

Hazlitt also felt that Miss O'Neill's talents were far inferior to those of Mrs. Siddons.

From June 1812 until January 1814, Kemble was away from London, spending most of his time in Bath (where he presented Coriolanus on 26 and 31 December 1812) and in Ireland. During the monarch's absence from the scene, two of his subjects vainly essayed to ascend his throne; since these appearances were all at Covent Garden, it is possible that they had received his blessing, but they did not win much applause from the critics. The first appearance was in June 1813 by Kemble's self-effacing second string, Young, and ran for two unremarkable performances which were ignored by the journals; the second and more important attempt was made in December of the same year by the Dublin actor, Conway, whose two performances were evidently rather restless for it was said that he

must always be tracing a circle with one leg, while the other acts the part of a pivot; when he stoops to lift the child, in Coriolanus, he stretches his limbs, and protrudes his posteriors with the air of a *losus naturae* engaged for exhibition, and stamps and heaves, and clasps his hands to the measure of one, two, three and a hop. (70)

His movements - though graceful - were as mechanical and repetitive as those of a country dancer rigorously following the diagrams in a manual

or of a professional master of posture; he certainly possessed "perpetual rotundity of movement", (71) but this was not in any way integrated with the essential nature of his role, and he too often indulged in meaningless and expansive gestures. The constant self-imitation of Conway's movements annoyed the critic of The Theatrical Inquisitor who scathingly attacked the "undiscriminating applause, by which he was received" and the "presumption" (72) which had caused so mediocre an actor to risk comparison with the depth, originality and intelligence of Kemble's interpretation.

Fortunately for the future of Coriolanus, Kemble returned to London the following month, and naturally elected to make his first appearance as Caius Marcius. On his entry, on 15 January 1814, he was greeted ecstatically by long-continued bursts of applause and was treated as "a sovereign prince restored to his lawful dominions"; (73) the whole pit rose simultaneously to welcome him and, as he bowed in graceful acknowledgement, a circlet of laurel was thrown at his feet from the boxes. His subsequent performance that night was warmed by this welcome and The Times, in saluting "the powerful and skilful hand of a great master", asserted that

On no occasion have we ever seen him in better health, better spirits, more activity and energy, or more truly identifying himself with the character. (74)

His interpretation made a notable and salutary contrast with that of Conway, and tribute was paid to his ability to unite into a homogeneous performance all the varied attributes of an outstanding technique

While we admire the majesty of his step and the expression of his eye, we listen with deep attention to his exquisite delivery, and admire the power by which his actions, his elocution, and his look, are blended to perfect accordance with each other. (75)

Thus encouraged, Kemble repeated his Coriolanus on a further three occasions during the first two months of 1814, following these with a single performance in the May in which his handling of his final scene before the Volscian army particularly impressed Thomas Barnes, the dramatic critic of The Times, with its skilful mingling of "studied respect ... bursting irritation, ... hatred, ... and irresistible exultation." (76) Indeed, Barnes went so far as to claim that Kemble's acting in this final scene

formed a combination of natural and adopted powers that has been seldom witnessed on the stage. (77)

Hyperbole seems to have been the order of the day in May 1814, for The Theatrical Inquisitor called it

A noble and unequalled performance. Were it possible that any thing human should be perfect, that praise might justly be given to Kemble's personation of the Roman hero. (78)

The incessant plaudits at the end of this performance encouraged Kemble to present Coriolanus early in the Winter season of the same year, giving several performances as Caius Marcius in the last three months of 1814. Thomas Barnes returned to Covent Garden to see the first of these and found his enthusiasm for Kemble in no way diminished. However, although he referred to "the practised skill and original genius of the 'Master of the School'", (79) Barnes was less satisfied with the historical inaccuracy of the setting and with the shortage of "extras" which meant that an "unhappy paucity was to be found in the populace at the ... canvass of Caius Marcius", (80) and that the famous Order of the Ovation passed across the stage without so much as a single Roman citizen to view it, and with enormous gaps between each section of the procession. Kemble was beginning to rely too much

upon his own outstanding acting to carry the day and was tending to economise on all other aspects of the play, to the detriment of the production as a whole: the expensive rebuilding of Covent Garden was taking its toll of artistic standards.

In May of the following year (1815), there were two further performances of Coriolanus at Covent Garden. According to C.B. Young, in the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of the play, Kemble was ill with gout at this time, and his place was taken by the contorting Irishman, Conway; the advertisements in The Times (which did not review the performances) made no reference to this substitution.

The season of 1815-1816 was of greater importance to the London theatre than any preceding season in the nineteenth century because it included the second centenary of the death of Shakespeare. Kemble's success with Coriolanus in the Autumn had been described as possessing "a matchless beauty", (81) so that, when it was decided to commemorate the actual day of the death (23 April) with a Shakespearean performance, this was the obvious choice. One can hardly imagine that at any time between 1616 and 1816 Coriolanus would have been considered a successful enough achievement with which to honour "the Bard" and it is a considerable testimony to the genius of Kemble that his Caius Marcius had by now become the natural choice as centrepiece of a solemn and important commemoration. The selection was popular as well as natural, the performance being repeated on 29 May 1816 and on many other occasions in the Autumn of the same year. William Hazlitt attended at least one of these performances and reviewed the production for The Examiner. At this time Hazlitt was moving towards the clarification of his views on

the characters and plays of Shakespeare, and he devoted the bulk of his review to a lengthy assessment of the play which he was to incorporate the following year in his account of Coriolanus in The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays. The critic recognised the greatness of the actor's interpretation, even though he was less pleased by the Volumnia of Miss O'Neill, who fell far below the level of Hazlitt's adored Mrs. Siddons:

Mr. Kemble in the part of Coriolanus was as great as ever. Miss O'Neill as Volumnia was not so great as Mrs. Siddons. There is a fleshiness, if we may so say, about her whole manner, voice and person, which does not suit the character of the Roman Matron. (82)

Hazlitt's political principles were affronted by the way in which Kemble's production held up the plebeians to ridicule, and he complained that Shakespeare "spared no occasion of baiting the rabble." (83) The power of Kemble's acting and of the "right royal" (84) poetry made Hazlitt find that, rather against his will, the protagonist was engaging his sympathies. In The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, he used four different arguments to explain this erosion of his political ideas. First, he blamed it on the effect of the verse, because

The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power; (85)

then he decided that the mob were too cravenly submissive to attract sympathetic attention; thirdly, with Kemble clearly in mind, he stated that

We take part with the lordly beast, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party; (86)

and finally his memories of the scenic splendour of Kemble's production caused him to assert that

Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp and circumstance, has more attraction than abstract right. (87)

The power of Kemble's acting is clearly shown in this ability to cause the radical Hazlitt to feel sympathy with the arch-reactionary aristocrat, Coriolanus, and in the way in which some reminiscences of the "pride, pomp and circumstance" of Kemble's production crept into his literary criticism.

Early in 1817, Kemble took his production of Coriolanus to Bath once more, performing there on 14 January. That great amateur of the drama, John Genest, was present and commented

He was truly great on this evening - he said himself that he had never played the part so much to his own satisfaction, (88)

but age was creeping towards this matured interpretation, and 1817 was to be Kemble's last year on the stage. He appeared in Coriolanus in London on 26 April and 10 May and then took a reluctant farewell of his public in a "last" appearance on 23 May; like other actors of his generation, however, Kemble used the word "last" in a loose way and was easily persuaded by popular clamour to reappear as Caius Marcius on 23 June, this "being the last time of his appearing on the stage" (89) in any rôle. As might be expected, the dramatic critics of London attended this final appearance in force and left a full and moving account of the actor's last performance.

Hazlitt had been present at a performance of Kemble's Coriolanus some twenty years earlier and still remembered it distinctly; he was delighted to testify that, on his last appearance,

the most excellent actor of his time ... played the part as well as he ever did - with as much freshness and vigour. There was no abatement of spirit and energy - none of grace and dignity; his look, his action, his expression of the character, were the same as they ever were; they could not be finer ... On the last evening, he displayed the same excellences, and gave the same prominence to the very same passages that he used to do. (90)

During the performance Kemble was understandably taut and nervous, but his vast experience of the stage enabled him to control his nerves for the greater part of the time so that Boaden, sitting in the orchestra just below the stage,

saw and enjoyed that amazing power, by which the actor is enabled to subdue even his nerves to the temporary demand of the stage, and lay himself completely aside, to be resumed like a stage revival. (91)

But in the great scene of reconciliation with his mother Kemble's emotions manifested themselves in a loss of control over his notoriously unreliable voice which "seemed to faint and stagger, to be strained and cracked." (92) The audience recognised the reason for Kemble's weakness at this point and sympathised with his overwrought state until his professionalism reasserted itself and he gathered strength for the final quarrel with Aufidius and for his spectacular and sudden death. Ludwig Tieck, the German critic and translator of Shakespeare, was in the audience and singled out the last moments of the play for especial praise:

Greatest and most exciting was the close, it might be pronounced sublime. (93)

When the curtain fell after the culminating dead march, the audience's response verged on hysteria, completely astonishing Herr Tieck, who supplied a vivid account of the scene:

Such were the plaudits, the cheers, the shouts of rapture and tears of emotion given to the noble veteran, the honoured favourite, whom the public were never to see again. The loudest outburst I had ever heard, even in Italy, was but feeble, compared to the indescribable din, which, after the curtain fell, arose on every side. There were thousands present, packed closely together, and the huge area of the house was changed as if into one vast machine, which produced a supernatural clangour and jubilation, men and women shouting, clapping, smiting the sides of the boxes might and main, with fans and with sticks, while, to add to the tumult, everybody was making what noise he could with his feet. (94)

Kemble, deeply moved and in tears, came forward to address the audience, but the clamour and tumult increased so that he could do no more than bow. After several attempts to quieten his admiring spectators, Kemble uttered a few sentences, with much emotion and incoherence, breaking down on several occasions. The audience heard him without a sound - "save from many points a suppressed low sob" (95) - as he spoke of his high-minded approach to his profession, his desire to bring to the stage a dignity of interpretation and a splendour of production which would be worthy of the works of Shakespeare.

"No exertions on my part have ever been spared to improve our dramatic representations with respect to their splendour, both as an actor and as a manager, whose object and accuracy, has been to add to the dignity of the stage; but more particularly in bringing forward the works of those of our divine Shakespeare." (96)

As he referred to Shakespeare, the actor's voice faltered, his tears became visible once more, and he was forced to summon all his self-control to complete his farewell speech without breaking down completely. When he ceased speaking, the storm of applause broke forth again in full force, and "bowing with graceful and profound respect" (97) Kemble disappeared from the stage for the last time.

And so an era passed - an era in which the public had been strikingly shown the power and excitement which could be generated by Coriolanus. Kemble had taken a play which had been rewritten and adapted on four occasions within less than eighty years and, by returning more nearly to the Shakespearean text than the previous "improvers" and by utilising his own knowledge of the theatre and his own unrivalled histrionic expertise, he had brought it glowingly to life for a whole generation of playgoers. Since one of those playgoers was



William Hazlitt, who was at that very time preparing to compose his Shakespearean literary criticism, this was an important achievement. Pedants may object to Kemble's departure from the authentic text of Shakespeare's play, but a sensible professional motive lay behind most of the alterations, and the greatest justification of Kemble's version of Coriolanus was its practical success in the theatre and the popularity with which it suddenly endowed a play which had hitherto lain neglected and unappreciated.

(iii)

Macready, Kean, Vandenhoff and Others 1817-1848

Kemble had been the last really great actor of the eighteenth century "classical" school and his controlled, stately intensity was now no longer in fashion: the romantic fire of Kean and the down-to-earth naturalness of Macready were already inaugurating a new era in which Kemble's style would have seemed an anachronism. While Richard III, Macbeth and Othello probably gained from this development, Coriolanus certainly did not.

At first, the shade of Kemble hung threateningly over the role of Caius Marcius and no-one dared to assume the toga which he had just laid aside. A Mr. J. Russell strove to keep alive the memory of Kemble by providing a series of imitations of some of the more famous moments from his stage successes, among them his reaction to Aufidius' taunt of "thou boy of tears" in the last scene of Coriolanus, and over a year after Kemble's retirement, Blackwood's Magazine paid tribute both to

the imitation and to Kemble's acting: the imitation

was certainly very correct, and forcibly recalled to us the pleasure we used to receive from that great actor's most masterly performance which we can scarcely hope to see equalled, certainly never surpassed. (98)

Conway then brought "the mediocrity of his powers" (99) to a further single performance of Coriolanus at Bath in January in 1819, but it was not until the end of the same year that any actor was bold enough to venture comparison in a London theatre with Kemble in his greatest role. This production stood every chance of success, for the enterprising actor was the young Macready, a promising newcomer who was destined to become England's leading tragedian and who was ~~to~~ to repeat his interpretation of Coriolanus on many occasions during the next twenty years.

Macready could hardly fail to realise that his performance would inevitably be compared with that of Kemble <sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ that he lacked some of Kemble's attributes: Macready was not blessed with the good looks of Kemble ("Macready a most horribly ugly fellow" (100) had been the verdict of Crabb Robinson two years before) and he was anxious not to suffer by comparison with the patrician dignity of his predecessor's movements and manner. Accordingly, the aspiring young actor worked hard at his task, and his insistent use in his Reminiscences of such expressions as "I went to work", "I studied", "practised", "no leisure" and "intent on mastering" clearly conveys the conscientious seriousness with which he attempted to equip himself for his task:

I stood at disadvantage, with the recollection of Kemble still fresh in the memory of the play-going public; but with a full consciousness of the difficulty of my task, I went to work. To add dignity and grace to my deportment I studied under D'Egville

the various attitudes from the antique, and practised the more stately walk which was enforced by the peculiarity of their dress on the gens togata. I allowed myself no leisure, intent on mastering the patricians outward bearing, and under that giving full vent to the unbridled passion of the man. (101)

Macready's painstaking preparation brought a measure of reward: he was already making a name for himself as Richard III and on his first entry as Coriolanus on 29 November 1819 his reception "was that of an acknowledged favourite." (102) As the play progressed, the applause grew in volume and the actor's most ambitious hopes were exceeded when "from the death of Coriolanus to the fall of the curtain the house resounded with applause" (103) and, in his performances of Coriolanus and Richard III at this period it became

the fashion to hail him with shouts of applause, waving of hats, & c., and calls for him to come forward and give out the play after he is "dead in law". (104)

The critics, however, took a more stringent view, and their comment was less rapturous than the audience's response to the new Coriolanus: certainly, The Morning Herald praised the scene of entreaty with Volumnia for its "proofs of variety, flexibility, and power rarely equalled and absolutely unexcelled" (105) and liked Macready's handling of the quarrel with Aufidius, which also attracted admiring comment from Leigh Hunt and from Blackwood's Magazine. But there was disagreement about the value of his lessons in deportment, for whereas The Morning Herald loyally asserted that Macready's attitudes closely approached the physical grandeur of Kemble, Leigh Hunt found them self-conscious, artificial, over-stately and utterly unmilitary. Hunt also objected to Macready's manner of delivery and the sudden alterations of tone and Volume:

He is also apt to be too sudden and theatrical in his contrasts, from a loud utterance to a low one (106) -

one of the first signs of that distressing descent from elevation to naturalness which was to be characteristic of so much of Macready's subsequent work. On balance, Hunt felt that the young actor had not done justice to the complexity and variety of the part, and rather patronisingly remarked that

In Coriolanus he rather gives additional proof that he deserves to have good parts allotted to him in general, than exhibits anything particularly characteristic of the part. (107)

The critic of Blackwood's Magazine went further than this and found that there was an air of plagiarism in Coriolanus' attack on the Tribunes when he is banished and in his quarrel with Aufidius:

This first was a facsimile of Mr. Kemble's voice and manner in the same part. So much so, indeed, that the resemblance actually startled us. The latter part of the last scene was performed exactly in the manner of Mr. Kean. (108)

Macready and his managers appear to have been more influenced by the luke-warmness of the dramatic critics than by the exuberant enthusiasm of the audiences, for this production survived for only two performances at Covent Garden (29 November and 6th December 1819) and Macready did not return to the role for four and a half years.

However, Macready's courage in being the first actor to attempt to break the Kemble "spell" on Coriolanus in London did not go unnoticed by the man who was now undisputedly the leading English Shakespearean actor - Edmund Kean. In 1820, Kean was playing the major roles at Covent Garden under the management of Elliston, and was delighting playgoers by his full blooded romanticism which formed such a fiery contrast with the aloof classicism of Kemble. Elliston's policy - revolutionary in its

day - was to present Shakespeare's plays untrammelled by addition and adaptation, and he determined that Kean should appear in a production of Coriolanus which relied on an entirely Shakespearean text - the first such production since Garrick's venture in 1754. Elliston realised that Coriolanus was rather too long to be presented in its entirety (along with the obligatory curtain-raiser), but added

though we cannot bring upon the stage all that the great poet has written, there yet appears no just cause for interpolating his text with the works of others. Any alteration but that of omission seems a sin against the majesty of our poet. (109)

This would be an unexceptionable aim in the twentieth century but audiences in 1820 had grown accustomed to adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in the theatre and there was some feeling against the reinstatement of a more accurate text, so that, while The Times admitted that Elliston's endeavour was laudable in theory,

it does not follow that such a restoration would be at all times judicious ... There are many reasons why into almost every play of Shakespeare it has been thought fit to introduce alterations, but the principal is the absolute necessity of studying stage effect. (110)

After the swiftly-moving inevitability of Kemble's simplified and reorganised version, the greater complexity of the Shakespearean text seemed to lead to a loss of dramatic power and The Literary Gazette decided that "the old readings and arrangements ... are not effective upon the whole." (111)

This may be philistinism, but it is also an impressive tribute to the stage effectiveness of Kemble's text and to the affectionate memories which were still evoked by his Coriolanus two and a half years after his retirement. More striking still is the series of glowing tributes to Kemble which were prompted by Kean's performance, and which

illustrate how impossible was his task in attempting so soon to follow in Kemble's steps. The Lady's Magazine, for example, dedicated a long paragraph to an enumeration of the qualities of Kemble's interpretation - his "just discrimination ... <sup>x</sup>equisite knowledge of the human passions ... grand and imposing dignity ... measured mode of acting ... correct declamation and noble deportment" - and, having asserted that "To have seen Mr. Kemble play Coriolanus was an event in every man's life", further undermined Kean's attempt by stating that the public "had identified the character with Mr. Kemble; there was but one conception, and one way of executing it." (112)

The evidence would certainly appear to suggest that, in spite of his many talents, Kean's appearance and style of acting were basically unsuited to the part of Caius Marcius, for he was not cast in the Roman mould which was now indissolubly associated with it. He possessed a finely expressive face and was able to deliver piercing glances from his eyes, but he had an ugly mouth and tended to project his nether lip ungracefully. H. Crabb Robinson had complained of him in 1814 that

his most flagrant defect is the want of dignity ... I think he will never be qualified for heroic parts. He wants a commanding figure, (113)

and The Literary Gazette found similar fault with his first and only attempt at Coriolanus:

There was no dignity in his scolding, no superiority in his reproofs, no mind in his rage, and no conflict with pride in his humanity ... Mr. Kean has done most unwisely in attempting Coriolanus. (114)

If possible, Blackwood's Magazine was even blunter in its assessment:

Mr. Kean has played Coriolanus, and he played it very badly ... Mr. Kean can no more represent Coriolanus than he can Apollo. Nature has forbidden him.... Mr. Kean is exactly the last person in the world to play Coriolanus; and, accordingly, his performance



EDMUND KEAN AS CORIOLANUS 1820

was a total failure ... He was hot where he should have been cold - vehement where he should have been calm - angry where he should have been contemptuous - passionate where he should have been proud ... Mr. Kean knew that he could not play Coriolanus; so he played something else, (115)

while Hazlitt complained that his proud retort, "I banish you",

displayed only "virulence of execration and rage of impotent despair".(116)

Although this is partially corroborated by Genest's comment on Kean's small stature:

Kean ought not to have attempted Coriolanus - his figure totally disqualified him for the part, (117)

these antagonistic comments were, in fact, less than fair. The critics' assessment of the role had been conditioned by Kemble's Coriolanus, and they seem to have been expecting a replica of this approach; consequently they experienced disappointment when Kean adopted an original line of approach which was much more rapid and vehement in manner than Kemble's deliberate majesty. Kean was introducing a new style of declamation which was more natural but less flowing than that of Kemble, and his distinct separation of words and syllables seems to have upset some of the critics, while - by contrast with the controlled scorn of Kemble - his bursts of passion were seen as mere tetchiness. The portrait of Kean as Coriolanus shows that he was well aware of his great predecessor, for he has placed himself in an identical attitude to that of Kemble, but the total effect of the picture is very different: the brow is higher, the gaze less soulful but more intense, the cheeks thinner and more ascetic; he is, perhaps, a more credible man of action than Kemble, but it must be agreed that much of the dignity and aloofness have been sacrificed. Significantly, when Kean came to the final two acts of the play he was able to make his effects much more successfully.



This was because Kemble had departed furthest from Shakespeare in this part of the play and therefore Kean, who used an authentic text, no longer suffered from such direct comparison. The critics felt that his true talent began to emerge in these final sections and The Lady's Magazine claimed that here

he evinced extraordinary genius. Indeed, from the commencement of the third act to the conclusion, his acting was of the very highest kind. (118)

Kean was also hampered by inadequate support in the other roles: Mrs. Glover's Volumnia was far from stern, being "addicted to whining and tears", (119) and Mr. Menley's Aufidius

must certainly have been formed upon some extraordinary misconception. He delivered those passages that fell to him with a most melancholy tone, as if his crested pride was quite fallen. (120)

Indeed, the only aspect of the production which won unqualified praise was the lavish scenery, with new scenes, dresses and decorations, which included four different views of Rome, the whole thing being "got up with considerable magnificence". (121)

These four performances in early 1820 were to be Kean's only attempt at the role of Caius Marcius, and it is to be regretted that they fell so completely under the shadow of Kemble. Certainly, Kean was far from the ideal Coriolanus in physique or temperament, but audiences less loyal to Kemble's conception of the part might have found much to commend in its greater naturalness and freedom.

Kean's failure appears to have deterred other actors from attempting to dispel the shade of Kemble, for in the next ten years there were only two London productions of Coriolanus. The first was at Covent Garden in December 1820 when the young Vandenhof travelled from Liverpool

in an attempt to storm the capital with his talents: he failed, his two performances in Coriolanus being ignored by the press, and disconsolately returned to the provinces for another decade. The second was when Macready returned to the play for two performances at Drury Lane in June 1824. Presumably, his interpretation was similar to that of <sup>his</sup> 1819 appearances and it does not appear to have aroused much enthusiasm; at all events, he retired from the role for a further seven years, during which interim no other actor had the temerity to attempt to rival Kemble's most lauded interpretation. During the last eleven years of Kemble's stage career, there had been more than fifty London performances of Coriolanus, and there would almost certainly have been more had it not been for the burning down of Covent Garden theatre. During the fourteen years after his retirement, the play received only ten London performances, so that it is fair to say that rarely has a play been so completely identified with one actor. Even his death, in 1823, did not break the spell, and as late as 1831 he was still sufficiently remembered for John Galt to say of his Caius Marcius

Had he only acted in that character he would have been deemed the very greatest male actor ever seen. (122)  
The year of Galt's tribute also saw the return of Macready to the same role. By 1831, he was the acknowledged king of tragedy on the London stage and was preparing himself with meticulous care for leading parts in Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean plays. Macready made an intellectual approach to his acting, carefully studying the text and the literary critics before embarking upon a characterisation, and striving always to achieve a naturalness of technique. Since his earlier modest success in Coriolanus, he had gained his greatest laurels in Macbeth, and it was not until May 1831 that he chose to return to the

Roman play. Regrettably, The Times did not review Macready's two appearances (on 27 May and 17 June 1831) and the actor's Reminiscences contain no reference to what was perhaps an unremarkable production, whose main significance lies in the fact that it appears to have rekindled Macready's interest in the play, for two years later he determined to mount a new production. As usual, he made careful preparation throughout the period of rehearsal, and during the ten days before the opening night he tried to ensure that he was fully at home in his role and that the other members of the company were adequately rehearsed. On 5 December 1833 he studied the play: on 13 December he rehearsed all day with the full company, but on his return to this task the following day he discovered that the production was

In so disgraceful a state that it was useless to bestow a word upon the mise en scene. (123)

He spent the entire day in efforts to improve this state of affairs, but had not time to try himself in the feeling of his own part, and merely succeeded in exhausting himself and in undermining his own confidence.

The first performance of this production took place at Drury Lane on 16 December 1833, and, on the preceding night, Macready attempted to bolster his confidence by reading Plutarch's account of the life of Coriolanus. His own view of the opening night - and Macready was always an introspective assessor of his own interpretations - was that he

acted languidly and ineffectively most of the first two acts of Coriolanus, but in the third act I assumed the character, and in the last blazed out. (124)

This slow and uncertain beginning was caused partially by the actor's

responsibilities as manager, which distracted his full attention from his own role, but more importantly by his lack of confidence in the play itself and by his consciousness that he would inevitably be compared with Kemble. His diaries indicate that he was anxious to make a success of this dominating role, but they also contain an expression of his fear that

the uninteresting nature of the story and the recollection of Kemble are objections too strong to be overcome. (125)

It was sixteen years since Kemble had retired from the stage, but his interpretation of Coriolanus still cast an inhibiting shadow and, although Macready felt that the audience had been excited by his power in the last act of the play, his confidence (never very great) seems to have been sapped by his lack of faith in the play and by his fear of Kemble's reputation, so that his second performance (on 20 December) failed to achieve even the moderate success of the opening night. Macready suffered from a perpetual insecurity which often led him to feel that his supporting actors were trying to undermine his efforts and to steal the limelight from him, so he blamed this deterioration on his Audifius:

Acted Coriolanus not as well as on Monday! ... gave too much voice to some speeches in the last scene, chiefly through that pleasant actor, Aufidius, purposely disconcerting me. (126)

Unhappy and irresolute about these two performances, which were not reviewed by The Times, Macready then abandoned his Coriolanus for four and a half years. His natural introspection - which aided him in his presentation of the soul-tormented Macbeth - was a positive handicap in approaching the character of Shakespeare's most resolute tragic hero, and the one least given to dissecting his mind and motives in soliloquy.

H. Crabb Robinson's description of Macready as "a man of rigid earnestness of character in his features and air" (127) perhaps indicates that one further reason for the comparative failure of this Coriolanus was that the actor had "too much of the milk of human kindness" to identify himself with the almost automaton-like Roman.

Macready's confidence did not increase, and in 1834 he went on tour in the provinces, appearing at Bristol, Exeter and Knaresborough among other places. Since Edmund Kean died in the same year, the London stage was almost simultaneously deprived of the services of its two leading tragedians, and it sank into a state of lethargy. At Covent Garden, Warde was now the leading actor, but - perhaps fearing comparison with the interpretations of Kean and Macready - he turned his back resolutely upon Shakespeare to concentrate upon such historical dramas as Gustavus the Third. Into this vacuum came Vandenhoff for his second onslaught on the stages of the capital: although originally destined for the Roman Catholic priesthood, he had been drawn to the stage by an inborn longing for tragedy and had first made his mark in Salisbury at the age of eighteen; then, after some years of popularity in Liverpool, he had brought his Coriolanus to London in 1820 only to be rebuffed by the critics and the public because he was not Kemble. Disheartened, he had returned to the provinces, and for many years before 1834 had constructed a considerable reputation for the intensity of his tragic performances in Manchester; his second attempt to attain national rather than provincial acclaim was thus backed by many years' experience. His basic technique was competent, but rather old-fashioned, and his

dignity linked him with Kemble's style of acting. Westland Marston, whose chief passion was the theatre, saw him as

the last prominent tragedian of the Kemble school, having a good deal of the stately carriage and bold outline of his predecessors, without, I suspect, quite the same tenacity of feeling and minuteness of suggestion. (128)

Although this more "classical" style of acting was the basic strength of Vandenhoff's technique, he was aware that such stateliness and aloofness was somewhat outmoded in 1834 and he therefore strove to update his performances by adding something of the romanticism of Kean and the naturalness of Macready in the hope that this would find favour in London. In a Summer season at the Haymarket in 1834, he therefore launched himself first of all into Macready's most famous role (Macbeth) quickly following this with one of Kean's triumphs (Richard III); to these, he added other roles particularly associated with these two popular tragedians - William Tell, Joseph Surface, and Adrastus in Ion; finally, he dared to provoke comparison with Kemble by appearing in Hamlet, The Stranger and Coriolanus.

The opening performance of his Coriolanus on 16 June 1834 gave conclusive proof that this play still belonged to Kemble. The Athenaeum, for example, devoted almost the whole of its review to reminiscences of Kemble as Caius Marcius, referring to his "indescribable grace and grandeur", asserting that "it was an appearance never to be effaced from the memories of those who saw it", and claiming that "Shakespeare must have had some kind of prophetic feeling, that John Kemble would one day exist, or he would never have written the part". (129)

Tributes to Kemble were so much to the fore that this review only glanced in its last two or three lines at the performance of Vandenhoff,

whose name was incorrectly printed and who received no more than cursory praise, since

Tried by such a standard, any body must have been found wanting - but, as far as we saw, Mr. Vandenhoff was judicious and sensible. He has had great experience, and seems to understand his business thoroughly. (130)

However, his attempts to imitate the deliberate and drawn-out style of delivery which had characterised Kemble's acting amounted only to

a slowness of utterance, almost a hesitation, which diminished the effect of many of the passages, (131)

and his derivative copying of Kemble's handling of the final scene with Aufidius clearly showed that he could not equal Kemble's delivery of the word "Boy!" or his gesture when referring to the eagle in the dovecote:

The two famous scenes with Aufidius were the worst of his efforts ... In the last, the violence of the exasperated soldier was not adequately supported by a noble bearing. He applied the epithet "measureless liar" to Aufidius in a noisy, scolding manner ... and in his reiteration of the epithet "boy", his rage at the indignity, and his supreme contempt for him who offered it, were not expressed with that grand indignation which is forced to stoop to notice insult. The action with which he accompanied his triumphant answer to this affront -

" ..... Like an eagle in a dovecote, I  
Fluttered your Voices (sic) ..."

was positively ludicrous. (132)

It was, indeed, the newcomer's lack of dignity which placed him at the greatest disadvantage by comparison with playgoers' memories of the stateliness of Kemble's Caius Marcius Coriolanus, for Vandenhoff's was a "broad" portrayal with "A want of gracefulness and ease in his gesticulation" (133) which caused him to lack the sense of inborn dignity and the imperious air which ought to belong to a proud patrician. Thus, in spite of such manifest advantages as a manly

presence, a striking and well-proportioned figure, a powerful voice, diligent study and wide experience, Vandenhoff's Coriolanus lacked any spark of genius or depth of subtlety, conveying only a military vigour and energy. His talents could compass the rough, honest hardiness of Caius Marcius but they were inadequate for a memorable portrayal of the deep-seated dignity and superciliousness which had lain at the foundation of Kemble's work.

His contempt for the people did not seem to be merely the irrepressible overflowing of his pride and superiority. His gestures of disgust, when he craved the voices of the plebeians, were a little too ostentatious. His sneers partook somewhat of peevish discontent; and this pervading expression of his face was too strongly marked. His rage when he was baited by the tribunes, was too shallow and noisy, and wanted the check of dignity. (134)

Apart from the Volumnia of Mrs. Sloman - who had appeared in the same role with Macready in the previous year - Vandenhoff received little support from the rest of the company, whose strength, according to The Times, did not lie in tragedy. He seems to have been afraid that the public would not respond warmly and amicably to his offering, and he therefore packed the house on the opening night with a clique of his friends who led loud and enthusiastic applause throughout the performance with such success that the management were persuaded to present four further performances between 18 June and 10 July. More importantly, Vandenhoff's venture at the Haymarket at last brought him the metropolitan recognition which he had been seeking since 1820, and he was engaged by the Covent Garden management for the Winter season of 1834-5.

The opening night of this season (2 October 1834) brought the first performance of Coriolanus at Covent Garden for fourteen years, but



Vandenhoff's interpretation had not grown any more subtle, graceful or dignified since his Summer season, and The Times noted that

its chief merit consisted in the intelligence and feeling he displayed, and in the energy with which he executed the difficult task he had to fulfill. Its faults were a want of gracefulness and dignity, the monotony of his declamation, and the awkwardness of his gesticulation, (135)

This workmanlike but uninspired Coriolanus received only one further repetition at Covent Garden (6 October) before being withdrawn from the season's repertoire.

Worse things were to follow in two and half years, when the Covent Garden manager, Osbaldiston, found himself in the desperate plight of being without a leading tragedian. In February 1837, Macready was on tour in Dublin, Vandenhoff had temporarily returned to his more familiar and responsive provincial pastures and the only remaining tragic actor - the second-rate Wallack - had disgraced himself by appearing at the Victoria Theatre on Wednesdays and Fridays without Osbaldiston's permission and had therefore been forbidden to appear at Covent Garden until the manager's wrath had been dispelled. In this unhappy situation, Osbaldiston engaged a visiting American actor, J.S. Hamblin, and dragged out the old war-horse, Coriolanus, onto the Covent Garden stage in late February and early March to suffer the greatest indignity it ever endured in London. He almost succeeded in turning Shakespeare's play into a burlesque in which Menenius was played as a farcical character, Cominius was inaudible, Aufidius ranted in the most ridiculous manner, Virgilia was a generation younger than Coriolanus and the minor characters were played on the level of recitations by schoolboys. The inveterate playgoer, Charles

Rice, recorded his unflattering impressions of Hamblin's Caius

Marcus, castigating both actor and manager for a ludicrous performance to a small and unappreciative audience:

Mr. Hamblin, a gentleman whom Mr. Osbaldiston has been foolish enough to engage as a fit person to succeed Mr. Vandenhoff, performed the part of Coriolanus last night to an exceedingly sparing audience, both as concerns number and applause; a compliment to which he proved himself fully entitled by his miserably tame personation of the fiery son of Mars! ... he has no idea of the part; and, had he the power of conceiving rightly, his physical strength is insufficient for a full development of the Roman warrior. (136)

Surprisingly, this feeble production survived for four performances, after which Wallack was once more permitted to appear at Covent Garden.

Drury Lane was likewise not without its difficulties in 1837 and these were also solved by an inadequate presentation of Coriolanus. The manager discovered that he possessed some heavy and expensive "Roman" scenery which had been designed for the now defunct Caractacus and which was in too good a condition to be destroyed; accordingly, Butler was cast as Caius Marcus for a performance on 23 November in which the scenery was utilised but in which Coriolanus was reduced to the level of a strutting and noisy braggart:

Caractacus has run his career; but, as the gilt is not worn off the gingerbread, Coriolanus is to drag the cumbrous rubbish on the stage again! and Mr. Butler struts and bellows through the part. (137)

Fortunately for the honour of the London stage, Macready returned from his tour and in 1838 embarked upon the most important and ambitious production of Coriolanus since the retirement of Kemble. In spite of his mediocre success with this play in previous years, the enterprise had long been in Macready's mind and he had been preparing a text for the play since at least 21 November 1837.

The opening announcement for the new season at Covent Garden, of which he had just assumed the management, stated his overall aims

The revival of the standard plays of Shakespeare in the genuine text of the Poet will be persevered in with increased activity, and without regard to expense in attaining the utmost fidelity of historic illustration. (138)

However, in spite of this bold claim, Macready's 1838 Coriolanus was not entirely Shakespearean and was far from being a full and scholarly text: in the first act, a large number of lines were excised and consolidated, and - less excusably - there was considerable alteration of the position of speeches and of sections of speeches. A similar technique was followed, to a lesser extent, in the remaining acts, but the least understandable weakness of Macready's adaptation was the retention of some twenty lines of Thomson's verse, scattered throughout half a dozen speeches and serving to connect the final scene with that in which Coriolanus yields to his mother's entreaties. Nevertheless, Macready's text was basically Shakespearean and, in restoring to their original importance the roles of Volumnia, Menenius and Aufidius, it reduced the glaring light which had been concentrated on Caius Marcius in Kemble's scissors-and-paste amalgamation; it also brought back the shape and general proportions of the play which Shakespeare had created.

If there was some exaggeration in Macready's reference to "the genuine text of the Poet", his other claim was magnificently justified. His desire for a sumptuous setting and a large number of supernumeraries was doubtless governed essentially by the prevailing theatrical fashion, but it may also have been an attempt to cloak what he felt was an uninteresting story with the gorgeous splendour of stage decoration. At all events, in February 1838 Macready worked hard on his preparations

of the scenery and costumes, pinning his faith in remarkably solid and substantial stage edifices of brick and wood which were supposed to emulate the Doric simplicity of early Rome. The first scene represented the city seen from the south-west side of the Tiber, which formed part of the foreground, and was described as follows in John Bull:

Beyond the river rises the steep height of the southern summit of the Capitoline hill, crowned with its Arx and temples; underneath, to the right, are seen the Cloaca Maxima, and the Temple of Vesta; whilst the remainder of the picture is occupied by the Palatine, crested with a few larger mansions, but with its shelving side, up which a rude street winds its way, densely crowded with the thatch-covered huts. (139)

The second scene was set in the atrium of Coriolanus' house which was

lighted through its compluvium and adorned by the tessellated floor, and shining brick-work of the period. The square-lintelled doors; the one candelabrum; and the extreme simplicity of the compartment are in excellent taste. (140)

The scene of the triumphal return to Rome from the battle at Corioli was graced with a massive gate "framed of alternate brick, and large blocks of perperino," (141) while another setting which attracted favourable comment was the Senate scene

held in the temple of Capitoline Jove, with its assembled fathers seated in triple rows on their benches of stone, the lighted altar in the midst, the Consul on his curule chair, backed by the bronze wolf to whom Rome owed her founders, with no other ornament than its simple columns and the vaulted heavens seen through its open roof, (142)

which Forster felt was "a reflection of the great heart of Rome". (143)

These solid and historically accurate buildings were viewed against unprecedentedly beautiful and convincing backcloths whose painters excelled in the representational style. Among others, there were two views of the Forum,

the one displaying the Tribunal and the warning statue of Marsyas in front, whilst high above tower the Arx, the Tarpeian rock, and the fane of Jupiter Capitolinus, which rises in Doric majesty and stretches with its hundred pillars, and massy porticos, half across the scene; the other showing the Forum lengthwise, looking towards the Temple of Vesta, which is seen through a centre arch, (144)

and a striking backcloth of the port of Antium with its pharos: the mole stretched into the sea beneath a star-covered sky, with the last streaks of twilight brightening the horizon, and roused "rich poetic feeling" (145) in the critic of John Bull.

In his determination to present a rich and sumptuous spectacle, Macready was no less exacting in his demands on costume designers and property-makers than he was on his scenic artists, and scholars were consulted on these matters so that even the senators' sandals worn by extras were historically accurate; far from being stagily tawdry, the trophies and standards were in keeping with the severe simplicity of early Rome, as were the tuba palmata of the triumpher and the eagle-crowned sceptres of the consuls. As for costume, "the robes and togas were full and ample vestments, classically cut" (146) so that

the figures clothed in the toga (which we never saw so classically worn on the stage before) look like animated statues. (147)

The stage was crowded with such figures, for the production called for the deployment of massive numbers of extras who were diligently coached by Macready with an impressive attention to detail, as was witnessed by J.R. Anderson, the Aufidius of this production, who was later to become the manager of Drury Lane:

The citizens of Rome were numerous enough to fill the stage completely - and every one of them was taught to act his part as if on him rested the success of the play. (148)

The results of this care with the crowd scenes were especially obvious at three points: the opening of the play, the return to Rome of the victorious Coriolanus, and the embassy of the ladies to the Volscian camp. As the curtain first rose, the audience could hear the roar of the mob off-stage gradually swelling until the angry citizens burst onto the stage armed with a variety of staves, mattocks, hatchets and pick-axes and proving themselves so formidable that, as Forster said, they

were now for the first time shown upon the stage, on a level with the withes in Macbeth, as agents of the tragic catastrophe. (149)

On Coriolanus's return from battle, the stage was filled with crowds of all social classes, a forest of laurel boughs clutched in their hands, the whole scene, according to Forster, being not "the gorgeous tinsel of an ill-imitated grandeur" but "the grandeur itself, the rudeness and simplicity, the glory and the truth, of Life." (150) The final scene was no less impressive, for the long files of the Volscian army literally filled the stage, the predominant red of their uniforms relieved by the golden shields and helmets of the chiefs, and by the steel which glittered on caps and spear-tips. This scene contained two memorable tableaux: first, the entry of Volumnia and Virgilia on their embassy, heading a long train of black-clothed ladies which threaded its way through the red masses of the Volscian army; secondly the final procession, in which the body of Coriolanus, laid on a bier which was formed from the spears and standards of the soldiers, was borne through the Volscian ranks, his shield and helmet on his chest as his only trophies, and the soldiers trailing their pikes in homage.

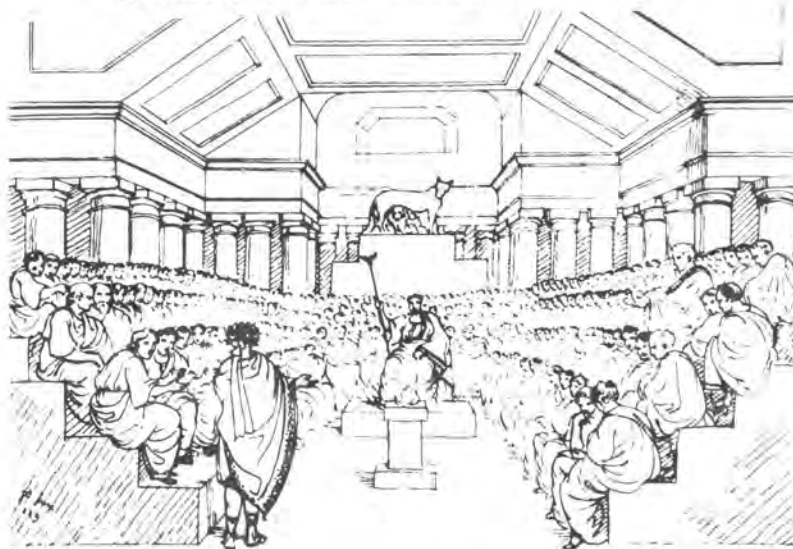
George Scharf's drawings of this production have preserved a vivid impression of the elaborateness, magnificence and realism of Macready's



■ Coriolanus enters Rome in triumph

MACREADY'S COVENT GARDEN PRODUCTION OF CORIOLANUS, 1838  
(drawings by George Scharf)

■ The Capitol : Coriolanus is made Consul by the Senate



Coriolanus. The sets for the triumphal entry to Rome and for the Senate House scene look massively solid, and there is an impression of a vast army of extras and of a fondness for spectacle and crowds, while the use of the correct toga and tunica of classical times is a convincing example of "the high classical fidelity sustained throughout." (151)

Such lavishness of presentation was in fashion at the time and drew the plaudits of theatregoers and dramatic critics alike, as can be deduced from the detailed attention given to the sets by John Bull.

The Spectator also hailed it as

without question the most perfect and impressive classic spectacle ever seen on the stage, (152)

John Forster assessed it as

the worthiest tribute to the genius and fame of Shakespeare that has yet been attempted on the English stage, (153)

and even Macready's steadfast enemy, Alfred Bunn of Drury Lane, reluctantly joined the chorus of tribute to the manner of presentation:

But disclaiming all personalities, and indulging in no predilections, I cannot deny, that Coriolanus was put upon the Covent Garden stage in a manner worthy of any theatre and any manager. (154)

At long last, after twenty-one years, it seemed as though the ghost of John Philip Kemble might finally be laid.

Alas for such hopes, however, for unfortunately the quality of the setting was not equalled by the calibre of the acting, and there was more than a suspicion that "the decorations were better than the substance."

(155) Almost without exception, the critics still harked back to Kemble's interpretation in their attempt to assess this new production,



and, whereas Forster found that the comparison was in Macready's favour, three powerful voices were raised in disagreement: The Spectator mentioned that Macready

lacks the stately figure and commanding air, which aided Kemble so powerfully in expressing the lofty dignity of the patrician hero, (156)

and The Athenaeum claimed that Macready's portrayal lacked the hauteur and frigid insolence which his great predecessor had brought to the role; it was

throughout a substitution of towering rage for dignified contempt; he gives way to sheer passion until it almost chokes his utterance; .... he placed himself on a level with the tribunes and the mob, as if he were quarrelling with his equals; whereas, Mr. Kemble delivered his taunting and contemptuous speeches to both, as if his feet were higher than their heads. (157)

Alfred Bunn also invoked the shade of Kemble, but went even further in his condemnation of the acting:

When the principal character in this noble play was represented by the late Mr. John Kemble, the people flocked in shoals to see it, notwithstanding it was unable to boast of any such excellent preparation. "Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, and he can never be disappointed!" Nothing was expected of Mr. Macready's personation of the noble Roman, and no disappointment was expressed at nothing being achieved. (158)

There was more than a germ of truth in his malevolence, for Macready was far from ideally suited to the role of Caius Marcius. Whereas Kemble had insisted on grandeur and dignity, Macready's talents caused him to portray Coriolanus with naturalness, roughness, soldierliness and ruggedness, and to sacrifice the overall dominance of the role as he sought with especial care for the minor details. Thus, although he generated a sense of warmth, and a genuine and passionate humanity in his relations with his mother and in his

temptestuous rivalry with Aufidius, his

minute style was altogether unfitted for the Roman patrician; his petty irritability had nothing in common with the aristocratic impatience and heroic daring of the patriot and the soldier. (159)

This view - expressed by The Illustrated London News at the time of Macready's retirement in 1851 - has been echoed by Bertram Joseph who feels that in his more heroic Shakespearean roles Macready merely

aimed generally at the heroic, with which he then mixed not too happily his celebrated snatches of "familiarity".... Macready's individualistic style was found too minute for Coriolanus. (160)

There were also other reasons for Macready's lack of success in his 1838 Coriolanus: he lacked the noble classical build which had stood Kemble in such good stead; his rough, fiery and passionate conception of the part was so radically different from Kemble's colder and more aristocratic interpretation that it was inevitably doomed to meet the hostility of critics who still saw all Roman parts in terms of the earlier actor; again, the return to something near the authentic text diverted from the central figure some of the bright limelight which Kemble's version had shone upon it; finally, Macready himself, whose faith in the interest of the plot was only minimal, was in a state of exhaustion with the strain of mounting a taxing production, so that his weariness and overwrought nerves took savage toll of his interpretation. It is not surprising, therefore, that Macready, the great Macbeth, Iago and Shylock of the period, should fail in a role so different from these, but he was nonetheless very depressed by the audience's lack of interest on the opening night (12 March) and confided to his diary:

The house was very indifferent; this was a blow ... I gave up all hope! ... Acted parts of Coriolanus well; parts, not to satisfy myself. (161)

He boldly persisted with this production in spite of the lack of public enthusiasm, and rather desperately strove to recoup the considerable sum of money which (to Alfred Bunn's malicious amusement) he had sunk in the abortive venture. The eight performances between 12 March and 26 April constituted by far the longest run of Coriolanus since the days of Kemble, but clearly the production was a success only from the scenic point of view.

