

**KING HENRY
THE EIGHTH**

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King Henry the Eighth by William Shakespeare & D. Nichol Smith

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & D. NICHOL SMITH

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GENERAL PREFACE

In this edition of SHAKESPEARE an attempt is made to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar. Criticism purely verbal and textual has only been included to such an extent as may serve to help the student in the appreciation of the essential poetry. Questions of date and literary history have been fully dealt with in the Introductions, but the larger space has been devoted to the interpretative rather than the matter-of-fact order of scholarship. Aesthetic judgments are never final, but the Editors have attempted to suggest points of view from which the analysis of dramatic motive and dramatic character may be profitably undertaken. In the Notes likewise, while it is hoped that all unfamiliar expressions and allusions have been adequately explained, yet it has been thought even more important to consider the dramatic value of each scene, and the part which it plays in relation to the whole. These general principles are common to the whole series; in detail each Editor is alone responsible for the play intrusted to him.

Every volume of the series has been provided with a Glossary, an Essay upon Metre, and an Index; and Appendices have been added upon points of special interest, which could not conveniently be treated in the Introduction or the Notes. The text is based by the several Editors on that of the *Globe* edition: the only omissions made are those that are unavoidable in an edition likely to be used by young students.

By the systematic arrangement of the introductory matter, and by close attention to typographical details, every effort has been made to provide an edition that will prove convenient in use.

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INTRODUCTION.

I. DATE AND HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth, the last in historical order of Shakespeare's Histories, and probably the last in date of composition, was not published separately in quarto form. It is one of the twenty plays which first appeared in the collected edition of his works issued in 1623 by his fellow-actors John Heminge and Henry Condell, and now known as the *First Folio*. The text there given is comparatively free from corruptions. The variations in the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios (1632, 1663-64, and 1685) are not always an improvement, while the emendations of modern critics are for the most part of little moment.

The date of the first performance of *Henry VIII.* is a matter of controversy. There is indisputable evidence that a play dealing with the reign of Henry VIII. was being acted on 29th June, 1613, when the Globe Theatre was destroyed by fire. There are at least three contemporary statements of this:—

(1) The Rev. Thomas Lorkin, writing to Sir Thomas Puckering on 30th June, 1613, says that "no longer since then yesterday, while Bourbage his companie were acting at the Globe the play of *Henry VIII.*, and there shooting of certayne chambers in way of triumph, the fire catch'd and fastened upon the thatch of the house and there burned so furiously as it consumed the whole house and all in lesse then two houres".¹

¹ Quoted from Dr. Aldis Wright's *Henry VIII.* (Clarendon Press), p. vi., in which the passage was first printed fully.

(2) Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter to his nephew on 2nd July, 1613, writes: "Now, to let matters of State sleep, I will entertain you at the present with what hath happened this week at the Banks side. The Kings Players had a new Play, called *All is True*,¹ representing some principal pieces of the Reign of *Henry 8*, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of Pomp and Majesty, even to the matting of the Stage; the Knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the Guards with their embroidered Coats, and the like: sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous. Now, King *Henry* making a Masque at the Cardinal *Wolsey's* House, and certain Canons being shot off at his entry, some of the Paper, or other stuff, wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the Thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds."²

(3) Edmond Howes, in his continuation of *Stow's Chronicle*, states that the burning of the Globe was due to the "negligent discharging of a peale of ordinance...the house being filled with people to behold the play, viz. of *Henry the 8*."³

Is the play of *Henry VIII.* here referred to that which we now have? Everything goes to prove the identity. There is nothing irrelevant in the above descriptions. The pageantry is excessive and sometimes interferes with the more legitimate dramatic effects; and in the fourth scene of the first act, in which 'King Henry [is] making a masque at the Car-

¹ This was apparently an alternative title of *Henry VIII.* There seems to be reference to it in the Prologue (see notes). A ballad "upon the pittifull burninge of the Globe Play-House in London", has the refrain:

O sorrow, pittifull sorrow, and yet all this is true;

but its authenticity is doubtful. See Collier, *Annals of the Stage* (1879), I. pp. 371-3.

² *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, third edition, 1672, pp. 425, 426.

³ *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England, begun first by Maister John Stow, continued unto the ende of this presente yeere 1614 by Edmond Howes*, 1615, p. 926, col. 2.

dinal Wolsey's house¹, there is the special stage-direction 'chambers discharged'.¹ To escape the conclusion that the existing play of *Henry VIII.* is substantially the same as that which brought about the burning of the Globe Theatre, it is necessary to hold, as some do, that there was another play of the same title and nature, and identical in some of its incidents; but there are no facts to justify this view. The only known contemporary play dealing with Henry VIII. is Samuel Rowley's *When you see me you know me*, and it does not tally at any point with the above descriptions.

But was *Henry VIII.* a new play in 1613? The only external evidence that bears directly on this question is the statement of Wotton, who says expressly that the Globe was burnt down during the performance of a new play. The internal evidence of metre and style would likewise point to a date towards the end of Shakespeare's career, but the probability of a joint authorship (see section iii.) affects its value. There remains, however, the internal evidence of allusion to historical events. The closing scene contains a panegyric on James I., and probably a reference to the first settlement of Virginia in 1607, or, according to Malone, to the state lottery granted expressly for the establishment of English colonies in Virginia in 1612. There would thus seem to be every reason for accepting without demur the direct testimony of Wotton that *Henry VIII.* was 'a new play' in 1613. As it so happens, Malone is one of those² who hold that the passage dealing with James I. is an interpolation, and that the play was originally written during the lifetime of Elizabeth. It need only be said that if there are no facts to confute this theory there are none to support it; but it may well be doubted, as Professor Ward³ points out, whether

¹ The origin of the fire is further confirmed by a letter, dated 8th July 1613, from John Chamberlaine to Sir Ralph Winwood: "But the burning of *the Globe* or *Playhouse* on the Bankside on St. Peter's Day cannot escape you; which fell out by a Peale of *Chambers* (that I know not upon what Occasion were to be used in the Play)".—Winwood's *Memorials*, 1725, iii. 460.

² Most of the older Shakespearian critics, e.g. Theobald, Johnson, Steevens, Collier, as well as Schlegel, Kreyssig, and Elze.

³ *History of English Dramatic Literature* (1899), ii. 203.