

**SHAKESPEARE'S ANTONY AND  
CLEOPATRA. WITH INTRODUCTION,  
AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND  
CRITICAL. FOR USE IN SCHOOLS  
AND FAMILIES**

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**HENRY N. HUDSON**

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SHAKESPEARE'S

III

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

WITH

INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL.

*FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES,*

BY THE

REV. HENRY N. HUDSON, LL.D

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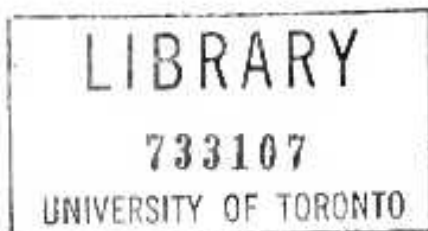
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## INTRODUCTION.

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### Date of the Composition.

THE TRAGEDY OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA was never printed that we know of till in the folio of 1623. As to the time when it was written, the most that we have to proceed upon, aside from the qualities of the work itself, is an entry at the Stationers' by Edward Blount, May 20, 1608, of "a book called Antony and Cleopatra." Whether Shakespeare's drama were the "book" referred to in this entry, is something questionable, as the subject was at that time often written upon, dramatically or otherwise. Of course the entry was made with the design of publication; so that, if it refer to the play in hand, either such design must have miscarried, or else the edition has been utterly lost. Blount was one of the publishers of the first folio; and in the entry made by him and Jaggard at the Stationers', November 8, 1623, *Antony and Cleopatra* is among the plays set down as "not formerly entered to other men." Which certainly favours the conclusion that the entry of 1608 referred to the same play.

There is perhaps no point in the early history of the English stage more certain than that the theatrical companies took every precaution in order to keep their plays out of print. And we have strong ground for believing that, after the edition of *Hamlet* in 1604, there was no authorized issue

of any of the Poet's dramas during his lifetime. This may have been, and probably was, the cause of there being no edition of this play in pursuance of the entry in question.

Knight and Verplanck argue that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was not written till after the date of Blount's entry, and that this entry referred to some other performance; their main reason being the admitted fact that the style of this play bespeaks the Poet's highest maturity of mind. I agree, however, with Malone and Collier in assigning the composition to 1607, or the early part of 1608, when the author was in his forty-fourth year. This brings it within the same five years of his life, from 1605 to 1610, which witnessed the production of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. It will hardly be questioned that at the time of writing these dramas the Poet's mind was equal to any achievement within the compass of human thought. Nor can I taste any peculiarities of style in this play, as distinguished from the proper tokens of dramatic power, that should needs infer any more ripeness of mind than in case of the other dramas of that period.

I must add that the original text of this play is not very well printed, even for that time or that volume, and has a number of corruptions that are exceedingly trying to an editor. And, indeed, the style of the play is so superlatively idiomatic, and abounds in such splendid audacities of diction and imagery, that it might well be very puzzling to any transcriber or printer or proof-reader, unless the author's hand-writing were much plainer than it appears to have been, from the specimens that have come down to us.



### Source of the Matter.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the drawings from history, though perhaps not larger in the whole than we find in some other plays, are, however, more minute and circumstantial. Here the Poet seems to have picked and sifted out from old Plutarch, with the most scrupulous particularity, every fact, every embellishment, and every line and hint of character, that could be wrought coherently into the structure and process of the work; the whole thus evincing the closest study and the exactest use of the matter before him. Notwithstanding, his genius is as far as ever from seeming at all encumbered with help, or anywise cramped or shackled by the restraints of history: on the contrary, his creative faculties move so freely and play so spontaneously under and through the Plutarchian matter, that the borrowings seem no less original than what he created, and the inventions no less historical than what he borrowed. I say inventions, for many of the finest scenes and passages are purely such: yet these seem to have caught the very spirit and method of the old material; so that the whole work is perfectly fused into one substance, all the parts being just as much of the same grain and texture as if they had originally grown together.

It is well known that even in matters of history fictions often express the real truth of things much better than any facts which history has preserved. This, to be sure, may sometimes proceed from a kind of psychological comparative anatomy, whereby a sagacious mind, from a small relic of fact, a single tooth or bone, as it were, reconstructs the living whole. Take, for instance, the early part of the 17th century: I suppose no competent judge will question that

many of the leading characters, as well as the manners and spirit of that time, are far better delivered by Sir Walter Scott in *The Fortunes of Nigel* than in any so-called authentic history of the same period. And it may be safely affirmed that in this drama, as in others of an historical nature, the Poet never cares to draw upon his inventive powers, save when by so doing he can bring out the truth of his characters more vividly, more dramatically, and even more fairly, than it is conveyed in the forms and incidents which the history offered him; not to mention that he often extracts and concentrates the life and efficacy of many incidents in one representative invention; thus giving the substantial truth of them all, without the literal truth of any one. Nor, closely as he here works to the record, is there any one of his dramas wherein he shows a more fertile and pregnant inventiveness; many of the scenes being perfectly original, and at the same time truer to the history *in effect* than the history is to itself. For it is not too much to say that he had the art to express what was in his persons far better than they knew how to express it themselves. How he could thus endow them with his own intellect, or with so much of it as they needed, without disturbing their individuality at all, or impairing their proper self-consciousness, is a mystery which perhaps no effort of criticism can solve.

#### Historic Outline.

Soon after the overthrow of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, which occurred in the Fall of the year B.C. 42, the Triumvirs, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus, partitioned the Roman world among themselves, Antony taking the Eastern provinces as his share. The next year, while on his way

with an army against the Parthians, he summoned Cleopatra to meet him in Cilicia, and give an account of her recent doings in aid of Brutus and Cassius. She responded in the celebrated adventure in which she caught the amorous Triumvir, and "pursed up his heart upon the river of Cydnus." In his account of this conquest, the Poet does little more than translate the delectable old narrative of Plutarch into dialogue. The result of the affair was that Cleopatra led Antony captive to Alexandria, where he lost himself in the prodigious revelries and sensualities of the Egyptian Court. Thereupon his ferocious wife, Fulvia, together with his brother Lucius, who was then Consul, raised a war in Italy against Octavius, her purpose being, it was said, to disenchant her husband and draw him back to Rome. In the Spring, however, of the year 40 B.C., Fulvia died; from which event dates the opening of the play.

In the course of the same year Antony was married to Octavia; by which marriage the difficulties of the two Triumvirs were expected to be permanently healed; though, as the issue proved, "the band that seemed to tie their friendship together was the very strangler of their amity." This was followed, the next year, by the treaty with Sextus Pompey at Misenum. For some four years, Antony, in form at least, kept his faith with Octavia, who bore him two children. But, with all her beauty and wisdom and illustrious virtues, she could make no abiding impression upon him: his thoughts kept flying back to Egypt. In the year B.C. 36, he set forth on another expedition against the Parthians, and sent an invitation to Cleopatra to join him; and on her doing so he fell more hopelessly than ever under her enchantment, lavishing realms and cities upon her as if the whole world were his, and he valued it only that he might give it to her