When the next season (1838-9) opened at Covent Garden, Macready's confidence in his Coriolanus was insufficient for him to wish to appear in it; yet, his dilemma was that he possessed a fully rehearsed play together with a quantity of expensive scenery and costumes. His solution to the difficulty was to cast Vandenhoff in his place for the opening performance of the season on 24 September 1838 and for a succeeding appearance on 27 September. The critics noted that the production was already familiar to them, and once more paid tribute to the "succession of grand and animated tableaux, ... sculptural draperies, and picturesque groupings" (162) which had characterised its first appearance five months earlier. The handling of the crowd scenes was as thrilling and as expertly controlled as before, presenting a vivid picture of popular vacillation as the excited populace was whirled to and fro by the eloquence of the major characters:

The mob - the many-headed monster of as many minds - now furiously vociferous, and anon sneaking away with tail between its legs, and hang-dog look - was as good as on the first night. (163)

This effectively evoked background of shifting loyalties could not

disguise the continuing weakness of the production, and Vandenhoff presented a disappointing interpretation of Caius Marcius. Macready's performance had been luke-warm, but he was at least a great actor; Vandenhoff, on the other hand, possessed talents of a lower order, and lacked the skill or power to sustain so mighty and dominant a role so that, just as Macready had seemed rough and lacking in dignity by comparison with Kemble, so Vandenhoff had not a tithe of the passionate sincerity which Macready had brought to the part:

He is a robust, rude, Roman soldier, and his pride and scorn of the mob seem impertinences in a man of so homely a nature; in a word, he is plebeian, not patrician. (164)

He painted in primary colours, without depth or subtlety: The Sunbeam spoke of his "broad, dashing outline", (165) saying of his performance that

the excellence is in the outline. There is no delicacy in the filling-up; but a daring recklessness regarding it, confident that the breadth of the general figure will command admiration, and the vehemence of its action, procure applause. In a word, the style of Mr. Vandenhoff is strong but coarse; he has much power, but less refinement; many advantages of nature, but few of cultivation. (166)

One of his weaknesses was a heavy and rather unresponsive voice which prevented him from achieving all that he attempted:

Mr. Vandenhoff seems to manage his voice, which is naturally ponderous, with difficulty, and sometimes to be deluded altogether in its effects. Often we perceive what he designs, but feel that he fails in execution. (167)

His best moments were the scene in the gown of humility, and in his great speeches to Volumnia in the final act. He delivered "measureless liar" to Aufidius in the last scene with stupendous vehemence, but overall Vandenhoff's performance lacked refinement and tenderness, showing "inferior taste and elocution" (168) by comparison with

the interpretations of Macready and Kemble. The Times felt that he had been elevated above the level warranted by his capabilities:

His acting calls forth no particular comment; ... He is a useful actor in a company, but he is certainly not fitted to sustain the weight of an entire tragedy. (169)

In spite of the vigour of a spectacular production and the solid honesty of Vandenhoff and Mrs. Warner (his Volumnia), this Coriolanus merited no more than the two performances it received, but there was one other point of interest about it, for it included the first appearance of young Samuel Phelps in a Roman play in London. Phelps had made his London debut as Shylock in August of the previous year, and he was later to appear in all three Roman plays; on this occasion, however, he had to be content with the small role of Aufidius, in which he made very little impression for The Athenaeum did not mention his performance, The Spectator saw nothing of interest in his portrayal, and The Times stated that "the Aufidius of Phelps was little else than mouthing". (170) An inauspicious beginning - but Phelps was destined for greater things.

When Macready, in his capacity as manager, realised that Vandenhoff's Coriolanus was even less remarkable than his own, he withdrew the expensive production from the stage until 6 May of the following year, when he made a final attempt at the part himself. On this occasion, he completely exhausted himself by over-rehearsing during the day, and, in spite of a rest, was in a state of nervous tension when he arrived at the theatre for the performance. His already limited confidence in the merits of the play was still further undermined when he cast a glance at the audience on his first entry and "was quite struck, as by a shock, on seeing the pit not full at my entrance." (171) This

depressed the sensitive Macready, who gave a mediocre performance which left him so completely dissatisfied that he remained low-spirited even when the audience called for him at the end. This experience left its scar: shocked by the apathy with which his public greeted his interpretation, disappointed by the mild praise of the dramatic critics, financially embarrassed by the costliness of his spectacular production, and lacking any real enthusiasm for the play itself or its hero, Macready turned away for ever from Coriolanus and, to some extent, from Shakespeare, increasingly appearing thereafter in contemporary plays (often of startlingly little merit) and in a limited repertoire of his most successful Shakespearean roles, especially Macbeth. Thus, Coriolanus fell into a state of desuetude while England's greatest tragic actor of the day concerned himself with other projects. Apart from Charles Dillon's performance at the Theatre Royal, Marylebone, in 1843, nearly ten years were to elapse before the London Theatre saw another Coriolanus.

(iv)

Phelps and Others, and the Decline

During the same period in which Macready was restricting his Shakespearean appearances, Samuel Phelps, now manager of Sadler's Wells, was initiating a very different policy in which he attempted to present every play which Shakespeare had written, appearing in most of them himself. During his tenure of the theatre, from 1844 to 1862, Phelps was indeed able to mount productions of all but three of the plays in the Shakespeare canon, thereby establishing the hitherto despised

Sadler's Wells as a byword for care and excellence of staging. So successful were his endeavours that G.C.D. Odell has claimed that

This remarkable house, under the leadership of Samuel Phelps, probably did more to popularise Shakespeare in the course of eighteen years (1844-62) than did any other theatre in the whole domain of English theatrical history. (172)

The style of the man who achieved this was closer to Macready than to Kemble in that he tended to eschew the classical and heroic approach in favour of the more down to earth "familiarity" to which audiences had grown accustomed. Bertram Joseph describes Phelps as

an actor of intelligence with a fine technique of voice and body, but whose physical limitations prevented him from reaching the top flights of tragic acting. (173)

Like Macready, he brought a background of understanding and of careful study to each of his roles, among the most famous of which were his Macduff, Falstaff and Shylock. He strove to deliver his lines with intelligence, judgement and clarity, and - while his pace would probably sound too deliberate to twentieth century ears - his tone and diction possessed both variety and feeling. These qualities did not automatically suit him to the role of Coriolanus, and he waited four years before attempting it. He planned to open the 1848 season with his first appearance as Caius Marcius, and announced the initial performance for 25 September only to find that he had underestimated the complexity of the production which he then delayed for two nights so that he could organise additional rehearsals. Even so, some of the critics noticed a slight unfamiliarity with the text on the part of a few members of the cast, but they could hardly fail to find many things which were very familiar, for Phelps had quite openly based this "new" production of Coriolanus on Macready's 1838 performances, in which

he had played Aufidius. The text used in 1848 was the one which Macready had prepared for his performances ten years earlier, and several of the strokes of production were obviously indebted to the more famous actor: for example, the scene in the Roman Senate consisted of an august white-robed assembly, with the old wolf in the background, while the arrival of the women in the Volscian camp consisted of "the train of weeping matrons in solemn black threading their way through crowds of soldiers", (174) and the tutelar deities on the hearth of Aufidius' home in Antium seemed remarkably familiar.

Phelps enjoyed organising large numbers of extras and his exciting handling of the insurrection of the mob also owed much to Macready, as John Oxenford of The Times was quick to notice:

The principle of giving animation and meaning to the mob, which was adopted by Mr. Macready when he brought out Coriolanus with great splendour at Covent Garden, has been successfully applied by Mr. Phelps, who has formed an efficient corps of lively and bustling rabble. (175)

Efficient organisation was also evident in the attention which had been paid to details of costume and accessories, and in the excellence of the entirely new scenery, which included the by now obligatory views of Rome and Antium. The most significant similarity with Macready's production was unfortunately that the acting of the main role did less than justice to the accuracy and splendour of the mise en scene. Phelps was less introspective and insecure than Macready, but he was too gangling to aspire to dignity, and his voice could become monotonous at times; Westland Marston described him as

somewhat tall and spare, with an ample forehead. He managed to throw much expression into his face, in spite of the closeness of his eyes to each other, and their want of marked colour. His voice, though deep and powerful, wanted at times variety in serious delivery. (176)



These are not the attributes of a Caius Marcius and his limited stock of patrician dignity brought from The Spectator the damning comment that he

probably could not have selected in the whole Shakspearian range a character less adapted to his histrionic merits, than that of the Roman patrician. (177)

Phelps himself was intelligent enough to be aware of his own limitations and was unwontedly nervous throughout the whole of the first performance in which he managed to convey effectively the impetuousness of Caius Marcius, the struggle in the hero's mind during the begging of the "voices", and the pathos of his tragic end. Perhaps his two most successful moments were in the harangue, "I banish you", which possessed a crescendo of fierce sarcasm, and in the climax of the last scene in which he lashed himself into fury and - perhaps in imitation of Kemble's famous gesture at the same point - made a memorable effect as he came to the word "fluttered"

which came after a seemingly enforced pause, and with that lifted emphasis and natural break in his voice, remembered, I dare say, by all who heard him in his prime. Lifting his arm to its full height above his head, he shook his arm to and fro, as in the act of startling a flock of doves. (178)

Phelps' interpretation found one enthusiastic supporter, whose opinion was of particular distinction in the audience on the first night of the new production was Charles Kemble, the younger brother of John Philip, and the veteran Antony from many productions of Julius Caesar, whose praise, for the new Caius Marcius was glowingly recorded by Phelps' nephew

Never shall I forget the veteran's look on several occasions, when he turned round to me after all my uncle's great scenes, and said, "That was very fine, that was very fine". That from the brother of John Kemble I thought the greatest proof



SAMUEL PHELPS AS CORIOLANUS

1848 - 1860

I could have of Mr. Phelps's excellence in this character. (179)

Other critics, however, were less polite and there was general agreement that his lack of innate dignity and lordly deportment made Coriolanus one of his less happy assumptions; as Westland Marston said?

Much cannot be said for his Coriolanus. He was too impetuous and excitable for the man who stood in lofty disdain of his kind. (180)

These comments are corroborated by the drawing of Phelps' Coriolanus for the Reddington Toy Theatre "penny plain" series in which the whole stance is indicative of action rather than dignity: the legs are widespread, the body bent in preparation for an impetuous dash forward, the sword is in process of being drawn and everything is redolent of the Caius Marcius of the battle scenes. He appears in full dress as a Roman officer, with breast plate, battle skirt, impressive helmet, and a cloak which leaves the right arm free for vigorous sword-play and creates a strong feeling of military efficiency; to modern eyes, an incongruous note is struck by the very Victorian moustache, and by the tents in the background which seem Plantagenet rather than Roman, and the dominant impression is of action rather than of patrician authority and aloofness.

The hero appeared to have inherited his lack of dignity from his mother. The Volumnia of this production was Miss Glyn, who was to amaze the dramatic critics in the following year by her outstanding interpretation of Cleopatra, but in the role of the Roman matron in 1848 she lacked the mature and dignified bearing which Volumnia demands in representation, and she marred her performance by an excessive stiffness and unnaturalness of gesture which she utilised as a substitute for these qualities.

She has evidently been trained in the school of suiting the action to the word with extreme definition of gesture, and she is earnest and painstaking throughout. But her tuition still

too visibly adheres to her, and she has not acquired ease in her art. (181)

She did, however, attempt a slightly new interpretation by throwing more tenderness into Volumnia's maternal affection than audiences had grown to expect from Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neill and Mrs. Warner, and the public responded to her innovation and

forgave in her acting some imperfection for the sake of the obvious design and general merit. Passages of pathos and force were frequent, - little perhaps being wanting but more stage confidence. (182)

Phelps' manly impetuosity and Miss Glyn's depiction of a mother's tenderness appealed to an early Victorian audience, and this production enjoyed the longest run of any Coriolanus since Kemble's day, achieving a total of twelve performances between 27 September and 10 October 1848, so that to Phelps must go the honour of rescuing the play from the oblivion into which it had disappeared since Macready's unhappy efforts ten years before.

In 1850, he revived this production at Sadler's Wells for a further six performances but only The Athenaeum bothered to review this recapitulation of an earlier attempt, finding that Phelps'

personation of the hero has undergone little change; but Miss Glyn's Roman mother was marked by increased decision of outline and more perfect filling up of character and colour. Her last interview with Coriolanus was distinguished by pathetic delivery and statuesque dignity. (183)

Phelps' revival of Coriolanus would appear to have brought the play to the attention of other actors, for it was promptly followed by two new productions, the first of which was in December 1850 when Creswick played Caius Marcius on four occasions at the Surrey Theatre. He was an actor whose power of emotion and sustained strength in the

execution of his roles made him somewhat similar to a pale copy of Edmund Kean, and his Coriolanus was a well-mounted and respectably acted production at an unfashionable theatre. Most of the journals ignored it, but The Athenaeum, in reporting that the audience called Creswick before the curtain at the end of the third act, stated that this was "an honour well merited by the intelligence with which he had supported a difficult assumption." (184) The phrase "a difficult assumption" is significant, for it indicates that, already, the complexity of the role of Coriolanus was beginning to be a by-word; since Kemble's retirement, no actor had increased his stature by appearing as Caius Marcius, and it was becoming almost impossible to see it as a part in which to establish a reputation. This was equally obvious in the following month (January 1851) when Anderson, who was trying to make a name for himself as leading tragic actor at Drury Lane, chose Coriolanus as one of his vehicles for this task, appearing twice as Caius Marcius. He went to considerable trouble to present a memorable production so that it would be

in every way worthy of the author. The play was strongly cast, the scenery mostly new ... and the classical costumes entirely so. (186)

In his autobiography, Anderson speaks of the flattering success achieved by these performances, but this was perhaps no more than wishful thinking for the receipts amounted to less than the expenses, and none of the leading periodicals reviewed it; Anderson was, indeed, as far as ever from achieving his desired status as the acknowledged successor of Macready who was to retire the following year.

The comparative lack of success of Creswick and Anderson perhaps deterred their colleagues and rivals from attempting the role of Caius Marcius during the rest of the decade, and there were no more London performances of the play until Phelps was officially about to retire in 1860. By then, it was nearly eleven years since he had last essayed this role but, ignoring his advancing years and emboldened by the success of a single appearance in March 1860, Phelps appeared a further seven times as Coriolanus at Sadler's Wells in September of the same year, only to be ignored by the majority of the intelligent journals. For this production, he commissioned new scenery and threw himself into the part with vigour, showing fire and energy in his performances. However, he had not radically altered or deepened his initial conception of a role to which he was basically unsuited and, although he was applauded, his final appearances were far from remarkable, his most moving moment being the way in which he "let his wrath have way" (186) when he recoiled from the word "Traitor" in the third act. In thirteen years, he had played Caius Marcius twenty-six times, and had been the first actor since Kemble to make a determined effort to become identified with the play. In spite of the superficiality of his characterisation, Phelps deserves credit for preventing Coriolanus from sinking into total obscurity after Macready's 1838 production, though his efforts seem merely to have shown not only that he was himself an inadequate Caius Marcius but also that the London theatre-going public of the mid-nineteenth century found little to interest them in this particular play.

It was another seven years before any further attempt was made to

restore Coriolanus to favour, and the manner in which it was done is significant, for it illustrates the distrust which was now felt in the theatre for Shakespeare's play. In 1867, Loraine presented three performances at Sadler's Wells (187) of a play which was billed as Coriolanus but whose author was not mentioned. In fact, it seems possible that Loraine - in a last desperate effort to inject fresh stage life into this play - had returned to a text based on Kemble's adaptation, for it was described in The Athenaeum as being

encumbered with Thomson's interpolations, which were properly discarded in Mr. Macready's and Mr. Phelps's revivals. (188)

Like Kemble, Loraine was drawn to this play by the classical dignity of his physical appearance which admirably fitted him for the portrayal of patrician roles and which had already helped to bring him success in another Roman play - Virginus. The critics agreed that "in person and figure he looked the noble Roman" (189) and his interpretation was also aided by his powerful voice, which brought him comparative success in the scenes of declamation and in the quarrel with Aufidius, which Loraine had retained from Thomson. His resonant voice

commanded repeated plaudits, which were well deserved both by the skill and the vocal power displayed in the delivery of some of the finest and most vehement passages, (190)

but he was conspicuously unsuccessful in the quieter sections of the play and presented only a brawling and noisy hero who lacked true intensity, finer feelings or any semblance of real passion. Indeed, Loraine was so proud of his virile physique that he gave the impression of an athlete rather than of a patrician, and was so exclusively muscular and robust that he was

wanting in that nervous force needful for the full moral impression

which poetical dialogue is so well qualified to convey. We missed, therefore, the intensity of the egotism, and the petulance so characteristic of the hero. (191)

Lorraine's inadequate acting was not helped by a rather slovenly production and an insufficiently grand setting, so that this revival survived for only three performances. This damp-squib of a production in a mutilated text, closed the theatrical history of Coriolanus in England for twenty-six years "not with a bang but a whimper" and was, in fact, the last London performance of the play in the nineteenth century. Lorraine's failure, following those of Creswick and Anderson, and the slight success of Phelps and Macready, probably played its part in disenchanting actors and audiences with Coriolanus, though, in any case, the stern austerity of the play ran counter to the growing fondness for melodrama and sentimentally romantic love stories, placing its classical masculinity at a severe disadvantage in the London theatre of the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's. The literary critics of the Victorian period spent much of their discussion of the play in insisting upon the unattractiveness of the protagonist, and phrases such as "a haughty and passionate personal feeling, a superb egoism," (192) "his irascible and tornado disposition" (193) and "his scoundrelly exultation" (194) may well indicate a tendency for the later Victorian age to turn away from a hero who "in the first scene claims no sympathies ... we feel no love for him" (195) and whose pride is "rendered altogether inflammable and uncontrollable by passion." (196) Whatever the cause, for over a quarter of a century, Coriolanus was to receive no important professional performance in England.



(v)

Benson.

The man who was bold enough to rescue the play from oblivion was F.R. Benson, who provided Coriolanus with its last two productions of the nineteenth century, both at the recently established Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, and not destined to be seen in London until the turn of the century.

In the 1890's, Frank Benson gathered round him a company of competent but relatively unknown Shakespearean actors and actresses for the annual festival which he was enthusiastically organising at Stratford and which, though it was to be the forerunner of the Royal Shakespeare Company, was contemptuously ignored by almost all London dramatic critics for the first fifteen years or so of its existence. He planned to perform Coriolanus as the "birthday play" on 23 April 1893, but was prevented from this when he contracted influenza and was forced to cancel all performances that week, delaying his first appearance in the play until August of the same year, when he performed to a large audience in intense summer heat. Benson had mounted an elaborate production with scenery painted from designs by the fashionable artist, Alma Tadema, and with a large number of supernumeraries for the crowd scenes, so that

the play was staged on a scale of great completeness, the Roman armour, dresses, and appointments being on a lavish scale.(197)

The only leading London journal to review the production was The Theatre whose critic was surprised by the high standards of this provincial productions

Scenery and stage-management were of surprising elaborateness and excellence, the latter, indeed, recalled the best achievements at the Lyceum and Drury Lane. (198)

This critic's surprise at the level of Benson's handling of the crowds doubtless stemmed from the prevailing attitude in London towards theatrical events elsewhere. The London critics viewed with contempt, or, at best, with an aloofly superior condescension, Benson's efforts to establish Stratford as a centre for worthy productions of Shakespeare's plays, regarding him as a foolish amateur. For this reason, The Times, Punch, The Athenaeum, The Spectator, The Illustrated London News, and The Saturday Review contained no comments on Benson's work at Stratford in 1893. The metropolitan attitude to Benson was clearly exemplified some years later in Max Beerbohm's famous review of Benson's Henry V, in which the Bensonians were treated as a group of Oxonian amateur cricketers who had taken light-heartedly and unsuccessfully to the stage; Max's devastating wit is certainly amusing, but such comments as

The fielding was excellent, and so was the batting. Speech after speech was sent spinning across the boundary ... As a branch of University cricket, the whole performance was, indeed, beyond praise. But, as a form of acting, it was not impressive, (199)

indicate the prejudice against an educated actor, and did Benson more harm than the reviewer could ever have imagined or intended.

Benson possessed many talents which ought to have made his Coriolanus a memorable one: he was tall, strong and athletic, with a steel-knit frame; his features were fine, noble and handsome, with a definitely "Roman" cast; he had considerable presence, and conveyed without artifice the impression of a transparently honest and incorruptible personality; his forthright attack easily encompassed the idea of the inflexible and undeviating Coriolanus, and his fine voice

was an asset in passages of declamation. The Theatre believed that Benson had many of the attributes which had graced John Philip Kemble's Caius Marcius, and claimed that he was a "natural" for the role:

Given the stateliness of "John Philip", the graceful limbs, the studied poses, the sonorous utterance, and Coriolanus is already three parts played. Now Mr. Benson has all this and something more. There is a natural note of aristocratic exclusiveness in him ... and he acts the noble that he looks. (200)

With such an array of natural assets, Benson made a convincing Coriolanus on a fairly uncomplicated level and, although his cutting of the text gave him a heavy and exacting role \* so that he was on the stage the whole evening with the exception of two scenes \*, a local paper was able to remark that "his impersonation throughout was characterised by much dash and vigour," (201) especially in the final fight, in which he really seemed to relish getting his men to the ground. His method of approach was

to conceive the temperament of the character, and then allow its various attributes to crystallise around, and take from it their colour and direction, (202)

and the careful thought which lay behind the performance was evident to the critic of The Stratford Herald, who was much impressed by the polish of Benson's interpretation:

It was finished and of symmetrical proportions, and a masterful intelligence wrought it to a conclusion which must be pronounced highly successful. (203)

The greatest moments were the "fine intellectual incision" (204) of his defiance of the tribunes, and all his encounters with the Roman mob; the line "You common cry of curs" was "spoken with scathing bitterness and power" (205) and he brought down the curtain on the third act with the "trenchant incision" (206) which he poured into "There is a world

elsewhere!" He seems also to have excelled in all the speeches after his desertion to the Volscians, in which he conveyed both the loneliness and the destructive force of the protagonist. He followed Kemble's lead by turning the victorious procession in Rome into a magnificent sacrificial procession with prisoners and spoil, and towards the end of the play he made the fullest possible use of his resounding voice, so that one word in particular echoed and re-echoed as an expression of his patriotism:

Now he spoke as he had hardly done before, letting the trumpets ring ... He sat in gold, his eye red as 'twould burn Rome. And he gave the weight that it demands to this greatest monosyllable of them all. Rome shakes the world. Benson's "Ro-o-mme" kept the world rocking. (207)

This first Stratford production of Coriolanus appears to have been of high standard, and to have come closer to an ideal performance of the play than anything seen on the English stage since Kemble's retirement in 1817. London, however, remained essentially unaware of its existence and of Benson's intention, five years later, of presenting all three Roman plays in his 1898 season at Stratford. In January 1898, The Spectator demonstrated its ignorance of Benson's past achievement and of his immediate plans by making a plaintive plea for the resurrection of Coriolanus in the theatre:

We have only one more word to add. When will Mr. Tree or some other manager revive Coriolanus? That is a play as full of political action as Julius Caesar, and even more full of political criticism. (208)

The Spectator was not alone in its ignorance: not one major London periodical reviewed any of Benson's performances in the three Roman plays at Stratford in 1898. For his Coriolanus, Benson spent some time in ensuring that the dressing and mounting were correct in

detail, and he carefully chose the actors who were to play the twenty-two speaking parts, the Aufidius (Frank Rodney) and the Menenius (Lyll Swete) particularly distinguishing themselves. Benson himself seems to have repeated his successful interpretation of 1893, and the Birmingham Daily Post commented on his suitability for the role and on the merit of his achievement:

Of Mr. Benson's Coriolanus it is only necessary to say that he played it with all his wonted energy and skill, his capabilities for the part appeared in almost every line. (209)

The Birmingham Daily Gazette agreed that "Mr. Benson seems by nature designed for the haughty Roman patrician," (210) and The Stratford Herald spoke of his

symmetrical, commanding figure, a strong Roman head, an inveterate power of will, the unconscious poise and slow deliberateness of strength, and an impetuous spirit, (211)

which made him an ideal choice for a classical role. Not since the days of Kemble had an actor's physique so fitted him to play Caius Marcius.

Benson's interpretation emphasised ("with subtle intuition and affluent artistic felicity" (212)) the selfish love of glory which lies behind the patriotism of Coriolanus, and he "displayed much passionate intensity, touched with glittering scorn and pathetic bitterness" (213) throughout the play. His best scenes were those which portrayed his conflict with the plebeians and their tribunes, in which his acting

displayed histrionic genius which seemed to place him in the right and his enemies in the wrong. There was something in his presence, his voice, and his fine reserve that bore testimony to his splendid executive ability. The scenes between he (sic) and Brutus were marked by fire and animation which infused a life into the tragedy which closely rivetted the attention of the audience. (214)

Altogether, The Stratford Herald was convinced that this was the finest of Benson's three Roman interpretations in 1898; for the first time since 1817, Coriolanus had found an interpreter worthy of its qualities.

Our knowledge of this production must be based entirely on provincial papers, which might easily be accused of naive over-enthusiasm, but fortunately in 1901 Benson brought Coriolanus <sup>to London, in each of metropolitan</sup> recognition, and it is possible to gain a completer picture of his interpretation from the comments of the dramatic critics on that occasion. Like so many of his predecessors, he had carved out his own text which was entirely Shakespearean and which tried to include all the best poetry of the original; it was, however, considerably shortened and there was much rearrangement of the order of the scenes, with the intention of emphasising the directness and simplicity of the story. These alterations ran counter to the contemporary movement towards a purer text, but were blessed by The Times on the grounds that

Coriolanus is never likely to become a really popular play... Its dramatic interest is too scrappy for the great public to delight in it, as they delight in Hamlet, for the plot. The persons of the play offer but slight chances to actor-managers, seeking parts in which to electrify the world ... (There is an) absence of plot, absence of love story, scrappiness of situation. (215)

Benson's interpretation started with a humorous contempt for the plebeians, but his inordinate caste pride gradually turned this into a settled rage of indignation, thus displaying a development in the character of the protagonist, which - together with Benson's powerful delivery of his lines - made Caius Marcius a dominating, impressive and interesting character who began to conquer the initial apathy of the

audience. A key factor in rousing their sympathy and enthusiasm was the careful handling of the crowd scenes which Benson managed so expertly that the mob of citizens seemed to be acting spontaneously and with natural impulse.

It was really the crowd that last night worked a cold house up, first to warmth and then to enthusiasm. (216)

These comments refer to the 1901 London production, which lies outside the immediate scope of this study, but they probably convey a reasonably accurate impression of the 1898 Stratford performances of Coriolanus which were the last nineteenth century appearance of this play on the English stage. Benson's talents brought him closer than any other actor since 1817 to a successful recreation of the qualities of Kemble's Caius Marcius, though his straightforward approach threw little new light on the character or on the play, which, in itself, lacked the softer qualities and the love interest which in 1900 were regarded as indispensable to success in a costume play.

(vi)

#### Conclusion.

In 1900, as one hundred years before, Coriolanus was still a one - man play indissolubly associated with the name of John Philip Kemble and still prompting The Times to remark that "until some actor discovers the secret which inspired John Kemble, Coriolanus will not be often acted" (217) Actors of such varied talents and capabilities as Cooke, Young, Conway, Kean, Macready, Vandenhoff, Hamblin, Butler, Creswick, Phelps, Anderson and Loraine had all attempted to repeat Kemble's success, but not one of them had merited whole-hearted acclaim. This is partly explained by the fact that Kemble's appearance and

technique did in fact uniquely equip him for the role; part lay in the lack of enthusiasm with which most of these later actors approached a task which they tended to regard as a duty rather than as a pleasure; again, the relevance of the plot of Coriolanus to nineteenth century political events in England perhaps faded as memories of the French Revolution grew ever more dim and as successive parliamentary representation made English life more sympathetic to democratic ideas. Then, the growing taste for sentimentality and melodrama must have played a part in banishing from the stage one of the most markedly unsentimental and austere of Shakespeare's plays.

In fact, Coriolanus was not seen in London, in a recognisably Shakespearean text, between the retirement of Phelps in 1860 and Benson's attempt to storm the capital forty-one years later. A few weeks after Benson's production at The Comedy, Henry Irving, with the support of Ellen Terry, Alma Tadema's scenery and Alexander Mackenzie's music, strove to resuscitate Coriolanus in a condensed version at the Lyceum, but Caius Marcius lay outside Irving's highly individual range of characters, and the production detracted from his reputation rather than adding to it.

Only F.R. Benson's two Stratford productions seem to have come anywhere near to recapturing the excitement and dignity with which Kemble had invested the play, and it is particularly unfortunate that the London periodicals should have adopted so superior an attitude towards these ventures and left them so disappointingly undocumented. The nineteenth century stage had found little satisfaction in Coriolanus: the play was castigated for its lack of interest and was almost always



presented in an adapted form; actors were little drawn to it, and only Kemble had unqualified faith in its ability to thrill an audience. As spectacle, sentimentality and love interest became the popular themes of the later nineteenth century stage, so Coriolanus was doomed to be viewed with apathy and to fade into disregard. In the twentieth century, only Benson (before the First World War), Olivier (in 1938 at the Old Vic and in 1959 at Stratford) and Ian Richardson in the 1967 Stratford production have attained any real measure of success in a play which will for ever be inextricably linked with its successful interpretation by John Philip Kemble.

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CHAPTER FOUR

"JULIUS CAESAR"

Performances before 1800.

Kenble's "Julius Caesar".

Performances of "Julius Caesar" 1817-1836

The Age of Macready 1836-1851

Phelps - The Only Remaining "Roman" Actor

"Julius Caesar" in Theatrical Oblivion 1865-1892

Benson and Tearle

Tree's "Julius Caesar" of 1898 and 1900

Conclusion

CHAPTER FOUR

"JULIUS CAESAR"

(i)

Performances before 1800

From its earliest days in the theatre, Julius Caesar swiftly established itself as a favourite with audiences, growing to be a reliable "stock" play in the repertoire of many stage companies. Its incisive narrative line, its three strongly contrasted leading characters, and its skilful blend of history and tragedy brought immediate success to the production at the Globe in 1599 which was admired by the Swiss visitor Thomas Platter. (1) C.B. Young also draws attention to its popularity at Court before the Commonwealth period, and to its inclusion in various lists of stock plays after the Restoration. From 1684 onwards, Betterton's Brutus won him many laurels, especially for his steady control of emotion in the famous quarrel scene with Cassius, and he seems to have established the tradition that the "star" role was that of Brutus.

Two great actors continued this tradition during the first half of the eighteenth century, considerable rivalry being generated by the performances of Booth and Quin as Brutus. Booth was first on the scene: having played Caesar at the Queen's in 1707, he graduated to Brutus at Drury Lane in 1709 and became so firmly established in this role that he played it quite definitely on 23 occasions between 1709 and 1728; absence of cast lists for other performances makes dogmatism impossible, but it seems highly likely that the actual number of Booth's performances as Brutus in these years at Drury Lane was 48. (2)

Meanwhile, his rival, Quin, having played Antony early in 1718,



progressed to the role of Brutus which he undertook 18 times at Lincoln's Inn Fields between 1718 and 1729, 34 times at Drury Lane between 1734 and 1741 and 24 times at Covent Garden between 1742 and 1751 - a grand total of 76 performances as Brutus in 33 years. (3)

The achievement of Quin and Booth helped to establish Julius Caesar as ninth in order of popularity of Shakespeare's plays in the first half of the eighteenth century, (4) and the influence of these performances by two great actors may also have spilled over into the world of scholarship. While Booth and Quin were bringing Julius Caesar to life on the London stage, a series of editors of varying degrees of scholarship, was gradually establishing the canon of Shakespeare's work, and arriving at a reliable text of each of the plays. Capell, whose edition of Shakespeare was published in 1767, lived through the period of Quin's appearances as Brutus, was a friend of Garrick and was thoroughly in touch with the theatre of the period. He therefore added to his considerable scholarship a lively awareness of the dramatic potentialities of the plays and was eager to assist the reader of Shakespeare to visualise the stage action of the plays by

marking the place of action, both general and particular; supplying scenical directions, and due regulating of exits and entrances. (5)

Capell felt that the Roman plays, in particular, had gained from his additions, and claimed that light had been thrown especially on

the battle scenes throughout; Caesar's passage to the senate-house, and subsequent assassination; Antony's death; the surprisal and death of Cleopatra; that of Titus Andronicus; and a multitude of others. (6)

A brief examination of the way in which various editors tackled the initial entry of Caesar in I i, and the assassination of Caesar, will show

the extent of Capell's additions, and the degree to which he was followed by later editors. Perhaps he was influenced in his additions by the performances of Quin; certainly, Capell's pioneer work did not go disregarded by Kemble when he came to compose his own adaptation of Julius Caesar in 1812.

Pope's 1723 edition of Shakespeare presents the first appearance of Caesar with the following rather bare stage directions:

Enter Caesar, Antony for the Course, Calphurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, a Soothsayer; after them Murellus and Flavius. (7)

In spite of his bitter rivalry with Pope, Theobald used exactly the same form of stage direction in the second edition of his Shakespeare (1740), except that he omitted any reference to the Tribunes. (8)

Hammer's eccentric edition of 1745 was identical with Theobald's except that, on grounds of historical accuracy, Decius became Decimus. (9)

This, then, was the traditional direction until Capell came on the scene.

Capell's 1767 stage direction attempts to emphasise the dramatic and spectacular value of the entry: he insists on the music which accompanies the procession, and draws attention to the size of the crowd, with the Soothsayer in its midst, thus helping a more vivid mental realisation of the scene

SCENE II. The Same. A publick place. Enter, in solemn Procession, with Musick, & c CAESAR: ANTONY, for the Course; CALPHURNIA, Portia; Decius, Cicero, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CASCA, & c. a great Crowd following; Soothsayer in the Crowd. (10)

By 1790, the great editor, Malone, had accepted the value of Capell's additions, and his version ran:

The Same. A publick Place. Enter, in procession, with musick, CAESAR; ANTONY, for the course; CALPHURNIA, PORTIA, DECIUS, CICERO, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, and CASCA: a great Crowd following; among them a Soothsayer, (11)

thus retaining the ideas - of a procession (no longer "solemn"), of music, of a great crowd, and of the positioning of the Soothsayer among the crowd - which had first found expression in Capell's edition. Malone's edition appears to have been more influential than Capell's, for whereas the second edition of Johnson and Steevens' Shakespeare of 1778 (eleven years after Capell) reverted to a bare outline:

The same. Enter Caesar; Antony, for the course; Calphurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, A Soothsayer, & c.  
(12)

their fourth edition of 1793 was phrased exactly in the words of Malone's edition of three years previously. (13) In 1812, Kemble was to follow the lead of Capell at this point, as will later be shown.

The moment of the assassination shows that Capell gave a similar impetus to the visualisation of the scene as it might be presented on stage. Pope, (14) Theobald, (15) and Hanmer (16) all supplied the same cryptic stage direction, "They stage Caesar", leaving any further development of the scene entirely to the imagination of the reader, producer or actors. Capell, on the other hand, took immense trouble to bring the scene clearly and vividly to life, and to mark its moments of climax: his stage directions during Caesar's journey to the Senate House give every indication of a spectacular scene on stage, for the Senate are gathered in force in the Capitol, and, after the flourish to herald the arrival of Caesar, there is the opportunity for an impressive and stately procession:

III i. The Same. The Capitol: Senate sitting. In the Entrance, and amid a Throng of People, Artemidorus, and the Soothsayer. Flourish, and Enter Caesar, attended; Brutus, Cassius, Casca, Cinna, Decius, Metellus, and Trebonius, Popilius, Lepidus, Antony, and Others. (17)

In III i, at line 13, Capell emphasised for the reader the two moments of immediate danger to the conspirators' cause by adding

Artemidorus is push'd back. Caesar, and the rest, enter the Senate: the Senate rises. Popilius presses forward to speak to Caesar; and passing Cassius says: ("I wish today ...") (18)

He also clarified the drawing aside of Antony:

Exeunt Antony and Trebonius, conversing. Caesar takes his seat; the Senate, theirs: and Metellus advances towards Caesar, (19)

and the conspirators' preparation for the attack:

The Conspirators range themselves about Caesar; Casca, on the right hand of his Chair, behind. (20)

As Casca strikes the first blow, Capell supplied the reader (and the actor playing Caesar) with full details of the ensuing moments:

Stabbing him in the Neck. Caesar rises, catches at the Dagger, and struggles with him: defends himself, for a time, against him, and against the other Conspirators; but, stabb'd by Brutus, CAES: Et tu, Brute? - Then fall Caesar. (He submits; muffles up his Face in his Mantle; falls, and dies. Senate in Confusion. (21)

All Capell's additions can be justified from the text, and from a sensitive recreation of the scene in the imagination; he here showed a lively sense of the theatrical potency of the assassination scene, and happily united scholarship with dramatic insight. Again, the second edition of Johnson and Steevens retained the conventional "They stab Caesar", (22) but Malone took cognisance of Capell's efforts, though shortening them considerably:

Casca stabs Caesar in the neck. Caesar catches hold of his arm. He is then stabb'd by several other conspirators, and at last by Marcus Brutus; (23)

he was followed - verbatim - by the fourth edition of Johnson and Steevens, (24) and also by Kemble, who prefaced the directions with one additional sentence:

Metellus lays hold on Caesar's robe. (25)

Capell's detailed stage directions not only help a reader to visualise the scene of the assassination, but also are of assistance in the theatre; too often, an incomplete visualisation of the death of Caesar, and imperfect planning of actors' positions and moves, can lead to confusion on the stage. Perhaps Capell had witnessed the sort of production described by Thomas Davies, and was anxious to play his part in preventing the recurrence of such an undignified scramble

From the great number of persons on the stage during the representation of Caesar's murder, much difficulty in the action may arise, unless great accuracy is observed in the direction of those who are employed. The several conspirators, pressing with eagerness to have a share in stabbing the victim, must be so regulated as to prevent confusion. (26)

Admirers of the "order" of the ancient classical age naturally rejected the possibility that the assassination of Caesar might actually have been a confused and undignified affair, and, as will appear later, Kemble's reverence for Roman dignity led him into an over-formalised presentation of the death of Caesar which may well have taken as its starting-point the stage directions of Malone, which in themselves owed so much to Capell. The great editor's work was thus of enormous significance in a production which was first mounted forty-five years after the publication of his edition of Shakespeare.

However, if the worlds of the actor and the scholar seem to have drawn close together in the work of Capell, the eighteenth-century theatre took little cognisance of the scholars' work in establishing a genuinely Shakespearean text. Nearly all the really popular Shakespearean plays were presented to the theatre-going public in adapted versions, so that the period grew accustomed to Davenant's Macbeth, Cibber's Richard III,

Dryden, Davenant and Shadwell's Tempest, and Tate's King Lear.

Consequently, it is no more than characteristic of the period that Julius Caesar appeared on stage in various guises. In 1677, Sir Charles Sedley altered and revised the play; in 1684, an anonymous adaptation established the precedent of allocating Cicero's lines to Trebonius, and Marullus' speeches to Casca. At the start of the eighteenth century, there was a further version of the play - attributed to Davenant and Dryden, but unlikely to be theirs - in which Casca added to his own part the lines of Marullus and Titinius, the parts of the Soothsayer and Artemidorus were amalgamated, and the Poet, who interrupts the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, was omitted. In addition to this reduction in the number of dramatis personae, the "improver" added four lines of his own which provided Brutus with a rousing exit line after the Ghost's appearance to him in the tent:

Sure they have rais'd some Devil to their aid,  
And think to frighten Brutus with a shade.  
But e're the night closes this fatal Day,  
I'll send more ghosts this visit to repay.

This version of 1719 - which also included a second appearance of the Ghost in the battle scenes - was that which became a favourite stock play in the early eighteenth century, with Booth as Brutus and Wilks as Antony, and it firmly established the tradition of a reorganisation and amalgamation of the multifarious minor characters of Julius Caesar.

The fourth of these early adaptations was brought out in 1722 by the Duke of Buckingham, and was based upon only the first three acts of Shakespeare's play. Buckingham changed many individual lines and purged a good deal of the authentic text: on the grounds of undue lightheartedness

(and anticipating Dr. Johnson's dislike of Shakespeare's "quibbles"), he excised the slight levity of the crowd of artisans in the opening scene, and Antony's apparent pun in the funeral oration:

If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answered it.

Buckingham seems to have taken an austere view of classical dignity and decorum and he was "most anxious to polish the 'rude lines' and 'wood-notes wild' of the gentle Shakspeare", (27) imposing upon the play the neo-classical ideals of politeness and gentlemanliness to such an extent that he sapped the quality and vigour of the original text.

In the same year, Buckingham published another play, The Death of Marcus Brutus, which drew upon the final two acts of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and in which - to expand the action to the desired five acts - he was obliged to introduce such new characters as Junia (the wife of Cassius), Dolabella and Varius.

However, the version of Julius Caesar which was most frequently performed in the second half of the eighteenth century was that which was eventually printed by Bell in 1773. This version is similar to the 1719 adaptation which has already been mentioned, and it included Brutus' extra four lines on the Ghost and an addition to his death speech (also in the 1719 version) to underline the selfless patriotism of Brutus:

Scorning to view his country's wrongs,  
Thus Brutus always strikes for liberty.  
Poor slavish Rome! Now farewell.

Bell's version also continued the tradition by which Casca absorbed the speeches of Marullus and Titinius, and it further reduced the *dramatis personae* by omitting the entry of Caius Ligarius in II i, and

by dispensing with the scene in which the poet Cinna is challenged by the inflamed mob; Decius Brutus also took some of the speeches of Flavius and Trebonius.

This was the version of Julius Caesar which was used in the second half of the eighteenth century and which provided John Philip Kemble with the basis of his 1812 adaptation of the play; it remains recognisably Shakespearean and maintains the clarity, logical construction and forward-flowing movement of events which characterise Shakespeare's play, which make it dramatically effective, and which appealed to eighteenth century "reason"; the bulk of the alterations are merely practical measures designed to reduce the large, confusing and expensive number of speaking parts.

Although Bell's adaptation was less savage in its alterations than were versions of some other Shakespearean plays, it did not find the popularity with which Quin and Booth had invested Julius Caesar. Garrick's unwillingness to risk comparison with the Brutus of Quin meant that Julius Caesar was not seen at Drury Lane from 1747 to 1780. Just as Kemble's superb achievement in Coriolanus effectively dissuaded his rivals and successors from attempting to emulate him, so the dominance of Booth and Quin as Brutus down to 1751 helps to explain the play's decline in popularity after they had both retired from the stage. From 1700 to Quin's last appearance in 1751, Julius Caesar was seen in London on 166 occasions; between 1752 and 1800, there were only 20 performances, Brutus being attempted by Sparks (6 times), Sheridan (2), Walker (5), Bensley (1) and Palmer (6).

The leading actor, "Gentleman" Smith, was associated with twelve of





SMITH AS MARK ANTONY IN "JULIUS CAESAR"

1773 AND 1780

these performances. He played Cassius at Covent Garden five times in 1766 and 1767, but in 1773 he switched to the role of Antony for a single performance, with Bensley as Brutus; Smith also played Antony in the 1780 Drury Lane production which ran for six performances, and which appears to have been the most successful Julius Caesar in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Smith had been trained in Garrick's methods, and was a famous Charles Surface; he appears to have used the unvaried style of delivery and tone of voice which had become predominant on the English stage of the period; Boaden described both the clarity and the monotony of Smith's utterances:

One uniform cadence seemed in him able to convey the most striking opposites of sentiment and character. He spoke the obvious meaning of the text, and satisfied common auditors; but this he did in one unvaried song, in a tone of measured power. (28)

Smith was, indeed, more remarkable for his gentleness, his wide experience and his prodigious memory than for the calibre of his tragic interpretations. The illustration of him as Antony shows him declaiming to the people, with hands outstretched in eloquent appeal, his high-waisted costume à la Romaine, with short sleeves and a pleated skirt, emphasising a rather protuberant stomach; he appears to be wearing a short cloak, and his sword hangs at his side. It is perhaps just possible to detect a little fire in his eye, while the untidiness of his hair indicates his haste and emotion without greatly detracting from a thin-featured face of some dignity; one can imagine such an Antony quelling and then rousing a fickle mob, but unfortunately there seems to have been a widespread silence about these early productions of Julius Caesar, and



BENSLEY AS MARK ANTONY IN "JULIUS CAESAR"

1765

even The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre contains no details of the earlier ones.

This is a pity since the Brutus of the 1773 production was Bensley, who would seem to have been admirably suited to the part: he had a rather stiff gait which lent to this interpretation a certain gravity and dignity, and he totally lacked affectation. His power of conveying genuine sincerity was most marked in his performances as Eustace de St. Pierre in Colman's Surrender of Calais, and would also have been a valuable attribute of his Brutus, while his tremendous voice, which was likened to a trumpet call, would have been an invigorating influence in the Forum scene and in the quarrel with Cassius. In the 1780 production, Bensley changed to the role of Cassius for four of the six performances, while Palmer played Brutus.

Palmer - known as "plausible Jack" - seems to have been a much less suitable choice for Brutus than Bensley. His career had started slowly, for Garrick had refused to employ him, and Foote had permitted him to appear only in comedy; nevertheless, in spite of a carelessness which frequently caused him to appear on the stage without knowing his lines, he became a competent general actor, being especially praised for his Joseph Surface, Face, Sir Toby Belch, Captain Absolute and Volpone. A strange choice, however, to play Brutus to the Cassius of Bensley and the Antony of Smith!

The only performance of Julius Caesar between 1766 and 1780 in which Smith did not participate was mounted at the Haymarket Theatre on 11 September 1769, with Thomas Sheridan - the adapter of Coriolanus - as Brutus; the major role of Antony was entrusted to an absolute tyro called Miller, in his very first appearance on the stage. The illustration



THOMAS SHERIDAN AS BRUTUS

1769

of Sheridan as Brutus shows a distinctly unaristocratic and bull-necked figure, attempting to look scoufully stoical, but failing to convey much dignity or intelligence. He too wears the eighteenth century stage costume à la Romaine, and appears excessively encumbered by a flowing cloak which trails on the ground behind him and hampers his gesticulation by tying his right arm to his chest, leaving only the hand free to move expressively. Beneath the cloak, Sheridan wears the habit of a Roman soldier which is markedly more accurate than that of Quin as Coriolanus twenty years earlier. The whole costume, however, seems an uneasy compromise between the warlike garb appropriate for the battle scenes, and the flowing folds of the toga which one might expect in the less military scenes in Rome.

James Boswell visited this performance of Julius Caesar, and his comments throw a revealing light upon the theatrical conditions of the time, leaving little doubt that this particular production failed to scale the artistic heights:

One of the players, I forget his name, I shall call him Carey, was always laughing. Many people around me grumbled, but did no more. "Come", said I, "I'll stop him." So, as he was going off, I called quite out, "Carey, you rascal, what do you laugh for?" This made him as grave and serious as a bishop. The people around me thought me a great man. (29)

Presumably the performances of 1766, 1767, 1773 and 1780, in which Smith participated, were marked by a greater seriousness of purpose, as befitted an actor trained in the Garrick tradition. After the success of the 1780 production, however, there was a gap of 32 years in performances of Julius Caesar before, in 1812, John Philip Kemble "brought back Julius Caesar to the stage, and raised from his ashes the living Brutus". (30) This descent into oblivion can probably be

explained by the theme of the play: the depiction of a conspiracy leading to the assassination of a ruler would be no more suitable than the theme of Coriolanus for enactment during the period of frightening revolutionary activities in France. Mrs. Inchbald's preface to her printing of Bell's edition of the play in 1808 confirms this theory, for she refers to the abundance of "real conspiracies, assassinations, and the slaughter of war" (31) in the current world, and says that "it has been thought adviseable, for some years past, that this tragedy should not appear upon the stage." (32) In her characteristically snobbish way, Mrs. Inchbald stated that a theatre audience is so socially mixed that the indiscriminating elements among it might draw the wrong conclusions from the forceful representation of the overthrow of a powerful and autocratic leader:

When men's thoughts are deeply engaged in public events, historical occurrences, of a similar kind, are only held proper for the contemplation of such minds as know how to distinguish, and to appreciate the good and the evil with which they abound. Such discriminating judges do not compose the whole audience of a play-house; therefore, when the circumstances of certain periods make certain incidents of history most interesting, those are the very seasons to interdict their exhibition. (33)

However, in spite of this justification for censorship, Julius Caesar - described by Davies in 1784 as "now laid aside and almost forgotten" (34) - was shortly destined to become once again a favourite play in the early nineteenth century repertoire; as with Coriolanus, its return to favour was entirely due to Kemble.

(41)

Kemble's "Julius Caesar"

Kemble's success as Caius Marcius since 1789, and the many glowing

tributes to his magnificent "Roman" appearance and physique, probably encouraged him to approach the role of Brutus and to revive a play which had lain in neglect for such a long period. The version which Kemble brought to the Covent Garden stage in February 1812 was one of his own concoction, but closely followed the text published by Bell, which was - in its turn - much influenced by the 1719 adaptation attributed to Davenant and Dryden. An examination of his text, which was printed by Mrs. Inchbald in her collected volumes of The British Theatre in 1824, (35) shows that Kemble's version remains basically Shakespearean in conception and expression. What Boaden described as Kemble's "very judicious alterations and arrangements" (36) were as follows: Artemidorus and the Soothsayer are merged; Marullus' lines in I i are allocated to Casca; the first forty lines of I iii are excised, thus dispensing with the character of Cicero; Caius Ligarius does not appear; the scene containing Cinna the poet vanishes, as does the proscription scene (IV i) containing the only major appearance of Lepidus; the Poet is excluded from the famous quarrel scene; Metellus Cimber adopts most of Lucilius' lines, and Trebonius is merged with Messala; the battle scenes are much reduced so that V i 69-93 (the reference to birthdays and mighty eagles) are dispensed with, as are Brutus' six lines beginning "Ride, ride, Messala" in V ii, and the opening fifteen lines of V iv (the capture of Lucilius); Brutus' final speech retains a variant of the resounding lines from the 1719 text, and reads:

This was the justest cause that ever men  
Did draw their swords for; and the gods renounce it. -  
Disdaining life, to live a slave in Rome,  
Thus Brutus strikes his last - for liberty!  
(He stabs himself.)

Farewell,



Beloved country! - Caesar now be still;  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.  
(Dies.)

The text, then, is essentially that of Shakespeare, with omissions, but with no important additions. The most interesting omission occurs just after the assassination, when the "Stoop then, and wash" speech is excised. Kemble probably felt that such an action was too undignified or melodramatic to be performed by Roman patricians. Kemble's punctiliousness in rejecting most of the non-Shakespearean lines to which the theatre had grown accustomed can be seen in his deletion of Brutus' additional line (at line 63 of the famous quarrel scene), "No, for your soul, you durst not", a small alteration which, according to Thomas Davies, had been made by actors "from time immemorial". (37)

It is easy to understand Kemble's motives in preparing this new version of Julius Caesar: first, in line with his general policy, he wished to return to a more genuinely Shakespearean text; secondly he wanted to reduce the time of performance; thirdly, he wished to cut the number of minor speaking parts, in order to lower the expense of his production; finally, he hoped to streamline the battle scenes, which are a constant headache for any producer working in the realistic mode. His alterations helped him to achieve all these objectives, and yet permitted theatregoers to see a play very closely resembling Shakespeare's original ~~conception~~, and markedly more accurate than the versions of Antony and Cleopatra, King Lear, The Tempest and Coriolanus which were then current. In fact, there was only one practical deficiency in this version: it was too long in performance, especially when staged

in conjunction with a curtain-raiser or after-piece. The Times stated that the first performance "took up nearly five hours, - too long, and too much confined in its incidents, not to be tedious in its present form." (39)

In spite of these strictures, this new production was both memorable and spectacular. An examination of Kemble's prompt copy, which is in the possession of the Garrick Club in London, makes it possible to reconstruct some of the highlights of the performance. When he prepared his production of Julius Caesar in 1811, Kemble was a very experienced stage director, and his manuscript additions to the text give very clear evidence of his detailed planning of the pageantry which he grafted onto it. The opening page is annotated with details of the resources on which he could draw for scenes of spectacle: 32 Men and 6 Boys as plebeians and general supernumeraries, 4 Priests, 6 Senators, 4 Matrons, 6 Virgins, 12 Lictors and 12 Guards were colourfully supported by 1 Star, 2 Golden Eagles, 2 Silver Eagles and 2 Standards of S.P.Q.R.

Kemble could hardly fail to be aware of the immense popularity of the Order of the Ovation in Coriolanus, and his organisation of Caesar's processions in I ii of Julius Caesar seems to indicate that he was trying to provide a similarly grandiose spectacle; his notes also show the careful and detailed thought which was essential in planning the moves and positioning of his cohorts of extras.

At the start of I ii, the orchestra played, and the curtain then rose to disclose an arch at the rear of the stage; upstage left, the Soothsayer was "discovered" at an altar. Then from the left, came the

almost regal procession of Caesar and his entourage first, 2 standards of S.P.Q.R. which moved upstage to the arch to form a colourful backing at the rear of the stage, and which were immediately joined there by 4 Priests and 6 Senators; then came Decius and Metellus, who crossed right, to be followed by Cinna and Popilius Lena, by the solitary Cassius, and by Trebonius and Casca; the left of the stage was then filled (in pairs) by Clitus and Servius, Strato and Pindarus, Titinius and Flavius. Twenty-five members of the procession were now distributed round the stage, and the moment had come for Kemble's own entrance as Brutus; because the last six actors had moved left on entering, Kemble was able to draw attention to himself by the simple device of walking alone across the full breadth of the stage to join the group of patricians already assembled on stage right. The next two characters, Lucius and Varro, moved left on entry, and then came Calpurnia preceded by 6 Virgins and followed by 4 Matrons. Unusually, Kemble omitted to record any positioning move for this female group. At this point, the soldiers shouted thrice, and the indispensable 12 Lictors, with fasces, entered and moved upstage left as a preliminary to the arrival on stage of Caesar himself, flanked by Lepidus and Antony. The procession was sumptuously completed by 12 Stars, 2 Golden Eagles, 2 Silver Eagles and 12 Guards.

The First Folio allows for the entry of twelve named characters at this point (including the Soothsayer); Kemble thronged his stage with 72 actors and extras - even without allowing for any spectators of the procession, to whom there is no reference in Kemble's notes. Kemble's

elaboration of this entrance seems to have been justified, if one may judge by the enthusiasm of the comments of contemporary critics, which stressed that he had "paid every attention to scenic splendour and classical costume, which could represent the dignity of 'the old heroic time'" (40) and claimed that "the splendour of the decorations" ensured that "an impression is left upon us of Roman manners and greatness." (41)

However, when he came to organise the spectacular scene of the assassination of Caesar, Kemble's desire for clarity and dignity seems to have betrayed him into a certain over-stylisation, which caused an eye-witness, Ludwig Tieck, to find it "a grotesque piece of stage business." (42) As the curtain rose on III ii (the III i of modern editions), the senate was discovered in session, Kemble having disposed his 52 actors and supernumeraries in what Herr Tieck described as "a well-defined pyramid, of which Caesar formed the apex, while Brutus stood well forward in the proscenium to the left." (43) Tieck's memory is confirmed by the careful plan which Kemble inserted into his prompt copy:

	12 Fasces						
	12 Guards						Silver
Silver Eagle	Golden Eagle	S.P.Q.R.	Star	S.P.Q.R.	Golden Eagle	Eagle.	
	Great Eagle						
2 Priests	Chair and c.			2 Priests			
3 Senators	Caesar			3 Senators			
<del>3 Chairs</del>	(with papers & Stylus)						
3 Chairs	Lepidus					3 Chairs	
	Decius		Casca				
	Antony						
	Trebonius		Cassius				
	Cinna						
Metellus			Brutus				
R							L

At the moment of assassination, there is some conflict between Ludwig Tieck's comments, which leave Brutus downstage left, and Kemble's

next plan, which shows him by Caesar's chair? according to Kemble's notes, the pyramid was now simplified to become:

Popilius Lena

Lepidus

Caesar

Cassius

Brutus

Decius

Casca

Cinna

Metellus

R

L

while Tieck's description of the over-formal assassination makes the re-positioning of Brutus unlikely:

Casca is the first to stab him; then Caesar turns to the right and receives a second blow from the second of his enemies; again he staggers in affright to the left, a few steps forward, and receives a fresh wound; then the same to the right: now the free space on the stage grows larger, and this strange movement of the mortally wounded man becomes extraordinary and unnatural, but he still goes on staggering across the stage five or six times, so as to be stabbed by the conspirators, who remain quietly standing until he receives his death-blow from Brutus, and falls forward, exclaiming, "Et tu, Brute!" This scene, arranged like the most formal ballet, lost all dignity; and it was rendered outrageous by its pretentious solemnity. (44)

Perhaps Kemble revised his original plans in rehearsal, or perhaps he made a slip of the pen in transcribing his plan, as he was to do shortly afterwards when he confused stage left and stage right in his disposition of the actors after "A general and violent movement of congratulation among the Conspirators" which he (as Brutus) had inaugurated at

Let's all cry, Peace! Freedom! and Liberty!

One final example from Julius Caesar will serve to illustrate Kemble's care in planning the effective embodiment on the stage of pageantry and spectacular tableaux. His diagram for the last curtain of the play ranges 42 actors in a visually impressive climax, with the body of Brutus in the dominant upstage centre position:

The Star  
Golden Eagle Golden Eagle 2 S.P.Q.R. Golden Eagle Golden Eagle  
12 Fasces  
12 Guards  
Strato Clitus Varro  
Brutus  
Lucius Metallus  
Octavius  
Antony  
Titinius

R

L

Kemble's manuscript notes also show that he supported the visual impact of spectacular moments in Julius Caesar by the addition of musical effects. His fondness for emphasising his own entries with a trumpet call or some similar dramatic coup was alluded to in an article which dealt with the Cato Street conspiracy of 1820. Kemble, the author claimed, was so studious of giving proper effect to his appearance, that he rarely entered upon the stage, without a flourish of trumpets, to announce something great was forthcoming. (45)

This claim is certainly borne out by an examination of Kemble's treatment of the entrances of Brutus, and a comparison with the relevant stage directions in T.S.Dorsch's Arden edition of the play (1955).

Kemble made ten entrances, as follows:

1. I ii as a member of Caesar's procession, already described.
2. II ii in his garden. His entry is preceded by the stage direction "Thunder and lightning", which finds no place in the Arden edition.
3. II iii Caesar's palace. An unremarkable entrance in the company of Casca.
4. III ii (the modern III i) The Capitol. As the curtain rises to disclose Caesar, Brutus and the other Senators, there is "A Flourish of Instruments". (Arden edition: "Flourish. Enter Caesar...").
5. III iii (The opening ten lines of the modern III ii) Brutus enters as the Plebeians shout, "We will be satisfied!" (as in the Arden edition).
6. III iv (The modern III ii ii onwards) An added non-Shakespearean (but attention-seizing) shout of "Silence! Silence!" from the plebeians as Brutus re-enters.

7. IV i (the modern IV ii) The Camp of Brutus. "A Flourish of Trumpets." (Arden edition: "Drum").
8. V i The Plains of Philippi. "A Flourish of Trumpets" as Cassius and Brutus enter, leading a procession of 22 other actors, a red ensign of battle and an unspecified number of standards. (Arden edition: "Drum").
9. V ii (The modern V iii) Battle. A processional entry with Titinius, Metellus, Lucius, Varro and Standards, S.P.Q.R., Silver Eagles, 6 Lictors and 8 Guards. (The Arden edition precedes the entrance with "Alarum" but includes only five other actors).
10. V iv (The modern V v) Battle. "A Retreat sounded" immediately before Brutus' entrance. (No such direction in the Arden edition).

Thus, of Kemble's ten entrances, only one (number 3 above) was not associated with music or noise, and seven of his arrivals on stage were marked in a more striking and heightened manner than is warranted by a modern scholarly edition. Their stage effectiveness in drawing attention to the star of the performance can hardly be disputed, however.

Kemble's productions did much to focus attention upon himself, and Harold Child has shown (46) that such a purpose lay behind many of the cuts made by Kemble in his adaptations of Shakespearean texts. The prompt-books of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus confirm the fact that Kemble was supremely interested in his own role, and less so in those of his colleagues, except where they directly impinged upon his. For example, while the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius, which covers about 120 lines in Kemble's adaptation, contains nine stage directions in Kemble's own handwriting, in addition to being prefaced with the comment, "Take time", the even more famous speech of Mark Antony in the Forum (to be delivered by Kemble's younger brother, Charles, and encompassing about 175 lines in Kemble's version) remains entirely without written comment from the producer in the prompt copy.

If Kemble was attempting to exhibit his confidence in his brother's ability, this was sadly misplaced:

We will not advert to the inadequacy of the performance (of Charles Kemble) farther than to remark, that in the well-known passage where Antony refers to the pretexts for Caesar's assassination -

"But Brutus says he was ambitious,

And Brutus is an honourable man

So are they all, all honourable men, -"

Mr. C. Kemble uttered the sentiment with all the gravity of an entire acquiescence in its force. We should have thought the suitable action quite the opposite of serious admission. (47)

If, on the other hand, Kemble was hoping that his own speech from the pulpit would outshine Antony's oration, it would appear, from Leigh Hunt's comment, that his lack of attention to his brother's great scene had the desired effect, for Hunt commented of Charles Kemble's interpretation that "the great fault of languor rendered its effect inferior to that of Brutus," (48) while John Genest, attending the production when it visited Bath commented that "(John Philip) Kemble was very great when he spoke from the Rostrum". (49)

Kemble was not always so self-centred in his productions, and, on occasion, was very willing to mark in the prompt copies the reactions or significant moves which would enhance the dramatic impact of crowd scenes or of individual speeches. It is noteworthy, however, that such directions almost always occur in those scenes in which the star himself was present upon the stage. In Julius Caesar, his written instructions concerning other actors seem to rise above straightforward moves and positionings on only two occasions. In the discussion between Brutus and Cassius in I ii, Kemble noted "Cassius is going to speak" after "I shall recount hereafter", halfway through Brutus' speech beginning



"That you do love me, I am nothing jealous". In the quarrel scene, Kemble noted, "Cassius advances very angrily" on his line "Is't possible?"

The Shakespeare Centre at Stratford upon Avon possesses a copy, made by R. and S. Jones, of another of Kemble's prompt books of Julius Caesar which includes rather more detail than that which is in Kemble's own hand; these additional comments are accepted by Mr. Shattuck in The Shakespeare Promptbooks as an authentic record of Kemble's production. In this copy, details are supplied of the arrival of the conspirators at Brutus' house: they enter the orchard

All with their faces muffled in their gowns except Cassius -  
They remain a little behind while Cassius advances to Brutus.  
Trebonius and Decius unmuffle each his face when Cassius  
presents him to Brutus:- Casca, Cinna, and Metellus unmuffle  
themselves all together when Cassius says - "This Casca is he"

The death of Brutus is also given fuller annotation in this copy: after driving the sword into himself, Brutus allows it to drop, and

Hearing his sword fall they (i.e. his followers) look  
towards Brutus and run and support him. He sinks on  
the ground.

	Varro (kneeling)	
(Kneeling)	Lucius Brutus Metellus	
L		R

The prompt books indicate the care taken by Kemble to supply his Julius Caesar with dignity and spectacle, with variation of pace and intensity of emotion, and with relevant lighting and musical effects. This care was rewarded at its first performance on 29 February 1812 at Covent Garden, for it was greeted with warm applause, and won many commendations from the critics. Leigh Hunt, who detested Kemble, felt that the Cassius of Young was "the most prominent attraction ... It is full of fire, and yet marked with the nicest discrimination." (50)

In his rendering of Cassius' speech, "I know that virtue to be in you", Young opened Leigh Hunt's eyes to the complexity and variety of Cassius' approach to Brutus, causing the critic to say

This speech is a string of varieties, from the commonest colloquial familiarity to the loftiest burst of passion; and Mr. Young passes from one to another with the happiest instantaneousness of impression - from an air of indifference to one of resentment, from anecdote to indignant comment, from the subdued tone of sarcastic mimicry to the loud and impatient climax of a jealousy wrought up into rage ... I do not remember a speech delivered on the stage by which an actor more nearly approaches to the ideal picture of the person he represents, (51)

thus giving the lie to Mr. Rowell's assertion that Young was an actor "in whom power of lung was substituted for subtlety of intelligence." (52)

Hunt's comments cannot be explained away as merely an expression of his bias against Kemble, for Crabb Robinson, who went with Mrs. Collier to the performance on 10th March 1812, felt that

Young in Cassius surpassed Kemble in Brutus as an actor ... On the whole Young seemed to be the favourite. And where he instigated Brutus to concur in the plot he drew down peals of applause. (53)

Kemble, only five years away from retirement, seemed to lack energy: Robinson claimed that "Kemble's whole performance was cold, stiff and pedantic", (54) and Hunt was irritated by the affected manner of speech with which Kemble attempted to convey the stoicism of Brutus:

This artificial actor does so dole out his words, and so drop his syllables one by one upon the ear, as if he were measuring out laudanum for us, that a reasonable auditor, who is not to be imposed upon with the multitude in general, has no alternative between laughing or being disgusted. (55)

Hunt had sufficient justice, however, to admit that

Mr. Kemble's performance ... is excellent as far as philosophic appearance and manner can make it so, and his general conception of the character is just and impressive, (56)

- a view confirmed by The Times' praise for Kemble's handling of the quarrel scene ( in which he followed the tradition of Booth rather than that of Quin, remaining "cold, calm and stoical" (57)), and for his interpretation of Brutus' speech to the crowd, in which he evoked a dignity, tenderness and interest which "deserved all the applause that they received." (58)

As already mentioned, Charles Kemble's Antony - a role which he was to play for a further 24 years - lacked drive and subtlety, and Robinson, who felt that "O. Kemble as Mark Antony neither gave nor received any glory", (59) asserted also that "The two orations from the Rostrum produced no effect whatever." (60) Indeed, the acting in general seems to have lacked the flamboyant excitement associated with Kemble's Coriolanus. Costumes and setting attracted praise for their accuracy and dignity, though The Times - preferring absolute historical accuracy to stage effectiveness - was somewhat annoyed by the rostrum's obvious function of providing a dominant upstage position for the orators:

We cannot ... pass over the form of the rostrum without some disapprobation. It appeared to us made merely for the exhibition of the actor, and quite unlike the form of the ancient rostrum as it appears on bas-reliefs and medals: the beaks of the ships might be mistaken for any thing else, and the whole erection was coarse and unsuitable to the scene, (61)

and Robinson objected to what he called "the blankets with red borders" (62) worn by the senators.

But, if the critics had reservations about the quality of this new production, the theatre-going public appear to have had none, for they welcomed back Julius Caesar to its former place as a stock play: in the succeeding three months, it was performed on no fewer than seventeen occasions at Covent Garden, and was also taken to Bath at

Christmas.

Each year, thereafter, until his retirement in 1817, Kemble revived this production, but unfortunately The Times reviewed none of these performances; indeed, from now on until 1881 The Times seems to have adopted a rather cavalier attitude towards productions of this play: it is understandable that the large number of single "benefit" performances should be ignored, but there is a similar silence about several of the longer "runs" of Julius Caesar; once Kemble had re-established its popularity on the stage, The Times seems to have treated it rather coolly as a familiar play, worthy of comment only on special occasions, or when there was a dramatic critic to spare. Thus, although Kemble appeared in London as Brutus at least 37 times between March 1812 and June 1817, The Times steadfastly ignored this interpretation, even during the three "last" appearances he made in the role in May and June 1817. The only occasion on which The Times again referred to Kemble's Brutus was when he lost his voice on 6 May 1816 and was compelled to act the entire role in dumb-show.

This was perhaps less than just to Kemble. Most of the contemporary critics appear to have been insensitive to the effects which the actor attempted to convey in this interpretation: he saw Brutus as a man, struggling to control his passionate temperament by the rigorous application of a cold, aloof stoicism. The stiffness which marked all Kemble's acting was here a positive advantage, but only Scott (in his review of Boaden's Life of Kemble in 1826) seems to have understood Kemble's aim:

The temperament of Brutus, for example, is naturally warm, as appears in his quarrel with Cassius; naturally affectionate, as is displayed in his scene with Portia. But his stoic mien ...

draws a veil over both feelings; and his affections are subdued, tho' not hidden, by sufferance, enjoined by his philosophy ... Those who have heard him (Kemble) pronounce the few words in Brutus,

No man bears sorrow better - Portia's dead, will at once understand our meaning - to others we almost despair of explaining it. We would further remark, that whatever might in some characters appear tardy, and even stiff in Kemble's mode of acting, was here natural and proper. The pause showed the time which philosophy claimed to obtain her victory over nature; the delay, elsewhere censured, was in these parts not merely appropriate: the suspense itself agonized the audience. (63)

The coolness of Leigh Hunt, Crabb Robinson and The Times to Kemble's Julius Caesar must not be allowed to obscure its merits: Kemble brought back to the stage a play which had been ignored by the previous generations; he increased the Shakespearean content of the text; he won the esteem of London's theatregoers, and achieved popularity both for himself and for the play; he also presented an interesting and coherent interpretation of Brutus as a man whose stiff stoicism found difficulty in controlling his naturally passionate personality.

(111)

Performances of "Julius Caesar" 1817-1836

After Kemble's withdrawal from the stage, there was a respectful pause of more than a year before any other actor ventured to assume the toga of Brutus; once again (as with Coriolanus), Conway was associated with this production, for he played Antony to Warde's Brutus on 21 April 1819. This performance, however, was at Bath.

On 8 June of the same year, Young, who had so frequently played Cassius to Kemble's Brutus, and who was to be Covent Garden's leading tragedian for another eleven years, was bold enough to adopt Kemble's former role in London - another illustration of the fact that Brutus

was seen at this time as the dominant role. Young was cast very much in the Kemble mould; indeed, he was at times criticised for too slavishly imitating his famous predecessor in manner of enunciation and stiffness of acting. Lacking the touch of genius which had made Kemble an outstanding actor, Young's interpretations tended by comparison to be laboured and artificial, over-declamatory and cold. Nevertheless, he was a perfectly competent actor, of some power and skill, being noted not only for his fine, sonorous voice (in which he markedly excelled Kemble) but also for conscientious and concentrated study of the roles he undertook. In 1812, Leigh Hunt's dislike of Kemble had caused him to prophesy that Young would

soon oust Mr. Kemble from the throne which his grave cant has usurped, and place in it a proper being of flesh and blood, who feels and speaks like a susceptible creature; (64)

the 1819 production allowed Young to seize his opportunity as Kemble's heir, and it certainly established him as the leading Brutus of the next thirteen years, for he was to appear in eight of the ten productions of Julius Caesar between 1817 and 1832, making this role peculiarly his own throughout that period.

Part of Young's success as Brutus is perhaps attributable to his studious copying of Kemble's interpretation of the same role; this must have been a fairly easy task for Young, who had played Cassius to Kemble's Brutus in every one of Kemble's London appearances in the play. It appears that Young was able to move his audience at the end of the quarrel scene with a technique which owed much to Kemble's interpretation of the same moment: a Mr. Hackett attended Young's performance as Brutus at Covent Garden on 1 October 1827 and, at the end of the quarrel scene,

Hackett was profoundly moved by Young's manner of "turning slowly and facing Cassius" as he uttered, "O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs," "and then slowly approaching him, taking one hand within his own and resting the other on Cassius's shoulder and pausing a little and fixing his gaze upon the face of Cassius, and then with a faltering voice, and a suffused eye ... added - 'Portia - is - dead!' and closed his eyes."

To Hackett's compliment after the performance. (in 1827) Young "modestly remarked" that he owed his conception "to the late Mr. Kemble's performance of Brutus." (65)

Young's Cassius in 1819 was the young W.C. Macready, then at the opening of his long and successful career. The part of Cassius was a golden opportunity for the young actor, and one for which he felt a particular attraction. At the height of his career, he was to follow convention by playing the "star" role of Brutus, but he still remained drawn to Cassius, and returned to that role during his last weeks on the stage, stating that it was

a part in the representation of which I have through my professional life taken peculiar pleasure, as one among Shakespeare's most perfect specimens of idiosyncrasy. (66)

It seems possible that the seeds of his later, very famous, interpretations of the ambitious Macbeth and the Machiavellian Iago were sown in this early performance as the discontented Cassius, which was repeated on 14 June 1819. Neither of these performances was reviewed by The Times, whose dramatic critic seems to have been unaware of them, for he greeted the next production of Julius Caesar with the comment that since Kemble's retirement "no-one till now has dared to attempt it." (67)

This comment referred to the Drury Lane production of Caesar in December 1820; Wallack then played Brutus, with Booth and Cooper as his Cassius and Antony, and, although three-and-a-half years had now passed since Kemble's retirement, the critic felt bound to assess Wallack's

interpretation by comparison with that of his great predecessor.

Predictably, he decided that

the London stage has reared but one actor capable of realizing the personification of Roman character in all its lofty attributes ... Kemble furnished the first just image the moderns had seen of the mind of Brutus. (68)

Measured against this standard, Wallack was found wanting: his appearance was relatively well suited to the dignity of the Roman patriot, but there was apparently a lack of depth and an unfortunate carelessness to mar the performance:

Wallack is a clever, but not a profound, actor. His exterior is imposing, and he even discovers, at intervals, an approximation to dignity of demeanour; but this is transient, and is sometimes succeeded by a carelessness of manner, the reverse of true ease. (69)

The reviewer found little to commend in Wallack's delivery or in his ability to convey with any degree of conviction the high-mindedness of Brutus:

The cadence of blank verse does not always seem familiar to his ear, nor the utterance of lofty and impassioned sentiments to his mind. (70)

In the face of such hostility, the production survived for only two performances, and Wallack abandoned the role until 1835.

A few days after Wallack's first appearance as Brutus, Young chanced his arm once more, with Macready as Cassius, and with Charles Kemble in his accustomed role as Antony. This time, he performed in the course of a winter season at Bath, but his appearance there on 18 December 1820 did little to please John Genest. For Genest, Marcus Brutus was still irredeemably identified with John Philip Kemble. He paid tribute to Young's ability as Cassius in Kemble's productions, but



sorrowfully lamented that he should ever have been tempted to emulate his more talented predecessor. The opening lines of Genest's comments may perhaps have caused Young to wonder whether he would ever be able to obliterate from the critics' minds their vivid memories of an earlier Brutus

Young's Brutus was very good indeed, but not equal to Kemble's, for which reason he ought not to have given up his old part of Cassius - no person living had seen so good a Cassius as Young, and in all probability there never was a better - whereas all frequenters of the theatre had seen Kemble in Brutus. (71)

Young obstinately refused to cower before the shadow of Kemble and on 22 April 1822, supported once more by Macready and Charles Kemble, he appeared again at Covent Garden. This was to be longest "run" of Julius Caesar between 1812 and 1836, extending to eight performances between 22 April and 3 June, and it is therefore particularly disappointing to find that it was ignored by The Times. Macready thoroughly enjoyed these appearances and felt that his interest and enthusiasm helped him to achieve a striking and realistic portraiture

I entered con amore into the study of the character of Cassius, identifying myself with the eager ambition, the keen penetration, and the restless envy of the determined conspirator, which, from that time, I made one of my most real personalities. (72)

Eighteen months later, in December 1823, Young played Brutus once more at Covent Garden for a single performance, and the production was revived for a further two performances in May 1825. Although Macready relinquished Cassius to Cooper for these performances, the change of cast did not inveigle The Times into a review.

In September of the same year, while Young was away, the same production was again presented at Covent Garden for four performances, in which Warde played Brutus. Warde was an actor of fewer talents than



WARDE AS BRUTUS

1825

Young he was a competent supporting actor, but unfitted to play the tragic hero; The Times felt that he was "not excellent - not an actor who will ever carry an audience through an evening, of his own merits, unassisted", (73) and the contemporary picture of Warde as Brutus confirms this impression, for it shows a rather worried and melancholy man with a lachrymose gaze; there is no sense of domination, and he seems a pathetic rather than a commanding figure, lacking the stately dignity which Kemble brought to the role

His action and general deportment, without being such as can properly be termed ungraceful, want that elegance as well as commanding dignity which we look for in a leading actor of tragedy. (74)

Although Warde made a competent job of his two great scenes - the speech in the Forum and the quarrel - he could not rival Young's performances, and the whole production, lacking the stimulus of a leading actor at its heart, was rather lackadaisical, and forced The Times to comment

Excepting Mr. Warde's performance, there was not much in Julius Caesar which demands notice. (75)

A year later, Young was back at Covent Garden, and Warde gracefully backed down from the star role to play Cassius to Young's Brutus for two performances in October 1826. Charles Kemble continued as Antony.

The same team opened the 1827-8 season at Covent Garden on 1 October 1827 with a single performance of the same production, which was by now so thoroughly familiar that The Times stated that "there was no immediate novelty in the opening bill"; Young showed his "usual taste and judgement" as Brutus, and Warde "was more than respectably good in Cassius." (76) These are not the phrases of enthusiastic delight: Caesar had by now become a mere "stock" play, to be drawn upon for

benefit nights, openings of the season, and as a gap-filler while new productions were being mounted.

The costumes for this production - and, presumably, for several preceding ones - were as follows:

Julius Caesar:	scarlet toga, buff hose, scarlet sandals
Mark Antony:	white toga, buff hose, black sandals, and a second costume of scarlet and gold Roman uniform
Octavius Caesar:	Scarlet toga and scarlet sandals
Brutus and all the Conspirators:	White toga, buff hose and black sandals, and a second costume of scarlet and gold Roman uniform
Lictors:	Scarlet Roman costume, trimmed with orange.
Plebeians:	drab and brown common dresses
Calphurnias:	white and silver
Portia:	white and gold, with a scarlet robe (77)

Two years later, Young appeared as guest star at Drury Lane for two performances of Julius Caesar, with Cooper as his Cassius and Wallack as Antony. This was Young's seventeenth London appearance as Brutus, and by now - twelve years after Kemble's retirement - it was seen as "a part singularly well suited for his peculiar style of declamation", (78) and he was praised for acting "in his best style" (79) and conveying to the audience Brutus' "cool philosophy ... his high-minded singleness of purpose - his scorn of every object meaner than the freedom of the commonwealth." (80) Wallack's Antony, though generally praised, was censured for his poor delivery of the celebrated oration, "which was by far too tamely uttered." (81)

By 1832 Young was nearing his retirement, and decided to appear in a series of farewell performances at Covent Garden. Naturally, he chose Julius Caesar as one of the plays in this series (others included Macbeth, Hamlet, The Stranger, The Man of the World and Venice Preserved), appearing in it twice in April 1832. On the first occasion, Thackeray was a member of the audience and recorded in his diary his delight in the

excellence of the acting of Warde and Charles Kemble, but he was less satisfied with Young's Brutus:

To Covent Garden to see Julius Caesar - all the parts were admirably filled - Warde's Cassius was as good as Kemble's Antony which is giving it very high praise - Young I did not very much admire ... C. Kemble had a most splendid silver helmet and shield. (82)

The second occasion, which was Young's "last appearance but seven previously to his retirement from the stage", (83) was on 30 April, but neither of these performances was noticed by the London dramatic critics; even more surprisingly, there were no references to his last appearance, and no tributes to his career in The Times, The Spectator or The Athenaeum. Young had been an efficient and conscientious leading tragedian for many years. He was perhaps too inflexibly of the Kemble school of acting, by now somewhat old-fashioned, and he certainly lacked the stamp of genius, but he had been an honest and worthy member of his profession, and had certainly played the major role in keeping Julius Caesar on the stage after the retirement of Kemble, and it is disappointing to find so little comment on his final appearances.

This absence of documentation seems to have led C.B. Young into error in his stage history of Julius Caesar in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, where he states that

Young acted Brutus in five seasons between 1819 and 1827, and is last recorded as playing the part in October 1829 in Drury Lane. (84)

This sentence contains two errors: the above account has shown that Young appeared as Brutus in six seasons between 1819 and 1827 (Details will be found in the Appendix); again, although Young certainly appeared in October 1829, he was in fact to repeat his Brutus once more at that

theatre and twice more at Covent Garden.

With Young's retirement in 1832, Julius Caesar also quitted the London stage for nearly three years, but in 1835 and 1836 its very "bitty" history at this period was continued with four single performances. Most of the journals of the day understandably ignored these benefit and one-night-stand appearances, so that there is an unfortunate absence of comment on most of them. Thus, when the ageing Wallack played Brutus on 19 January 1835 at Covent Garden (his first appearance in the role for fifteen years), and when, the following month, Vandenhoff made his first London attempt at the same part, the dramatic critics of The Times were too absorbed with other events - reviews of romantic melodramas at the Queen's and the Strand on the first occasion, and the Queen's visit to Covent Garden on the second - to be able to comment on these two interpretations.

The same was true of two other single performances of Julius Caesar in the following year (1836). On 30 May, the Covent Garden manager (Osbaldiston) chose this play for his own benefit performance, casting Sheridan Knowles as Brutus and Macready as Cassius. Macready still felt drawn to this role, which he had previously played in London in 1819, 1820 and 1822; on this occasion, he felt that his interpretation was a worthy one, and he expressed his pride in his ability to win the sympathetic attention of a rather recalcitrant audience.

The audience were rather noisy through the early scenes, but I was not disposed to yield to them ... I acted Cassius in my very best style, and made the audience feel it. The audience were rapid and vehement in their applause ... I was certainly pleased with my own performance this evening; it was fresh, characteristic, and majestic. (85)

It is probable that Macready's Cassius would have become one of his greatest roles: his appearance and style suited him to it, and he thoroughly enjoyed playing it, however, by 1836 Macready found himself in the position of leading tragedian in London, and thereafter bowed to the established convention that the "star" role was that of Brutus.

Before he transferred to it, however, there was one other single performance of the play. This was on 30 June 1836 when Drury Lane staged a remarkable evening's entertainment, consisting of a violin recital by Mr. Ole B. Bull, Julius Caesar with Paumier as Brutus and Warde as Cassius, and two other plays (The Cabin Boy and the old favourite, Popping the Question); it is perhaps understandable that no comments seem to have survived about this rag-bag of theatrical divertissements.

This period had been a difficult one for Julius Caesar, in which it had steadily lost the leading position to which Kemble had restored it. In spite of honest effort, Young had failed to generate much enthusiasm or excitement by his appearances as Brutus, and the play was now revived almost entirely for somewhat mediocre individual appearances, which The Times rarely reviewed.

One reason for Young's comparative failure was the impact of a new actor and a new style of acting: Kemble had been undisputedly the greatest actor of his age, but after his retirement the pendulum had predictably swung against his school of acting, which was admirably suited to "Roman" roles. After 1817, London's leading actor was Edmund Kean, whose talents and appearance were radically different from those of Kemble, bringing him his greatest successes as Richard III, Shylock and in Othello. The absence of a great actor with interest,

and appearance directed towards the Roman plays was the greatest single factor in the decline of Julius Caesar after 1817. Perhaps this would have been inevitable anyway, for the Romantic movement tended to place a lower value on the classical austerity of plays like Coriolanus and Julius Caesar, preferring instead the more personal emotional crises of Macbeth, Othello and Antony and Cleopatra.

The period between 1817 and 1836 seems to have confirmed the establishment of Brutus as the leading role. Young had moved from the part of Cassius to that of Brutus as soon as Kemble retired; Warde backed down from Brutus to Cassius when Young returned to Covent Garden; Macready, whose first love was Cassius, switched to Brutus when he became England's leading tragedian. This tradition was to remain unquestioned until F.R. Benson's Stratford production of 1892.

As Brutus increased in importance, so Antony seems to have declined. Thackeray's comment was one of the few laudatory ones on Charles Kemble in this role. He was assessed by Boaden, Leigh Hunt, Macready, The Times and Crabb Robinson as an actor of little talent in the role, yet he was dominant as Antony for no fewer than twenty-four years. This perhaps explains the comparative silence of contemporary dramatic critics about Antony's famous speech in the Forum, and their tendency to concentrate on the much less impressive speech by Brutus. It may be relevant to note here that most eighteenth-century literary critics had tended to ignore the character of Antony and to make little or no reference to his great speech. Instead, writers like Mason, Warburton and Mrs. Montagu concentrated their attention on Brutus' oration to the mob and spent much time and effort in complaining of its paltriness as a speech, and in seeing it as something of an insult to the oratorical



skill of the real Brutus. Even Hazlitt, who was familiar with Kemble's production, did not refer to Antony's speech, which seems to reinforce the view that literary critics and actor-managers alike saw Brutus as the really central character. With rather inadequate actors in the role of Brutus between 1817 and 1836, it is hardly surprising that Julius Caesar should fall from the position of esteem to which Kemble had raised it. Macready optimistically hoped to reverse this trend.

(iv)

The Age of Macready 1836-1851

As his fame increased, and he became the chief attraction at Covent Garden, Macready conscientiously attempted the portrayal of a wide range of Shakespearean roles, and it was decided that in 1836 he should make his first appearance as Brutus. This was to be the first major production of Julius Caesar for many years, and a strong cast was assembled, with Vandenhoff as Cassius and - inevitably - the veteran Charles Kemble as Antony. After at least fifty-nine London appearances as Antony, Kemble was presumably thoroughly familiar with the part, but by 1836 he was a comparatively old man and, although he still possessed the family physique which suited him to Roman roles, The Spectator commented that

C. Kemble's Mark Antony has not the fervour and energy of his younger day. (86)

An even less fortunate link with the days of Kemble was the scenery, for the manager had economised by resuscitating the rather tired and dingy architectural effects which had been used in the days of the elder

Kemble's glory.

As he was to do in his production of Coriolanus in 1838, Macready placed considerable emphasis upon the part played by the citizens, and he provided a vociferous audience of thirty plebeians for the famous speeches in the Forum. Mr. Downer's examination of Macready's prompt copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library shows (87) that Brutus' ascent to the rostrum was accompanied by a "low murmuring among the citizens" who were ranged to right and left of the steps. The exit of Brutus coincided with the arrival of the body of Caesar, and Antony's great speech was punctuated by such movements as

Several of the Citizens extend their hands to Antony & press forward towards him.

when he produces Caesar's will, and

A movement of surprise and joy by all

when the mob are told that they are the heirs of Caesar. At "O, what fall was there ...", "Some of the Cit(ize)ns here incline their heads sorrowfully, others put their hands to their eyes, &c", while the end of the speech provoked a memorable climax to the scene:

All vociferating together, as they cross R & L - Exit at the diff(eren)t ent(rance)s, as rapidly as possible. The Tumult is heard dying away in the distance until the Act drop falls.

This skilful handling of crowds brought to life the central section of the play, and was characteristic of Macready's careful planning, but the main interest, of course, was centred on Macready's Brutus. He had been very unwilling to forsake the part of Cassius, and felt he had been granted insufficient time to prepare a satisfactory interpretation of his new role. His diary after the first performance on 14 November 1836, gave a melancholy estimate of the production, and verbally lambasted

the manager:

Acted Brutus in Julius Caesar very, very feebly - crudely - badly - I was not prepared for it and ought not to have yielded to the desire of the stupid and ignorant manager. I am punished for my folly by a complete failure. Such a thing I have not known these many days ... The play altogether was bad. (88)

Part of the fault, however, lay with Macready himself. As with Coriolanus, his style of acting was essentially unsuited to this role.

He based his interpretation upon an amalgam of intensity and quiet familiarity, overlaying this blend with a highly artificial and elaborately formal - not to say mannered - diction and presence.

Although his Brutus possessed "moral dignity ... classic grace ... simple earnestness", (89) these qualities were confused with others which he had incorporated in his portrayals of the radically different Cassius. It took Macready a long time to rid his Brutus of the characteristics which he had delineated in his preferred role of Cassius, and as late as 1848 George Vandenhoff (the son of the Cassius of this 1836 production), who appeared in America as the Antony to Macready's Brutus, claimed that elements of Cassius were still evident in it:

His Brutus was an entire mistake; there was none of the philosophy of the Portico about it; no contrast to the impetuosity of Cassius: in fact, it was Cassius with a different "make-up"; the mental characteristics exhibited were the same. (90)

Macready seems to have realised his inadequacy for the role, and he retreated into the same sort of excuses in which he had found refuge three years earlier when justifying his lack of success as Caius Marcius:

It is one of those characters that requires peculiar care, which only repetition can give, but it can never be a part that can inspire a person with an eager desire to go to a theatre to see represented. (91)

However, in spite of this lack of confidence in the efficacy of

the role, Macready's second performance on 18 November was more assured, and after the third performance on 21 November, for which he had prepared by completely rereading the part of Brutus during the day, he felt that he had "Acted the part - partially well - not altogether". (92) On this occasion, The Times sent a critic to Covent Garden, but his presence appears to have been due not so much to the interest of Macready's Brutus as to the first performance of the new after-piece (Thalaba) to which the reviewer devoted thirty-six lines of his review, his only reference to the major production of Julius Caesar being that it was "extremely attractive." (93)

Three days later, Macready was growing more satisfied with his interpretation, and felt that he had warmed to his role

Acted Brutus very well, better on the whole than I think I had done before, (94)

and by 10 December, after a further two appearances, the actor felt that at last he had come to terms with the character of Brutus - partly as a result of the presence in the audience of some of the nobility

Acted Brutus particularly well. Lady Blessingham and Count D'Orsay were there, and I took pains. I felt the part; I think I may say "J'etois le personnage." (95)

On 15 December, things did not go so well. Macready suffered from a searing jealousy of his fellow-actors, and was constantly under the impression that they were striving to steal from him the limelight to which he felt he was entitled (literally and figuratively) as England's leading tragedian. His diaries frequently accuse his colleagues of practising upon him the most unpleasant tricks while sharing the stage with him. His insecurity caused Macready to feel that Vandenhoff had recently been attempting to deprive him of his

deserved acclamation from the public; he held Vandenhoff's Roman Catholicism against him, and, on 15 December, retaliated. Small wonder that Vandenhoff was "discontented", and that Charles Kemble, nearing his retirement, was "gloomy or glum":

Acted Brutus moderately. Was weak enough to retort on Mr. Vandenhoff the tricks to which he has nightly resorted in Othello, and latterly in Cassius, to deprive my effects of their applause. He wanted the hint and I gave him a strong one; he is a most unfair actor - a regular Jesuit - he was very angry, but dared not show it beyond his discontented look. C. Kemble seems very gloomy or glum. (96)

Morale continued to decline, and worse was to come at the final performance of the year on 20 December 1836. Macready's diary accused Vandenhoff of maintaining his "dirty tricks", but the more famous actor had found a new way of demonstrating his superiority:

Lay down on the sofa and read part of Brutus. Acted the part well - with energy, dignity and freshness. I was anxious to do so, and I felt my own superiority. Mr. Vandenhoff again resorted to his dirty tricks of endeavouring to impede my effects, and take the applause from them, but I left him to the enjoyment of his unavailing efforts, and made my character stand conspicuously foremost in his despite. (97)

This same night saw the last performance of Charles Kemble's long interpretation of Antony. The Times advertisement for Covent Garden on 20 December remarked that this was

most positively the last night of his ever performing that character (98)

and the veteran was understandably determined to make the most of it - to the fury of Macready:

At the end of the play Mr. Kemble lingered in a ridiculous manner about the scenes, so that I was forced to pass by him. I heard some noise afterwards and sent to see if the audience were not applauding on the occasion of Mr. Kemble "going forward". The prompter came to say that the audience were calling for me, Mr. Kemble having gone on; I merely observed that I should not go. I cannot believe that the sense of the

audience (if sense were indeed among them) could be in favour of paying a compliment to the worst among the leading actors of the play, and for such a miserable performance as is the Mark Antony of Mr. C. Kemble, and that at the expense of those who stood before him. (99)

Macready's diary for that same evening also contains his considered judgement of Charles Kemble as an actor; his low opinion of his colleague was obviously biased by his own neurotic insecurity, but there was probably more than a grain of truth in the estimate, for Leigh Hunt had stated in 1812 that "Mr. Charles Kemble ... is most probably an actor because the rest of his family were actors," (100) and Macready's estimate is similarly damning:

I have performed for the last time with Mr. C. Kemble - my professional account is closed with him, and I part with him without regret or esteem. As an artist, I think him by comparison good in second and third-rate characters; ... but complete in scarcely any, great in none, and very bad in those of a higher class. There is no character, no assumption in anything he does - the only difference between the serious scenes of Cassio and Mark Antony are, with him, a Roman looking dress in this and in the other doublet and hose. (101)

These comments make it easier to understand that the comparative silence of the dramatic critics of the early nineteenth century about Antony's Forum speech could be partially attributed to the limited talents and outdated style of Charles Kemble.

Macready's dislike stemmed partly from the fact that Kemble's style of acting was by now an anachronism in an age which - under Macready's influence - was beginning to devote itself to realism and to the "minute" in characterisation. Kemble's approach to a role was broad and general, while his deportment and diction belonged to an earlier epoch in theatrical history, rather as if the Donald Wolfit of the 1930s had lived to act alongside the Paul Scofield of the 1960s.

Charles Kemble's performance as Antony was very different from that of his successor in the role, the popular playwright, Sheridan Knowles, who was engaged to appear in Julius Caesar with Macready and Vandenhoff when this production was repeated at Covent Garden in April of the following year (1837). By now, the costumes and the scenery, handed down from John Kemble's day, were decidedly the worse for wear so that, in spite of the dignity of Macready's Brutus, the rest of the performance was an amalgamation of

dingy scenery, dirty dresses, shabby appointments, and subordinates composed of the sweepings of the provincial stage. (102)

The newcomer, Knowles, was a haughty and rather boisterous man, with strong but coarse features, who played all his roles with the same rollicking style, marked emphasis, and heavily underlined theatrical effects which made his Antony a rough and homely man very different from the mannered interpretation of Charles Kemble.

The Spectator was rather annoyed that Knowles failed to please the spectators at the three performances which were given:

It is superfluous to add that the audience was scant and cold. Knowles did not even get the applause that he well deserved for the feeling which gave value to his homeliness. His personation was the very reverse of Kemble's; being as rough and natural as that was polished and artificial. (103)

The failure of this rather tired production ensured that Macready relegated his Brutus entirely to benefit performances for the next six years: between April 1837 and May 1843, this production of Julius Caesar was seen in London only for three single performances. The first of these was on 20 May 1837, for the benefit of the Box Bookkeeper at Covent Garden; the second was on 22 February 1838 for

the benefit of a Jewish charitable institution, and was marked by the first appearance of Samuel Phelps as Cassius, "displaying some feeling and much knowledge of effect" (104) in his portrayal of a hasty and petulant Cassius; the third individual performance was for Vandenhoff's benefit on 27 April 1839 at Covent Garden, after which - disillusioned by the lack of popularity of his 1838 Coriolanus, the mediocrity of his support in Julius Caesar, and the theatre-going public's decreasing interest in Shakespeare - Macready turned away for the next two years to an increasing number of more modern plays, among them, Glencoe, Master Clarke, The Stranger, Werner, Money and Virginus.

There appears to have been only one other production of Julius Caesar in London at about this time, but there is some little doubt about its exact date. The performance took place at the Victoria Theatre, for the benefit of the tragedian, George Bennett, and starred Vandenhoff as Brutus, Phelps as Cassius and Knowles as Antony. According to Westland Marston, this performance took place in Holy Week 1839, but an examination of theatre advertisements in The Times reveals no such performances: during the actual Holy Week, the Victoria announced performances for two evenings only (the Monday and the Maundy Thursday), as follows:

The entertainments will commence with the astonishing performances of the Monkeys, Goats and Dogs ... After which, A Roland for an Oliver. A variety of dancing, with the wonderful evolutions on the tightrope ... To conclude with The Miller and his Men. (105)

It is, of course, quite possible that the Victoria Theatre varied this heterogeneous theatrical fare even further by slipping in a single performance of Julius Caesar on March 26, 27, 29 or 30, omitting to advertise it in The Times. No such performance was advertised for 1838



or 1840, so Marston does not appear to have been in error about the year. On this occasion, Phelps played Cassius in a dark beard and a bald wig, which made him look about fifty-five years old; however, he displayed enormous vitality and impulsiveness, and John Coleman felt that

Phelps had very much the best of it in the acting; his rugged, fiery, and impetuous mode of attack carried everything before it. (106)

Westland Marston, who was only eighteen at the time, was much impressed by the young actor's interpretation of Cassius' bitterness:

In my young judgment, Phelps easily bore off the palm. In the expression of discontent and injury as Cassius, there was mingled with his caustic, fretful tone an impetuosity which indicated "that rash humour which his mother gave him." (107)

Vanderhoff was stately, if somewhat turgid, as Brutus, while Sheridan Knowles played Antony in an Irish brogue as thick as butter:

The oration over the body of Caesar was delicious. The opening lines he introduced after this fashion:  
"Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears,  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise 'em!" (108)

The rest of the performance was comic rather than tragic, and it is easy to understand why The Times so frequently ignored "benefit" performances if this was characteristic of them. The minor role of Popilius Lena was played by a well-known pantomimist, known as Joey, who had never previously performed in Shakespeare and who was terrified at the thought of delivering his ominous two lines before the assassination of Caesar. In an agony of stage-fright, he was pushed onto the stage, but

Just as the unfortunate pantomimist reached the centre he caught his foot in his toga, and down he went on his nose. When he got up Phelps, Vanderhoff, and Bennett glared at him savagely. The laughter subsided, and a solemn silence ensued, amidst which the noble Popilius looked round to see that no-one was listening, then, beckoning the conspirators around him, and putting his finger to the side of his nose, he said, confidentially -

"I wish yer luck!"

The yell which arose on all sides at this ingenuous expression of sympathy, and the portentous grimaces of the enraged tragedians, perfectly paralysed the poor little man, who looked hopelessly round for a moment, and tottered towards the wing; but ere he could make his exit a wag from the gallery called out -

"Never mind Shikspere, Joey; give us

'Hot Codlins!'"

This was the most striking effect of the night; even the tragedians yielded to the general infection, and laughed as poor Joey bolted, exclaiming:

"Oh, b\_\_\_\_\_ Shikspere! I wish he'd never been born!" (109)

Julius Caesar had indeed fallen on evil days, and it was left to Macready to attempt to resurrect it with dignity. After deserting Shakespeare for two years, he tentatively returned to some well-tried roles ( Macbeth, Hamlet, Jaques and Shylock, for example) in 1842, and mounted three performances of Julius Caesar at Drury Lane in May and June 1843. On this occasion, his Cassius was once more Phelps, but Knowles was downgraded to the role of Casca, and J.R. Anderson undertook Antony, bringing to the funeral oration such a power of sustained declamation that he received long and enthusiastic applause. Phelps continued to highlight the impetuous irritability of Cassius, enjoying himself so much in the role that he began to overact in a self-indulgent manner. The centre of interest, however, was Macready's Brutus. As the actor's insight into the part developed, he tended to increase the tenderness inherent in the character of Brutus and to act "with admirable delicacy and feeling". (110) This was particularly evident in the quarrel scene, in which warmth and dignity went hand in hand so that

By his quiet dignity of bearing, he reduced the storming Cassius to a point of humiliation which it was almost painful to witness; but then his generous advance towards reconciliation came like a healing balm, and rendered the character as amiable as it was admirable. (111)

Artistically, this was a great advance on any London production of the play since 1836, but it was very little to the taste of the public, which was swinging resolutely away from Shakespeare. This was the period in which Wallack was compelled to abandon his grand project of Shakespearean plays at Covent Garden in favour of the immediate opening of a second season of non-Shakespearean dramas. The public had begun mightily to disrelish Shakespeare and The Spectator posed the question where Macready had failed, could Wallack hope to succeed?

No possible mode of apportioning the principal parts in Othello, Macbeth and Julius Caesar between Messrs. Vandenhoff Phelps, and Anderson, would have made these tragedies popular. If Macready's Shakesperian revivals, which included the attractions of his name and talent, aided by a mise en scene the most complete and splendid ever witnessed, were unprofitable, it is not likely that representations every way inferior would prove remunerating. (112)

During the later 1840's, in fact, the banner of Shakespeare in the London theatre was steadfastly held aloft by only two leading tragedians: Macready constantly appeared as guest star at a variety of theatres in the four great tragedies of Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear, and Samuel Phelps, at his revived Sadler's Wells, was bringing to that formerly undistinguished stage a growing reputation for carefully and competently presented performances of many Shakespearean plays, among them Julius Caesar.

Phelps had already made some reputation as Cassius, but he followed convention by switching to the role of Brutus now that he was in command of his own company, trying himself first of all in a single performance on 5 May 1846, the last night of the season. Satisfied with his achievement on this occasion, Phelps launched into a series of performances of Julius Caesar at Sadler's Wells in the summer of 1846,

alternating these with his highly successful Henry IV i, in which he played Falstaff. At first sight, it would seem unlikely that the same actor's range would include both the irascible Cassius and the dignified and selfless Brutus, but Phelps' two strong points were the depiction of anger and of pathos, and his Brutus "which, for quiet feeling and calm heroism is an example to be studied", (113) was an instant success. Westland Marston, who had admired his Cassius, was surprised that Phelps could also encompass the radically different Brutus, and he suggested that Phelps perhaps owed his success to his ability to portray Brutus as exactly the reverse of his interpretation of Cassius. (114) The other roles in this production were played conscientiously, and the production was mounted with all that care and attention to detail which was becoming the hallmark of Sadler's Wells. It helped to restore public interest in the play, which ran for six performances in August 1846.

Encouraged by Phelps' success, Macready returned once more to the role of Brutus. In 1848, he was appearing as star attraction at the Princess's Theatre, which worked on the assumption that a big "name" would draw the crowds and that it was therefore unnecessary to take trouble over setting, production or supporting actors; thus, Macready was left to bear the whole weight of the performance himself, and towered head and shoulders above his colleagues and the mise en scene. In his three performances of Julius Caesar in April 1848, Macready maintained his usual high standard, continuing to emphasise the tenderness of Brutus' nature.

The Brutus of Mr. Macready is a highly finished performance; characterized by the prominence he gives to the recorded mildness of the Roman patriot. A more amiable version could not be imagined. (115)

He himself was increasingly satisfied with his own interpretation, and wrote in his diary after the opening night

Acted Brutus in a very masterly manner. I do not think I ever acted it with the same feeling, force and reality. (116)

Soon after these three performances, Macready understandably abandoned the Princess's in favour of the Theatre Royal, Marylebone, where he appeared in the four great tragedies before departing for the U.S.A.

It was another year before the London public had an opportunity of seeing Julius Caesar again, and this was merely a recapitulation of Phelps' familiar Sadler's Wells production. For these six performances in April 1849, Phelps repeated his successful interpretation of Brutus ("one of Mr. Phelps's best assumptions" (117)) with Marston once more as Antony, but he replaced Creswick with Bennett - a vigorous actor - as Cassius. However, there was no other novelty about the production, which was ignored by most of the contemporary dramatic critics.

The following year was a notable one for Julius Caesar which was presented in four separate productions in London, in addition to the special performance by Macready at Windsor Castle before the Queen and Prince Albert on 1 February. First, there was a Drury Lane production, with Vandenhoff playing Brutus for the first time (in London) in six-and-a-half years. John Oxenford, dramatic critic of The Times, reported on its merits, commenting that Julius Caesar "has been so seldom performed of recent years that its production last night excited some degree of curiosity." (118) For a dramatic critic, Oxenford appears

to have been remarkably isolated from the world of the London theatres in the preceding three-and-a-half years, Phelps had appeared in London as Brutus on thirteen occasions, and Macready three times. Oxenford tended to review only the productions which appeared at the former patent houses, ignoring even Phelps' work at Sadler's Wells, and his strange comment was possibly caused by the thought that there had been no notable new production of the play at either Covent Garden or Drury Lane since Macready's venture in 1836.

As for the new production, which made its first appearance on 14 February 1850 (mistakenly ascribed by G.C.D. Odell to January 1850) Vandenhoff's age was undermining his physical and vocal strength and he was able to make little more of his role than "a quiet, mild, and sensible Brutus, (whose) delivery is marked by good taste and inobtrusiveness", (119) while Cathcart - a follower and imitator of Kean - was far from an ideal choice for the role of Cassius, and allowed his undoubted forcefulness and intelligence to be swamped by a peculiar tone of voice which gave a "most singular effect" (120) to the longer speeches. Antony was played by the theatre manager, J.R. Anderson, who at this time was rather desperately attempting to build himself a reputation as a leading tragic actor in such plays as Ion, The Lady of Lyons, The Elder Brother and Othello; he presented an Antony cast in a rough mould, and tried to seize his opportunity in the Forum scene by emphasising every word, so that "the slow manner of utterance unnecessarily lengthens out the famous oration," (121) which, nevertheless, was impressively delivered with carefully managed variations of feeling. On the whole, therefore, the acting was unremarkable, and the production -

though efficient - was rather too obviously indebted to Macready's manner of handling crowd scenes.

The second and third productions of Julius Caesar to be staged in 1850 appeared almost simultaneously and each may have cancelled out the other's chance of success. The production at the Surrey Theatre in October 1850, with Creswick as Brutus, survived for six performances in spite of being ignored by all the leading journals, and it seems to have taken away some of the interest from Phelps' revival which appeared at Sadler's Wells two days after Creswick's opening night, and which received only two performances. The Shakespeare Centre at Stratford upon Avon possesses Creswick's prompt copy for his production of Julius Caesar at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool in 1845, which was probably very similar to the 1850 production at the Surrey. Interestingly, Creswick worked from the copy of Kemble's prompt book which had been made by R. and S. Jones, adding his own manuscript comments in a darker ink. Basically, he seems to have followed Kemble's text and production, but replaced several of the Shakespearean lines which Kemble had excised. Among the resuscitated lines were

Now is it Rome indeed and room enough  
When there is in it but one only man

in the first act, and

What other bond  
Than secret Romans that have spoke the word,  
And will not palter? and what other oath  
Than honesty to honesty engaged

in the orchard scene, to which Creswick also restored the final conversation between Brutus and Caius Ligarius. For his 1845 production, Creswick cut Kemble's V iii (Antony receiving the news of

the capture of a supposed Brutus) and amalgamated V ii and iv into a single scene. He also added a small number of stage directions, among them three shouts before the rise of the curtain on I i, and a handshake between Casca and Cinna at "There's a bargain made" in I iii. After the quarrel with Cassius, on his line

Speak no more of her,

Brutus "Takes his hand and turns away." Essentially, however, Creswick's Liverpool production was firmly rooted in Kemble's conception of the play; presumably, he remained faithful to it in his 1850 performances in London which attracted no comment from the critics.

Fortunately for the honour of the play, the final production of Julius Caesar in 1850 was incomparably the greatest of the four. It was presented at the Haymarket in the course of Macready's series of farewell performances as, nearing retirement, he threw himself with enthusiasm into his most famous roles, notably in Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Werner and Virgilius. On 18 November he tackled Brutus, with Davenport as his Cassius. He realised that, for most of his audience, there would be no further opportunity of witnessing his interpretation and so he acted with vigour, deliberately drawing attention to

the gentle, loving, self-subdued mind of Brutus which I tried to make manifest before them. The gentle touches were done with great care, and, I think, with skill. (122)

Macready himself was delighted with the results of his portrayal and felt that this interpretation was "far beyond any performance I ever gave of the character". (123) Indeed, words failed him when he noted in his diary the excellence of his acting in certain key scenes:



The remonstrances with Cassius in the third act about Caesar's funeral and, in the fourth, the quarrel, were ---! (124)

Elated by his success on this first night, Macready decided to give himself a retirement present by returning to the role of Cassius, which had been his first love in this play, and which he had not performed in London since 1836; unfortunately, by 23 November, when he and Davenport were to exchange roles, Macready's mood had altered and he was filled with depression and uncertainty; characteristically, he explained his comparative failure as Cassius by blaming his colleagues, especially Davenport as Brutus:

Acted Cassius, tried to carry through the burning spirit of the impatient republican, but moved with heavy weights hanging to me in the actors of the play ... The Brutus was very bad. Forster thought that he neutralized my performance - especially in the quarrel. (125)

After <sup>the</sup> Christmas recess at the Haymarket, Macready made one further attempt to play Cassius, which - to judge from the silence about it in his diary - can hardly have been any more successful than the first. Therefore, on 24 January 1851, he once more exchanged roles with Davenport, appearing for "the last time for ever" (126) as Brutus. Again Macready emphasised the softer side of Brutus' nature, convinced that this was the best route to an ideal interpretation of the role:

The tenderness, the reluctance to deeds of violence, the instinctive abhorrence of tyranny, the open simplicity of heart, and natural grandeur of soul, I never so perfectly, so consciously, portrayed before. (127)

The audience were moved by his performance, and the actor himself was satisfied that he had never acted so well in this role. Rather surprisingly, Oxenford of The Times made no comment on Macready's final appearance as Brutus - a role which he had assumed some twenty-five times

in London. (128) He had never touched the greatest heights in it; his style of acting imposed upon him certain limitations in Roman (indeed, in Shakespearean) roles, and his peculiarities of delivery - notably his over-use of the pause, and his sinking into a familiar style of dialogue - forced him to sacrifice the music, rhythm and fluency of the verse; thus, although he conveyed to an audience the ideas and meaning of his speeches with impeccable clarity, he tended to sacrifice their poetic qualities. Nevertheless, Macready had consistently and ~~conscientiously~~ striven to portray the dignity, the honesty and - above all - the tenderness of the Roman patriot, and had played a leading part in keeping Julius Caesar on the London stage between 1819 and 1851. He was no Kemble, however, and the full-page pictorial tribute to Macready in The Illustrated London News on his retirement in February 1851 shows that Roman parts were not to be remembered as among his greatest achievements: the centre of the page is devoted to a large drawing of Macready as Macbeth (his most famous role) which is flanked by much smaller pictures of him in Richard II, Virginus, King Lear, Richelieu, King John and Werner; evidently, the artist did not consider his Antony, Coriolanus, Brutus and Cassius to be worthy of this exalted company.

(v)

#### Phelps - The Only Remaining "Roman" Actor

With the retirement of Macready, Samuel Phelps was the only leading actor in London who was willing - or, perhaps, sufficiently talented - to appear regularly in major Shakespearean roles, but even this dogged and determined actor-manager found it increasingly difficult,

in the philistine state of the mid-Victorian theatre, to mount successful productions of the Roman plays. While Macready had been at the height of his powers and reputation, Phelps had played Brutus fifteen times in London, but he realised that public taste made it unpropitious to return to this role in the 1850's. In November 1856 he ventured a single performance at Sadler's Wells in which he "preserved the equanimity of the patriot and the stoic with his usual tact and judgment" (129) in an efficient if unremarkable performance, but public apathy towards this appearance persuaded Phelps to withdraw Julius Caesar from his theatre's repertory until he was about to retire. In the Autumn of 1862, conscious that he was about to take his farewell of the stage, he reappeared at Sadler's Wells in many of his most successful Shakespearean roles, notably as Shylock, Hamlet and Othello. For his final appearance, Phelps chose Brutus, but John Oxenford preserved his usual majestic silence about Phelps' endeavours, and no account appeared in The Times of what was supposed to be Phelps' final appearance on the stage. This silence is all the less comprehensible or justifiable in view of the fact that for nineteen years, almost alone among the London actor-managers, Phelps had resolutely maintained a policy of presenting honest productions of Shakespeare's plays. He had been the first impresario to take advantage of the abolition of the patent system and his work at Sadler's Wells had given to that theatre the reputation of providing artistically reputable productions of a wide range of Shakespeare's plays; indeed, as The Athenaeum said, "it would have been in vain to have gone elsewhere for Antony and Cleopatra, Timon of Athens, Pericles, and Love's Labours Lost". (130)

Fortunately, Phelps & like Kemble before him - found it difficult to abandon the stage, and so he continued to appear at various theatres for the next three years. In 1865, he appeared as guest star in Julius Caesar at Drury Lane, with the manager, Anderson, as Antony. The first appearance was for a single performance on 6 April and was marred by an attack of influenza which struck Anderson and left him so weak that he could scarcely struggle on to the stage; however, an appreciative audience helped him to recover sufficient strength and voice to support Phelps effectively. Since this was an individual performance (a benefit for Anderson), the newspapers ignored it, but there were brief reviews in two journals of the last production of Julius Caesar in which Phelps appeared. This was for six performances in October and November 1865, and was rather perfunctorily staged

apparently as a medium of filling up the week's interval before the production of King John, which is to be brought out on an extensive scale. (131)

With so mundane a reason for the revival, it was hardly to be expected that this Julius Caesar would reach the histrionic heights, and the comments of the critics were appropriately luke-warm, paying testimony to the fact that it was "effectively performed" (132) with "acceptable" (133) acting. Phelps played conscientiously, as ever; Swinbourne, as Cassius, "brought out the fiery nature of the Splanetic republican", (134) and Anderson, revelling in his fine voice, delivered the funeral oration with élan. Nevertheless, this was no more than a mediocre production, and was an unworthy setting for Phelps' final appearance as Brutus; perhaps this explains why it is not mentioned in C.B. Young's stage history of the play. Over many years, Phelps had brought to the part

of Brutus less dignity and a smaller amount of technical skill than his more famous and talented predecessors, Kemble and Macready, but he had identified himself with the role much more effectively than the other leading Brutuses of the nineteenth century, Young and Vandenhoff. He had at all times attempted to present an honest, sincere and thoughtful interpretation, set in a workmanlike production, and had steadfastly continued to appear in Julius Caesar (and many other Shakespearean plays) when the whole theatrical current of London was flowing strongly against such a venture. Without the work of Phelps, it seems inevitable that this play would have vanished from the Victorian stage some fifteen years or so before his final appearance as Brutus.

Some six weeks after Phelps' retirement, Anderson appeared at Shoreditch in a benefit performance of Julius Caesar which was to be the last time for twenty-seven years that this play would be performed in English on the London stage. It was not an auspicious end to this chapter in the play's life, and Anderson's autobiography castigates the inadequacy of this one-night-stand, in which he played Antony to a tremendous and enthusiastic audience

The tragedy was villainously acted and wretchedly put upon the stage; being for one night only, there was no time for preparation. (135)

Until 1892, English actors abandoned Julius Caesar: the increasing dominance of the "star" system made the play, with its three leading roles, unacceptable to some of the actor-managers; the audiences' taste had turned away from the stoical masculinity of this episode of Roman history; the comparative lack of success of recent productions deterred managers from viewing Julius Caesar with favour.

(vi)

"Julius Caesar" in Theatrical Oblivion 1865-1892

During the twenty-seven years which separated the disastrous Shoreditch performance and Frank Benson's revival of Julius Caesar at Stratford in 1892, it was left to a company of German actors to remind London theatregoers of the power inherent in this once popular play. In May 1881, the Saxe-Meiningen Company arrived at Drury Lane to present a series of German plays and of Shakespeare's plays translated into German. Their season in London extended from 30 May to 23 July and they were so confident of the excellence of their Julius Caesar that they chose this play for both their opening and closing performances, presenting it altogether on thirteen occasions during the two months of their visit. They worked from a translation by Tieck and Schlegel which followed Shakespeare with such typically German thoroughness and punctiliousness that it brought to the attention of London managers and playgoers a new standard in Shakespearean presentations. The translation followed with minute fidelity the original order of the scenes, and took detailed account of every stage direction which had been added by reputable editors or which could be deduced from the text: as The Times said:

There is no exit, no entrance, no flourish of trumpets, no acclamation of the people which is not exactly realized upon the stage. (136)

This accuracy was unusual in the London theatre of the later Victorian period, and so was the German company's absence of "stars". Since the days of Garrick, English playgoers had been accustomed to the

"star" system, with actors such as Quin, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, Kean, Macready and Phelps towering above their colleagues in an absolute dominance of the stage. The German company, on the contrary, had no "stars" but prided itself upon attention to detail and a meticulous care in the handling of crowd scenes and the interpretation of minor roles: homogeneity of style was their watchword. Thus, Julius Caesar, with its three equally important central characters, its multiplicity of very important secondary parts, and its emphasis upon the citizens of Rome, was tailor-made for this corporate approach, and was regarded by the Saxe-Meiningen Company as "their favourite cheval de bataille." (137)

Thoroughness was everywhere evident: the costumes, designed by first-class artists, were exact copies of antique originals, and the senators had been trained to drape their togas in the manner of ancient statues; every minor actor had been so drilled that he really appeared to be a Roman transported bodily from the classical age to the London of 1881, and there was

a total absence of that lumping of masses, that rigidity of form and feature, which chills the spectator at ordinary performances. (138)

The highlight was Antony's speech in the Forum, which was "a masterpiece of scenic arrangement, such as has been seldom witnessed upon the stage," (139) and which was notable for the delicacy of gradation in the feelings of the crowd as Antony turned them against the conspirators, and for the sudden outburst of mob fury at the climax of the scene, so that



■ Saxe-Meiningen Company's  
*Julius Caesar, 1881.*



those forests of hands, .... those staccato shouts, that brilliancy of emphasis, the whirl and rout and maddened frenzy of an excited mob, urged to avenge the death of Caesar, certainly did make a startling effect upon the audience, (140)

eliciting from them the utmost enthusiasm.

The illustration of the scene in the Forum clearly shows its spectacular effectiveness, and the care taken with members of the mob. A solidly Teutonic-looking Antony, hemmed in by a large crowd of well-differentiated individuals, dramatically holds aloft the cloak of Caesar, exposing the dead body, which appears to be resting on a well-padded litter. The grouping of the scene shows evidence of careful thought: the outstretched hands of the man in the left foreground lead the eye over the lower figures of the kneeling women to the dominant bulk of Mark Antony, who has adopted a striking pose, with arms wide outstretched in appeal, at the centre of the scene. The crowd is large, and yet the artist has conveyed the impression - noted by the dramatic critics - that it consisted of a group of separately characterised individuals; there is a difference of age, of dress, of stance and of expression which brings each supernumerary to individual life.

Only The Athenaeum felt that the careful drilling of the actors had resulted in an unnatural and over-formal artificiality, so that

The violence of the outbreak seemed out of keeping with the quasi-symmetrical arrangement of the tableaux. (141)

Other journals were unanimous in their praise of the total effect produced by minute exactitude and meticulous attention to detail: The Standard's comment may be taken as typical of their enthusiasm:

Last night Julius Caesar was played in England for the first time as Shakspeare had conceived it. We have seen great actors in England before now, but never until yesterday evening had we

seen a great Shaksperian drama represented with perfection in every detail. (142)

Thus, in spite of the German company's attempt to break away from the "star" system, their 1881 production drew the attention of theatregoers to the dominance of the part of Antony and may well have helped to establish an attitude which encouraged Benson and Tree to adopt Antony, rather than Brutus, as the key role. It would appear that the Antony of this German production came the closest to the English convention of acting and that he therefore stood out from the more reserved and academic style of the other actors. The homogeneity of style did not appeal to all the critics, and The Athenaeum went so far as to say of the actors that "none can be said to have in striking degree individualized the part he played". (143) The Times also found difficulty in adapting itself to the foreign style of production and acting:

The German style of action and enunciation is more conventional, one might say academic, than what we are accustomed to in this country ... A certain keynote was struck almost at the beginning of the performance, and from that there was little or no deviation. (144)

But whatever its shortcomings, this careful, thorough and honest production in German was the only opportunity between 1865 and 1892 which was afforded to London playgoers of seeing Julius Caesar on the stage. Why was there this neglect of a play which hitherto had been popular and successful in production? It seems likely that the absence of a star role, eclipsing all others, may have deterred ambitious actor managers, as The Times commented:

There is in it, indeed, scarcely a character which a Salvini, a Rossi or an Irving would be likely to choose. Julius Caesar, in spite of its name, is the very reverse of what is known as a one-part play. Brutus, Cassius and Antony divide the interest at about equal shares. (145)

Secondly, Julius Caesar contains a large number of important minor parts, demanding considerable skill in effective performance; ideally, first-rate experienced actors should undertake the roles of Casca, Cicero, Titinius and ~~The~~ Tribunes, but it is difficult to persuade actors of high calibre to accept such small character-studies, especially when they are not members of a stock company presenting a wide repertoire of plays in which they can display their versatility; yet, an inexperienced or untalented actor in one of these roles can detract substantially from the overall success of the play. Kemble had tried to overcome this difficulty by excision and amalgamation of characters, but by the 1860's there was sufficient respect for the text of Shakespeare's plays to deter any manager from such an attempt unless he were motivated by the desire to supply spectacle.

Thirdly, the style of acting prevalent at this time militated against the successful assumption of Roman roles. Kemble had been the last great exponent of the classical style of acting; with Edmund Kean, the breath of Romanticism blew upon the stage, and Kemble's approach began to seem stilted, artificial and old-fashioned. By the 1860's and 1870s the romantic style was dominant, being about to reach its apotheosis in Irving. B.L. Joseph's exposition of the characteristics of the Romantic style of tragic acting makes perfectly clear that it was inappropriate for Shakespearean tragedy, and particularly for those tragedies with a Roman setting

Romantic tragic acting was essentially a compromise: it adapted rather than abandoned the heroic conception of tragedy, so that characters larger than life could be made to seem life-size, while verse-speaking retained a poetic glow on a stage increasingly devoted to spectacle and realistic effect. Romantic tragic acting was particularly successful in superior melodrama ... But this acting did not really suit Shakespeare. (146)

Above all, as was illustrated in Chapter Two, the small condition of the London theatre in the 1860s and 1870s very largely explains a reluctance to embark on Shakespearean productions of any kind, and all the Roman plays suffered an eclipse during this period.

(vii)

Benson and Tearle

In fact, there was to be no London production of Julius Caesar until 1892 and none of any distinction until 1898, thirty-three years after the previous London performance in English. In 1889, however, the Stratford Festival was in process of being established, and Osmond Tearle produced Shakespeare's Julius Caesar as one of his offerings. Kemp and Trewin state somewhat too benignly that the play was "done with competence" (147) but the performances were not chronicled by the metropolitan press. Stratford had yet to make its name as a home of professional Shakespearean drama, and The Times, The Athenaeum, The Spectator, The Saturday Review, and the Illustrated London News all ignored Tearle's pioneer effort; even more significantly, The Theatre (a monthly periodical devoted exclusively to reviews of current stage performances) made not the slightest reference to the Stratford season of 1889, although it allocated four and half pages to the analysis of an ambitious amateur production of Julius Caesar at Oxford in the same year. It is therefore necessary to turn to Tearle's prompt-book (in the possession of The Shakespeare Centre at Stratford) and to the provincial press, in order to discuss this production, to which there is no reference

in C.B. Young's brief stage-history of Julius Caesar.

The text was an unusual and very unscholarly one, for Tearle worked from a highly inaccurate acting edition in French's series. He divided the play (printed in five acts) into six acts as follows: Acts One and Two were drawn from the conventional act division of Shakespeare's play, but with the omission of II iii (Artemidorus) and II iv (Portia's conversation with the Soothsayer); a few other lines were also sacrificed (e.g. I iii 91-7 "Therein, ye gods ... lacks power to dismiss itself"). Tearle's third act consisted of the usual III i, and his fourth act was the major portion of III ii (the Forum scene), omitting the first ten lines (so that Brutus was "discovered" onstage amid "Great clamour") and the final ten lines (Octavius' servant greeting Antony). The usual III iii (Cinna the poet) and IV i (the proscription scene) vanished, and Tearle's fifth act was devoted to the conventional IV ii ("Ride, ride, Messala ...") and V iv ("Yet, countrymen ..."). Altogether, then, six scenes were excised, and III ii was lopped of its opening and close. The final speech by Octavius was also cut, so that the curtain fell on Antony's "This was a man!"

Tearle also made slight alterations to the text: some of the characters were amalgamated, so that, for example, Titinius became Trebonius, the Soothsayer greeted Caesar with "Hail, Caesar" in III i, and Brutus' "This is a sleepy tune" before the appearance of the Ghost was inexplicably altered to "This is a mournful tune". More seriously, the first entrance of Brutus and Cassius was held back until after the departure of Caesar and his entourage to "see the order of the course", thus necessitating the reallocation of their first speeches to Antony.

Tearle also incorporated the extra lines in Brutus' final speech which had been a part of stage history since the eighteenth century.

The prompt-book indicates that the production made some use of spectacle, notably at the moment of Caesar's first entrance. Tearle had followed Creswick in causing his supernumeraries to raise three shouts before the first rise of the curtain; then, as the music approached, heralding the arrival of Caesar, Tearle noted - with a characteristic lack of punctuation

The Citizens go up steps R and L they stop when they hear the music and range on Terrace - they shout at intervals as the procession passes - very loud when Caesar appears

Order of Procession

From the Palace

R

Officer

Guards Spears and Shields

Two Standards Eagle (sic) SPQR

Lictors

Caesar and Antony

Calphurnia

Ladies

Guards who have gone off and Return

At the same time from platform above the palace Enter the Senators all the characters excepting Brutus and Cassius. Soothsayer Enters a (sic) goes to the Altar C.

After the procession had passed out of sight, Tearle caused Brutus and Cassius to appear for the first time "on Terrace and down Steps R. Cassius goes to Arch Brutus down R". On the return of Caesar, Tearle marked the isolation of Cassius by causing him to cross to the left when everyone else was on stage; he sat there, at the foot of the stairs, until Caesar's procession left the stage.

In the battle scenes, Cassius was provided with another effective moment: The battle opened with

Soldiers discovered in conflict beaten off R and L a soldier with flag met by Cassius who takes it from him and slays him.

Then, to music, Cassius grasped the eagle in his hand and launched into "O, look, Trebonius, look, the villains fly!"

Music played an important part in this production; Brutus' speech in the Forum was interrupted by music announcing the arrival of Antony with Caesar's corpse, and the Ghost of Caesar was assisted by both music and limelight; the same scene ended with a slow curtain drop to the sound of distant trumpets inaugurating the battle scenes of Tearle's final act. Brutus spoke his lengthened death speech to music, at first "very Piano" and then Forte; "very Piano" music was also heard for the final twenty-two lines of the play.

The prompt copy conveys the impression of a production histrionic (not to say "ham") to a degree, and even the local papers, judging it by provincial standards, found that the Portia lacked tenderness, devotion and dignity, and spoke her words without feeling. The Calphurnia (Marie Fraser) was far from ideal, and also failed to show feeling and earnestness, while F.B. Conway's Antony was disappointing especially in his big scene in the Forum, in which

His action was undignified, his delivery wanting in earnestness and impressiveness, and some of the noblest passages in the speech were flippantly spoken. (148)

Tearle himself reached a somewhat higher level than most of his associates, his depiction of Brutus being

good in texture, bold in treatment, and almost pre-Raphaelite in its attention to even the smallest detail. (149)

He conveyed intense passion in a lively and colourful way, full of movement and action, and was so imbued with energy that he "seemed to take the action out of the domain of art into that of absolute realism" (150)

He was physically well suited to his role, and his best moments were in his first scene with Cassius and his farewell to Portia. The Cassius of Edwin Lever showed spirit and discrimination and together they made a highlight of the quarrel, which

for refinement and strength was seldom, perhaps, surpassed. Some old playgoers and critics, moved to enthusiastic admiration, affirmed that nothing had been seen to equal it since the days of Macready, and the audience testified to its excellence with repeated plaudits. (151)

Thus The Sporting Dramatic; but The Stratford upon Avon Herald, in a longer review, was less laudatory, and this seems in fact to have been a mediocre production which perhaps helped to perpetuate the idea, current in that period, that Stratford was the home of amateurish productions.

Better things were to come, however, for by the following year F.R. Benson was in command at Stratford. His aim was to follow the policy of Samuel Phelps and - by presenting as many plays as possible, with frequent changes of programme - to allow the public to appreciate something of the range of Shakespeare's achievement. He tried to assemble round him a permanent company of actors (the Bensonians) who had been trained in the delivery of blank verse, and who had already acquired some experience of acting in Shakespeare. He believed firmly that even the most minor and apparently insignificant parts should be given to competent actors, and was opposed to Irving's policy of centring attention upon the "star" by using inferior actors in supporting roles. Although he could on occasion present a lavish and spectacular production, on the whole Benson believed that scenic embellishment should be simple and inexpensive and that it should be subordinated to the play's dramatic interest.



These were eminently sensible and responsible aims, but at this stage of his career Benson was rather scornfully regarded by the London dramatic critics, and by some of his fellow actors, as a mere amateur. His fondness for sport, and for such escapades as swimming or rowing in the Avon during the long absences from the stage of such characters as Hamlet and Leontes, attracted hostile comment, and dramatic critics seem to have been unwilling to travel into the Midlands to attend his performances. In 1892, under the patronage of the local brewer, Charles Flower, Benson opened the Stratford Festival at Easter with three performances of Midsummer Night's Dream, three of Timon of Athens, and one of Twelfth Night and Julius Caesar, but even The Birmingham Daily Post gave no more than a perfunctory glance in this direction, merely asserting that

The "Company of Players" ( Mr. F.R. Benson's) played with excellent taste and skill in this charming theatre, (152) while the leading metropolitan journals (including The Theatre) had not a word to say about any of his 1892 productions.

It is therefore necessary to rely on The Stratford Herald for an assessment of Benson's achievement in this Julius Caesar, in which he had insisted on teamwork and playing well together as a company. The play was set in appropriate and rational scenery, and careful attention was bestowed on the details of dress and adjuncts to give form, colour, and coherence, and to make a rounded and complete picture, (153)

and - apart from the heavy cold which prevented Erskine Lewis from doing justice to Caesar - all parts were competently filled.

The most interesting feature of the production was Benson's choice of the role of Antony, to which his fine physique especially suited him:

His elocution, while facile and feeling, exhibited an abundance of light and shade. He was particularly powerful in the Forum scene, where he delivered the grand and stirring oration over Caesar's body. His action was dignified, his delivery was marked by intensity, intellectual keenness, and impressiveness, and altogether it was a fine study and a striking example of effective and impassioned oratory. The transition passages from his love for Caesar to his compact with the conspirators were made with admirable sharpness of outline. (154)

The voice, intelligence, emotional power, and fine physique of Benson made him a memorable Antony. He was supported by an impetuous Cassius from William Mollison which was "good in texture, bold in treatment, excellently conceived, and worked out with thorough earnestness and finish" (155) and which made sensitive use of voice, facial expression and movement. Lyall Swete's Brutus was a little halting at first, but grew more effective in the tent and death scenes.

This was altogether a better acted, more professional, intelligent and artistic production than that of Tearle three years before, and it received clamorous ovations from a crowded house. One can only regret that critics of wider experience were not present to confirm its merits.

Undeterred by the apathy of the leading periodicals, Benson resolutely continued with his Stratford productions, mounting Julius Caesar once more in 1896. His experience in 1892 had confirmed him in his decision to adopt Antony as his own role; since Kemble's assumption of the role of Brutus in 1812, Brutus had consistently been regarded as the most important of the three leading roles, and this study has shown how actors "graduated" to it as they achieved stardom. Benson was the first leading actor to break this long-standing tradition, and his innovation almost certainly influenced the more famous Beerbohm Tree at

the very end of the century. Helped by his Roman profile, his athletic form (which looked taller than its actual five feet ten and-a-half inches) and his resonantly powerful voice,

he ran on during the first scene, in goatskins, "for the course", and laughing among the crowd, he showed in every movement the quick spirit that was Antony. (156)

A Birmingham paper realised in 1896 that Benson had found in Antony

a character admirably suited to his style, and in which he achieved a distinct triumph. His performance was marked by ~~at the~~ essential liveliness of character in the opening scenes, and afterwards by the pathos and stern declamation aroused by the death of Caesar. (157)

His greatest moment was, of course, the Forum scene, and no effort was spared to make it memorable. Everyone who could be freed from duties backstage was press-ganged into the crowd, the set being that which Alma Tadema had designed for the amateur production in Oxford in 1889. Benson had been much impressed by the crowd in the Saxe Meiningen production of 1881 and he deliberately based his management of the Forum scene on this earlier model, carefully rehearsing the rising tumult of the mob. At the end of the scene, he tossed off the full black mourning cloak in which he had delivered the greater part of his oration, revealing himself splendidly armoured in gold; with drawn sword, he stood impressively above Caesar's funeral pyre, which was then dramatically lighted. (Kemp and Trewin state that, in his later years, Benson said of this coup, "One management that tried to imitate ... nearly burned down their theatre".) (158) Bracelets and jewels were cast into the rising flames, while round the fire the excited mob threw stones, broke staves and hurled benches into the air to close the scene in a furious crescendo of noise and flames. This apocalyptic moment "called forth the unbounded

enthusiasm of the audience". (159)

The scene was not merely a spectacle, however, for Benson showed throughout such a "splendid conception and grip of the part, and a powerful delineation of it," (160) that the critic of The Stratford Herald commented of the Forum scene:

Here Mr. Benson was superb. Antony's lofty eloquence, the blazing fire of his passion, the intense subtlety of his argument, the incomparable skill with which he plays upon his audience, and the complete reversal of feeling which he produces were worked out with consummate skill. (161)

Benson's only weakness as Antony was a tendency towards "stageiness" in his lamentations over Caesar's body, and in his speech of praise for Brutus in the final scene.

Frank Rodney's Cassius contained some really fine moments, notably during the quarrel scene, and the Brutus of Oscar Asche was gifted with a deep, sonorous voice and dignified bearing; he

exhibited tragic powers of a high order, and won his spurs so far as Stratford is concerned. No actor has made greater strides ... He looked a leader of men, and especially in the Forum spoke with the fire and passion of true eloquence. (162)

Benson had reorganised the text slightly into four acts: Act One concluded in the middle of the conventional II i at "Render me worthy of this noble wife", Act Two ran from Caesar's debate about meeting the Senate to Antony's lamentations over Caesar's body, Act Three was the impressive Forum scene, and the final act contained the battle scenes. The later fire at Stratford destroyed Benson's prompt copies, so it is difficult to be sure whether he had used this text before, or whether it was newly arrived at for this production, but it was an effective acting text, more than competently presented, and Benson's production was worthy of some attention from London-based critics.

In the same year, Osmond Tearle ( Now the temporary manager of The Olympic Theatre in London) brought out a Julius Caesar in which he himself played Brutus. Presumably, it was at least first cousin to his Stratford production of 1889, but it was not advertised in The Times and it is therefore difficult to be sure of the dates and number of the performances. It opened on 16 April 1892, and The Illustrated London News stated that it was "for a few nights" only. (163) The few comments extant seem to indicate that this was rather a "stop-gap" production, and that it made no advance on Tearle's mediocre efforts at Stratford three years before: two journals mentioned it briefly, though neither lavished on it any significant praise. The Athenaeum - perhaps because of the production's genesis at Stratford - surmised that the actors who supported Tearle were provincial:

various actors, better known, possibly, in the country than in London, in the remaining characters, (164)

while The Theatre commented that Tearle

produced it with appropriate scenery and dresses, but without going to any extraordinary expense. (165)

This seems to have been a somewhat shoddy production, but Tearle himself was more than competent, and he appears to have seized his opportunities near the climax of the play:

Mr. Edmund (sic) Tearle's Brutus was a sterling performance throughout but he made his special mark in the quarrel with Cassius, and in his death scene at Philippi. (166)

Neither of these critics mentioned the Antony or the Cassius of this very minor and short-lived production.

Four years later, in 1896, Benson again mounted Julius Caesar at Stratford, and was once more totally ignored by the leading journals;

even Clement Scott, who wrote a regular article on "The Playhouses" for the Illustrated London News, made no reference to the Stratford Festival of 1896.

In 1898, still trying to attract the attention of the dramatic critics, and under the shadow of Tree's London success in Julius Caesar in January of the same year ( a success which was partly indebted to Benson's pioneer work), Benson mounted all three Roman plays at Stratford. The critics, however, remained steadfastly in London, making no attempt to take him seriously: even in 1900, when he brought his Antony and Cleopatra to London The Athenaeum, in very superior manner, stated that the production went

some way towards relegating Mr. Benson's experiment to the amateur level from which it appeared to be issuing (167)

- a poor reward for eleven years of devoted and unremitting labour at Stratford in the cause of Shakespeare, but a good illustration of the condescension with which Benson's efforts were viewed from the capital. The Times, Punch, The Illustrated London News, The Spectator, The Athenaeum and The Saturday Review contain no reference to any of the three Roman plays presented by Benson at Stratford in 1898, and it is therefore necessary to rely upon the views of the local critics.

The Birmingham Daily Post stated that the play was now regarded as "one of Mr. Benson's stock pieces" (168) and had "for some years been accepted as one of the best of the Benson repertoire." (169) Alma Tadema's scenery was still much in evidence, and Brutus and Cassius were still in the capable hands of Oscar Ashe and Frank Rodney. According to the Birmingham paper, the most effective moments came in the conspiracy scene in the first act, and in Portia's appeal to Brutus to

divulge his secret. The crowded theatre showed great appreciation, and "a very scholarly and finished representation was given ... Julius Caesar has rarely received a better interpretation." (170) These views were confirmed by The Birmingham Daily Gazette, ~~which also referred~~ which also referred to the "admirable drilling of the crowd" (171) and the excellent delivery of the famous oration.

There is, of course, no means of knowing whether these critics had seen an even more important production of Julius Caesar which had taken place a few months earlier in London, when Herbert Beerbohm Tree had made so successful a first appearance in the play that Benson had abandoned his plan of bringing his Stratford Julius Caesar to London later in the year.

(viii)

Tree's "Julius Caesar" of 1898 and 1900

Ironically, Tree - whose production scored an immediate success - was a much less professional actor than the overlooked Benson. He lacked intensive vocal and technical training, depending for most of his effects on the impulse of the moment; being thus at the mercy of his moods, he was essentially an incalculable actor. Like Benson, however, (and unlike Irving) he believed in surrounding himself with highly skilled colleagues, and he was most anxious that his first production of a Roman play should bring renown and credit to his new theatre.

Tree had subscribed £10,000 of his own money towards the cost of this building, which was opened on 28 April 1897, and named Her Majesty's. He had intended to open with a spectacular production of Julius Caesar.

but had found it impossible to assemble a strong enough cast, and therefore postponed this production for nine months. During the rest of 1897, Tree was disappointed to find that complete success eluded him in his initial productions at this costly new theatre, and he was determined that his first appearance in 1898 would be a triumphant success. He was not to be disappointed, for his production of Julius Caesar was to win widespread critical acclaim, to run for over 160 performances, to be toured in the Autumn of 1898, and revived in 1900; not least, it was to bring Tree a clear profit of £11,000. The wealth of comment on his performances is another testimony to his success, and makes a dramatic contrast with the paucity of documentation of Benson's achievements at Statford.

A significant feature of the production was Tree's choice of his own role. Perhaps under the influence of Benson's experiment in 1892 and 1896, Tree departed from established tradition by playing Mark Antony himself, and turning it into the "star" role. He chose Antony because he felt that in physique, temperament, and acting style he was more suited to it than to Brutus; he also believed that Antony, especially in the Forum scene, is the character who makes most impact upon an audience, and is most readily remembered by them: in his notebook, he wrote

For the scholar Brutus, for the actor Cassius, for the public Antony. (172)

Lady Tree also claimed to have been instrumental in influencing her husband's choice of role. In her memoir, Herbert and I, which forms a large part of the book of essays on Tree which was collected about 1920 by Max Beerbohm, she states that she entreated Tree to play Antony rather than Brutus; unfortunately, she gives no indication why she preferred to



see him in this role:

It was only between Brutus and Marc Antony that he wavered, and, owing, I think, to my entreaties, he settled on Marc Antony. (173)

Shaw's review of this production contains an analysis of the major characters, and goes a long way towards justifying Tree's choice of Antony as the central figure:

Brutus is nothing but a familiar type of English suburban preacher; politically he would hardly impress the Thames Conservancy Board. Cassius is a vehemently assertive non-entity. It is only when we come to Antony, unctuous voluptuary and self-seeking sentimental demagogue, that we find Shakespeare in his depth; and in his depth, of course, he is superlative. (174)

Tree's decision to play Antony himself affected the text from which he worked, and - indeed - his whole presentation of the play. Although he liked to be supported by competent actors, Tree also loved the limelight to be concentrated on himself, and, unlike Benson, he deftly reorganised Julius Caesar to throw the maximum attention on to Mark Antony, a cardinal point of this reorganisation being to give himself the "curtain" at the end of each act. Since Antony does not have a major speech until well into III i, Tree compiled the first act of his 1898 production from all Shakespeare's material up to and including Antony's apostrophe over the "bleeding corpse" of Caesar. Even with some slight omissions, and with the transformation of Flavius and Marullus into two senators, the five scenes of Tree's first act ran for an unprecedented two hours - "surely the longest known." (175)

The second act was devoted to the Forum scene, and the final act (from which the proscription scene was omitted) encompassed the quarrel (uncut) and the battle, in which many of the speeches were reduced or omitted.

This version had "the managerial advantage of enabling Antony to bring down the curtain on a sensational bit of rent" (176) at the end of each act. This made Antony "in Mr. Tree's dramatic scheme, the central figure of the play. This arrangement certainly adds to the conspicuousness and importance of Antony." (177)

Several of the critics praised this adaptation: The Spectator claimed that Tree had not sacrificed the play but had "still preserved the stately march of the great Roman drama", (178) The Times spoke of the "scrupulous reverence" (179) with which Tree had treated the text, and Shaw paid himself and Tree a compliment:

Before going to Her Majesty's I was curious enough to block out for myself a division of the play into three acts; and I found that Mr. Tree's division corresponded exactly with mine. (180)

Only The Athenaeum was perceptive enough to realise that Tree's adaptation gave the play a different ethos, and that the concentration of attention on Antony:

conveys an impression that the play ceases to be a tragedy since it leaves the principal character victorious at the end. (181)

Having arrived at his text, Tree set about preparing a series of dramatically and scenically exciting coups, and put the play into rehearsal. Part of his unprofessionalism was often evident in the lack of discipline and organisation at rehearsals, and even backstage during performances; Hesketh Pearson draws a clear picture of the chaotic, noisy confusion which reigned as Tree and his stage manager tried to cope with the huge cast and the vast number of stage hands during one of the dress rehearsals for this Julius Caesar:

At one point during a dress rehearsal the crowd got completely out of hand, the scene shifters were arguing, the scenery was swaying, the assistant producers were bellowing, and the stage-

manager, Herbert Shelton, was distractedly rushing hither and thither, waving his arms about and yelling at everybody. Overcome by the general hubbub, and moved by the contortions of his stage-manager, Tree knelt on the stage and offered up a prayer: "Dear Lord, do look at Bertie Shelton now!" (182)

But in spite of this preparatory chaos, Tree's 1898 Julius Caesar was outstanding in its effective stage presentation. The curtain rose for the lengthy first act on a set by Mr. Harker: through a towering archway, the audience could see the front of the new Forum and an array of imposing temples; into this scene came the grand procession of Caesar, with lictors, musicians and a patrician escort. The ordinary citizens wore drab tunics and short blouses, but the senators were gorgeously and colourfully robed in red-trimmed togas and scarlet mantles designed by Alma Tadema. One of Tree's original touches came when after the Soothsayer's warning, "Beware the Ides of March", a girl from the crowd threw a handful of blood-red roses in Caesar's path, causing him to start at the omen.

The assassination scene itself was composed with the skill of a painter, great attention being paid to grouping: Caesar himself was raised high on a chair of state; the conspirators - as his friends - were grouped round him; gradually, they moved in upon him until he was stabbed in the back as he sat; he stumbled forward, and down the steps which lead from the dais, receiving dagger strokes on either side as he came, until he fell into the arms of Brutus, who dealt him the finishing blow. As Caesar fell, muffling his face with his cloak, the conspirators, some of whose hands were red with the dictator's blood, clashed their arms in triumph. The Spectator felt that the staging of this scene contained lessons for other producers:

The stage arrangements are masterly, and if actors and managers would only note, it would show them that it is not scenery, and not even rich and beautiful dresses, but well-graced human groupings that make up the charm and beauty of the stage-spectacle. (183)

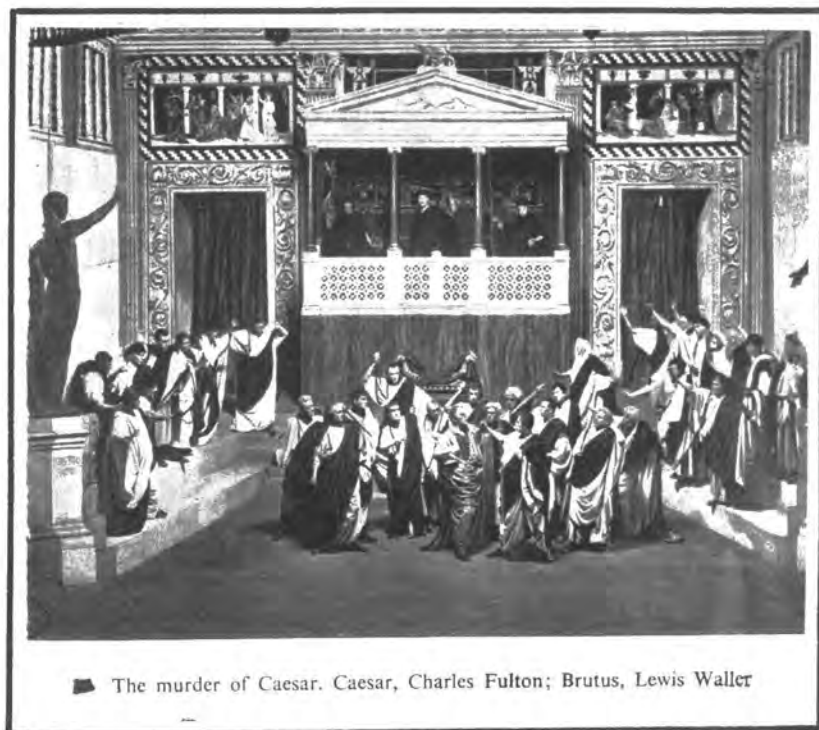
The picture of the assassination scene confirms the effectiveness of "well-graced human groupings" as the upraised hands of the encircling knot of conspirators are echoed by those of the horrified senators on one side of the stage and of the statue at the other side. It also illustrates the solidity of the sets, the use of different stage levels and the rather self-conscious "composition" of the groups of senators.

Left alone with the corpse of Caesar, Antony gave a "laugh of bitter mockery as the crowd disappears" (184) and then suddenly abandoned himself to his grief as he knelt beside the body.

In the second act of Tree's version, the Forum set (designed by Mr. Hann) was flanked with stately buildings which, as can be seen in the illustration, gave the impression of "the marble palaces of the eternal city beginning to abandon itself to luxury." (185) Tree realised that this scene would establish the dramatic ascendancy of Antony, and he therefore carefully drilled the mob which alternately hooted and applauded him in his great speech: his success was considerable, both emotionally and pictorially:

This is an impressively real crowd ... Their excitement is contagious to the house; their execrations thrill; one feels the irresistible force of this seething and surging mass of humanity. And always the picture presented on the stage - the elements, the grouping, the colouring and in a word the composition - is that of an artist. (186)

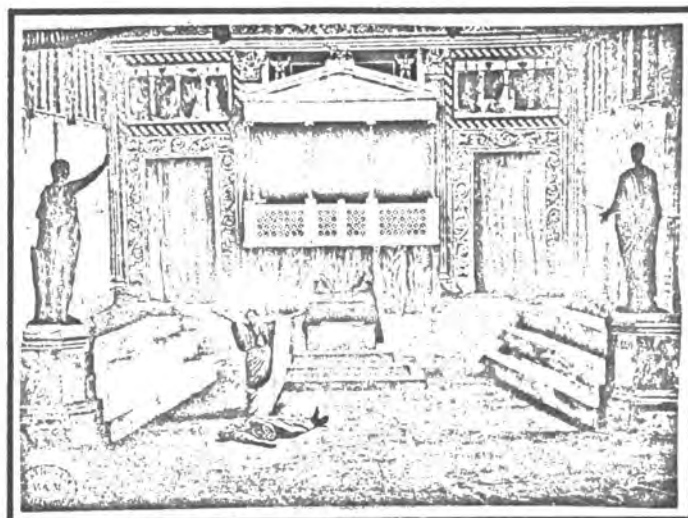
Tree's handling of the oration was felt to be worthy of the setting. It reached a grand climax as a funeral pyre was lighted, as Calphurnia entered to attitudinise over the corpse of her late husband, and as the



BEERBOHM TREE'S PRODUCTION OF "JULIUS CAESAR"

1898

BEERBOHM TREE'S PRODUCTION OF "CAESAR"  
 1898  
 ANTONY'S LAMENTATION OVER THE CORPSE  
 OF CAESAR



BEERBOHM TREE'S PRODUCTION OF JULIUS CAESAR; HER MAJESTY'S, 1898

■ Antony's Oration. Antony, Beerbohm Tree



mob excitedly lit their torches at the flames; clearly, Benson's earlier productions at Stratford were not unfamiliar to Tree! The Times, unaware that Benson had set this precedent in 1892, felt that

This scene alone justifies the preference shown by Mr. Tree for the opportunist Antony over the nobler but more rhetorical Brutus (187)

and claimed that the effect of the avenging mob lighting their torches at the funeral pyre had probably never been surpassed upon the stage.

The illustration shows the solidity of the setting, and the careful grouping of the actors: the lines of the composition flow smoothly down from the left, and in from the extremities, in a series of three triangles, whose apexes meet at the commanding figure of Antony who holds the cloak of Caesar. Tree himself played the scene fairly quietly - his style was not suited to declamation - and tried to underline the irony of Antony's remarks. The Times felt that he succeeded in this, but The Illustrated London News asserted that "he scarcely suggested the necessary sarcasm in the great funeral speech," (188) while Shaw claimed that any effect produced from this speech was the result of Shakespeare's skill rather than Tree's, because "it's effect is inevitable, and Mr. Tree neither made the most of it nor handled it with any pretence of mastery or certainty." (189) Nevertheless, the audience were roused by this scene to such a pitch of excitement and enthusiasm that everything thereafter seemed an anticlimax. The battle scenes, in particular, proved ineffective: Tree showed the two armies confronting each other across a ravine, and skirmishing in a fashion which some spectators found confusing. The Times complained that

The closing episodes of the play are tame ... The battle itself seems ineffective in comparison with the issues involved ... One sees no tactics, no disposition of forces, no generalship; merely an aimless rushing to and fro of small bodies of combatants belabouring each other's shields, (190)

but was kind enough to explain this inadequacy in the depiction of battle scenes as "one of the inevitable limitations of the stage", (191) while The Illustrated London News blamed the fault on Shakespeare's lack of dramatic skill:

That is the bard's and not the manager's fault. (192)

In fact, the main point of interest in Tree's final act was the appearance of his wife as Lucius, and her rendering of Sullivan's ultra-nineteenth-century "Orpheus with his Lute" to a pizzicato accompaniment which annoyed the musically conscious Shaw because it was "supposed to be played on a lyre with eight open and unstoppable strings, a feat completely and absurdly impossible." (193)

The above account shows that Tree had lavished an immense amount of time, attention and care on the successful setting and staging of his 1898 Julius Caesar; unfortunately, he had been so occupied with these aspects that he had left himself insufficient time to supervise and mould the acting in quite the same detail, with the result that the interpretations of the major roles were barely adequate, and seem to have fallen a long way below the level of Benson's achievement. Lewis Waller played Brutus, and The Illustrated London News, aware of a lack of subtlety and colour, forebearingly hoped that time would develop his performance. Shaw was more outspoken and more detailed, complaining of a tameness and a lack of sensitivity which are utterly alien to the divided mind and struggling conscience of Brutus:



Mr. Waller, as Brutus, failed in the first half of the play. His intention clearly was to represent Brutus as a man superior to fate and circumstance; but the effect he produced was one of insensibility. Nothing could have been more unfortunate, for it is through the sensibility of Brutus that the audience have to learn ... the terrible momentousness, the harrowing anxiety and dread, of the impending catastrophe. Mr. Waller left that function to the thunderstorm. From the death of Caesar onward he was better; ... but at best his sketch was a water-colour one. (194)

Cassius was undertaken by Franklin McLeay, who was a deliberately "stagey" actor. His technique betrayed him into "extravagant and melodramatic violence" (195) in the quarrel scene, and he "died the death of an incorrigible poseur, not of a noble Roman." (196) His was, nonetheless, the finest performance of the evening, and he displayed vigour in the earlier scenes.

The main interest, however, was centred on Tree's Antony, which was far from an assured success. In a luke-warm phrase, The Illustrated London News spoke of his interpretation as "a decidedly pleasant and interesting one," (197) and Shaw credited it with certain negative merits:

He was not stupid, nor inane, nor Bard-of-Avon ridden; and he contrived to interest the audience in Antony instead of trading on their ready-made interest in Mr. Beerbohm Tree, (198)

but these were swamped by many inadequacies and weaknesses. For a leading actor, Tree had a notoriously poor memory, and (on the opening night at least) he forgot a large number of his lines; his amateurish approach was evident also in his lack of technique:

A good deal of the technical part of his work was botched and haphazard ... I cannot recall any single passage in the scene after the murder that was well done. (199)

Above all, there was a lack of music and vocal variety in his performance. The Illustrated London News spoke of "the actor's obvious lack of declamatory force and painful vocal monotony", (200) and Shaw lambasted

all the actors for their unprofessional inability to convey the Shakespearean music: the acting, he claimed, was

quite in the spirit of the man who had never played the fiddle, but had no doubt he could if he tried. Without oratory, without style, without specialised vocal training, without any practice worth mentioning, they assaulted the play with cheerful self-sufficiency. (201)

Shaw had wanted to hear "the full organ, ... the sixteen-foot pipes, ... the annobled tone, and the tempo suddenly steadied with the majesty of deeper purpose, ... those moments when the verse ... rises to its most brilliant clangour and rings like a thousand trumpets," (202) but he found Tree's production unvaried and insensitive to the dynamics of the verse:

What is missing in the performance, for want of the specific Shakespearean skill, is the Shakespearean music ... If we cannot have these effects, or if we can only have genteel drawing room arrangements of them, we cannot have Shakespeare; and that is what is mainly the matter at Her Majesty's: there are neither trumpets nor pedal pipes there. The conversation is metical and emphatic in an elocutionary sort of way; but it makes no distinction between the arid prairies of blank verse ... and the places where the morass suddenly piles itself into a mighty mountain. (203)

To Shaw's ears, McLeary's "tone throughout was dry, and it never varied ... The best lines seemed to him no more than the worst ... Yet he was not inferior in oratory to the rest", (204) while Waller's Brutus "kept at much the same level throughout, and did not at any moment attain to anything that could be called grandeur." (205)

Tree's quietly sincere approach was effective in his final speech, but he made Antony <sup>a more</sup> sympathetic, genuine and selfless a character than could be justified from the Shakespearean text. He recognised his own vocal limitations and placed restraint upon the volume of his voice, except on one occasion, when his attempt at a more robust style of

declamation brought disaster?

Mr. Tree, except for a conscientiously desperate effort to cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war in the robustious manner, with no better result than to all but extinguish his voice, very sensibly left oratory out of the question, and tried conversational sincerity, which answered so well that his delivery of "This was the noblest Roman of them all" came off excellently. (206)

As this was the first major London production of Julius Caesar in English since Phelps' appearance at Drury Lane in November 1865, some of the critics addressed themselves to an assessment of the play in general. The Times suggested that

The comparative unpopularity of Julius Caesar in the theatre in recent times may be due to two causes - its complete lack of "female interest", ... and the tolerably even distribution of interest among the three or four principal male characters, (207)

and then went on to state that it "has not been performed publicly in London and in English for 50 years", (208) a statement which makes the not inconsiderable omission of Phelps in 1849, Vandenhoff, Creswick and Phelps in 1850, Macready in 1850 and 1851, Phelps in 1856, 1862 and 1865, Anderson in 1865 and Tearle in 1892.

The critic of The Athenaeum obviously disliked Julius Caesar and expressed his surprise that Tree had bothered to produce it, stating that "the courage of the proceeding is as conspicuous as its piety." (209) He was confident, however, that this revival "fails ... to raise Julius Caesar to the position of a great acting play"; (210) Indeed, Tree's production convinced this critic that Julius Caesar

gains less than almost any other of Shakespeare's dramas from stage rendering, and the magnificent declamation of Antony and the sublime devotion of Portia appeal to us as much in the printed text, as in the spoken word. Julius Caesar is, in fact, in the anomalous position of a play without either hero or heroine. (211)

Four months later, when this production - whatever its limitations - was still drawing appreciative audiences to Her Majesty's, the same critic asserted that this success "surpasses precedent and almost surpasses belief" (212) and remained faithful to his claim that the play had

generally been presented out of loyalty to Shakspeare rather than with any faith in its attractions for the general public. (213)

Other critics, perhaps remembering the position of Julius Caesar as a popular and successful "stock play" for over a century, recognised as sound common sense the public's fondness for it. The Spectator called it "a great acting play" (214) and Shaw saw it as "the most splendidly written political melodrama we possess". (215) He also praised its outstanding effectiveness in performance:

Regarded as a crafty stage job, the play is a triumph: rhetoric, claptrap, effective gushes of emotion, all the devices of the popular playwright, are employed with a profusion of power. (216)

The public of 1898 agreed with Shaw that this was an exciting play, and - in spite of the comparative weakness of the acting in Tree's production - they packed Her Majesty's from the opening night on 22 January until the closing night, over 160 performances later, on 18 June 1898.

Tree's commercial and popular success with this play, which he also took on tour in the Autumn of 1898, led him to revive the production two years later at Her Majesty's in September and October 1900 - the last performance of Julius Caesar in the period to which this study is confined. On this occasion, certain changes were made, the most important being those which involved the battle scenes. The comments of the critics, and the waning interest of audiences after the quarrel scene, had shown Tree in 1898 that his staging of the battle was inadequate

and in the 1900 production he accordingly discarded Shakespeare's scenes in favour of a set tableau which won the praise of The Times:

The new tableau in the battle scene will doubtless gratify those playgoers who are not affronted by the interpolation of tableaux in Shakespearian texts. An interpolated tableau is certainly not more absurd than the authentic scene in which the opposing armies call a truce in order to exchange schoolboy gibes from neighbouring hill-tops. (217)

Another minor change involved Mrs. Tree, who abandoned the role of Lucius for that of Calpurnia, but the most important change in personnel had been caused by the death of Franklin McLeay, who was replaced as Cassius by Robert Taber. This new interpretation was cursorily praised:

Mr. Taber is the most Roman-looking of all the aristocrats, and the restless, plotting nature of Cassius is well shown. (218)

Mr. Taber's Cassius is a splendid example of declamatory acting, (219) as was Waller's "thoughtful and virile study of Brutus" (220):

Once more Mr. Lewis Waller presents a Brutus of marmorean simplicity and dignity, instinct, as the part should be, with sweetness and tenderness, but, in the quarrel with Cassius, glowing with sudden fire. (221)

Tree's Antony was still the centre of critical attention, and The Times - although praising the mob in the Forum scene - complained of an affectation in Tree's delivery which prevented his words from achieving their full impact:

The Roman mob ... gives the perfect illusion of a natural force let loose. Now it resembles an avalanche, now a wild beast, now a raving maniac. It ululates, undulates, dashes itself against the rostrum, subsides hushed and spent ... The sight of Mr. Tree as Mark Antony, riding in the whirlwind directing the storm, is as stirring as ever. It would, we think, be even more stirring with a little less deliberation. The pause is an indispensable oratorical ingredient, but it may be abused - as, for instance, when Mr. Tree takes some minutes by the clock to say "And none so poo-oo-oor" (rallentando) "to do him" (six bars rest) "reverence". (222)

This affectation (now always absent from mid-twentieth century interpretations at Stratford) was also noted in The Athenaeum which

complained of a deterioration in Tree's Antony, "the pauses being even longer than before." (223)

Unfortunately, Shaw was no longer dramatic critic of The Saturday Review, and it is therefore impossible to tell what he thought of this refurbished production. His place had been filled by Max Beerbohm, who wrote a lengthy review of the play. Perhaps he felt a natural reticence about dealing in too much detail with the performance of his half-brother: at all events, although the review extended over nearly two columns, "Max" never mentioned Tree's Antony (or, indeed, Waller's Brutus). He had one short sentence of general praise for the new Cassius, but spent all the rest of his space attacking the ineffectiveness of Shakespeare's portrayal of Caesar and in discussing whether both men and women can possibly enjoy the same type of entertainment, or whether there are plays which are specifically for a female audience and others which appeal only to men. He praised Tree "for having refuted these serried croakers" (224) who had claimed that no play could succeed without a strong love-interest.

The decisiveness of this refutation can be judged from the fact that this revived production ran at Her Majesty's for over fifty performances between 6 September and 27 October 1900, which was the date of the final performance of Julius Caesar in the period with which this study is essentially concerned.

(ix)

### Conclusion

The oscillations in popularity experienced by Julius Caesar in the nineteenth century can be explained by a variety of causes: at the opening of the century, its depiction of the overthrow and assassination of a powerful ruler bore too revolutionary a tinge to be accepted with

equanimity in a stage performance within a decade of the French Revolution. Kemble's interest in Roman roles - and his aptitude for them - restored the play to the stage during the last years of his career, and he attempted to underline the struggle in Brutus' mind between passion and stoicism. His conception of the character was original and influential: Nathan Drake saw Kemble's performance on at least one occasion, and in 1817 (the year of Kemble's retirement) wrote of the way in which Shakespeare's Brutus is raised to genuinely tragic stature by precisely the sort of internal conflict which Kemble had expressed on the stage:

It is not the fall of Caesar, but that of Brutus which constitutes the tragedy ... (Brutus is shown) as possessing the utmost sweetness and gentleness of disposition, sympathising with all that suffer, and unwilling to inflict pain but from motives of the strongest moral necessity ... It is this struggle ... that gives to Brutus that grandeur of character and that predominancy over his associates in purity of intention. (225)

Hazlitt was also influenced by Kemble's Brutus: in his discussion of Julius Caesar in The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, Hazlitt hardly mentioned Brutus, expressing only the conventional views about his "honest manliness." (226) However, in his article on the retirement of Kemble, written in the same year as Drake's book, Hazlitt moved from a discussion of Kemble's acting to a consideration of the characteristics with which Shakespeare had invested his Brutus; chief among these (according to Hazlitt) was an internal struggle which Kemble's interpretation had failed to convey, although the comments of other dramatic critics, quoted earlier, show that he had attempted it:

It has been suggested that Mr. Kemble, chiefly excelled in his Roman characters, and among others in Brutus. If it be meant that he excelled in those which imply a certain stoicism of feeling and energy of this kind, this we have already granted; but Brutus is

not a character of this kind, and Mr. Kemble failed in it for that reason. Brutus is not a stoic, but a humane enthusiast. There is a tenderness of nature under an assumed garb of severity; an inward current of generous feelings, which burst out, in spite of circumstances, with bleeding freshness; a secret struggle of mind, and disagreement between his situation and his intentions; a lofty inflexibility of purpose, mingled with an effeminate abstractedness of thought, which Mr. Kemble did not give. (227)

This is the fullest, and most perceptive, discussion of Brutus in the early nineteenth century, and is of particular interest because it was provoked by a stage performance which, although falling short of Hazlitt's conception of Shakespeare's Brutus, nevertheless aimed at showing such a struggle in his mind.

After the retirement of Kemble, Julius Caesar once more lost its steady popularity. This time, the fall from favour was due to the new fashion for more romantic acting and roles, and to the fact that there was no actor sufficiently skilled to risk comparison with Kemble in a Roman role. Macready's revivals of Julius Caesar in the 1830s were out of duty rather than conviction of the play's power, and they continued the tradition, established by Kemble, that Brutus was the star role; Macready also emphasised that tenderness of character which was later to be stressed by R.G. Moulton, who wrote in 1885 that the gentleness of Brutus

may be seen in his culture of art, music and philosophy ... Again Brutus's considerateness for his dependants is in strong contrast with the harshness of Roman masters ... Brutus's relations with Portia bear the same testimony. (228)

Macready's heart was not really in his interpretation of Brutus, however, and it was left to Phelps to continue the tradition. Phelps also underlined the equanimity of Brutus in the face of crises - an interpretation which again foreshadowed the reference by Moulton to the "imperturbability of outward demeanour that belongs to his stoic religion." (229)



Actors and literary critics can here be seen arriving independently at the same assessment of a complex character.

Julius Caesar's long period of absence from the English stage from 1865 to 1892 (apart from the Saxe Meiningen performances in German) was symptomatic of the public's lack of interest in Shakespeare, and of the paltry level of endeavour on the London stage of the period. The absence of a major feminine role and the division of interest among three leading characters were two important concomitant reasons. When its potential for spectacular production helped to restore (Julius Caesar to popularity at the end of the century, Benson and Tree both seized on the role of Antony as the "star" part and tended - Tree especially - to present him as too sympathetic and sincere (and therefore as too straightforward) a character. They chose to highlight the courage, eloquence and energy of Mark Antony, which he undoubtedly possessed, but they ignored all the less pleasant features of his character, to which a variety of literary critics had already drawn attention:

He is sufficiently unprincipled. (230)

a man of genius without moral fibre ... Antony possesses no constancy of self esteem. (231)

There seems to be no element in Antony that is not selfish. (232)

However, such assessments of Antony, if emphasised on stage, might well have detracted from the star's popular appeal and were therefore eschewed by Benson and Tree in favour of more sympathetic and rudimentary characterisations. They were doubtless drawn to the role by the series of superb speeches and dramatic coups allocated to Mark Antony in the central section of the play; this therefore became the

play's great climax and the major effort of the production was reserved for it, whereas an earlier generation - when Brutus had been the major role - had responded much more enthusiastically to the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius.

Tree's revival brought Julius Caesar back to public favour, and the twentieth century has seen a series of major productions at Stratford (during one of which, Benson was knighted by King George V) and at a variety of other theatres, notably the Old Vic. The range of characters, the directness of plot, the political implications and overtones, and the opportunities afforded to star actors have ensured that since 1900 Julius Caesar has regained the position it held in the mid-eighteenth century as a constantly popular and frequently revived "stock-play".

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22 February 1838	at Covent Garden with Phelps and Elton
10 May 1838	at Covent Garden with the same support
27 April 1839	at Covent Garden with Phelps and Vandenhoff
1 & 16 May and	
5 June 1843	at Drury Lane with Phelps and Anderson
5, 7 & 10 April	
1848	at The Princess's with Ryder and Cooper
1 February 1850	at Windsor Castle before the Queen and Prince Albert
18 November 1850	
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## CHAPTER FIVE

### "ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

Performances before 1800.

Kemble's 1813 Production of "Antony & Cleopatra"

Macready's "Antony and Cleopatra" of 1833

Phelps and Miss Glyn, 1849

Miss Glyn in Command, 1855 - 1867.

Hallidays' Version of "Antony and Cleopatra" 1873

The Jersey Lily's Egyptian Queen, 1890

Miss Achurch as Cleopatra, 1897

Benson's "Antony and Cleopatra", 1898 and 1900

Conclusion



CHAPTER FIVE

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

(i)

Performances before 1800.

Antony and Cleopatra has drawn much praise from a variety of literary critics, Dr. Johnson for example claimed that

    this play keeps curiosity always busy and the passions  
    always interested ... The power of delighting is derived  
    principally from the frequent changes of the scene; (1)

Davies, in 1784, spoke of the "degree of sublimity" (2) in Cleopatra's preparation for death; Mrs. Inchbald (3) praised Shakespeare's skill in drawing the character of Cleopatra as queen and woman; Coleridge placed the play on almost the same level of achievement as the four great tragedies, claiming that it was "of all Shakespeare's plays the most wonderful", full of the playwright's "giant strength". (4) To Drake, writing in 1817, Antony and Cleopatra was a play "which gratifies us by its copiousness and animation", (5) while Hazlitt, excited by Miss Faucit's stage interpretation of 1813, and busily reworking his dramatic criticism into The Characters of Shakespeare, said "The character of Cleopatra is a masterpiece", (6) and asserted that "This is a very noble play." (7) Later literary critics continued to laud the play: to Hallam, it was "redolent of the genius of Shakspeare" (8), and for Charles Knight it possessed "a flood of noonday splendour", (9) while Cowden Clarke responded to its "splendour and richness" (10) and H.N. Hudson to its "vital ecstasy". (11) Minto praised "Shakespeare's bold and sure treatment of the stormiest passions" (12), Dowden romantically spoke of "a golden haze of sensuous splendour", (13), Swinburne and

Symons both found it "most wonderful" (14) and in Boas' view "the work is unsurpassed". (15)

The twentieth century has continued the paean of praise for the glories and splendours of Antony and Cleopatra, Granville-Barker speaking of its "magnificence and magic", (16) and G. Wilson Knight waxing lyrical over its qualities:

In Antony and Cleopatra those brighter elements maintain throughout, and serve even to diffuse a glory over death. Here finite and infinite are to be blended. Throughout we have a new vital complexity surpassing other plays; a wider horizon, a richer content. It is probably the subtlest and greatest play in Shakespeare. (17)

Derek Traversi assessed Antony and Cleopatra as "one of the culminating achievements of all Shakespeare's genius", (18) and even though Ernest Schanzer felt obliged to catalogue it among Shakespeare's problem plays, he still wrote, in his final sentence on the play, that it

develops and brings to perfection methods and techniques used with less consummate skill before. It is by far the greatest, as well as the most quintessential, of Shakespeare's Problem Plays. (19)

The unanimity of these testimonies is striking, yet when we turn to examine the stage history of this much-praised play we find an obverse to the medal. On the stage, there is such a record of neglect and bad taste that no direct evidence can be found of any pre-Restoration performance of the play, and that a leading historian of Shakespeare in the theatre was moved to remark

Frankly, I admit that I do not know what can be done with Shakespeare's great tragedy on the stage; it is so episodic, so devouring in its demands on the stage manager and on the attention of an audience, that I hardly see how it can be presented at all. (20)

In these words, Professor Odell merely echoed the view of most eighteenth and nineteenth century actors and producers, who found the splendour and

diversity of Shakespeare's play so intransigent in the theatre that, in order to stage it at all, they felt compelled to resort to a series of adaptations and re-writings.

The first of these appeared in February 1677 when Sir Charles Sedley brought forth his version of Antony and Cleopatra at the Dorset Gardens Theatre with Betterton as Antony and Mrs. Mary Lee as Cleopatra. Sedley returned direct to North's Plutarch as his source, rather than attempting a revision of Shakespeare's play, and his version starts after the battle of Actium, telescoping the subsequent events in order to approximate as nearly as possible to the unities of time and place. Unity of action seems to have concerned him less, for he introduces a sub-plot of Photinus and his love for Iras, which V. de Sola Pinto suggests he found in Corneille's La Mort de Pompée. (21) There is a further embellishment in the love of Iras for Antyllus, and of Maecenas for Octavia. The play is written in heroic couplets, which are mainly end-stopped, and which provide an air of artificiality, for the voice has a strong tendency to dwell on, and emphasise almost to exaggeration, the jingling rhymes; thus, the couplets hinder Sedley in his attempts to achieve a sense of emotional struggle and dramatic impact, and the verse bounds along with such regularity and amiability that it is very difficult to arrive at any emotional involvement. Thomas Davies was justified in the scorn he expressed for this play seven years after its first - and, probably, its only<sup>^</sup> production:

Sir Charles Sedley could either have no veneration for Shakspeare, or had great confidence in his own abilities. He has borrowed very little from him, and has spoiled what he took. (22)

Sedley's play only marginally preceded Dryden's All for Love, which found immediate popularity and which, from 1677 to 1759, completely pushed Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra from the stage - if, indeed, it had ever taken the stage. It is comparatively easy to understand why All for Love was so much more frequently performed than Antony and Cleopatra at this period, though most of the reasons stem from weaknesses seen in Shakespeare's play rather than from any superiority inherent in Dryden's treatment of the theme. In the eyes of most men of the theatre, Antony and Cleopatra was an impossible challenge, mainly because of the large number of scenes (42 in all) into which editors divided Shakespeare's drama. The physical features of the stage for which Shakespeare wrote had given extreme freedom in change of scene, because the setting of each new location was left largely to the imagination of the audience, aided by the poet's verse, but untrammelled by heavy scenery. After the Restoration, this convention was increasingly superseded by the introduction of large, cumbersome and expensive "realistic" scenery. Thus, the cost involved in representing a wide range of locations, and (even more) the immense physical difficulty of changing the set from scene to scene, made it seem virtually impossible to attempt to mount a production of Antony and Cleopatra which would be acceptable to a post-Restoration audience. A.C. Sprague directly links the absence of performances of Shakespeare's play with the arrival of "realistic" scenery:

Its history in the theatre, since the introduction of heavy scenery, is profoundly discouraging, (23)

while G.C.D. Odell refers to "that hopelessly impossible thing for the picture-stage, Antony and Cleopatra." (24) It was no accident, then,

that the more frequently performed All for Love reduced Shakespeare's 42 scenes to a mere five.

This was a practical advantage in favour of Dryden's play, but theory was on his side as well. In the eighteenth century, there was a strong feeling among certain classically minded critics that a successful play should at least bow deferentially in the direction of the doctrine of the unities, and Antony and Cleopatra boldly violates the unity of place again and again as Shakespeare ranges over Alexandria, Rome, Messina, Syria, Athens and Actium, not to mention the wide variety of locations in Alexandria itself. On the other hand, Dryden specifically set out to bring All for Love within the bounds permitted by the doctrine of the unities, confining the action entirely to Alexandria.

Shakespeare's play also manifestly offends against the ideal of the other two unities, of time and of action. Not only does the action of Antony and Cleopatra extend over a considerable period, but the main theme is also supplemented by the incidents involving Pompey. Once more, Dryden sought, rather self-consciously, perhaps - to avoid these supposed weaknesses; his Preface indicates his awareness that he had interpreted this "rule" more strictly than was essential in the English theatre:

The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it. (25)

To a twentieth century reader or playgoer, this concern to maintain the three unities seems essentially artificial, so that the action seems to be imposed by the dramatist rather than emerging naturally from characters and situation. The desire to achieve unity of place becomes almost risi<sup>h</sup>

as each character just happens to arrive in Alexandria at exactly the opportune moment for the dramatist's purpose. Such economy of scene and action, however, commended itself in a theoretical way to the literary critics of the eighteenth century, and in a practical and financial way to the theatre managers of the period.

Dryden's concern for unity of action also caused him to limit his *dramatis personae* to only ten, while Shakespeare had prodigally demanded the services of thirty-four speaking characters. The practical advantages of Dryden's streamlining are obvious.

The theme of the play was another important factor in the eighteenth century's preference for All for Love. With their acute consciousness of "decorum", many eighteenth-century people would have felt uneasy at Shakespeare's unwillingness to indulge in forceful moral condemnation of the behaviour of the two lovers. Much of the greatness of the two protagonists stems from the depth of their passion for one another, a passion which ennobles them. But an audience in the eighteenth century, accustomed to the peaceful paintings of happy English families decorous in their unity, would have been uneasily aware that the passion of Antony and Cleopatra was an illicit one and should therefore be held up for opprobrium. Dryden himself was very conscious of the need for a thoroughly moral view: the word "accordingly" in the following extract from his Preface to All for Love indicates that, in Dryden's eyes, there was a natural and highly moral concatenation between the sinfulness of the love and the tragic demise of the two lovers:

The same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the excellency of the moral. For the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. (26)

This tendency to look to the drama for moral example was long-lived, and in the early nineteenth century Mrs. Inchbald, too, was looking for moral instruction from the amalgamation of Antony and Cleopatra and All for Love which was performed in 1813

In this short production ... are lessons - multifarious, and enforced by great example - for monarchs, statesmen, generals, soldiers, rege<sup>does</sup> (sic); for the prudent and the licentious; the prosperous and the unfortunate; the victor and the vanquished. (27)

Unfortunately, Dryden's desire to enforce a moral reduces much of All for Love to the level of mere sentimentality, while the introduction of the two young children of Antony and Octavia in III i is too domestic an interlude, allowing Octavia to make a woefully tear-jerking appeal to her husband:

Look on these;  
Are they not yours? or stand they thus neglected,  
As they are mine? Go to him, children, go;  
Kneel to him, take him by the hand, speak to him;  
For you may speak, and he may own you too,  
Without a blush; and so he cannot all  
His children: go, I say, and pull him to me,  
And pull him to yourselves, from that bad woman.  
You, Agrippina, hang upon his arms;  
And you Antonia, clasp about his waist;  
If he will shake you off, if he will dash you  
Against the pavement, you must bear it, children;  
For you are mine, and I was born to suffer.  
(Here the children go to him) (28)

The self-pity of Octavia and the sentimentality of the whole approach reduce Antony to a suburban unfaithful husband, and Cleopatra to "that bad woman" who has stolen him from his family. It is speeches such as these, and Antony's sentimental comments in I i on the weeping of Ventidius

and Cleopatra's description of a wife's role:

a silly, harmless, household dove,  
Fond without art, and kind without deceit, (29)

which, for a modern reader, take away from All for Love almost all sense of power, grandeur, tension or significance.

However, these were exactly the aspects of the play which recommended it to eighteenth-century taste, and when these fashionable merits were allied to an absence of complications (financial or physical) in production, and to a correspondence with contemporary views on the value of the three unities, it is easy to understand why, for 150 years at least, All for Love almost totally superseded Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra on the English stage.

It was first produced at Drury Lane, with marked success, in the winter of 1677-8, with Mr. Hart as Antony and Mrs. Boutell as Cleopatra, immediately establishing itself as an indispensable item in the repertoire. John Downes referred to the play's continuing popularity at Court:

Note, from Candlemas 1704, to the 23d, of April 1706. There were 4 Plays commanded to be Acted at Court at St. Jame's (sic) by the Actors of both Houses, viz. First, All for Love Mr. Betterton, Acting Marc.Antony; Mr. Vantbrugg, Ventidius; Mr. Wilks, Dolabella; Mr. Booth, Alexas the Eunuch; Mrs. Barry, Cleopatra; Mrs. Bracegirdle, Octavia: All the other Parts being exactly done, and the Court very well pleas'd. (30)

The veteran playgoer, Thomas Davies, also thought quite highly of All for Love (more highly, certainly, than of other versions of the same tale), feeling that the genius of Shakespeare had inspired Dryden to greater heights than he normally achieved. He found, however, a decline in power after the first scene and had a low opinion of the depiction of Cleopatra:



Dryden....seems to have been, in many scenes of his All for Love inspired with the warm flame of the original. In endeavouring to imitate his master, he has excelled himself. Ventidius is a sober Enobarbus. Antony, in the first act, is so great, that the poet wanted power to keep pace with himself, and falls off from his first setting out. Dryden's Cleopatra has none of the various feminine artifices, and shapes of passions, of the original; nor, indeed, that greatness of soul which ennobles her last scenes in Shakspeare. She resembles more the artful kept-mistress, than the irregular, but accomplished, Queen of Egypt. (31)

Surprisingly, Davies makes no reference to his attendance at any of the performances of All for Love.

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, All for Love was frequently performed. For example, between 1765 (when it was already ninety years old) and 1790 it was performed with consistent regularity, there being nineteen presentations within those twenty-five years (one performance in each of 1765, 1767, 1772, 1774, 1776, 1778, 1781, 1784 and 1788; two performances in each of 1766, 1768, 1773, 1779 and 1790). After 1790, All for Love appears suddenly to have lost its popularity and Genest records no more performances between 1790 and 1830, apart from one at Bath on 12 January 1818.

In face of this overwhelming competition from All for Love, there was only one attempt in the eighteenth century to mount Shakspeare's Antony and Cleopatra on the London stage. This was brought about in January 1759 by co-operation between the leading actor of the day - Garrick - and one of the leading Shakspearean scholars - Capell, and the text was essentially authentic, though with many omissions and transpositions. Garrick arranged for a multiplicity of scene changes to represent (among other interior sets) three different rooms in Cleopatra's palace, a room in Caesar's house and one in Lepidus', and the tent of Caesar; exteriors included a pavilion on the deck of Pompey's

galley, Antony's camp, a plain between the opposing camps, and panoramic views of the walls and gates of Alexandria, the hills without the city, and Cleopatra's monument. (32)

One of the great scenes was the death of Cleopatra which was probably staged according to the detailed directions which Capell later incorporated in his 1767 edition of Shakespeare. At "Husband, I come", Cleopatra mounts a raised bed and is arranged decorously upon it, from which position she can dominate the stage with regal dignity:

Goes to Bed, or Sopha, which she ascends; her Women compose her on it: Iras sets the Basket, which she has been holding upon her own Arm, by her. (33)

At "Iras, long farewell", Capell's edition adds "Kissing them. Iras falls", (34) and at "Come, thou mortal wretch", it reads "to the Asp; applying it to her Breast". (35) Two lines later, taking the hint from Shakespeare's line "Be angry and despatch", Capell's direction assumes that the asp was too sluggish in its death-dealing task, and Cleopatra is "Stirring it" (36) as she speaks. Similarly, Cleopatra says "Nay, I will take thee too", while "Applying another Asp to her Arm". (37)

Although the production was expensively costumed and was based on this unusual and potentially productive partnership between a great actor and a great scholar, it survived for only six performances. According to Davies, Garrick's "person was not sufficiently important and commanding to represent the part" (38) of Antony, and Mrs. Yates, as Cleopatra, was too youthful and inexperienced. The chief importance of Garrick's production, indeed, lay in its unsuccessful attempt to break the monopoly of All for Love, and to return to something like an authentically Shakespearean text; however, this was to be the last such attempt for

ninety years, for not until Phelps presented Antony and Cleopatra at Sadler's Wells in the autumn of 1849 was there another production using an undilutedly Shakespearean text.

The continuing popularity of All for Love did not prevent Henry Brooke from composing another "improvement" of Antony and Cleopatra in 1778, which seems never to have been performed. This is, perhaps, fortunate, since Brooke's entirely new presentation of the story of Antony and Cleopatra succeeded in debasing it to the level of a little family affair. His domestic interpolations devote a good deal of attention to the children of the lovers, Alexander and little Cleopatra, the main effect being to alter Antony's motives for remaining in Egypt; the alluring physical charms of Cleopatra are here supplemented by the cosy attractiveness and security of home and family, thus effectively reducing the play's stature and impact. Another weakness is the sentimental verses it is difficult to imagine the fiery Cleopatra of Shakespeare's play addressing their children in Brooke's lines:

O, my sweet lambs,  
My babes of gentleness and beauty! - how  
How will ye bear with the unkindly frost  
Of strange and hostile brows? - Who, now, will lay  
Your nightly pillow soft; or, in the day,  
Delight to see and share your playfulness?  
O, ye will miss a mother's tenderness;  
Your hearts will think upon your native Egypt,  
And break with the remembrance. (39)

And so, apart from the Garrick-Capell venture of 1759, the stage history of Antony and Cleopatra before the nineteenth century is one of adaptation, "improvement" and new versions almost unrecognisably far from the text and intentions of Shakespeare.

(11)

Kemble's 1813 Production of Antony and Cleopatra

The first production of Antony and Cleopatra in the nineteenth century also adopted a far from scholarly text. This was the anonymous version which was first performed at Covent Garden on 15 November 1813, with Young as Antony and Mrs. Faucit as Cleopatra. The title page of the adaptation indicates that it is an amalgamation of Shakespeare's text with Dryden's All for Love, and that it is printed from the prompt-book of Covent Garden Theatre. (40) The complete lack of taste of the adaptation is ample vindication of Genest's bitter comment:

That sink of iniquity - the Prompt-book - (for such it is with regard to Shakespeare), (41)

and for Hazlitt's opinion that

the manner in which Shakespeare's plays have been generally altered or rather mangled, by modern mechanists, is in our opinion a disgrace to the English Stage. (42)

This version must have lain unperformed for some years after its concoction, for it was certainly in existence in 1808, when Mrs. Inchbald printed the text in the fourth volume of her British Theatre. H.T. Hall states that "this version is attributed to J.P. Kemble", (43) but Kemble's name does not appear upon the title page, and there seems to be no other corroborative testimony to this effect. Harold Child's pamphlet on Kemble's Shakespearean productions makes no reference to any version of Antony and Cleopatra, Kemble himself never appeared in the play, and G.C. Odell asserts that "there is no certainty that he had a hand in the concoction." (44) The internal evidence in the play itself is also against Hall's suggestion: in his re-working of Coriolanus, Kemble

showed complete disregard for scansion and metre, but one of the chief concerns of the "improver" of this new version of Antony and Cleopatra was to enforce strict regularity of metre; on this ground alone, it is unlikely that Kemble played a major part in arriving at the text which was used for the 1813 production. A further piece of evidence is that the Folger Library contains a manuscript draft by Kemble for a proposed version of Antony and Cleopatra which does not draw upon All for Love; it omits large sections of the play, such characters as Pompey, Ventidius, Scarus and twelve minor characters being excised, while Kemble's only significant addition is a new character, Titius, who acts as Antony's confidant. Furness comments of Kemble's proposed version that it

was made by a man of rare intelligence, an excellent judge of stage-effect, a scholar, and reverential admirer of Shakespeare. If the play must be abbreviated to meet the requirements of the modern stage, it is not easy to see how it can be done more judiciously. (45)

Such comments could hardly be applied to the version which was presented in 1813, which is worthy of detailed consideration because it graphically illustrates the cavalier fashion in which many adaptors approached their task; by contrast, Kemble's adaptations of Coriolanus and Julius Caesar seem masterpieces of scholarship.

The general features of the mélange of Shakespeare and Dryden which was brought to the stage in 1813 are the omission of the Pompey episodes, a reduction in the importance of Enobarbus, and the retention (from All for Love) of Ventidius as a major character; there is also, of course, an immense amount of cutting. Some of the minor textual alterations are of interest for the light they throw upon the mind of the adapter. The most obvious criterion in his mind was that of decency and decorum, an

he consequently replaced by a more polite term any word or phrase which could be considered at all dubious in meaning or implication: Shakespeare's description of Antony as "a strumpet's fool" (I i 13) is bowdlerised into "a wanton's fool": (46) Antony's reference to the hand "that shov'd her on" (I ii 124) is rendered more genteelly but less forcefully as "that forced her on"; (47) Caesar's mention of the "lust" of Antony and Cleopatra (III vi 7) is softened to "crime", (48) while a little later "lust" (III vi 61) is transformed to "love"; (49) Cleopatra's line "Against the blown rose may they stop their nose" (III xiii 39) is turned to "They treat with negligence the rose when blown". (50) Many other forceful phrases are totally excised, among them Antony's reference to "our dungy earth" (I i 35), Caesar's "to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy" (I iv 17), "knives that smell of sweat" (I iv 21) and "the stale of horses" (I iv 62), Cleopatra's "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black" (I v 28), "a morsel for a monarch" (I v 31) and "I will give thee bloody teeth" (I v 70), and Maecenas' reference to "the adulterous Antony" (III vi 93). The whole scene of Antony's fury with the messenger (III xiii) is considerably softened, and his speech beginning "I found you as a morsel cold" (III xiii 116-122) vanishes completely.

It is clear that the "improver" was obsessed by the need for a high moral tone in the diction. Much of Cleopatra's sexual attraction and passionate temperament, together with a good deal of Caesar's contempt for "lascivious wassails", disappears from the text, in deference, perhaps, to the ladies in the audience. A similar concern for the audience is evident in the care taken by the adapter to ensure that the spectator knew exactly what had happened, and where each scene was laid. This version is a

compromise between Dryden's austerity and Shakespeare's munificence in number of characters and range of settings: the 34 characters of Shakespeare's play become 19 in this version ( 10 in All for Love); the 42 scenes of Shakespeare are here reduced to 26 (5 in Dryden), while the locations are restricted to Alexandria, Rome, Athens and Actium, suppressing the Syria and Messina of Shakespeare, but providing much greater variety than Dryden's "blanket" setting of Alexandria. The adapter seems to have been worried that, after being accustomed for many years to the greater simplicity of scene in All for Love, the audience might find difficulty in following the more complicated geographical manoeuvres of his version. Consequently, he added a series of new phrases designed to convey information of a geographical nature: for example, at the opening of Shakespeare's III iv (II iii in the "improved" version) the text reads:

Nay, nay, Octavia, not only that,  
That were excusable, that and thousands more  
Of semblable import, but he hath waged  
New wars 'gainst Pompey. (III iv 1-4)

The editor of the text in Mrs. Inchbald's volume felt it necessary to remind the audience that Octavia was now the wife of Antony, and that the scene was taking place in Athens:

Nay, nay, Octavia, not only that,  
That were excusable; that and thousands more  
Of semblable import; - but since we married,  
And have dwelt here, in Athens, he hath wag'd  
New wars 'gainst Pompey. (51)

A little later in the same scene, where Antony dismisses Octavia, Shakespeare makes him say, "Make your soonest haste" (III iv 27), but the adapted text clarifies the geographical import of these words by re-expressing the line as, "Speed you then to Rome." (52)

Again Shakespeare's III vii opens with Cleopatra's comment to Enobarbus, "I will be even with thee, doubt it not" (III vii 1), to which the adapter felt impelled to add the line "And have command here, while we stay in Actium." (53)

A third sphere for minor textual alterations is metrical regularity, and from time to time the unknown editor felt called upon to improve Shakespeare's handling of metre. He may have been bearing in mind the comment of the Reverend James Hurdis who, in 1792, had stated that "of all Shakespear's plays, that which most abounds with faulty lines is Antony and Cleopatra"; (54) certainly the adapter seems to have been horrified by short lines and by the mature Shakespeare's widespread use of extra-metrical syllables, and he conscientiously strove to ensure that all lines in the version should contain the requisite ten syllables. Thus,

Contemning Rome he has done all this, and more (III vi 1)  
is "corrected" to

Contemning Rome, he did all this, and more. (55)

The reverse process is accomplished at Shakespeare's III xiii 71, where the short line "And put yourself under his shroud" is lengthened to ten syllables by the addition of "the great" (56) at the end of the line.

Unfortunately, the adapter's concern for good taste, clarity and metrical regularity caused him to omit several of Shakespeare's more forceful expressions and to weaken the verbal originality and impact of the play. A scene-by-scene examination of this adaptation also creates a growing sense of confusion which will be only too apparent in a summary. At first the adaptation is fairly straightforward: Act One is entirely from Antony and Cleopatra, with only minor alterations (for example, in



I i Demetrius becomes Canidius and is given both Philo's opening speech and - at the end of the scene - the "age cannot wither her" speech which Shakespeare allocated to Enobarbus at the close of the conventional II ii. In the adapted I ii, the first 84 lines of conversation between Alexas and Cleopatra's maids are excised, the messenger announcing the death of Fulvia becomes Proculeius, Enobarbus' prose conversation with Antony is greatly shortened, and Antony's final references to Pompey are completely suppressed. Scenes iii, iv and v of Act One suffer only slight cuts).

Shakespeare's Act Two is more severely damaged: II i, iii, iv, vi and vii (concerned mainly with Pompey) disappear. Thus, Shakespeare's II ii becomes the new II i, in which Ventidius becomes Canidius, there are minor excisions, and the scene ends at Shakespeare's II ii 170, so that the final conversation between Enobarbus, Agrippa and Maecenas (including the great speech "The barge she sat in") is omitted. Then, Shakespeare's II v becomes the adapter's II ii, in which the violence of Cleopatra towards the messenger is considerably toned down. This may have been on the grounds that no lady could act in such a passionate and uncontrolled manner, but it effectively destroys Shakespeare's conception of the sadistic side of Cleopatra's character, for the stage directions "strikes him down" (II v 61), "Strikes him" (II v 62), "She hales him up and down" (II v 64) and "Draws a knife" (II v 71) vanish from the text.

These cuts were so severe that the "improver" was left with a ludicrously short second act; consequently, he drew on Shakespeare's Act Three and on Dryden in order to complete it. Shakespeare's III i, ii and v are omitted, so that the original III iv (Antony and Octavia) becomes the new II iii, with cuts. Shakespeare's is heavily cut and somewhat rewritten.

[III iii (Cleopatra's curiosity about Octavia) becomes II iv in the version, though]

To this is added much of Dryden's II i, starting with the entry of Cleopatra, Charmian and Iras to Antony and Ventidius (who becomes Enobarbus in the new text) and continuing to the end of Dryden's second act. At the first performance, it was immediately obvious that this was a most foolish interpolation, as Genest's comments show:

Dryden's scene is a very good one, but it is not introduced in this place with propriety - in Dryden's play, Ventidius in the 1st act estranges Antony from Cleopatra, after which, naturally follows the scene in which Antony reproaches her - but the editor of the present play reverses the order of things, and makes Dryden's 2d scene precede his 1st - in Dryden's play the scene lies the whole time in Alexandria, but in this alteration Antony is represented as coming back to AEgypt merely to tell Cleopatra that they must part - which is not only contrary to the fact, but absurd in itself. (57)

The adaptation's Act Three returns to Shakespeare, drawing on the original III vi (Octavia's return to her brother) and vii for its III i and ii, with slight cuts and alterations. The battle of Actium is much more severely changed: some of Antony's lines are given to Canidius, and extra lines are added by the adapter to describe the noise of preparation for the sea-battle. This was one of the great spectacular scenes of the 1813 production: real galleys sailed upon real water, and a good deal of time was spent in preparing the stage for this setpiece, and in presenting the slow and unwieldy movements of the large ships. The Examiner, indeed, felt that the mutilation of the play's text throughout was a direct result of the need to provide time for this scene and for the final procession:

They strip it indeed of many of its chief beauties; but then to make amends they supply its mutilations by gorgeous ornaments and pompous shows ... Antony and Cleopatra is acted for the sake of the sea-fight and the funeral procession. (58)

Some of the lines of the battle scene vanish, either to allow time for the

naval display, or because (as in the suppressed "The breeze upon her, like a cow in June") they offended the editor's ideas of propriety; some words are altered to achieve greater clarity (so that "the greater cattle of the world is lost" is simplified to "The great portion of the world is lost"); many of the speeches are reallocated (so that Enobarbus speaks the lines which Shakespeare had given to Scarus); and every opportunity for spectacle and procession is gratefully seized and embellished.

The next scene in the new Act Three (III vi) is drawn from Shakespeare's III xii (Antony's ambassador to Caesar), while the editor ~~III xi~~ (Cleopatra's approach to Antony after Actium) ~~for the basis of his III vii,~~ returns to Shakespeare's ~~savagely cutting to a mere 12 lines~~ Antony's great speech "I have fled myself" (III xi 7-24). To this scene, the version adds Shakespeare's III xiii, starting at the entry of the messenger from Caesar (i.e. at III xiii 37); all Enobarbus' ~~and~~ asides preparing for his desertion of Antony are excised; the kissing of Cleopatra's hand by the messenger, and Antony's subsequent rage, are retained but greatly softened, the number of references to the whipping of the messenger being reduced from eight to a solitary one.

As this version moves towards its climax, the alterations become even more drastic, and Antony's death is held back until the fifth act. IV i is drawn from Dryden's I i, after the entry of Ventidius, though heavily cut until the entry of Antony. The section between Antony and Ventidius, of which Dryden said,

I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act,  
to anything which I have written in this kind, (59)

is retained almost without alteration or omission. To allow time for the performance of this lengthy scene, Shakespeare's IV i, ii, iii, iv and v (the preparation for battle and the desertion of Enobarbus) disappear.

The version's IV ii is a short scene preparing for battle, and culled from Shakespeare's IV vi. Shakespeare's IV vii is omitted, and his IV viii thus becomes the new IV iii (Antony's speech of victory) with an added speech for Ventidius from All for Love II i ("I'm not ashamed of honest poverty"). When he reaches the end of Shakespeare's IV viii, the editor continues his own IV iii with Dryden's III i, beginning with the conversation between Antony and Ventidius. At the point when Dryden introduces Antony's speech, "Her galley down the silver Cydnus rowed", the editor substitutes the more famous "The barge she sat in", but (with deference to the "star" actor, no doubt) allots it to Antony. The rest of the scene reverts to Dryden's III i, but omits the sentimental interlude of Octavia's two little daughters and ends at the departure of Antony, Octavia and Ventidius immediately before Alexas' cunning speech, "This downright, fighting fool". Shakespeare's IV ix is cut.

Something of the complexity and confusion of this adaptation is doubtless evident in the preceding paragraphs, but worse is to come: the fifth act of the version is so complex in its rearrangement of Shakespeare and Dryden that it is almost impossible to convey the sources of the various speeches and the range of the alterations. The new V i consists of a conversation between Antony and Ventidius drawn from Shakespeare, Dryden and the editor of this anonymous adaptation. For example, Antony speaks the lines which Shakespeare had given to Caesar in IV xi and to Antony in IV x 4-6; Ventidius speaks the lines which Shakespeare had given to Scarus in IV xii 3-9, about the swallows' nests in the sails of Cleopatra's ships; both Antony and Ventidius are given lines from Dryden's II i; Thus, in a scene of only 39 lines, the editor draws on

four different scenes of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, one scene of All for Love, and still finds it necessary to add some half dozen lines of his own to introduce and link this mélange. The same sort of procedure occurs in V ii of the version, which takes place in Cleopatra's place. Charmian, Iras and Cleopatra discuss the battle for some six or seven lines invented by the adapter; then Alexas arrives and speaks the lines of Serapion from Dryden's V i announcing the Egyptian defeat; the scene concludes with some more of the editor's hack-work.

The new V iii opens with a quite unnecessary reworking of Antony's speech from Shakespeare's IV xii 10-13, so that

This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me!  
My fleet hath yielded to the foe, and yonder  
They cast their caps up and carouse together  
Like friends long lost

becomes

Gods! how this foul AEgyptian hath betray'd me!  
Her fleet and Caesar's mingle in the port,  
And there, like long-lost friends, carouse together} (60)

Such completely pointless alterations show how far removed is this version from the practical acting versions of Coriolanus and Julius Caesar which Kemble had evolved, and is another indication that he was almost certainly not responsible for the text of the 1813 production of Antony and Cleopatra.

After this altered speech at the start of the new V iii there comes a heavily cut version of All for Love V i, in which Alexas brings to Antony and Ventidius the false news of Cleopatra's suicide, Ventidius slays himself rather than kill Antony, and Antony bungles his own suicide just before Diomed informs him that Cleopatra is, in fact, alive. The wounded Antony's conversation with Diomed then reverts to Shakespeare's IV xiv from line 105 to the end of the scene, as Antony is borne away.

By printer's error in Mrs. Inchbald's text, there is then another V iii, in which Caesar receives the news of Antony's attempted suicide and speaks the eulogistic lines which Shakespeare had given him in his V i 14 onwards, though much reorganised and incorporating elements of all Caesar's major speeches in Shakespeare's V i.

The new V iv portrays the death of Antony in Cleopatra's arms. This is basically Shakespeare's IV xv, with severe reduction of Cleopatra's speeches. Antony's death speech is slightly rewritten to enable the actor to make a protracted melodramatic demise after the final, "I can no more", the version adds

"One kiss! - and - oh?" (61)

The scene continues with Cleopatra's preparation for death, taken from Shakespeare's V ii with massive cuts (for example, lines 12-70, 79-105, 110-196, 213-287 of the original text are all excised) and some rewriting. Small wonder that Genest commented that "Cleopatra's speeches are sadly mutilated". (62)

V v of the reorganised text is a final conversation between Dolabella and Proculeius in which they discuss the greatness of Antony and use the famous lines which Shakespeare had given to Cleopatra in V ii 82 onwards ("His legs bestrid the ocean" etc). The play concludes with a spectacular funeral procession and the singing of a lengthy Epicedium divided among a Chorus, a Solo, a Trio or Quartetto and a Grand Chorus. The funeral procession gave the opportunity for a final spectacular set piece, which seems to have impressed the reviewer of The Times more than the earlier sea-fights

The last scene, in which the bodies of Antony and Cleopatra are brought into the mausoleum, was well conceived. By ranging the Chrus and attendants on the steps of the sarcophagus, a fine

depth was given to the view; and, excepting the biers which were narrow gaudy fabrications, like children's cradles, there was nothing which we would wish to see removed. (63)

The verses of the Epicedium - presumably intended to supply <sup>a</sup> climactic finale - lavish great praise upon the military prowess and nobility of Antony, but his love for Cleopatra is still seen as the world well lost, and is relegated to a comparatively minor reference towards the end of the Epicedium. The jingling nature of the couplets makes it difficult to take the lines too seriously, and The Times found the supposed climax bathetic.

The funeral song had no particular merit. The choruses were not worse than the usual choruses of the stage. The solos feeble; and the poetry only worthy of laureateship. (64)

It was only in this emasculated version that Antony and Cleopatra was ever staged between 1757 and 1833. The tastelessness of the adaptation of the final two acts is remarkable, and successfully removes all the force, passion, beauty, pathos and genius of the original, turning it into a clumsy and involved pot pourri of snippets from Shakespeare, Dryden and the unknown editor. Why was such a version necessary? It is probable that the adapter felt that he was performing a service for Shakespeare: after all, Shakespeare's play had remained in oblivion since Garrick and Capell's attempt at resuscitation and had received only that one production since the Restoration; the editor was perhaps attempting to bring it to public favour. He would know of the recent theatrical popularity of All for Love, and he perhaps felt that by amalgamating the two plays he could simplify the task of the stage manager and bolster the temporarily forgotten Shakespearean drama with the assistance of the better known play by Dryden. He also had before him the convincing

example of the life with which Kemble had invested a Coriolanus which was composed of an amalgamation of Shakespeare and Thomson. Unfortunately, this unknown adapter did not show the skill and taste which Kemble had demonstrated in his adaptations of the other Roman plays; for the first three acts, this Antony and Cleopatra is a passable success, but thereafter the rearrangements become so sweeping, so pointless and so lacking in taste that the resultant play is made very nearly meaningless and valueless.

Mrs. Inchbald's comments perhaps suggest two other reasons which may have led the adapter to tamper with Shakespeare's play: first, she points out that Shakespeare depicts Cleopatra as a genuine woman, of fickle moods, whereas Dryden presented her merely as a symbol of regality:

Shakspeare proves a queen to be a woman ... Dryden, in his All for Love or the World Well Lost, has humoured the common notion about kings and queens; and there, they are seen only in parade, as the public are accustomed to behold them. But Shakspeare gives these royal personages more endearments, far, than splendour can bestow, in exposing them as part of the human species. (65)

It is possible, then, that the editor's views coincided with those of Mrs. Inchbald and that he was attempting in his version to unite the regal and the human sides of Cleopatra's nature as seen by the two dramatists. Mrs. Inchbald's second point occurs in an aside in which she indicates that Antony and Cleopatra

may be wanting in dramatic merit, so as to obtain that enthusiastic admiration from an audience, which most of the author's other plays have done. (66)

Perhaps the adapter felt that, by adding scenes from Dryden's more successful play, he was increasing the dramatic merit of Antony and Cleopatra. Certainly, the sea-fight, the grand climax in which the two lovers die almost simultaneously, and the spectacular procession and Epicedium all



seem to be attempts to graft onto the play further scenes of dramatic impact. Many of these attempts probably seem ill-advised and specious to a twentieth century reader, but additions of this kind were familiar to, and popular with, the audiences of the period.

It is strange to find Genest - who was usually outspoken in his criticism of fashionable Shakespearean adaptations - stating his opinion that this was the best full-scale adaptation yet made of any of Shakespeare's plays, and commending the editor for his judiciousness:

the modern editor omits too much of Shakspeare - yet it must be allowed that no person has altered one of Shakspeare's plays materially, and has yet succeeded so well - the reason is obvious - he has selected the best parts of Dryden's best Tragedy, instead of patching up a play with his own invention. (67)

Thomas Barnes, dramatic critic of The Times, also lent his influential support to the view that the adapter had discovered an acceptable via media between the rather uncouth genius of Shakespeare and the over-artificiality of Dryden:

The tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, as it has now appeared, deserves to take its rank among the favourites of the Theatre; the grossnesses have been expunged, the improbabilities softened, the interest of the story steadily followed; forgotten, as it sometimes was, among the wild beauties of Shakespeare, or chilled by the stately formalities of Dryden. (68)

Even Hazlitt agreed that the editor might need to omit "certain passages, which he might deem objectionable to a modern audience", (69) but he was much offended by the juxtaposition of "the gold of Shakespeare" and "the heavy tinsel of Dryden", (70) finding that

There is not the slightest comparison between them, either in kind or degree. There is all the difference between them, that can subsist between artificial and natural passion. (71)

and being hurt by the fact that

The transition, in the present compilation, from these flashes of genius that lay open the inmost soul, to the forced mechanical style and architectural dialogue of Dryden, is abrupt and painful. (72)

Hazlitt objected even more vehemently to the additions by the adapter himself, which he called "claptraps", (73) and to the transposition of "The barge she sat in" to the climax of the play, where "it answers no end, and excites little interest." (74)

The most outspoken criticism of the adaptation was printed in The Theatrical Inquisitor, which launched an attack on those managers who pandered to the popular taste for mere spectacle:

We cannot but express our astonishment that any manager of a theatre could present to the public a miserable piece of patchwork, in the place of the rich and splendid tissue of Shakespere ... But spectacle is the order of the day: the intellect yields precedence to the eye, and to painting, and the contrivances of machinery; truth and taste, and sentiment, are the melancholy sacrifice. (75)

This version of Antony and Cleopatra was considerably inferior to Kemble's adaptation of Coriolanus: it mingled great verse with competent verse and with hackwork; it attempted to unify two utterly disparate plays; it sacrificed taste, character and structure to its spectacular scenes. In short, it possessed no literary, and very little theatrical, merit, and yet it provided the only opportunity for two whole generations of playgoers to see Antony and Cleopatra on the London stage.

The Shakespeare Centre at Stratford upon Avon possesses the prompt-book for this production, but it is a disappointing document being very lightly marked indeed - perhaps because Kemble himself was not to appear in the play - and throwing very little light on the production. The bastardised text remained uncut except for the omission on the nine-line speech beginning "Swallows have built/In Cleopatra's sails their nests,"

which occurs in V. 1 of the adaptation. The use of music is characteristic of Kemble's productions, with flourishes of trumpets on every conceivable occasion, not only in military moments and battle scenes, but also on the first entry of Antony and Cleopatra, and of Caesar. Antony's departure to the sea-fight was accompanied by "Long Flourish. Trumpets and Drums," and a dead march was played as the dying Antony was led offstage to Cleopatra's monument and the body of Ventidius was removed.

Pageantry - another characteristic of Kemble's productions - was apparent not only in the sea-fight (preluded by "3 shouts with Trumpets &c before the Scene Opens") but also in the first appearance of Caesar and Lepidus, escorted by two officers, two Eagles and twelve Lictors. The conference between Antony and Caesar in II. 1 of the adaptation provided the opportunity for an effective, if rather obvious, tableau: three chairs were placed in the centre of the stage, and Antony sat in the left-hand one, backed by the standing figures of Enobarbus and Canidius; then came Lepidus in the centre, and in the righthand chair, balancing Antony, was Caesar, backed by Maecenas and Agrippa.

Otherwise, this prompt copy throws little light upon the production, even at the moment of the sea-fight and the funeral procession, and it is therefore from contemporary periodicals that one learns that, during its nine performances between 15 November 1813 and 28 April 1814, this Antony and Cleopatra based its main hope for success upon the spectacular naval combat, the splendid funeral procession and the beauty and accuracy of its costumes. The spectacle pleased the public, and some of the critics, though Thomas Barnes of The Times, castigating the excessive expenditure on the sea fight, pronounced it to be



COSTUMES IN THE 1813 "ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

unfortunately contrived. The encounter of real combatants required galleries of a size that impeded all their movements, and the whole scene gave us the idea of unwieldy and unpicturesque confusion. (76)

The costumes took cognisance of the publication in the previous year of Hope's Costumes of the Ancients and were thus more faithful to historical truth than was usual at the time. The prints of the characters from Antony and Cleopatra which were published by Jameson's Theatrical Print Warehouse in 1814 were based on the costumes of the production; it is perhaps not fair to assume that the stilted attitudes of the actors in these prints are entirely representative of their movements on stage, although the Cleopatra, Mrs. Faucit, had a reputation<sup>o</sup> for being stiff in gesture and gait. Her costume as Cleopatra abandoned the production's loyalty to historical accuracy, and the contemporary picture shows her in a Regency dress which was the height of fashion in 1813; her crown helps to add to her height and to create a certain dignity, but her face, with its extremely large eyes, is somewhat coarse and insensitive, while her gesture is stilted in the extreme. It is difficult to imagine such a Cleopatra enslaving the heart of an Antony, and it is possible that Genest was right in attributing the production's comparative failure to Mrs. Faucit:

This revival of Antony and Cleopatra did not meet with the success it deserved - it ought not however to have been brought forward without a first rate actress in Cleopatra. (77)

She appears to have found difficulty in emancipating herself from the behaviour of an early nineteenth century lady indulging in an attitude of affected levity towards a beau; consequently, Hazlitt found that her interpretation "wanted the passion and dignity of the enamoured and haughty sovereign." (78) Mrs. Faucit's principal means of bringing passion to the character was by throwing a sudden energy and volume into



■ HARRIET FAUCIT AS  
CLEOPATRA AT COVENT  
GARDEN, 1813-14  
(Engraved from the painting  
by De Wilde, 1814)

certain of her lines, which rather took the audience by surprise. Nevertheless, she "conveyed at least a reflex image of the voluptuous magnificence of the Queen of Egypt". (79)

Young's Antony, like all his performances, was competent and exhibited a just and impressive picture of the Roman hero, struggling between the dictates of his love and honour. (80)

Barnes was also satisfied with Young's portrayal, but his comments on this matter help to explain his praise for this execrable adaptation: in Barnes' view, the role of Antony "requires no dexterity, as it must excite no interest", (81) and he justified this opinion by condemning Antony on social and moral grounds as

a character distinguished by the coarse exhibition of common passions, and ranging from love to politics, and from inconstancy to adoration, with the levity of a barbarian. (82)

Consequently, Young's task - according to Barnes - was an easy one!

To catch the poet's conception of his hero, offered no difficulty to one who was capable of comprehending the broad outline. (83)

This interesting production gives very clear indication of the widely held belief in 1813 that Antony and Cleopatra needed to be reworked in order to provide clarity of narrative and decency of expression. Clearly, the early nineteenth century viewed Antony's emotional character as evidence of a lower order of civilisation than had been achieved by 1813, and the moral conventions of the period were somewhat affronted by Shakespeare's portrait of a lascivious but ageing queen and her middle-aged lover. Mrs. Siddons would have made an excellent Cleopatra, and had on many occasions played the role in All for Love, but she felt a moral repugnance for Shakespeare's queen. As Genest testified,

she had been more than once solicited by Kemble to play Shakespeare's Cleopatra, but she continually declined for a very foolish reason - she said she would hate herself, if she should play the part as it ought to be played (84)

In this attitude, she was entirely typical of her period, and neither the adapter's concern for decency and rectitude nor the producer's addition of spectacle could bring this 1813 production of Antony and Cleopatra into any real public acclaim. After its final performance in April 1814, this adaptation was seen no more, and for almost twenty years Antony and Cleopatra vanished once more from the English stage.

(111)

Macready's "Antony and Cleopatra" 1833

In the early 1830's, Macready, then England's leading tragedian, was engaged in attempting almost all the major Shakespearean roles. On 31 July 1833 he began to prepare for his performance as Antony in Antony and Cleopatra which was to be presented at Drury Lane on 21 November; simultaneously, he was working on his interpretations of the three great tragic roles which he had not so far undertaken, and which were to provide the core of his Shakespearean acting in the 1840's - Lear, Hamlet and Othello. Within a week, he was dissatisfied with his progress, recording in his diary on 6 August:

My professional practice of Antony and Lear was very loose and unsatisfactory. (85)

In an attempt to come closer to an understanding of the role of Antony, Macready read the comments of Hazlitt on this play; his diary gives no indication why he selected especially Hazlitt, but it may well have been



that he was aware of Hazlitt's keen interest in the practical world of the theatre as well as his talents as literary critic. On this occasion, however, there was to be no cross-pollination between the study of the writer and the dressing room of the actor, for Hazlitt's comments inspired in Macready only disgust and annoyance, which he vented in his diary on 20 August:

Read the last act of Antony and Cleopatra, and Hazlitt's observations on that play and on Lear. What conceited trash that man has thought to pass upon the public, and how willingly many of them have received the counterfeit as sterling. (86)

Unfortunately, the actor supplied no details about those aspects of Hazlitt's work which had roused his ire.

As October advanced, Macready prepared for his first discussion with the colleagues who were to appear with him in the following month's production. On 18 October, he

Read over Antony and Cleopatra in preparation for the next day's repetition of the task to the performers. Continued my attention to Antony through the evening, (87)

and on the following day, in the Green Room at Drury Lane, he read the entire play to the assembled company of actors. Macready maintained his usual policy of following a genuinely Shakespearean text, though on this occasion there were a large number of excisions - to make time for the lengthy scene changes which were called for by the splendour and variety of the scenery - and a small admixture of some of Dryden's lines from All for Love. This tradition of amalgamation was hard to escape, and The Times praised the skill of the adaptor:

Every part of the drama that was necessary to the development of the story has been preserved; but some scenes and portions of scenes that did not further that object, and which rather detracted from than added to the beauties of the play, have been removed. To that extent, only the alterations, by which the interest of the tragedy is concentrated, proceed. (88)

This was not, then, a completely Shakespearean production, but it was at least a much closer approximation to an authentic text than the 1813 production.

Having read the entire play to his company, Macready continued with his careful preparation of his own role, as almost every day he "thought upon and read part of the character of Antony." (89) On 4, 5, 6 and 12 November 1833, his diary included references to rehearsals of the play - often prior to an evening performance of some other work. These efforts imposed a strain upon the always highly-strung Macready, and, as the date of the opening night approached, there was evidence of increasing friction between the actor and Alfred Bunn, the manager of Drury Lane. Later in their respective careers, this friction was to develop into a mutual scorn and contempt, but at this stage it had only reached the pitch of unhelpfulness and evasion. On 16 November, Macready was understandably anxious to see the costume in which he was to appear in five days' time, but it required some determination before he succeeded:

Went to the theatre about my dress for Antony, which I persisted, after evasion and delay, in seeing. (90)

Later that same day, he returned to the study of his role and to a reading of Plutarch, from whom he hoped to discover something about the historical character of Antony; he then "gave a careful reading to the part itself." (91)

In spite of the meticulousness of his personal preparations, Macready began to panic only two days before the opening, and on 19 November he pessimistically noted:

Went to rehearsal of Antony, which was in a very backward state, and mounted with very inappropriate scenery. (92)

But Bunn would not hear a word against his scenery, of which he was so proud that he enthusiastically distributed playbills devoting considerable space to details of the mise en scene; the more spectacular effects were highlighted by capital letters:

The following is the succession of the Scenery:-

A Splendid Hall in Cleopatra's Palace,

A Chamber in the Palace,

GARDEN OF CLEOPATRA'S PALACE.

Portico attached to the house of Octavius Caesar,  
with the Capitol in the Distance.

A Hall in the House of Lepidus

NEAR THE PROMONTORY OF MISENUM

A Room in the Palace of Alexandria,

The Camp of Octavius Caesar.

Antony's Camp, near the

PROMONTORY OF ACTIUM

With a view of the Fleets of Antony and Caesar.

A Court in the Palace. Field of Battle, near the  
walls of Alexandria.

A Terrace of the Palace, the Bay, and part of the Roman  
Encampment.

Cleopatra's Chamber in the Palace. (93)

However, Bunn's enthusiasm for this prodigality of scenic effects did not raise the spirits of Macready, whose nervousness characteristically led to a feeling of physical illness. He therefore told Bunn that he would be unfit to appear, as advertised, on 21 November, but the manager refused to show sympathy and persisted in announcing him for the 21st. Against his will, and with a weakness which prevented him from displaying his understanding of the part with any strength, Macready spent 20 November in a further consideration of his role

Read Antony through the whole evening and discovering (sic) many things to improve and bring out the effect of the part, though unable from a pain at my heart, impeding my respiration, to practise it. I found that I had just got an insight into the general effect, but had no power of furnishing a correct picture or of making any strong hits. (94)

The next day was spent in an exhausting and depressing final rehearsal.

Macready's diary indicates his conviction that the production had been mounted too hastily, so that the play had been "sacrificed", (95) and that he himself had been forced to skimp his own preparations; he therefore "protested to Messrs. Wilmott and Cooper against the hurried manner in which I was thrust before the public". (96) As the day passed, his depression and hypochondria increased, and he refused to speak to Bunn:

Still rather hoarse, not quite free from the pain at the heart, and generally depressed and weak ... Felt quite knocked up and very unwell. I was so wretchedly low, fretted and exhausted, that I could not speak to him (Bunn). I nursed the minutes on the sofa until five. (97)

Clearly this was an inauspicious preliminary to Macready's debut as Antony, and to the first attempt since 1757 to present a basically Shakespearean text of Antony and Cleopatra. The actor was tired and (in his own imagination, at least) of uncertain health; he was depressed and lacking in energy or confidence; he felt that rehearsals had been inadequate and that the scenery was unimpressive; to crown it all, he had a comparatively low opinion of the merits of <sup>the</sup> role he was to play; His diary contains the ominously significant comment:

"Read the character of Antony through: it is not very powerful," (98) and his unhappy rehearsals of the play had merely confirmed this initial impression, for he later stated that the part "is long, and I fear not effective." (99) Thus, Macready's performance as Antony was doomed to be unsatisfactory even before it reached the stage, his own lack of confidence in the production, the play and his role being a potent ingredient in its comparative failure.

His first performance as Antony was agony for him, his own analysis

of his performance indicating that he was deeply conscious of the tentativeness and rawness of the interpretation:

I acted - what shall I say? As well as I could under the circumstances; was raw, efforty and uncertain in the scenes of passion, but had just taken precaution enough to make my pauses, although not to make use of them - it was not a performance to class with what I have lately done. (100)

In spite of his depression, however, The Times was kind to him next morning, speaking of his "spirit and judgment", and singling out for especial praise his handling of the later scenes:

Marc Antony was represented by Mr. Macready with spirit and judgment. In the third act he was especially fine. The bitter feelings which assail Antony after his disgraceful flight were vividly portrayed, and the anger which the jealous lover feels when he discovers Caesar's messenger profaning with his lips the hand of Cleopatra was no less forcibly expressed. His last scene, where the news of Cleopatra's death wholly disgusts him with existence, was pathetic in a very high degree. (101)

Evidently, Macready's nervous and emotional state was particularly suited to the forceful expression of "bitter feelings, ... anger" and a total disgust with existence after his experience during rehearsal.

Miss Philips, as Cleopatra, seems to have lacked fire and variety, although her dignity brought greater success to the climax of the play than to its commencement; perhaps it was the "tame"ness of Miss Philips which accounts for the remarkable fact that Macready's diaries contain no reference to the Cleopatra who played opposite him:

In the earlier scenes she wanted that coaxing coquetry, that airy amorous gaiety, with which Shakespeare has invested the "serpent of old Nile." She was comparatively tame. Her last scene, after the death of Antony, was extremely beautiful. She was here impassioned, lofty, dignified, her whole bearing was worthy of one who had "descended from a long line of Princes". (102)

The comparative kindness of the reviews on 22 November 1833 pleased and surprised Macready, encouraging him to give what he felt was a better

performance that evening; he was nevertheless still very dissatisfied with the whole venture

Read the newspapers, which were, I thought, very liberal in their strictures on Antony. Acted Antony better tonight than last night, but it is a hasty, unprepared, unfinished performance. (103)

By the end of the week, critical opinion was beginning to agree with the actor's own evaluation, and was hardening against the production. The Spectator spoke of it as "a failure", brought about by the incompetence of Miss Phillips, by the abysmal support provided by the minor actors (even The Times had stated, "We can say nothing favourable of Mr. King's Octavius Caesar; it was mere rant." (104)), and by the comparative mis-casting of the stars

The revival of Antony and Cleopatra at Drury Lane has, we understand, proved a failure; as indeed it must needs have been, with no competent actor in the play but Macready, and even he not in all respects an Antony. It was cruel to put Miss Phillips forward as Cleopatra. Thus suffers Shakespeare, week after week, at the "National Theatres!" (105)

In spite of these strictures, Macready nerved himself to give one more performance - his third and last appearance as Antony. On 2 December he felt that, after a weak beginning, his interpretation improved:

At the theatre I began Antony very feebly, but rallied and acted parts of it better than I had yet done. (106)

but this slight gain in confidence was insufficient to save a production which had been doomed from the start. Antagonism back-stage, ill-health (imaginary or real), hurried rehearsals, mediocre supporting actors, and a lack of faith in the power of the text are disadvantages too strong to be overcome even by an actor ideally suited to his role. Macready could never have been an outstanding Antony, because his intimate style could not really encompass the grandeur and passion of the role; by the

time of his retirement in 1851, this 1833 production was seen in perspective as one of his less noteworthy appearances:

He was not so successful as Antony ... It must be confessed that he made but a grim lover. (107)

He had established the idea of a return to a Shakespearean text, but he had failed to bring that text to life. Later actors and managers, drawn to the play by the opportunities it presented for spectacle, may well have remembered this fact, and been encouraged thereby to tamper more sweepingly with Shakespeare's construction and words.

(iv)

Phelps and Miss Glyn, 1849

It was sixteen years before another Antony and Cleopatra came to the London stage in what would later be seen as the most important production of the play during the nineteenth century. In the Autumn of 1849 Samuel Phelps turned his attention to a production which would return - for the first time since Capell's version of 1759 - to a text eschewing any interpolations from All for Love and "played exactly according to Shakespeare's text, without any of the liberties usually taken by modern adapters." (108) To achieve the smoothness and efficiency he required, Phelps compressed and somewhat transposed Shakespeare's multiplicity of scenes, and excised the three minor roles of Taurus, Seleucus and Silius; these were only slight deviations from an authentic text and Mr. Hall was essentially right to hail this as

the first time since the reign of Charles I, the English playgoer had an opportunity of seeing Antony and Cleopatra acted from the original text. (109)

Phelps' heroic efforts at Sadler's Wells since 1844 ensured that the dramatic critics took considerable notice of this new production. Many of them commented upon the recent scarcity of performances of the play, and formulated their own reasons for the neglect of so famous a piece. The Times asserted that this was "a play unknown to the mere playgoer of the present time", (110) and then claimed that "the very fact that Antony and Cleopatra is performed is sufficient to excite curiosity", (111) finally referring to it as "this neglected play." (112) Similar views were expressed in The Athenaeum and The Spectator. Between them, the reviewers managed to adumbrate a list of those defects in the play which had kept it for so long in limbo. The Times spoke of an "apparent rambling" which meant that "there is no close sequence of incidents to any one point", (113) and The Spectator agreed that history cannot always be adequately dramatised

In consequence of its character as a "history", it has many portions which are dramatically ineffective, though they may please the reader of Plutarch. (114)

Writing in The Morning Advertiser, F.G. Tomlins found that another weakness in the play was the universal fame of the leading characters, so that

The difficulties must ever be great to equal the ideal of "a pair so famous" .... The difficulties are arduous enough as respects a suitable impersonation of Marc Antony; but to realize upon the stage the beauteous Egyptian Queen, whose "person beggar'd all description," must ever far surpass them. (115)

This same idea may well have been in the mind of the critic of The Illustrated London News when he commented that the characterisation left the protagonists as "ideas" or symbols; he appears also to have believed that an over-hedonistic portrayal of the lovers in Antony and Cleopatra



had led to the preference for the more moral All for Love:

The persons of this wonderful drama are ideas - of voluptuous sublimity and gorgeous pleasure - gifted with almost divine capacities for enjoyment ... We are not surprised that such a work should have proved caviare to the general public, and that there was a period when ... Dryden's play was infinitely preferred. (116)

The Athenaeum advanced yet another reason for the lack of success of Antony and Cleopatra in the theatre: that

the interest of this magnificent play is decidedly of an epic character. It requires an audience specially educated to appreciate its sublimity and beauty. (117)

Thus, the dramatic critics of 1849 appear to have absorbed into their critical equipment the views expressed during the preceding century by a large number of literary critics: Johnson and Davies had complained of a weakness of construction, Skottowe and Drake had commented on the difficulty of arranging the historical events in an appropriately dramatic manner, and Johnson and Skottowe had found some weakness of characterisation in the protagonists. The critic of The Spectator went so far as to suggest that the grandeur and opulence of the settings in Phelps' production were a deliberate attempt to disguise the dramatic ineffectiveness of the play, and to beguile the eye when the mind was bored:

Mr. Phelps has very judiciously thrown himself with full vigour into the work of decoration, resolved that when the interest flags the pictorial illustration shall attract. (118)

The Times was less blunt, and felt that Phelps' care over the setting was in accordance with contemporary taste and was an essential accompaniment to a virtually unknown play:

(Phelps) has put it on the stage with a geniality and an artistic feeling which are likely to render it an object of attraction to the whole metropolis ... In the present day, when stage decoration has become requisite for theatrical enjoyment, an effective mise en scene is especially requisite for this neglected play. (119)

Phelps had certainly bestowed especial care and effort on the staging of Antony and Cleopatra: the settings and costumes strove for historical accuracy, he had paid great attention to detail, and his overriding consideration was that the scenic effects should spring from, illustrate and enhance Shakespeare's text and intention. The view of

The Times:-

To produce a visible picture consistent with the poetical one drawn by the dramatist has been the great object of Mr. Phelps. His Egyptian views, decorated with all those formal phantasies with which we have been familiarized throughout modern research, give a stange reality to the scenes in which Cleopatra exercises her fascinations or endures her woes (120) \*

was echoed by The Illustrated London News, The Spectator, The Morning Advertiser and The Athenaeum in very similar terms, Phelps' careful study of recent archæological researches winning the applause of the critics.

The costumes and scenery (painted by Mr. F. Fenton) not only showed great attention to detail, but also attempted to recapture the spirit of ancient Egypt and Rome. This evidently reached its peak of success in the banquet scene on board Pompey's galley, to which several critics drew especial attention. This comparatively insignificant scene was lifted into importance by

the spirit with which the revelling of the triumvirs and their host is represented, the classical fitting up of the banquet, and the jollity of those who share in it, (121)

as well as by "the completeness of decorative details." (122) This striking scene showed Phelps at his finest level of inventiveness,

drawing praise from The Illustrated London News (which lauded his "well-studied bacchanalian attitudes" (123)) and from The Athenaeum;

His bacchanal gaiety on board Pompey's galley was conceived and executed with pictorial effect. The entire arrangement of this scene was a telling point in the performance. (124)

On the whole, however, Phelps' performance as Antony was not felt to be very remarkable, and none of the leading periodicals devoted much space to it - indeed, The Spectator made no reference at all to his appearance in this new role. Other reviewers were mildly complimentary, but rarely spent much more than a sentence in assessing his Antony. Apparently, his make-up was astonishingly good, transforming him physically to a closer approximation to the noble and lascivious Antony than had been expected; some of the writers could hardly conceal their surprise.

The making-up of the characters was excellent. Mr. Phelps was transmuted into Mark Antony in a remarkable manner. (125)

Mr. Phelps' make-up in the character of Antony was capital. The illusion was almost perfect; the actor could scarcely be recognised through the disguise. (126)

He supported the excellence of his make-up by playing with great spirit and animation, and by using his powerful voice effectively in the more vigorous passages. Altogether, it was a careful performance, in which

the struggles between an enthralling passion and a sense of departing honour and glory, were represented most ably, (127)

but Phelps was not really a Mark Antony, and the total impression was of "a remarkable triumph over difficulties." (128) According to

Westland Marston, Phelps "wanted grace and the romantic ardour of passion" (129)



*Miss Glyn as Cleopatra*

in this role and all his carefulness could not supply this deficiency.

Moreover, Phelps was completely overshadowed by the utterly unexpected brilliance of Isabella Glyn's Cleopatra, on which the critics delightedly expatiated. She had hitherto pursued an unremarkable career, playing Volumnia to Phelps' Coriolanus in a very stilted manner the previous year. She was tall, and her dignified carriage and graceful bearing provided her with a certain presence; her feelings were expressed through powerfully dark eyes and through a voice which could encompass many different moods while yet remaining outstandingly clear in enunciation. All this the critics already knew, but none of these talents had prepared them for the way in which she blazed forth as Cleopatra in 1849, in the first of a very long line of performances in what was to become her most famous role as the only entirely satisfactory Cleopatra of the nineteenth century. The contemporary picture of Miss Glyn in this role underlines the reason for the critics' surprise, for this rotund hausfrau (whose shape is echoed in the stumpy pillar at the rear) has few of the visible attractions of the "serpent of old Nile": the face is broad, its Red Indian appearance being accentuated by the straight black hair scraped back from a centro parting. The jewelled collar and headdress certainly seem Egyptian, but the rest of the costume is distinctly early Victorian. Her gesture seems stilted, and there is altogether too much solidity of form to prepare one to expect a passionate and volatile Cleopatra. Two critics, indeed, were unable to conceal their astonishment at her transformation, for The Times admitted

Hitherto we have regarded this lady as an actress of much promise, confined by a very formal style of gesticulation. In Cleopatra she seems animated by a new fire, (130)

and a similar tone is evident in the review in The Illustrated London News:

In this almost impossible character of Cleopatra she put forth new energies, and exhibited a versatility of power which surprised those most acquainted with her style and the scope of her genius ... Critics who before doubted her capacity, were now astonished at the extent of her resources, and the grandeur of the results. (131)

There seems no doubt that Miss Glyn was able to run the gamut of the wide variety of emotions and moods which form such an interesting and - to the actress - such a challenging element in the role of Cleopatra. At the same time, however, she was able to shed over this variety a sense of unity, so that the full range of moods was convincingly presented, each one being a different facet of the same complex personality. The reviews convey the impression of a genuine histrionic tour de force, and may most effectively be allowed to speak for themselves:

Miss Glyn ... portrayed the changing moods of Cleopatra - her caprice and jealousy, her pride, luxury, and prodigal fancy - with delightful spontaneousness, while she abandoned herself to the death which is to reunite her to Antony with a smiling and eager majesty that converted it into a triumph. The harmony which Miss Glyn effected between so many lighter moods and the imperial dignity of her more tragic passages, especially that of her death, was surprisingly fine. In coquetry, in anger, in cunning, in subjugation, and in her royal end, she was still the same Cleopatra. (132)

The same three points recur again and again in the reviews: Miss Glyn was superbly able to convey with great spontaneity the ever-changing variety of Cleopatra's passions:

The wiles and coqueties which the Egyptian Queen employs to hold more firmly the heart of her lover are represented not only with quick intelligence, but with every appearance of spontaneity. (133)

The variety and fascination of the character she touched to admiration. The Caprice, the grace, the pride of the character were exhibited with a power which exceeded expectation. It was evident that she had made a profound and industrious study of the part. The whole portrait was thrown out with decision and force, and richly coloured. (134)

She combined grace and dignity ...; she was, as it were, the impersonation at once of the sublime and the beautiful ... Gorgeous in person, in costume, and in her style of action, she moved, the Egyptian Venus, Minerva, Juno - now pleased now angry - now eloquent, now silent - capricious, and resolved, according to the situation and sentiment to be rendered. (135)

Her second triumph was in the anger with which she stormed at the messenger who brought her the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia, which

bordered perhaps on extravagance: but this is the tendency of the language she has to utter; and, with less violence, she might have been less consistent with the real force of her words. (136)

This scene also gave Miss Glyn the opportunity to convey a sense of the underlying evil which could rise frighteningly to the surface of

Cleopatra's character:

Her penetration into the undercurrent of wickedness which exists beneath all Cleopatra's fascinations, displays an acumen constantly exercised. You feel that the spiteful rage with which she receives the news of Octavia's marriage, and which would vent itself with Oriental cruelty on the messenger, is only the stronger manifestation of the lurking devil which peeps out in her blander moments. (137)

But her greatest moment was perhaps the death scene, which

was sublime. With a magnificent smile of triumph, she is, as it were, translated to the shades, there to meet her imperial lover. (138)

The death by the bite of the asp, when she allows her face to be kindled by a sort of joyous rapture at the prospect of escaping Caesar and meeting Antony in another world, is excellently conceived and beautifully executed. (139)

It was in the fifth act, when preparing for her death, that the better phases of the character and the more refined parts of the action tested the fitness of the actress for this assumption. Indignant majesty, compulsory resignation, heroic resolve, and tender memory were all adequately pronounced. The death itself was a triumph. With the asp at her bosom, the countenance of Cleopatra became irradiated with a sudden gladness; and she passed as it were exultingly into the land of shadow where she was to meet "the curled Antony." (140)

This, although there occasionally remained traces of stiffness and formality of gesture, the consensus of opinion was well summed up by the critic of The Illustrated London News in his bold claim

Altogether, Miss Glyn's performance of Cleopatra is the most superb thing ever witnessed on the modern stage. (141)

The profusion of admiring comment already quoted clearly indicates that this opinion was endorsed by many other witnesses of her performance. At last an actress had appeared who could be as wholeheartedly identified with the role of Cleopatra as Kemble had been with that of Coriolanus, or as, in our own time, Leonard Rossiter has been with the Arturo Ui of Brecht; her performance ensured that Phelps' revival was the only presentation of Antony and Cleopatra in the nineteenth century to be an artistic, dramatic and financial success. She brought the play to the attention and into the affections of the theatregoing public for the first time in its history and she incidentally provided Phelps with the longest run he ever achieved in his many years at Sadler's Wells (142) for Antony and Cleopatra was performed there on nineteen occasions between 22 October and 6 December 1849, thus helping to establish the gradually developing policy of presenting plays "for a season" rather than in sporadic performances as part of a repertoire. Together, Phelps and Isabella Glyn had demonstrated that this play could be successfully presented on the stage; six years later, The Athenaeum paid tribute to Phelps' achievement with Antony and Cleopatra

So thoroughly ideal is it in its elements that the critic was accustomed to believe it altogether ineligible for stage representation; and that in particular the character of Cleopatra could not be even tolerably impersonated. Some few seasons ago Mr. Phelps, however, dared to think otherwise, and conceived that he had the means in the then state of his company for producing the drama with effect. He was not



disappointed. Miss Glyn proved that she had at least aptitude for the character of the Egyptian queen, and the tragedy became remarkably attractive. (143)

Indeed, the tragedy - now restored to a Shakespearian text and able to make its effect untrammelled by additions from Dryden - had become so closely identified with Miss Glyn's monumental performance that no other actress attempted it during the rest of Isabella Glyn's long career. In the next eighteen years, she appeared in three further London productions of Antony and Cleopatra, in addition to delighting large audiences with her frequent "readings" from the play in a variety of halls.

(v)

Miss Glyn in Command, 1855-1867

In March 1855, Miss Glyn brought her interpretation of Cleopatra to the Standard Theatre in Shoreditch for nine performances, with Marston as her Antony. The Athenaeum was outspoken about the decline of the drama into its "long night" which caused this famous interpretation to hide itself away in the East End and

not at the West End, where no performer, if not leasing a theatre, can hope to appear in any important venture - at the East End, at a cheap Shoreditch theatre, - which had already gained a reputation for having engaged theatrical stars, for almost fabulous sums, to shine for certain periods during the long night of the drama in England. (144)

The critic took some consolation from the fact that, even if the works of Shakespeare had been banished from fashionable areas by the emptyheadedness of the upper classes, they still showed their power to impress and give pleasure to the lower echelons of society:

The poetic drama rejected by the frivolous and the fashionable has yet a home in the heart of the working man; and can operate as an influence, even when not understood, on the imagination of the masses. (145)

"The imagination of the masses" was much stimulated in this production by "a wealth of histrionic resources, lavished with a befitting prodigality on the luscious poetry" (146) and by what The Spectator called the "elaborate magnificence" of its mise en scene. The main glory, though, was Miss Glyn herself whose frequent public readings of the play had consolidated her earlier skills and brought such a polish and assurance to her performance that she

delivered the text with a succession of glancing lights and minute shades that keep the watchful spectator in perpetual surprise, (and) acted with a refinement only to be gained by practice. (148)

Again, Miss Glyn excelled in her representation of the caprices and the transitions of mood in the role of Cleopatra, providing a performance which was "brilliant and fascinating," (149) while Marston, who was the last of the Kemble school and who based his approach largely upon fine elocution and graceful posture, was perhaps able to approach more closely to the passion and the pathos of Shakespeare's Antony <sup>than</sup> ~~and~~ Phelps had done:

Mr.H.Marston.... looked the part well, and acted it with his usual intelligence; as he warmed into the passion and situation of the character, he became pathetic, and so won on the sympathies of this great multitude of spectators that, at the end of the third act, he was called for, but abstained from appearing. (150)

This production was so successful that it was revived at the same theatre two-and-a-half years later, when, on 24, 25, 26 and 29 August 1857, Marston and Miss Glyn recreated their interpretations of Antony and Cleopatra, following this second successful foray into the East End with long runs at the Standard of The Duchess of Malfi and The Winter's Tale. C.B.Young makes no reference to this revival in his stage history of Antony and Cleopatra in the New Cambridge Shakespeare.

There was one unexpected side-effect of Miss Glyn's success in

keeping this play before the public gaze: while Shakespeare's play was forced to retire to an unfashionable theatre such as the Standard, a burlesque version, called An Eccentric View of the Well-Known Tale of Antony and Cleopatra; being Her Story and His Story related in a Modern Nilo-metre was presented by F.C.Burnand at the Haymarket, in the heart of the West End. In this production of November 1866, Burnand seems to have assumed that his audience would be familiar with the recent productions of Shakespeare's play, which he attempted to rival in spectacular effects which could not disguise the paucity of the verse:

As a spectacle, the piece has great merits: but the writer has not been so happy in his couplets as usual. (151)

A sad illustration of the depths to which drama had sunk in mid-Victorian England.

As the century progressed, spectacle became ever more popular and Antony and Cleopatra grew to be a vehicle for productions which steadily increased in lavishness and which found financial, if not artistic, success. Miss Glyn's final appearance as Cleopatra in 1867 underlined one of the paradoxes which were beginning to surround this play: while the old Shakespearean war-horses, such as Julius Caesar, dropped out of the repertoire and it became almost impossible to see performances of the Shakespearean plays in which Kemble, Kean, Macready and Phelps had excelled for the previous seventy-five years, Antony and Cleopatra - a play hitherto utterly neglected - was suddenly precipitated into prominence, receiving about two hundred London performances between 1867 and 1897. One of the reasons for this sudden success was that this play, with its oriental setting, its court scenes, its variety of setting, and its battles, was a natural choice for the spectacular "treatment" then so popular in the

theatre. Secondly, there was the attraction of novelty: audiences could not claim to be sated with productions of this play as conceivably they could with Hamlet and Macbeth, for example. Again, the play was something of a challenge to leading actors and managers, who could take pride in delighting the public with a play which had for so long been considered unactable. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, Miss Glyn's triumph as Cleopatra had forcefully demonstrated the potentialities of the play, and the laurels which could be won in it.

In 1866, Charles Calvert launched the first of this series of spectacular productions of Antony and Cleopatra at the Theatre Royal in Manchester, establishing once more the precedent of a drastic adaptation of the text in order to allow time for a rich panoply of scenic effects aided by armour and regalia purchased in Paris from Le Blanc Grainger. Miss Glyn had meanwhile been continuing with her successful reading from Shakespeare, and especially from Antony and Cleopatra, in the St. James' Hall, London, and elsewhere, and she seems to have been spurred by the provincial success of the Calverts to return to her role as Cleopatra, opening at the Princess's on 15 May 1867. It was at this theatre that Charles Kean had mounted his lavish productions a decade before, spending over £10,000 on improving and enlarging the building, which nevertheless remained small by comparison with the former Patent Houses. From him, the managership had passed first to Augustus Harris, Senior, and then to George Vining, who soon embarked on a policy of reviving past successes, given by established performers. His 1867 Antony and Cleopatra fitted neatly into this category, for Miss Glyn was by now as familiar with the part, as experienced in its enactment, and as closely identified with the

character, as it was then possible to be. The audience at the opening night were therefore predisposed to witness a success, and they were not disappointed: during the next few days, the superlatives fell thick and fast as critics enumerated the merits of Miss Glyn's "perfect conception" of the role which "is altogether her own." (152) Her interpretation was hailed as "one of the most perfect creations achieved by modern histrionic art" (153) in which "not a line, not a phrase, not an emphasis, escapes the acumen of this gifted actress," (154) Miss Glyn's triumph placed her on as high a pedestal as any actress since Sarah Siddons, and left "no doubt on the mind that Miss Glyn is as great an actress as ever adorned the English stage." (155)

The lengthy review in The Times deserves quotation because it contained a detailed account of Miss Glyn's ability to portray the seductive power of Cleopatra, her almost sado-masochistic desire to propel her lover towards tragedy, and her ecstatic death; the actress appears to have become Cleopatra in appearance, bearing and emotion, convincingly unifying the many strands of character into a homogeneous whole:

The character presented by Miss Glyn is that of a woman endowed with surpassing personal charms and accomplished in all the arts of blandishment, who deliberately brings to humiliation and destruction a man originally of an ambitious nature - a man, too, be it emphatically stated, whom she passionately loves, nay, she adores for the very qualities she perpetually undermines - .... Enraptured with the joys of the moment, she courts the destruction of herself as well as of her victim, and when life is robbed of its delights finds refuge, like a true voluptuary of the antique type, in a painless death. She lives for love and pleasure, and in a sort of sleepily (sic) ecstasy (sic) she dies.... Miss Glyn's impersonation is one continuous work, without flaw or gleamish - all of a piece from beginning to end. The personal appearance, the winning smile, the triumphant consciousness of power, the torments of a very feminine jealousy, the graceful bearing, even the gorgeous costumes, are each and every one essential to this great work of histrionic art. (156)

One further quotation will serve to show that The Times was not alone in feeling that "to Miss Glyn, and Miss Glyn only, does Cleopatra belong" (157) for there is confirmation of her excellence in all the reviews, of which The Athenaeum may be taken as typical:

The witchery of the blandishments, the Asiatic undulations of the form, the variety of the enchantments, the changes of mood, the impetuous passion, and in the end the noble resignation: - all these points are brought out with an accuracy of elocution and with a force of genius. (158)

As might be expected, Miss Glyn's tour de force completely overshadowed the performance of her Antony, who on this occasion was Henry Loraine. He had carefully studied his role, and, physically, he made a fine classic figure:

His attitudes were sometimes fine; and in his elocution he judiciously avoided that pompous delivery which adds injurious weight to poetic dialogue. (159)

Such perfunctory praise seems to indicate a competent but unexciting interpretation thrust into the background by the vigour and excellence of Miss Glyn's achievement, and The Times said no more than that.

Mr. Vining may be congratulated on securing an actor who plays the part so sensibly and looks it so admirably as Mr. Loraine, (160)

while Punch never even referred to the Antony of this production.

Indeed, the periodicals were so little stirred by Loraine's skill that they devoted a great deal more space to a discussion of the scenery and costumes, which had originally been used in the Calverts' Manchester production of the previous September which had been staged with a lavish deployment of the talents of scenic designers. Mr. T. Grieve excelled himself in his depiction of the interior of Cleopatra's palace, of Caesar's house and of panoramic views of Rome, Alexandria, the banks of the Nile, and

and the plain near Actium, which proved his ability "to realise on the stage the most magnificent of buildings and the most extensive landscapes, with minute attention to details." (161) So complicated were the sets that one artist could not paint them unaided, and so Mr. F. Lloyds was called upon to recreate Pompey's galley in the moonlight, his achievement being sufficiently memorable to draw approval from several journals, though Punch inquired with barbed tongue:

Who feels the need of scenery, that hears the glowing poetry wherein Enobarbus paints the voyage of Cleopatra? What artist could so vividly depict her pomp and grandeur? The play as acted now-o'-nights, has great scenic attractions, but they only show that Shakespeare was the greater scene-painter. (162)

The scenery of this production was not the only acquisition from the Manchester venture of Mr. and Mrs. Calvert. Like other actors before him, Calvert thought that he could improve on Shakespeare and he had therefore evolved his own version of Antony and Cleopatra, described by G.C.D. Odell as "a poor thing" (163) and used by Vining in 1867. Professor Odell's description of Calvert's version seems to indicate that he had not actually studied the printed version of Calvert's text, which is available in the Central Reference Library, Manchester; consequently, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving contains certain inaccuracies in its description of this version. Odell (164) states that the first act of Calvert's text consists of two scenes, whereas in fact there were three (I 1 drawn from Shakespeare's I 1, ii and iii and concluding with a few words from Shakespeare's IV viii); I 2 drawn from Shakespeare's I iv; and I 3 drawn from Shakespeare's I v). The second act is split into four scenes (II 1 drawn from Shakespeare's II ii; II 2 drawn from Shakespeare's III ii 23 onwards and II iii; II 3 - the scene with the messenger - drawn from Shakespeare's II v and III iii; and II 4 - on Pompey's galley - drawn

from Shakespeare's II vi and vii). Odell, who unaccountably speaks of five acts in Calvert's edition, when there are in fact only four, was also incorrect when he stated that Calvert did not utilise Shakespeare's II iii.

Calvert's third act also has four scenes (Odell (165) says it has nine): III 1, Caesar's House, drawn from Shakespeare's III vi; III 2, Antony's Camp, drawn from Shakespeare's III vii and IV xii; III 3, Open Country, drawn from Shakespeare's III x and xii; and III 4, Cleopatra's Palace, drawn from Shakespeare's II<sup>1</sup> xi and xiii and IV ii). The act concludes with a lavish Alexandrian Festival. The final act of Calvert's text is the most condensed and contains five scenes, not the three referred to by Odell (166). These are IV 1 drawn from Shakespeare's IV iv; IV 2, in Caesar's Camp, drawn from Shakespeare's IV i and vi; IV 3, on the banks of the Nile, drawn from Shakespeare's IV xii and xiv; IV 4 encompassing the death of Enobarbus and drawn from Shakespeare's IV ix, and Scene Last, in the Monument, containing the consecutive deaths of Antony and Cleopatra and drawn from Shakespeare's IV xv and V ii. The play concludes with a Tableau.

Calvert's version butchers the play for the sake of scenic effect to such an extent that "a world tragedy is reduced to a love episode in Alexandria and its environment" (167), and that it becomes almost impossible for anyone unfamiliar with the original play to follow its events with any exactitude or clarity. Charles Calvert attempted to justify his adaptation by quoting the adverse comments on Antony and Cleopatra made <sup>Johnson and Gervinus, and by adding to these his own views. (As a producer,</sup> by Schlegel; Calvert objected to the play's diffuseness, to the large number of scene changes, and to the multiplicity of comparatively insignificant characters. He solved the first problem by cutting large



tracts of text (for example, the conversation between Cleopatra's servants and the Soothsayer which forms the first 83 lines of Shakespeare's I ii; the whole of II i, II iv, III i, III iv, II<sup>I</sup> v, IV iii and V i), and by shortening many speeches (for example, after Enobarbus' famous description of Cleopatra in the usual II ii, Calvert's version dispenses with the references to Cleopatra hopping through the street and her ability to make hungry rather than to cloy the appetites of men). Scenes were reduced in number from 42 to 16 by cutting and amalgamation as described above, and the following characters were excised (though some of their speeches were reallocated): Dercetas, Demetrius, Mecaenas, Doqlabella, Gallus, Menecrates, Varrius, Taurus, Silius, Alexas, Seleucus, Euphronius, and Messengers. Calvert claimed that

Admitting their importance historically, I have nevertheless omitted them, from the conviction that they are not essential to the effective presentation of Antony and Cleopatra, and that their absence makes the remaining parts more prominent and acceptable to trained performers. (168)

He admitted that by shortening the text he had caused "diminution of the matter" (169) but he asserted that the splendour of the production would enhance the play's appeal:

I have introduced music and other adornments, because I think them not only admissible but conducive to the better enjoyment of so splendid a work. (170)

As it proceeds, this botched text grows ever further from Shakespeare's shaping of the play and yet - and this is another of the paradoxes which abound in the staging of this play - between 15 May and 11 June 1867 this savagely shortened version was performed more times (twenty-four in all) than any other production of Antony and Cleopatra in the stage history of the play to that date. Calvert had dispensed with twenty of the scenes which would be found in a normal edition of

the play, and yet he had grafted onto the remains so much pageantry and complicated scenery that the performance extended over more than four hours, concluding after midnight.

To twentieth century eyes, an absurd situation had been reached, in which essential sections of the play were brutally and tastelessly excised for the sake of mere spectacle. But the most astonishing fact about this production was the silence of most dramatic critics about the inadequacies of Calvert's adaptation: The Athenaeum and Illustrated London News had nothing to say against it, and never referred to the excisions; The Times did not even mention that the play had been adapted for performance, and spoke of it as if it were entirely Shakespearean. Phrases such as "one of Shakespeare's most celebrated works" (171), "a work of such admitted excellence" (172), "the most marvellous of Shakespeare's tragedies", (173) "a tragedy ... glorious in diction and abstractedly lofty in its every thought" (174), might well apply to Shakespeare's play, but they are hardly consonant with Calvert's inartistic surgery. Critics even lavished outspoken praise upon the production:

Altogether, the affair is equally magnificent as spectacle, as poem, and as acted play, (175)

and

We may safely assert that those who miss the opportunity of seeing it now forego the advantage of fully appreciating the genius of Shakespeare. (176)

It is inconceivable that the dramatic critics had failed to notice that this production was only an approximation to Shakespeare's play. They were not usually averse to condemning the philistinism of the London theatre of this time; why, then, did they not protest against the

insensitive way in which Calvert had wielded his scissors, subordinating Shakespeare's verse to magnificence of scenic effect?

There are many possible answers to this question. Perhaps, in the arid waste of farce and melodrama which constituted most of London's theatrical endeavour in the late 1860's, even a mangled Antony and Cleopatra was a pleasant oasis of literary and dramatic skill. Or perhaps the superlative talents of Miss Glyn seemed to compensate for Calvert's lack of taste; or perhaps the critics were subdued to the mould in which they worked and found pleasure in extravagant and exotic scenic effects. Another possibility is that the critics were as short of aesthetic perception as Calvert himself - a possibility which receives some support from the fact that The Times could speak of Cleopatra as "A comedy character, who comes to a tragic end" and could say of her lover that

Even a great tragic "star" could scarcely make an imposing figure of Mark Antony, bereaved as he is of the eloquence which makes him so important in Julius Caesar. (177)

But the most likely explanation of all is that the reviewers, conditioned by the versions of Capell and the 1813 editor, and by the strictures of some earlier literary critics, had accepted as historical fact that Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra was full of faults which needed to be eradicated before it could find favour with the public; certainly, The Times said of the play that it was

not blessed with those situations that take an audience by storm, and remain fixed in the memory when the rest of a work is comparatively forgotten. (178)

Calvert had attempted to win the applause of playgoers who were used to undemanding shows and thrills, and he did not altogether succeed:

The audience do not love it ... To comprehend an argument of this

kind an audience requires to be differently educated, than the habitues of the Princess's Theatre. They have simply to rise to the greatness of the occasion; and they are not yet, we fear, able to do so. (179)

Nevertheless, even in an emasculated version, something of the potential of the play was revealed, especially in the outstanding performance of Miss Glyn, and other managers sought to find even greater success with it than Vining had achieved. Unfortunately, the net result of Miss Glyn's achievement seems to have been to persuade later managers that Antony and Cleopatra must be textually bastardised, and weighed down with spectacle and with heavily realistic scenery before it could find favour. Thus - another paradox - Isabella Glyn's demonstration of the power, range and fascination of Cleopatra's character enabled Antony and Cleopatra to fall victim to the fashion for altered texts and over-elaborate productions which was then holding sway in the London theatre. Vining's modest success in 1867 persuaded Chatterton, the manager of Drury Lane, to mount yet another version of the play in 1873 which was to run for the hitherto unprecedented number of seventy-five performances. Unfortunately, Chatterton followed the lead he had been given by Calvert and Vining, and produced a piece of spectacle so complex that it demanded what was virtually a complete rewriting of Shakespeare's play.

(vi)

Halliday's Version of "Antony and Cleopatra" 1873

The new production came only five years after Chatterton's famous dictum, "Shakespeare spells ruin", and was an attempt to redeem his honour by presenting a splendid and spectacular production of a

Shakespearean play. He attempted reparation by preparing a sumptuous procession of elaborate scenic effects. William Beverley was engaged to design a panoramic view from the Temple of Isis, and some Roman and Egyptian interiors which The Athenaeum described as "thoroughly delicate and artistic." (180) But the two grand moments of the play - scenically speaking - were to be the appearance on the stage of Cleopatra's barge, as described by Enobarbus, and an actual representation, on water, of the Battle of Actium.

As preparations began for the mounting of this "display of dumb show and spectacle that belongeth more to the world of panorama than it does to the dramatic world," (181) it became increasingly evident that the text would have to be adapted and shortened to allow time for all these additional effects. Chatterton therefore approached Andrew Halliday, who had already dramatised some of the novels of Dickens and Scott with notable financial success, with a request for a new version of Antony and Cleopatra. Supported by a climate of opinion in which The Times could pontificate that

The question whether it is expedient to adapt Shakspeare to popular taste, and to use his works as a subject for spectacular display, has long been answered in the affirmative, (182)

and in which The Illustrated London News could ridicule the indignation of scholarly men at textual alterations and could assert that

the total disregard of Mammon to which their worship of Apollo has led makes them infinitely worse judges of matters theatrical than far wiser men, (183)

Chatterton and Halliday combined to mount what G.C.D. Odell has rightly called "an exhibition in which Shakespeare was butchered to make a scenic holiday for London playgoers." (184) Every technical resource of

the Victorian stage was drawn upon; songs, dances, processions and spectacles were added; everything was to be subordinated to the claims of visual effect, even though Shakespeare's text had to be savagely reduced from 3014 lines to only 1396 Shakespearean ones (185) contained within four acts and only twelve scenes. To avoid a plethora of scene changes, Halliday further reorganised the scenes so that all the action at Rome was contained within the second act, and the scene of all the rest was Egypt. He struck out all that was connected with Pompey, as well as omitting the death of Enobarbus and all references to Cleopatra's infatuation with Julius Caesar. Many of the speeches were redistributed so that Eros and Diomedes (for example) spoke the lines which Shakespeare had given to Philo and Demetrius. Far from receiving condemnation from his contemporaries, Halliday was praised because he had

avoided those leaps from Egypt to Rome and back again, which passed unheeded by our ancestors, but which harmonize ill with our present respect for unity, (186)

and had "made the action of the play more direct and intelligible" (187) which was a "manifest convenience for the modern playgoer". (188)

From the rise of the curtain, Halliday strove to gain the attention of the audience by a generous use of scenic and ballet effects. The play opened with the entrance of Cleopatra in a chamber of her palace at Alexandria, in which an Egyptian dance was performed, and the first act closed with Antony and Cleopatra leaving together in the Queen's state barge, "to produce a pictorial illustration of the words of Enobarbus which could scarcely be surpassed." (189) The second act - in Rome - concluded with a festival in honour of the wedding of Antony and Octavia, which consisted of four processions and a new song sung by a Miss Banks

and a choir of thirty boys; this was followed by a ballet called The Path of Flowers. The greatest of the setpieces, however, was the Battle of Actium at the end of the third act: the stage was flooded with real water, and two opposing galleys attacked each other with showers of arrows until some of the warriors, wounded, fell with lifelike (or deathlike) agonies into the water below. This return to the aquatic tradition was singled out by The Athenaeum as a "marvel of ingenuity and taste." (190) In the last act, Halliday and Chatterton, imaginations exhausted, left Shakespeare to achieve his aim without the superimposition of spectacular effects.

Halliday himself seems to have felt on the defensive about the extent to which he had adapted the Shakespearean text, and The Times of 22 September 1873 quoted at some length his justification for the changes. In this apologia, he claimed that the length of the play prevented it from being presented without significant abridgement, and asserted that he was performing a public service by staging an approximation to a play which would otherwise never have been seen. Unfortunately for his argument, Phelps had already demonstrated in 1849 the feasibility of producing Antony and Cleopatra in the original text, but Shakespeare's words were less sacrosanct in 1873, and Halliday had no need to fear the wrath of the critics. Apart from The Spectator - never a friend to spectacle and easily-won popularity - the dramatic critics of the day had little fault to find with Halliday's depredations; The Athenaeum almost canonised him for the adaptation:

(Halliday) has treated the text with a reverence almost unprecedented.... Mr. Halliday has displayed judgment in the arrangement of the text, and has taken no unpardonable liberties ... Mr. Halliday's task is well accomplished. We thank him for doing reverently what it appears has to be done. (190)

These comments, inexplicable as they seem to a modern reader, must have gratified Halliday and Chatterton almost as much as the rapturous ovations which greeted the first performance on 20 September 1873; Halliday no doubt noted with pleasure that the applause and enthusiasm were at their peak during the first three acts - that is, during those sections of the play which had been most drastically altered for the sake of spectacle. The Times recorded that the enactment of the Battle of Actium at the conclusion of the third act roused the spectators

to a state of excitement which would not be calmed till Mr. Chatterton came before the curtain. In vain did the actors, in vain did Mr. W. Beverley and Mr. Cormack (the designer of the marriage festival scene) make their appearance. People would not be satisfied till the manager came forward to be honoured with vociferous applause. (192)

These first three acts pandered to the public's delight in spectacle, but the more purely Shakespearean final act saw

a gradual cooling, and the verdict at the end, though favourable, was far less enthusiastic than it would have been could the play have ended with the fight at Actium ... As it was, the interminable agonies of Antony, for such in the presentation they seemed, rendered altogether ineffective the death-scene of Cleopatra. (193)

Nevertheless, the critics were sufficiently impressed by the enthusiasm of the audience for the efforts of Chatterton and his cohorts (if not of Shakespeare) to predict a long and successful run; The Illustrated London News recommended the public to support this venture, and The Times launched into the uncharted seas of prophecy:

Prophecy is dangerous, but if Antony and Cleopatra does not "run" till Christmas, we shall be greatly deceived as to ... the value of pageantry in the third quarter of the 19th century. (194)

Amidst these paeans of praise, one of the few dissentient voices to



be raised was that of J.R. Anderson, who performed the role of Antony. Displaying greater aesthetic judgement than was apparent in the views of several of the dramatic critics, Anderson refused to allow his assessment of the production to be swayed by the baubles in which it was decked:

Antony and Cleopatra was produced with great splendour, but little judgment; the house was crowded, and the play received with more applause than it deserved. The spectacle (it could not be called a tragedy, being all made up of scenery, processions, ballet, gaud, and glitter) was accepted with maddening demonstrations of approval by the pit and galleries, but the "judicious few" looked coldly on. (195)

Anderson's comments are particularly valuable in setting this production in perspective, for his evaluation was based on a long and successful career in the theatre. He had himself been manager of Drury Lane, had played Antony (in Julius Caesar) in 1843, 1850 and 1865, and Coriolanus in 1851. The views of this experienced actor are therefore a valuable counterblast to the over-laudatory enthusiasm of the dramatic critics. Anderson's connection with the production makes an interesting story, and throws some light upon the working methods of Chatterton and Halliday.

Anderson had been eager to appear again as Coriolanus, and had accepted his engagement by Chatterton for the 1873-4 season under the impression that it would include this part. Without consulting Anderson, however, Chatterton had already committed himself to Antony and Cleopatra, having made expensive arrangements to produce it spectacularly before he mentioned to Anderson that he would be playing Mark Antony. The actor could rouse little enthusiasm for his unexpected and undesired role:

This intelligence was annoying and dispiriting. I had never played Antony ... and had not intended to do so, as I never felt an inclination to make a study of the part. (196)

However, Anderson was nothing if not thoroughly professional, and, finding

that Chatterton's determination to stage the play was unshakable, he diligently set about a comprehensive study of Shakespeare's play and of Plutarch's life of Antony, working seven or eight hours each day at this task

I wrote out the whole part ... I then consulted my Plutarch and other authorities for information concerning age, appearance, change of character and aspirations. (197)

A good deal of this effort was in vain, for Chatterton had been so preoccupied with scenic effects that he had omitted to inform his leading actor that the original text was not to be followed. Anderson nearly threw up the part when he at length received the first draft of the manuscript from Halliday and

found it cut down to a mere skeleton ... Nor was this all; the reckless mutilations had involved many gross mistakes and blunders. (198)

Anderson's heart-felt protests to Chatterton and Halliday proved ineffective, although he claimed to have forced Halliday to rework some of the text; unfortunately, Anderson's autobiography gives no detailed information about the changes on which he insisted, and it is therefore impossible to know whether he was at all responsible for the fact that the last act was so much closer to Shakespeare than its predecessors.

Very conscious that he was playing a subordinate role to the scenery and the spectacle, Anderson approached the opening night without any marked eagerness. His worst fears were confirmed when he found that, at almost every point in his performance, he was hampered by the deafening rumble of scenery being moved behind the scenes!

I must first acknowledge my own inability to make a serious impression on the audience; I could do nothing, being stunned and cowed by the furious noise of preparation for "heavy sets" behind the scenes that destroyed all power of acting in front. (199)

Consequently, Anderson did not do himself justice; The Times politely

tolerated his performance out of consideration for his long and valuable services to the theatre:

The veteran, Mr. James Anderson, has been expressly engaged to play Marc Antony, whom he represents with much force; and though he does not exactly correspond to the notion of the love-stricken Triumvir, he was on Saturday enthusiastically welcomed as one of the members of Mr. Macready's still-venerated company, and as a manager who once made a gallant effort for the revival of the poetical drama. (200)

The Athenaeum was even more cursory and luke-warm:

Mr. Anderson is ultra-declamatory in style, but fine in presence ... He mouthed the lines after approved fashion. (201)

The reviewer was perhaps remembering Marivale's hyperbolical anecdote about Anderson's somewhat outdated style of delivery: according to this story, when Anderson was asked to return to the stage, he went down to Margate to try out his voice on the coast:

"When he found that he was audible at Ramsgate, he came back and played the part." (202)

The stentorian power of Anderson's voice was nonetheless a valuable attribute when contending with the heavy sets which were the real stars of Chatterton's production.

The manager had further underlined the comparative insignificance of the actors in this production by casting as Cleopatra a very young and almost unknown actress, Miss Wallis. As Anderson said, she

was a young actress with handsome features and a graceful appearance but altogether too juvenile to sustain the part, (203)

and it must indeed have been a remarkable sight - the youthful and inexperienced Miss Wallis, in her first starring role, playing opposite the ageing Anderson, who had been a star for over thirty years and who had received his grounding with Macready. The illustration of the death of Antony does not emphasise this difference in age, but shows Anderson,



ANDERSON AND MISS WALLIS IN "ANTONY & CLEOPATRA"

1873

with noble beard and profile, sprawled on a couch while Cleopatra indulges in a frantic appeal to Heaven which is so sentimentally exaggerated that it lapses into melodrama.

← The Times thought more highly of Miss Wallis' performance than did her stage lover:

Noone was prepared for the amount of power and passion which she displayed in one of Shakespeare's most responsible parts, (204)

but the Illustrated London News confirmed Anderson's evaluation of her achievement when it described her as

yet scarcely robust enough or old enough for a role so weighty and various ... There was in parts a strain upon her powers and an effort which showed too much that the young artist was acting, and not trusting to natural impulse, (205)

and the critic of The Athenaeum was even blunter:

Miss Wallis gives an outline of the character of Cleopatra which experience may enable her to fill up. Her voice was exhausted, however, before the end of the second act, and the pathos of the later scenes seemed as much a result of sore throat as of inspiration. (206)

But such mediocrity was of small significance in a production which starred the scenery and the spectacle that the public really wanted to see; as one critic wrote:

In giving precedence to the spectacular position of the entertainment, we are following the example of the public as well as that of the management. (207)

Chatterton had correctly assessed the public's mood, and the set pieces of scenery were enthusiastically applauded for a total of seventy-five performances between 20 September and 18 December 1873 - the longest run of Antony and Cleopatra in its stage history to that date. Once more, there is a paradox: this resounding success was achieved by a travesty of Shakespeare's play. An ironical footnote to the production was that, although it drew the crowds, Chatterton's desire for scenic

magnificence had overwhelmed his business acumen, and the overall financial result was that he lost between £4,000 and £5,000. His financial debacle appears to have frightened other managers away from Antony and Cleopatra for the next seventeen years, but the next production did not seem to have learned much from Chatterton's experience.

(vii)

The Jersey Lily's Egyptian Queen, 1890.

By 1890, the public's delight in spectacle remained unabated, and managers continued to provide pageants of scenic spectacle and sumptuous costume in which the author's words tended to become a running commentary on the stage manager's art rather than being a prime cause for the production. As Sir Sidney Lee - no enthusiast for this approach - wrote:

The dramatic interest of Shakespearean drama is, in fact, deemed by the manager to be inadequate to satisfy the necessary commercial purposes of the theatre ... Shakespeare's words must be spoken to musical accompaniments specially prepared for the occasion. Pictorial tableaux, even though they suggest topics without relevance to the development of the plot, have at times to be interpolated in order to keep the attention of the audience sufficiently alive. (208)

Managers were therefore drawn to those Shakespearean plays which particularly lent themselves to this sort of production, and into which ostentatious spectacle, dance and music could be most easily fitted. Unfortunately for Antony and Cleopatra, this tale of passionate love in the exotic setting of an opulent near-Eastern court seemed tailor-made for such a production, and in November 1890 Charles Coghlan and Lily Langtry appeared at the Princess's Theatre in the most spectacular

production of Antony and Cleopatra during the nineteenth century. These performances were so nicely calculated to pander to contemporary theatre-going taste that this production remained on the stage from 18 November 1890 to 21 February 1891, beating all previous records for this play. This was fortunate for the theatre, which had just endured three years of unsuccessful management by Grace Hawthorne, an American actress, who had relinquished the Princess's in May 1890. For the next twelve months, Mrs. Langtry became the tenant, opening with Antony and Cleopatra, which was followed by long runs of Lady Barter and then Linda Grey. The Princess's had been rebuilt ten years before in sumptuous fashion, drawing its decorative inspiration mainly from the rich mouldings, gilt and ornamentation of the French Renaissance. In the intervals, members of the audience could wander through lounges and saloons, admiring the etchings and the genuine trees, flowers and rippling fountains which the architect had profusely scattered.

In harmony with all this opulence in the auditorium, Mrs. Langtry consciously set out to emphasise the spectacular side of the production; indeed, the performance was so embellished that it ran for four-and-a-quarter hours, and, in deference to the complaints of the public, the management brought forward the rise of the curtain on the fourth night and thereafter to 7.45 p.m. instead of 8.00 p.m. Conforming to the spirit of the age, Mrs. Langtry provided a

chaotic mass of spectacle ... endless interiors and exteriors of Egyptian palaces, ... brilliant festivals, ... marchings and countermarchings of Roman legions, ... an irrelevant and offensive mass of pseudo-archeological detail. (209)

She ceremoniously introduced an Egyptian mummy to preside at the banquet, made special set pieces of the Alexandrian Festival and the Triumphal

Reception of Antony by Cleopatra, and added two ballets which Shaw claimed "impede the action, and very unduly lengthen a long performance," (210) while The Times objected that

The so-called allegorical interlude of "the conflict between day and night", danced by swarthy slaves in the banqueting scene, is a purely conventional ballet that might appropriately be transferred to the stage of the Alhambra. (211)

Mrs. Langtry also commissioned the Honourable Lewis Wingfield to supply massively impressive scene paintings of A Hall in Cleopatra's Palace, The Banks of the Nile, and The Interior of an Egyptian Monument. Shakespeare's play was merely the excuse for mounting a huge oriental pantomime in which - following Chatterton's lead - the actors were subordinate to the scenery and the effects. Cecil Howard, reviewing this production in The Theatre stated that

It will not be for the acting ... that the Princess's production will be specially remembered, but for the gorgeousness of its pageants. (212)

But Mrs. Langtry had miscalculated: her supernumeraries were unskilled and badly drilled, and The Speaker amusingly commented:

To suggest that the bearers of Cleopatra's palanquin betray an unmilitary lack of ambulance practice, or that the supernumeraries should not carry their bucklers at night precisely as they carry their advertisement boards by day, would perhaps be carping criticism. (213)

Again the scenic panoply took so much staging that there were long pauses in the production to enable the stage manager to accomplish his complex task. Thus, the overall effect was one of weary length which - the critics agreed - soon induced a state of boredom and satiety in the members of the audience:



The spectator can carry away but one impression - a sense of boredom. No acting, no scenery, no processional pageants can successfully hold attention for over four hours at a stretch ... (Mrs. Langtry's) great spectacular version of Antony and Cleopatra dragged its weary length along last night until the house was indifferent to all but its own exhaustion. (214)

Instead of assisting the action of the play, it (the spectacle) overlays it. In time the attention is not stimulated, it becomes depressed. The mind slumbers and the eyes, weary with watching gradually close. (215)

From any standpoint other than that of spectacle, meanwhile, the entertainment is wearisome. (216)

Mrs. Langtry's extension of the Chattertonian principle of production also included a radical reorganisation of the text of Antony and Cleopatra; the stage was so overcrowded with time-consuming pageants, troops of soldiery, oriental dances, pomp, processions, ballets, choruses, tableaux, and general glitter that the play had to be "depoetised almost out of all recognition" and only "by fits and starts we got a bit of Shakespeare". (217) The excisions were so severe that Shaw complained that

The tragedy has been so cut - long as it remains - that no-one could possibly tell from seeing it at the Princess's Theatre what is the crime that so affects the conscience of Antony's friend; indeed, only an extremely vague idea of the story is here obtainable. (218)

Unlike their colleagues of 1873, the dramatic critics of 1890 possessed sufficient artistic integrity to realise that this surfeit of scenic splendour was in bad taste, and that it merely bemused the minds and imaginations of the spectators. The Illustrated London News had its suspicions that all this gorgeous display was a forlorn attempt to disguise the weakness of the acting, and the critic nostalgically contrasted Mrs. Langtry's production with the greater integrity which

had been shown by earlier actors, before the era of Charles Kean:

Experience teaches us that there is always some hidden reason for all this gorgeous and costly display. Macready did not want it, nor did Samuel Phelps, and for a very good reason - because they put the acting of the play first and the decoration of it last. But Charles Kean wanted the show, and so did Drury Lane Chatterton, and so did Calvert of Manchester, because they had no very remarkable acting to put in front of the pictures. (219)

There was evidently more than a grain of truth in this implication: Mrs. Langtry's talents and appearance made her almost the last person in the world to attempt the role of Cleopatra, for she was typically English in appearance, with blue eyes and nut-brown hair, a gentle countenance and a mild expression; she looked beautiful, but sentimental and mild; above all, she lacked the dignity, majesty, power and ferocity expected of a Cleopatra:

There can scarcely be one of Shakespeare's female characters to which Mrs. Langtry is less suited than Cleopatra - that is to say unless history, Shakespeare, and the poets are wrong and Mrs. Langtry right. There is nothing Egyptian or Eastern about Mrs. Langtry. She has no command, no queenly presence, no voice sufficiently powerful to declaim, no passion with which to subjugate ... Her physical gifts and training will not admit of her realising Cleopatra, so she makes her a mild-eyed saint instead of a passionate animal. Conceive a Cleopatra ... beaming wistfully at her Antony, and trembling in his presence! This is the natural state of the new Cleopatra. (220)

Cecil Howard agreed that Mrs. Langtry's assumption of the role was an error:

Unfortunately she has miscalculated her dramatic strength, and neither as she who would conquer all hearts or (sic) as the powerful queen did the actress fulfil the requirements of the character. Where Mrs. Langtry was not languid or pettish, she played with undisciplined force. (221)

The critic of The Speaker was amusing at Mrs. Langtry's expense:

Mrs. Langtry's Cleopatra is not to be described as a disappointment, for the judicious can have found nothing in the lady's previous career to warrant the expectation that she could play the part. (222)

Other critics were a little kinder: The Athenaeum, devoting less than

one sentence to Mrs. Langtry's interpretation, found her "Picturesque, handsome and womanly;" (223) The Times allowed that she was "at least a fine majestic figure, of queenly bearing;" (224) but the kindest of all was George Bernard Shaw who, in an unwonted tolerance, stated that

Mrs. Langtry soon makes it evident that the histrionic requirements are pretty well understood. The stateliness of the Queen and the coquetry of the woman are united as they should be, and a very recognisable phase of temper is portrayed ... Here is the woman, indeed, wayward, petulant, impulsive; and passion is added to all this later ... We find much to admire in almost every part of Mrs. Langtry's study. (225)

Even Shaw, however, admitted that she did not always "rise to the full pathos or to the full passion of her theme", that she failed in expressing Cleopatra's "infinite variety", and that she was most successful as "the central figure of brilliant pageants". (226)

The most effective moments of Mrs. Langtry's performance appear to have been when Cleopatra received from a slave the news of Antony's second marriage and struck the messenger in the face with the jewels which she had unclasped for the purpose of rewarding the good news she expected, and in the death scene. To induce added majesty, Mrs. Langtry ignored the stage direction suggested by Malone and since accepted as normal - "Falls on a bed and dies" - and remained sitting in regal splendour on her throne, motionless and erect in her robes, with her handmaidens prostrate and dying before her. Shaw complained of Mrs. Langtry's lack of grace when she thrust the asp into the bosom of her robe, but The Athenaeum found this final scene superb, and Punch, speaking of "her Graceful Majesty, Mrs. Langtry, Queen of Egyptian Witchery", said that the death scene was

one of the most pathetic pictures ever presented on the stage. So lonely in her grandeur, so grand, and yet so pitiable in her loneliness is this poor Queen of Beauty, the Empress-Butterfly. (227)

Even in these words of praise, it is significant that it was the visual impact which was particularly memorable.

The inadequacies<sup>4</sup> of Mrs. Langtry were somewhat buttressed by the strength of Charles Coghlan's Antony. He had recently returned from an American tour, and was the very embodiment of virile vigour. Punch referred to him in its jocular style as "a rantin', roarin' boy" (228) and The Athenaeum praised the scene of his self-inflicted death wound.

Cecil Howard spoke warmly of Coghlan's Antony as

one of his greatest successes, from the energy and passion ~~at~~ which he threw into the portraiture, (229)

and The Illustrated London News stated that Coghlan

full of strength, surprised everyone with his Antony. The old Coghlan is unlocked again ... He was of immense assistance to the play and to Mrs. Langtry, and played the character not only with power but with remarkable intelligence. (230)

Shaw, whose usual asperity had deserted him in his assessment of this production, praised the vigour and robustness of Coghlan, and the intelligence of his interpretation, placing him on a remarkably high pedestal:

Garrick failed as Antony and Macready certainly did not succeed ... but Mr. Coghlan, perhaps, comes fairly near to what is required ... He never goes astray. (231)

Coghlan's two faults - a tendency to lapse into a very unmilitary shambling gait, and an inability to remember his words so that he paraphrased many of the speeches into a prose which conveyed the sense of the text but jettisoned its poetry - were seen as minor blemishes in a performance which gave Mrs. Langtry rather more support than her own

achievement really deserved. It is always possible, of course, that Coghlan's acting was somewhat overestimated by the critics merely because it was seen in juxtaposition with the inadequacies of his Cleopatra.

Two critics - Shaw and the critic of Punch - commented in the course of their reviews that it was almost impossible to stage a really satisfactory production of Shakespeare's play. Shaw complained that Antony and Cleopatra places "too great a strain upon our credulity", that Cleopatra can never be adequately interpreted because of the variety of moods with which Shakespeare invested her, and that the host of minor roles shatters illusion because no British "extra" can "be effectually disguised as a soldier of the days of the triumvirate;" accordingly, Shaw decided that "Antony and Cleopatra we are inclined to put in the list of works unsuitable for the stage". (232) He was supported in his views on Cleopatra by the dramatic critic of Punch:

Now honestly I do not consider Cleopatra a good part, nor is the play a good play for the matter of that. I believe it never has been a success. (233)

Thus, the two critics who had been kindest in their reviews of the play sought to excuse the weaknesses of Mrs. Langtry's production by denigrating Shakespeare's text.

The strictures of the critics upon the play and upon its performance did little to dissuade the public from attending this production; as The Illustrated London News cynically and somewhat wearily remarked:

As the playgoers will not go to the Princess's to find Shakespeare what does it all matter? (234)

The lead of Calvert and Chatterton had been followed to its ultimate extent in this production, and Antony and Cleopatra was firmly established in the affections of the theatregoing public - if not of the

dramatic critics - as a popular love story which could be gorgeously embellished with grandiose pomp and pageantry.

(viii)

Miss Achurch as Cleopatra, 1897.

This tradition of spectacle was further strengthened in Louis Calvert's presentation of Antony and Cleopatra at Manchester in 1897. Since this production was transferred to London later the same year, these provincial performances merit a brief examination.

Louis Calvert was the son of that Charles Calvert whose text had been used for the appearance of Loraine and Miss Glyn in Antony and Cleopatra in 1867. Understandably, this utterly inadequate text of 1867 was resuscitated in the new production which ran for eight weeks at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester in February and March 1897. No scholar seems to mention, however, that the younger Calvert made certain small alterations to his father's text. A few speeches were reallocated to other characters, a fifth scene (drawn from Shakespeare's II vi) was added to the second act, and the new version's II iv included at the correct place about eighty lines drawn from Shakespeare's II vi (and including references to the beds i'th' east being soft) which the earlier one had placed at a later point in the galley scene. Louis Calvert also added one scene (his III iii) of a ~~Tableau~~ of the sea-fight at Actium. His most significant alteration, however, was the excision of several of Cleopatra's speeches in the final scene, in which she praises the dead Antony (e.g. "His legs bestrid the ocean") which his father had retained.

Needless to say, these slight deviations from the earlier text did not increase the value of the adaptation, but they are interesting because no historian of the stage seems so far to have made reference to them. This Manchester production attracted the attention of two notable dramatic critics, William Archer and George Bernard Shaw. Archer was kind to Calvert's interpretation of Antony, which he found strong and vital, in spite of some weakness of delivery:

Mr. Calvert's Antony is rugged, forcible, and effective. It lacks elevation, and is not very strong in diction; but it has plenty of impetuosity and vitality, (235)

but Shaw was more outspoken, thoroughly enjoying himself at the expense of Calvert's girth:

He is inexcusably fat: Mr. Bouchier is a sylph by comparison... Only at one point was Antony's girth awkward. When Eros, who was a slim and rather bony young man, fell on his sword, the audience applauded sympathetically. But when Antony in turn set about the Happy Despatch, the consequences suggested to the imagination were so awful that shrieks of horror arose in the pit; and it was a relief when Antony was borne off by four stalwart soldiers whose sinews cracked audibly as they heaved him up from the floor. (236)

Shaw further felt that Calvert missed the tragedy of Antony/making of him instead a pleasant, genial, easy-mannered, humane creature with whom the audience sympathized even though he was "an Antony comedic in his tragedy" (237).

G.B.S.'s fiercest shafts of criticism were reserved for Janet Achurch's Cleopatra. Miss Achurch was proud of her voice, and was determined to demonstrate its range and power; her vocal gymnastics annoyed Shaw, who pretended to be unnerved by them, most effectively ridiculing them, at some considerable length:

Of the hardihood of ear with which she carried out her original and often audacious conceptions of Shakespearean music I am too utterly unnerved to give any adequate description. The lacerating discord of her wailings is in my tormented ears as I write, reconciling me to the grave. It is as if she had been excited by the Hallelujah Chorus to dance on the keyboard of a great organ with all the stops pulled out. I cannot - dare not - dwell on it. I admit that when she is using the rich middle of her voice in a quite normal and unstudied way, intent only on the feeling of the passage, the effect leaves nothing to be desired; but the moment she raises the pitch to carry out some deeply planned vocal master stroke, or is driven by Shakespeare himself to attempt a purely musical execution of a passage for which no other sort of execution is possible, then - well then, hold on tightly to the elbows of your stall, and bear it like a man. And when the feat is accompanied, as it sometimes is, by bold experiments and facial expression, .... the eye has to share the anguish of the ear .... I have only seen the performance once; and I would not unsee it again if I could; but nonetheless I am a broken man after it .... How infernal the discord was! .... That is the word that sums up the objection to Miss Achurch's Cleopatra in point of sound: it is discordant. (238)

Shaw's condemnation of Miss Achurch's Cleopatra was not limited to an attack on her outrageous vocal effects; even without these, he felt that she would never be a Cleopatra, for her appearance (Germanic and solidly built), which had assisted her to become a notable Nora in Ibsen's Doll's House, was here against her, as was her lack of ceremony and dignity, and a bourgeois approach to the role which divested it of any regality. Altogether, Shaw felt of her acting in Manchester that "there is not a stroke of Cleopatra in it", and that the play was "Antony and Cleopatra with Cleopatra left out .... (and) with Brynhild cum Nora Helmer substituted" (239)

Archer agreed with Shaw that Miss Achurch played the opening acts too much for comedy, and he earnestly recommended her to lay more stress upon the poetry of her role and upon the dignity and fascination of Cleopatra. Nonetheless, he found something to praise in the death scene, in which Antony's body remained at the foot of Cleopatra's throne, and the Egyptian Queen shrouded and uncovered his face during the course of her



final speeches:

Miss Achurch seemed to me quite at her best in the last act, where she gave a haggard nobility to the figure of the dying queen that was original and memorable. (240)

In spite of Shaw's unflattering remarks about the acting ~~this~~ Manchester venture attracted the attention of Mr. Ben Greet, who was presenting Shakespeare's plays at popular prices in the Olympic theatre in London. The Olympic had been rebuilt on a grand scale in 1897 as a speculation, in the hope of substantial compensation should the ground be required in the redevelopment of the Aldwych and Kingsway end of the Strand. Every seat commanded an excellent view of the stage, and the sight lines had been carefully considered. Decorations were in the style of the period of Louis XVI, with richly decorated ornamentation in raised plasterwork, and a highly decorative ceiling shaped like an inverted saucer. The prevailing colour scheme was rose and gold. It was to this theatre that Greet invited Calvert and Miss Achurch to bring their production of Antony and Cleopatra, where it was mounted for matinee performances on May 24, 25, 27, 28 and 29, 1897, then on the evenings of June 1, 2, 3 and 4, culminating in both a matinee and evening appearance on 5 June - a total of ten appearances in London. By the time of this production's transfer to the Olympic Theatre the incidental music - to which Shaw had objected in passing, at Manchester <sup>^</sup> had grown into something more than incidental and was in danger of turning the whole performance into a ballet, or (with the aid of Janet Achurch's continued vocal contortions) an opera:

There were times, in the later acts, when we seemed to have been transported from the Olympic and Antony and Cleopatra to Covent Garden and Aida. Even Cleopatra's "business" was timed to the music, and one would scarcely have been surprised if Miss Achurch, who was always rather inclined to chant her words, had broken out

into a "recitative and aria." (241)

Archer (who wrote the above) was now much more aware of Miss Achurch's vocal tricks (perhaps he had read Shaw's review of the Manchester performance) and felt impelled to condemn them

Miss Achurch, by-the-bye, ... indulges very daringly in articulate noises. I wish - forgive the jingle - that she would let us substitute "sparingly" for "daringly". These audacities are seldom felicities. (242)

Audiences were puzzled by the frequent outbursts of hysterical laughter with which Miss Achurch punctuated her performance, and perplexed by what The Graphic described as "frequent abrupt transitions from a droning and solemn enunciation to a familiar and rapid utterance", (243) as well as by her tricks of arbitrarily emphasising and lengthening out certain syllables.

Shaw nerved himself to visit this production again and, as might be expected, composed a destructive yet amusing article for The Saturday Review, in which he asserted:

I have only had an afternoon of lacerating anguish, spent partly in contemplating Miss Achurch's overpowering experiments in rhetoric, and partly in wishing I had never been born. (244)

Indeed, his contempt for this version of Cleopatra was such that he treated Miss Achurch only as a joke: his abusive account of her performance, and of its effect upon intelligent members of the audience, makes entertaining reading and provides a vivid picture of the over-acting, the excess of gestures, and the ridiculously exaggerated vocal effects which characterised this interpretation:

Mr. Grossmith may caricature her at his recitals; flippant critics may pass jests through the stalls or pittites with an ungovernable sense of the ludicrous burst into guffaws; the orchestra may writhe like a heap of trodden worms at each uplifting of her favourite tragic wail; but now .... the public

as a whole is clearly at her mercy ... On Monday last she was sweeping about, clothed with red Rossettian hair and beauty to match; revelling in the power of her voice and the steam pressure of her energy; curving her wrists elegantly above Antony's head as if she were going to extract a globe of goldfish and two rabbits from behind his ear. (245)

The critic of The Illustrated London News lacked Shaw's gift for making his destructive criticism amusing, but confirmed the overall impression of an outlandish performance

Miss Achurch, save in a superbly conceived death scene, disappointed us by an artificial and monotonous elocution and by strange vocal tricks which never carried conviction, (246)

while The Athenaeum decided that the only sensible way to assess this production was to ignore it:

In the case of Miss Janet Achurch conception and performance were fantastic; in most other cases they were unintelligent. As the performances are already over and qualified for oblivion there is no need to dwell upon shortcomings. It is enough to say that Shakespeare's verse was delivered after the rhetorical fashion now common on our stage, (247)

and The Times followed this approach to its logical conclusion by publishing no review of these performances.

In view of the unanimity of these critics, it is surprising to find that, in his stage history of Antony and Cleopatra in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, Mr. C.B. Young quotes the glowing praise of the youthful James Agate, who acclaimed Janet Achurch as the best Cleopatra he ever saw, with "majesty" and "physical" passion, "with looks which might have unpeopled a city, and tones which might have quelled provinces." (248)  
From Mr. Young's account, one might assume that Miss Achurch's Cleopatra equalled the earlier achievement of Miss Glyn, which appears in fact to be far from the case.

Mr. Young's praise of Calvert's Antony seems rather more justifiable. Piqued, perhaps, by Shaw's comments on his bulk, he had lost some weight in the intervening months, and The Illustrated London News was impressed by his appearance as well as by his vigour; again, however, there was the sense that tragic intensity was absent from Calvert's performance.

Mr. Calvert was, physically speaking, a perfect Antony, and his performance was marked throughout by strength and intensity, yet missed erotic passion and tragic power. (249)

Like its immediate predecessors, this production aimed at spectacle, bringing down the curtain no fewer than seventeen times each performance on various tableaux, although it fell short of the lavish and costly profusion which had been such a feature of Mrs. Langtry's production seven years earlier.

Once more, some of the dramatic critics were provoked into comments on the difficulty of presenting Antony and Cleopatra, successfully on the stage. The Athenaeum looked despondently into the past:

Antony and Cleopatra has never proved remunerative as an acting play, and not a single actor has won a name as Antony. Garrick and Macready head the list of those who lost reputation in the part, (250) while William Archer analysed the weaknesses of the play more thoroughly by comparing it with Henry IV, Part One, in which Calvert had appeared the previous year (as Falstaff). Like other writers before him, Archer drew attention to a looseness of structure, a compression of style, and a challenging pair of acting roles: his comments also seem to imply that he accepted that some abridgement of the text was essential in the theatre:

The play is considerably looser in structure, and therefore calls

for more skilful curtailment; the style is far more compressed and difficult; ... and the two leading characters present much more complex problems to the actors. (251)

The productions of Antony and Cleopatra in 1873, 1890 and 1897 marked the nadir of interpretations of these famous roles, and the high-water mark of the spectacular production. While Halliday's text of 1873 was probably the least defensible of all versions of the play in the nineteenth century, the histrionic level reached in 1890 and 1897 in the performances by Mrs. Langtry and Miss Achurch was probably lower than at any other time in the history of the play. Although the next production also attempted a "spectacular" approach and laid stress upon vocal effects, it was to be a slightly more artistic venture.

(ix)

Benson's "Antony and Cleopatra", 1898 and 1900

During the 1890's, F.R. Benson had appeared in performances of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus at Stratford which had been neglected by the London critics. In 1898, he chose to mount productions of these two plays again, adding to them his first appearance in Antony and Cleopatra, which opened a two weeks' Stratford Festival in the Spring.

Although the stage at Stratford was small, he aimed at a spectacular production, with costumes and properties by Lyall Swete and his wife, and special music by Michael Balling. According to the Birmingham Weekly Post, "over twenty tons of property and scenery had to be manipulated" (252) to mount tableaux of Cleopatra's palace with a golden throne, Pompey's Roman galley, the seafight followed by the defeated Egyptian ships ablaze

at sunset, and the processional re-entry of Antony into Alexandria. Cleopatra's monument was decorated with ebony and silver furniture, and its walls were adorned with hieroglyphics and processions of Egyptian gods. A memorable scene was that in which Antony gave himself over to riot and revelry: the strains of oriental music were heard, incense floated across the stage, young girls strewed flowers, and slaves and eunuchs prostrated themselves before the two lovers.

Benson appears to have been the first producer to cause the dying Antony to be raised a considerable height into Cleopatra's monument in accordance with the text and the usual stage directions. Mrs. Benson described this piece of stage business, which was much admired at the time

Cleopatra and her maids were discovered on a high balcony. When the dying Antony was brought in, and the Queen in anguish stretched out her arms and cried, "Oh, Antony! ... let's draw him hither",... we used to lower strips of linen which guards wound round Antony, and raising him on the butt ends of their halberds, helped us to hoist him over the balcony. This was no easy task, and our strength was taxed to the uttermost, but it was a realistic and effective piece of business, adding greatly to the tragic picture. (253)

Benson was so proud of the striking picture made by the ebony and silver monument that he staged Cleopatra's death scene there rather than in the palace, though he may also have been influenced by the fact that his realistic sets caused long gaps between acts which a local paper found "rather tiresome". (254) Throughout, he strove to make every one of the lavish sets, costumes and properties archeologically and historically correct, but - as so often in this era of spectacle - the acting was less memorable than the setting against which it took place.

Mrs. Benson's interpretation of Cleopatra showed the intelligence of the actress, but failed to achieve the passion and sexual attractiveness so essential to the role. The portrayal was said to be "in a rather novel

form" (255) but it seemed

to be a little beyond her physical capacity, and ... lacks the broad humanity which Shakespeare has imparted to it. (256)

In only two scenes did she achieve the requisite tragic power - in the clash with the messenger who brings the news of Antony's remarriage she developed "the ferocity of a tiger-cat", (257) and the death scene drew from her a good deal of dramatic art, so that "her death was consistent with her brilliant and luxurious life. She robbed it of its hideousness." (258) Benson himself, producing as well as acting, was bowed down by cares which affected his performance for the first few nights, and he was accorded only conventional praise by a local paper:

Mr. Benson has made a close study of the part of Antony, and his conception of the character will commend itself to most intelligent playgoers, and students. (259)

Gradually, however, he grew into the part, making superbly effective use of his voice. James Agate was later to write of this performance:

The verse in Antony and Cleopatra is molten and brassy. Benson puts into it the blare of trumpets, the clash of cymbals, the clang of opposing shields, and if some of the sounds do not mean very much in themselves, their sum makes up the most astounding and inspiring symphony to be heard on the English stage today. (260)

Through voice and physique, Benson at first expressed nobility and vigour, but he reserved his most telling effects for the moodiness of Antony <sup>in</sup> the later sections of the play:

When he became <sup>fall</sup> fail and flexible the declension was obvious and painful. He rose and fell according as he was wrought upon by the pressure of circumstances and the conflict of passions. (261)

A local paper was much impressed by this alternation of valour and dejection, and said of Benson's interpretation:

It struck one as approaching artistic perfection of the character he presented. It exhibited an amazing force and vitality, and it displayed a form of intensity and intellectual keenness which were somewhat striking. (262)

In spite of this praise, the London critics ignored this production, as they had ignored virtually all Benson's work at Stratford for the previous ten years. In 1900, however, Benson brought his Antony and Cleopatra to the capital, where, amid a season at the Lyceum devoted mainly to Richard II and The Tempest, he and his wife presented it for six performances. They were hampered in this production by the fire at Stratford which, shortly before his London engagement, had destroyed all his costumes, properties and prompt books. Irving kindly lent him his dresses and armour for this London appearance.

If Benson had hoped that metropolitan performances would awaken the London dramatic critics to the merits of his Antony and Cleopatra, he was to be disappointed: The Spectator and The Saturday Review did not review this production, and he received little encouragement from the other journals. Benson, The Sphere said, was not shown at his best in this role:

Physically and temperamentally he seems to me quite unsuited for the part of Antony ... He entirely misses the mastering passion on which the whole tragedy is pivoted, (263)

and The Times asserted that Benson's natural endowments did not fit him to play Antony:

Mr. Benson can declaim Antony's lines; he can show Antony the soldier, Antony the noble Roman, But torrential passion he cannot show, and what is Antony without that? (264)

The Morning Post was more satirical at Benson's expense:

He was rather a woe-begone Oriental whining a little at times, but on the whole well satisfied with the handsome way in which Kismet was treating him. (265)



Mrs. Benson fared even worse, being "manifestly unequal to the part of Cleopatra ... (she was) young, inexperienced, and after a time decidedly monotonous." (266)

The Times outlined its conception of Shakespeare's Cleopatra before showing how far Mrs. Benson's interpretation fell below this:

There is, to begin with, that astonishing Cleopatra. She is a Baudelairean woman, a fleur du mal. She has what the decadents are fond of calling in their jargon an orchidaceous personality. Now there is nothing of the uncanny, diabolic fantasy of the orchid in Mrs. Benson. With the temperament conferred on her by nature she does well, wonderfully well, but it would be idle to pretend that hers is the temperament for the part. And the drawback of the part is that no amount of skill and good will can atone for the absence of the requisite temperament. (267)

Two final quotations, from The Illustrated London News and The Athenaeum, will show that the sincere, honest and careful performances of the Bensons fell far short of an estimable achievement because neither leading player could convey the overmastering passion of the famous lovers.

The dreaded word "amateur" was once more launched at Benson:

Both are just simply earnest and intelligent, if rather stagey, players, and ... both find their latest roles entirely unsuited to their respective natures ... But Mrs. Benson's rendering - well, it is a very clever tour de force, but mere languorous poses and deliberate intoning of speeches cannot atone for an absence of all real abandon. So, again, it is with Mr. Benson's Antony. (268)

All that one can feel concerning this is regret that artists who are winning their way into public favour, and substituting a London for a country reputation, should take a step we are bound to regard as reactionary. Cleopatra is within the reach neither of Madame Bernhardt nor of Signora Duse, nor, indeed, of any actress by whom it has been essayed. We will not say that the failure of these artists should be prohibitive of further effort. But such assumptions as those of Antony and Cleopatra go some way towards relegating Mr. Benson's experiment to the amateur level from which it appeared to be issuing. (269)

(x)

Conclusion.

This chapter has shown that the nineteenth century saw no entirely successful production of Antony and Cleopatra. In 1813, 1873, 1890 and 1897 it was presented in ludicrously non-Shakespearean versions which attempted to "improve" Shakespeare by adding spectacle and ornament, and by reorganising his text. Macready (in 1833) and the Bensons (in 1898 and 1900) made honest attempts to present a basically authentic text in an appropriate setting, but since these actors were not suited to their roles - by temperament, or physique or style of acting - mediocrity was the result in each case. Only Miss Glyn (in 1849, 1855, 1857 and 1867) became identified with the role of Cleopatra as Kemble had been with that of Coriolanus. But whereas Coriolanus is essentially a one-man play, Antony and Cleopatra demands two leading performers of outstanding ability, and Miss Glyn received no more than competent support from her three Antony<sup>s</sup>. Nevertheless, her interpretation was by far the finest which was seen in the nineteenth century.

The play has yet to receive an entirely satisfying performance. Constance Collier's Cleopatra in 1906 was said to rival Miss Glyn's, but Beerbohm Tree's Antony was no more than adequate. Since Robert Atkins established the tradition in 1922 of playing it without a constant series of scene changes, Antony and Cleopatra has proved more popular, and notable performances were given at the Old Vic in 1925 by Balliol Holloway and Edith Evans, and in 1930 with John Gielgud and Dorothy Green. Other

comparatively successful productions have been those with Godfrey Tearle and Edith Evans at the Piccadilly in 1946, with Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in 1951, with Michael Redgrave and Peggy Ashcroft at Stratford in 1953, and with John Clements and Margaret Leighton at Chichester in 1969.

Shakespeare's play has always proved rather inflexible material on the stage if not in the study, and there has never been a lack of critics to denounce it for the impossible tasks which it sets its leading actors and its stage managers. Latest of the line of Jeremiahs is Harold Hobson, who, in August 1969, elevated the dramatic expertise of Harold Pinter in Landscape to a higher level than that of Shakespeare in Antony and Cleopatra when he wrote

The fault - I dare to say it, the inferiority - is Shakespeare's. In Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare performs many miracles, but not the miracle of making us really feel the bondage and the ecstasy of overwhelming love. By the use of "objective correlatives" ... this particular miracle is by Mr. Pinter in Landscape memorably achieved. (270)

One waits, in vain it would appear, for some miraculous partnership of actor, actress, director and designer to prove him wrong.

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## CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION.

## Chapter Six.

### Conclusion.

The three preceding chapters have reviewed in detail the three Roman plays of Shakespeare as they marched - sometimes purposefully, sometimes falteringly - across the nineteenth century metropolitan stages. It has been a long and, at times, a complicated story. What has it shown?

Emerging clearly from the mass of detail is the fact that only rarely in the nineteenth century was it possible to see Shakespeare in an unadulterated text. Some actors made worthy attempts at it - Macready (under the influence of the manager Elliston) and Phelps notable among them - but it was thought necessary even in these performances to cut and reorganise. With less scrupulous adaptors, excisions were positively murderous, much non-Shakespearean material being added. The adaptations of Kemble and Tree (among others) strove to highlight the "star" role; the 1813 Antony and Cleopatra attempted to render with greater delicacy some of Shakespeare's blunter expressions; late nineteenth century versions of the same play butchered the text for the sake of the embellishing and expensive spectacle so dear to the audiences of the period, whereas earlier adaptations of Coriolanus and Julius Caesar had sought by amalgamation of characters to reduce the number of speaking parts, and thus the cost of production.

A notable feature of the period was a remarkable reluctance on the part of actors, managers, adaptors and dramatic critics to allow that Shakespeare could construct a workmanlike play, capable of making its

effects with clarity and precision in the theatre. The Times of

26 January 1820 supported the idea of adaptation by stating that

There are many reasons why into almost every play of Shakespeare it has been thought fit to introduce alterations, but the principle is the absolute necessity of studying stage effect. (1)

and the critic of The Literary Gazette preferred Kemble's adaptation of Coriolanus to the original. Macready spoke of "the uninteresting nature of the story" (2) of Coriolanus, and The Athenaeum saw the role of Caius Marcius as "a difficult assumption"; (3) The Times supported Benson in his adaptation of Coriolanus on the grounds that its dramatic interest was low, and that there is an "absence of plot, absence of love story, scrappiness of situation." (4) To Macready, Brutus could "never be a part that can inspire a person with an eager desire to go to a theatre to see represented", (5) The Illustrated London News felt that the inadequate battle scenes of Tree's Julius Caesar were "the bard's and not the manager's fault", (6) and The Athenaeum saw the play as lacking in hero, heroine and love interest, so that "it gains less than almost any other of Shakespeare's dramas from stage rendering." (7) The Times of 16 November 1813 claimed that the version of Antony and Cleopatra presented in that year had improved Shakespeare's text by softening the improbabilities and steadily following the story lines, and also commented that there was no interest in the character of Antony. Twenty years later, The Times also praised Macready for removing from the Shakespearean text of Antony and Cleopatra those scenes and lines "which rather detracted from than added to the beauties of the play", (8) while Macready himself found the character of Antony "not very powerful", (9) "long, and I fear not effective." (10) The Times in 1849 referred to Antony and Cleopatra

as "rambling", asserting that "There is no close sequence of incidents to any one point", (11) and The Spectator claimed that the play contained "many portions which are dramatically ineffective." (12) The Times described Cleopatra as "a comedy character, who comes to a tragic end", (13) and The Athenaeum felt that even Halliday's bastard version of Antony and Cleopatra "made the action of the play more direct and intelligible". (14)

Although some lip service was paid to Shakespeare's dramatic skill, the dominant nineteenth century practice was to regard his texts as in need of considerable revision and reorganisation before they could hold the attention of an audience. Most nineteenth century adaptations were less severe than their more notorious predecessors of the eighteenth century, but several of them - notably those of Antony and Cleopatra - were, in fact, just as inartistic and indefensible.

Actors, managers and adaptors were, of course, under the influence of many external pressures which affected versions, styles of production and frequency of performance. One of the most important of these pressures was the need to make a financial profit. It is perhaps too easy to forget that financial motives had perforce to lie behind each production. When each theatre housed a regular company providing a wide repertoire, the more popular plays could subsidise the production of less familiar works, but this was made impossible by the change to the production which was specially cast for a long "run". Managers were therefore forced to bow to popular taste if they and their families were to eat. Whereas until about 1850 the London theatre had been the equivalent of B.B.C. Television, presenting a fairly balanced diet of masterpieces and trivia, it was thereafter forced by its own manner of

organisation and by financial necessity to adopt a role similar to modern IV, pandering fairly consistently to the lowest common denominator of public taste. Only with the advent of Government grants to the Arts in more recent times has the theatre been able, in a few selected areas, to break away somewhat from the heavy pressure of the need to be profitable.

Political pressure (of an indirect kind) can also be discerned in the way in which Coriolanus and Julius Caesar vanished from the stage during the worst excesses of the French Revolution, for fear that they might provoke a similar social upheaval in England.

The story of Antony and Cleopatra in the nineteenth century also illustrates the force of moral opinion on the theatre. Somewhat surprisingly, the later Victorian public took this play to its heart, valuing its portrayal of romantic love and its depiction of the varying emotions of Cleopatra, but the earlier part of the century viewed it with considerable distaste. Mrs. Siddons refused to play Cleopatra, the adapter of the 1813 version was frightened of such words as "stumpet", "lust" and "lascivious wassails" and was praised by Thomas Barnes for the manner in which "the grossnesses have been expunged." There is no doubt that the Puritan tradition, and the influence of late eighteenth century "sentimentality" played an important part in keeping Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra so long from the stage.

The tastes, interests and physique of the actors themselves were also of prime importance in deciding whether or not to present a particular play, and in shaping its production. Macready (until the later years of his career) and Phelps saw it as their duty to present a full range of Shakespearean drama, and they conscientiously adopted a wide variety of

roles, to which they were not always suited. Apart from Macready's delight in playing Cassius, neither of them was particularly drawn to the Roman plays, and neither achieved much personal success in them, but without their declared policy of providing the public with honest productions of most plays in the canon, Coriolanus and Antony and Cleopatra would have vanished from the stage for even longer periods than was, in fact, the case, and Miss Glyn might never have blazed forth as Cleopatra.

Other great actors are notably absent from this study because their talents did not suit them to the portrayal of Roman roles. Edmund Kean, Barry Sullivan, Charles Kean and Henry Irving were probably wise to eschew Shakespeare's Roman roles, for which neither their physique nor their technique fitted them, but it was another story with those actors who became identified with certain Roman roles. This study has shown the catalytic effect which the talents of one actor can produce in the success of an individual play. Kemble's physical appearance and his cold, formal style of acting made him the greatest Coriolanus the stage has ever seen, raising that much-neglected play to a place of honour and popularity with a whole generation of playgoers. Miss Glyn's unexpected power as Cleopatra provided the initial impetus which launched Antony and Cleopatra into public favour after 1849. To a lesser extent, Benson's identification with Caius Marcius restored Coriolanus to a position which it had lost for many years, and the ensemble playing of the Saxe-Meiningen Company directed attention to the lively dramatic force inherent in a Julius Caesar which had been off the stage for a long period. Success in the theatre, it seems, can be less dependent upon the essential achievement of the author and his text than upon the presence of the right actor, whose technique

and appearance enable him to become identified with a particular role, as Mrs. Siddons was with Lady Macbeth and Volumnia, as Kemble was with Coriolanus, Edmund Kean with Richard III and Othello, Macready with Macbeth, Miss Glyn with Cleopatra, Charles Kean with Louis XI, and Irving with Mathias, Louis XI and Richelieu.

Actors and managers were also influenced by the larger new theatres which were constructed early in the nineteenth century. The vast size of the new Drury Lane and Covent Garden demanded an entirely new approach, and must have added a new dimension to stage acting in much the same way as the addition of sound brought new potentialities and new problems to the filmmakers. Larger gestures, more stentorian voices, and more thickly populated crowd scenes were called for, so that these huge stages played their part in forcing managers to turn to spectacle, machinery, opera and ballet. Similarly, the improved stage lighting and machinery of the 1830s and 1840s placed greater emphasis on realistic scenery and elaborate backdrops.

The Roman plays also experienced many different styles and fashions of acting in the nineteenth century: the aloof dignity of Kemble, the romantic fire of Edmund Kean, the minuteness and familiar style of Macready, the ensemble playing of the Saxe-Meiningen Company, the professionalism of Benson (treated as amateurism by the reviewers) and the comparative amateurism of Tree (treated by the critics as professionalism). At a lower level, hardworking conscientiousness was evident in the diligence of Young, Vandenhoff, Phelps and Anderson, and an incredible incompetence seems to have been the key note of Conway, Hamlin, Butler and Miss Achurch in their Roman interpretations. Throughout the century, the classicism of

the Kemble school (remnants of which survived into the 1860s) gave way first to the greater emotional pull of romantic acting, and then to the down to earth naturalism of Macready, only to return to a full-blooded rhetoric towards the end of the century. Coriolanus benefited most from the classical approach, and Julius Caesar from ensemble playing, but Antony and Cleopatra came to life through the skill of Miss Glyn rather than because it responded to a fashionable style of acting.

The central chapters of this study have provided detailed evidence on a narrow front to substantiate the generally held views about the development of the nineteenth century theatre. They also illustrate the growth in the importance of dramatic critics: as the century progressed, an increasing number of serious periodicals was founded, all of which gave considerable space to the theatre. At the start of the century, The Times provided regular, though rather short, reviews of the programmes presented at the Patent Houses; for other comments it is necessary to turn to gossip columns, diaries and reminiscences. From the 1840s onwards, periodicals of the stature of The Illustrated London News, The Athenaeum and The Spectator were printing lengthy reviews in which text, scenery, acting and production were fully discussed. Paradoxically, these periodicals arrived on the scene in time to chronicle and bewail the decline of serious theatre in England, and one can only express regret that Kemble's performances lacked the documentation which later, and often lesser, actors were to receive. The nineteenth century dramatic critics included some of the greatest and liveliest writers in the English language, and it is a matter for gratitude that we are still able to recapture performances through the words and vision of Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Forster, Shaw and Max Beerbohm. The Times' cavalier attitude towards most productions of



Julius Caesar, and the unaccountably vicious attitude of most London critics towards Benson's early work, are small prices to pay for the wit of Shaw and the scholarship of Hazlitt.

Hazlitt illustrates at its most potent the link between the literary critic and the stage. Almost all his comments (as literary criticism) which appeared in The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays were drawn directly from his dramatic criticism in The Examiner, The Morning Chronicle and elsewhere. For example, when, in The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays Hazlitt stated that

of imagination

Few things in Shakespear ... have more of that local truth and character than the passage in which Cleopatra is represented conjecturing what were the employments of Antony in his absence - "He's speaking now, or murmuring - Where's my serpent of old Nile?" or again when she says to Antony, after the defeat at Actium, and his summoning up resolution to risk another fight - "It is my birthday; I had thought to have held it poor; but since my lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra," (16)

he was remembering those very moments which had impressed him in his capacity as dramatic critic in 1813, for his review of the performance on 15 November 1813 contained the following paragraph:

Nothing can have more local truth and perfect character than the passage in which Cleopatra is represented as conjecturing what are the employments of Antony in his absence. "He's speaking now, or murmuring - where's my serpent of old Nile?" Or again, when she says to Antony, after the defeat of Actium, and his resolution to risk another fight - "It is my birthday; I had thought to have held it poor, but since my lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra." (17)

Most of his literary criticism of Shakespeare was similarly enlivened by attendance at performances of the plays; the detail, sensitiveness, thoroughness and enthusiasm of his comments spring from, and were perhaps given impetus by, a familiarity with the practical world of the theatre. It is more than possible that Kemble's deliberate attempt to convey on

stage the struggle in the mind of Brutus prompted Hazlitt to emphasise a similar point in his interpretation of Brutus in The Characters of Shakspeare's Plays.

Otherwise, apart from the possible influence of Capell's stage directions on Kemble's production, and of the agreement of actors and scholars about the tenderness of Brutus, the worlds of the study and of the stage rarely influenced one another. Benson and Tree were certainly unwilling to draw attention to the less pleasant features in the character of Mark Antony in Julius Caesar, whatever the literary critics might say.

Basically, however, this study has not attempted to prove anything. Its aim has been expository: to provide a detailed stage history of three plays in a limited period of time. It will have attained its goal if it has allowed contemporary prompt copies, reviews, diaries, memoirs and reminiscences to tell their own tale of the nineteenth century theatre's attempts "to tread on classic ground."

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APPENDIX

LONDON AND STRATFORD PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN PLAYS

1800 - 1900

KEY: C.G. - Covent Garden  
D.J. - Drury Lane  
H.Ms. - Her Majesty's

Hmt. - Haymarket  
Str. - Stratford  
S.W. - Sadler's Wells

The star roles in Julius Caesar are in the following order: Brutus, Cassius, Mark Antony.

YEAR      "CORIOLANUS"

"JULIUS CAESAR"

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

1800			
1801			
1802			
1803			
1804	May Cooke D.L.		
1805			
1806	Nov & Dec. J.P. Kemble C.G.		
1807	May & Oct. J.P. Kemble C.G.		
1808			
1809			
1810			
1811	Dec. J.P. Kemble C.G.		
1812	Apr May & June J.P. Kemble C.G.	Feb March Apr May & June J.P. Kemble Young C. Kemble C.G. June J.P. Kemble Young C. Kemble C.G.	Nov & Dec Young & Mrs. Faucit C.G.
1813	June Young C.G. Dec. Conway C.G.	Feb May Oct Nov & Dec J.P. Kemble Young C. Kemble C.G.	Jan & Apr Young & Mrs. Faucit C.G.
1814	Jan Feb May Oct Nov & Dec J.P. Kemble C.G.		

# APPENDIX PAGE 2.

YEAR	"CORIOLANUS"	"JULIUS CAESAR"	"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"
1815	May Conway C.G.	Apr J.P. Kemble Young	
	Oct J.P. Kemble C.G.	C. Kemble C.G.	
1816	Apr Oct Nev	May Nov & Dec. J.P. Kemble	
	& Dec. J.P. Kemble C.G.	Young C. Kemble C.G.	
1817	Apr May & June J.P. Kemble C.G.	Apr May & June J.P. Kemble	
		Young C. Kemble C.G.	
1818			
1819	Nov & Dec. Macready C.G.	June Young Macready	
		C. Kemble C.G.	
1820	Jan & Feb E. Kean D.L.	Dec. Wallack Booth	
	Dec. Vandenhoff C.G.	Cooper D.L.	
1821			
1822		Apr May & June Young Macready	
		C. Kemble C.G.	
1823		Dec Young Cooper C. Kemble C.G.	
1824	June Macready D.L.		
1825		May Young Cooper C. Kemble C.G.	
		Sept Oct & Nov Warde, Cooper	
		C. Kemble C.G.	
1826		Oct Young Warde C. Kemble C.G.	
1827		Oct Young Warde C. Kemble C.G.	
1828			
1829		Oct & Nov Young Cooper Wallack	
		D.L.	
1830			
1831	May & June Macready D.L.	Apr. Young Warde C. Kemble C.G.	

APPENDIX PAGE 3

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>"CORIOLANUS"</u>	<u>"JULIUS CAESAR"</u>	<u>"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"</u>
1833	Dec. Macready D.L.		Nov & Dec Macready & Miss Phillips D.L.
1834	June & July Vandenhoff Hmt Oct Vandenhoff C.G.		
1835		Jan Wallack Warde Cooper C.G. Feb Vandenhoff Warde Cooper D.L.	
1836		May Knowles Macready C. Kemble C.G. June Paumier Warde Cooper D.L. Nov & Dec. Macready Vandenhoff C. Kemble C.G. Apr & May Macready Vandenhoff Knowles C.G. Feb & May Macready Phelps Elton C.G.	
1837	Feb & Mar Hamblin C.G. Nov Butler D.L.	Apr Macready Phelps Vandenhoff C.G. Apr? Vandenhoff Phelps Knowles - Royal Victoria	
1838	Mar & Apr Macready C.G. Sep Vandenhoff C.G.		
1839	May Macready C.G.		
1840			
1841			
1842			
1843	? Dillon Theatre Royal Marylebone	May & June Macready Phelps Anderson D.L. Oct Vandenhoff Phelps Anderson C.G.	

# APPENDIX PAGE 4

YEAR      "CORIOLANUS"

"JULIUS CAESAR"

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

1844			
1845			
1846			
1847	May Phelps Bennett Marston S.W.		
1848	Aug Phelps Creswick Marston S.W.		
1849	Apr Macready Ryder Cooper Princess's		
1850	Apr Phelps Bennett Marston S.W.		Oct Nov & Dec Phelps & Miss Glyn S.W.
	Feb Vandenhoff Cathcart Anderson D.L.		
	Oct & Nov Creswick Mead Montague Surrey		
	Oct Phelps Bennett Marston S.W.		
	Nov Macready & Davenport Howe Hmt		
	Jan Macready & Davenport Howe Hmt		
1851	Jan Anderson D.L.		
1852			
1853			
1854			
1855			
1856			March Marston & Miss Glyn Standard
1857	Nov Phelps Marston Robinson S.W.		
1858			Aug Marston & Miss Glyn Standard
1859			
1860	Mar & Sep Phelps S.W.		

APPENDIX PAGE 2

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>"CORIOLANUS"</u>	<u>"JULIUS CAESAR"</u>	<u>"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"</u>
1861			
1862			
1863			
1864			
1865			
		Apr Phelps Montgomery Anderson D.L.	
		Oct & Nov Phelps Swinbourne Anderson D.L.	
		Dec ? ? Anderson Shoreditch	
1866			
1867	Nov Lorraine S.W.		May-June Lorraine & Miss Glyn Princess's
1868			
1869			
1870			
1871			
1872			
1873			
			Sep-Dec Anderson & Miss Wallis D.L.
1874			
1875			
1876			
1877			
1878			
1879			
1880			



APPENDIX PAGE 6

"CORIOLANUS"

"JULIUS CAESAR"

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

1881	May June & July Saxe Meiningen Co. (in German) D.L.	
1882		
1883		
1884		
1885		
1886		
1887		
1888		
1889	Apr Tearle Lever Comay Str.	
1890		Nov Coghlan & Mrs. Langtry
1891		Feb Princess's
1892	Apr Tearle ? ? Olympic Apr Swete Mollison Benson Str	
1893	Aug Benson Str.	
1894		
1895		
1896	Apr Asche Rodney Benson Str	
1897		May June Calvert & Miss Achurch Olympic
1898	Apr Benson Str.	Apr Benson & Mrs. Benson Str.
1899		
1900	Sep Oct Waller Taber Tree H.Ms	Mar-Apr Benson & Mrs. Benson Lycceum.

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ations of Shakespeare's Tragedies,

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F.P. 1931

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Dissertation on the Three Parts of King  
Henry VI; an Historical Account of the  
English Stage; and Notes, by Edmond  
Malone. London 1790

The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare,  
with the corrections and Illustrations of  
various commentators! Comprehending a  
Life of the Poet, and an Enlarged History  
of the Stage 21 volumes London 1821 f.p. 179  
The Works of Shakespear in Six Volumes,  
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Editions by Mr. Pope London 1725

G. Steevens (Ed)

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1800

L. Theobald (Ed)

The works of Shakespeare in Eight  
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2nd edition F.P. 1733

#### IV VERSIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND EDITIONS OF INDIVIDUAL PLAYS

G.C. Branam

Eighteenth Century Adaptations of  
Shakespearean Tragedy Berkeley, U.S.A.  
1956

H. Brooke

A Collection of Pieces Volume II  
London 1778

C. Calvert

Shakspeare's Tragedy of "Antony and  
Cleopatra". Arranged for Representation  
in Four Acts by Charles Calvert, Prince's  
Theatre, Manchester Edinburgh 1866

L. Calvert

Messrs. Louis Calvert and Richard  
Flanagan's Second Annual Shakespearian  
Season, Queen's Theatre, Manchester,  
February 16th. 1897. "Antony and  
Cleopatra": Arranged for Representation  
in Four Acts, and Produced by Louis  
Calvert Manchester N.D. (1875)  
Julius Caesar (New Arden edition)

T.S. Dorsch (Ed)

London 1955

J. Dover Wilson (Ed)

Antony and Cleopatra (New Cambridge  
Shakespeare) Cambridge 1968

J. Dover Wilson (Ed)

Coriolanus (New Cambridge Shakespeare)  
Cambridge 1968

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J. Dryden

All for Love, or The World Well Lost. A  
Tragedy London 1948 (Everyman edition)  
F.P. 1678

H.H. Furness (Ed)

A New Variorum Edition of "Antony and  
Cleopatra" New York 1907

H.T. Hall

Shakspeare's Plays: The Separate Editions  
of, with the Alterations Done by Various  
Hands Cambridge 1880

G.R. Hibbard (Ed)

Coriolanus (New Penguin Edition) London  
1967

Mrs. Inchbald (Ed)

The British Theatre, or A Collection of  
Plays which are acted at the Theatres  
Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden and  
Haymarket. Printed under the Authority  
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with Biographical and Critical Remarks  
Volumes IV and V London 1808

Mrs. Inchbald (Ed)

M.R. Ridley (Ed)

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C. Sedley

H. Spencer

J. Thomson

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Volumes IV and V London 1824  
Antony and Cleopatra (New Arden edition)  
London 1956 F.P.1954

Coriolanus, or The Roman Matron, a Tragedy Taken from Shakespear and Thomson. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Smock-Alley. To which is added, The Order of the Ovation Dublin 1757

Poetical and Dramatic Works (Ed.V. de Sola Pinto) Volume IV London 1928

Shakespeare Improved: The Restoration Versions in Quarto and on the Stage

Cambridge, Mass. 1927

The Works of J. Thomson, Volume IV  
London 1762

#### V PROMPT COPIES

##### "Coriolanus"

- (i) Shakspeare's Coriolanus or The Roman Matron, A Historical Play, adapted to the stage, with additions from Thomson, by J.P. Kemble, and now first published as it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden  
London 1806

(The Prompt Copy for Kemble's 1806 revival of his production originally staged in 1789, In the possession of The Garrick Club, London.)

##### "Julius Caesar"

- (i) Shakspeare's Julius Caesar, A Tragedy, adapted to the stage by J.P. Kemble, and published as it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden. London 1812

(The Prompt Copy for Kemble's first production of Julius Caesar in 1812. In the possession of The Garrick Club, London.)

- (ii) Shakspeare's Julius Caesar, A Tragedy; adapted to the stage by J.P. Kemble; and now published as it is performed at The Theatres Royal. London 1814

(A copy made by R. and S. Jones of Kemble's promptbook of 1812, but containing slightly more manuscript detail. Used by William Creswick for his production of Julius Caesar at the Theatre Royal,

Liverpool in 1845, and therefore probably very similar to his production at the Surrey Theatre in 1850. In the possession of The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon)

- (iii) Julius Caesar: A Tragedy, In Five Acts, By William Shakespeare. Printed from the Acting Copy, with Remarks Biographical and Critical, by D. & G. To which are added, A Description of the Costume, & Cast of the Characters, Entrances and Exits & Relative Positions of the Performers on the Stage, & and the Whole of the Stage Business. As performed at the Theatres Royal, London London N.D., but the printed text refers to the 1827 Covent Garden production. (A prompt book "marked from Mr. Vandenhoff's", but with no indication of date of production. In the possession of The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon)
- (iv) Julius Caesar A Play, in Five Acts. By William Shakespeare London N.D. (Circa 1889) (The prompt copy for Osmond Tearle's production at Stratford in 1889, re-worked into six acts. In the possession of The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon)

"Antony and Cleopatra"

- (i) Shakspeare's Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra; with alterations, and with additions from Dryden; as now performed at the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden. London 1813 (The prompt-copy for the 1813 production of Antony and Cleopatra. In the possession of The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon)

C.H. Shattuck

The Shakespeare Promptbooks  
A Descriptive Catalogue.  
Urbana, U.S.A. 1965.

VI PERIODICALS CONSULTED

The Athenaeum  
The Birmingham Daily Gazette  
The Birmingham Daily Post  
The Birmingham Weekly Post  
Blackwood's Magazine  
The Cornhill Magazine  
The Edinburgh Review  
The Examiner  
The Graphic  
The Illustrated London News  
John Bull  
The Lady's Magazine  
The Leamington Courier

The Literary Gazette  
The London Magazine  
Macmillan's Magazine  
The Monthly Magazine, or British Register  
The Monthly Mirror  
The Monthly Review (and the Monthly Review Enlarged)  
The Morning Herald  
The Morning Post  
The Nineteenth Century  
Punch  
The Quarterly Review  
The Saturday Review  
The Speaker  
The Spectator and W. Beach Thomas: The Story of The Spectator 1828-1928  
London 1928  
The Sphere  
Sporting Dramatic  
The Stage  
The Standard  
The Stratford upon Avon Herald  
The Sunbeam  
The Telegraph  
The Theatre  
Theatre Notebook  
The Theatrical Inquisitor of  
The Times and The History "The Times";  
Vol. I "The Thunderer" in the Making London 1935  
Vol. II The Tradition Established 1841-1884 London 1939  
Vol. III The Twentieth Century Test 1884-1912 London 1947  
The Westminster Review