

by a critic enamoured of dramaturgic craftsmanship.

Professor Barrett Wendell is right in calling attention to the "perverse complexity" of *Cymbeline*, and in asserting that "until the very last scene the remarkably involved story tangles itself in a way which is utterly bewildering." Of course, *Cymbeline* is not without evidence of Shakespeare's power; but it is one of the poorest of his plays, one of the most arbitrary in its motives, and one of the least effective on the stage. Therefore, it should be one of the last of Shakespeare's works to be called to the attention of the eager student. To set out its plot in one hundred pages at the very beginning of his book is to go contrary to Professor Sherman's avowed purpose of making the approach to Shakespeare easy and alluring. In fact, it is difficult for any one who is really appreciative of what is best in Shakespeare to read these five-score pages with any other feeling than blank amazement.

To put this book into the hands of young Americans possessed of healthy and active minds, and to tell them that this is the best way to prepare themselves to enjoy Shakespeare, is to run the risk of giving them an instant and violent distaste for the writings of the great dramatist. If there are readers in doubt as to the proper method of approach to the works of the playwright who wrote so as to be understood by the plain people that thronged the theatre when his plays were first performed, these readers may be recommended to get the late Richard Grant White's *Studies in Shakespeare*, and to avail themselves of the advice there given "On Reading Shakespeare." And if there are any readers of Professor Sherman's absurd suggestion that Shakespeare probably himself played Shylock and Benedick, "though we can agreeably conceive him his own best Romeo, Mercutio," etc. (p. 256), such readers may be recommended to get the late George Henry Lewes's *Actors and the Art of Acting*, and to inform themselves about "Shakespeare as an Actor," as he appeared to that very acute dramatic critic, who was not only a philosopher, but also on occasion both actor and dramatist.

Brander Matthews.

IV.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS'S "ULYSSES."*

Mr. Phillips has endeavoured to weave a number of episodes from the *Odyssey* into a dramatic form. How far the result may justify the undertaking only the acted play can prove: the most theatrically-minded critic must, in reading, set aside theatrical limitations and use the term *dramatic* in that wider sense permissible when the reader's mind is the stage. Even from this larger standpoint it is doubtful if Mr. Phillips has justified his choice of a subject; since the story of Ulysses, as handled by him, remains rather a series of more or less dramatic incidents than a dramatic whole. The temperament of Ulysses makes this inevitable: it would be hard to imagine a more centrifugal hero. He was an adventurer in the fine old sense, taking good and evil "with a frolic welcome," animated by no definite purpose, making for no fixed goal, but living life for life's sake with the thoroughness though without the self-consciousness of the modern Cyrenaic. Such a character might, by its action on others of different mould, produce situations full of dramatic possibilities, as, for instance, the hero's parting from Calypso or his return to Ithaca. Each of these situations contains the germ of a drama; but when they are used episodically their dramatic value is lost, and they become merely heterogeneous fragments of experience. Mr. Phillips might reply that this was what he intended them to be, and that the episodic nature of his hero's adventures was typical of such a temperament—that to centralise the diffused emotions of the "fluid" Ulysses into a single dramatic crisis would have been to recast the hero of the *Odyssey*. To say this, however, is to admit the dramatic unfitness of the subject; and this Mr. Phillips is far from admitting. He declares, indeed, that the story of Ulysses seems to him to "afford matter for telling dramatic presentment," and adds that he has tried to weave his hero's adventures "into the fabric of a properly-knit play;" but he would doubtless not quarrel with the critic who should prefer to extol his work as a

*Ulysses: A Drama. By Stephen Phillips. New York: The Macmillan Company.

poetic narrative rather than to condemn it as a drama.

Viewed in the former light, it is seen to be full of detached beauties, even of detached dramatic effects, though there are intervals of weakness and inadequacy, where the dramatic and the poetic inspiration seem to fail simultaneously. It will doubtless generally be admitted that the two scenes in which Mr. Phillips has been least successful are those on Olympus and in Hades. His muse, Antæus-like, draws fresh strength from contact with the earth, and it is to be regretted that he did not discard the whole Olympian machinery and deal with the purely human side of the story. The poem might have lost in picturesqueness, in a masque-like effect of quaintness, but would have gained, one feels, a deeper beauty and significance. At all events, Mr. Phillips has not justified his attempt to walk with the immortals. The prologue on Olympus is the weakest part of the play. The author has chosen to make his gods speak in rhymed pentameter, a doubtful vehicle for majestic speech, but one probably selected to give what the Germans call a "humoresque" touch to the scene. Mr. Phillips, perhaps mistrusting his ability to report "that large utterance of the early gods," has preferred to present his divinities in a serio-comic aspect: a permissible alternative, had it been successfully carried out. Unhappily, Mr. Phillips is deficient in both humour and irony, and that "smile of the universe," which was evidently intended to play over the scene, somehow fails to make itself visible: like a recalcitrant stage-moon refusing to rise at the right moment. Here and there, indeed, the prologue rises to poetry; but this is when Mr. Phillips drops the ironic masque and lapses into the elegiac or the introspective key. Such a line as

Mocked by the green of some receding shore
is among the gifts for which one must
ever be grateful to Mr. Phillips; but,
placed as it is, it produces the effect of
having been drawn from its original con-
text to eke out Athene's rhymes. Lines
of this quality are, moreover, infrequent,
and the verse of the prologue moves
chiefly on the level of:

Who hath so suffered, or so far hath sailed,
So much encountered, and so little quailed?

or (in Zeus's address to Poseideon):

In thy moist province none can interfere—
or (worse yet) in the description of
Calypso:

All his wisdom swoons beneath the charm
Of her deep bosom and her glimmering arm.

These examples will probably suffice
to show that the rhymed pentameter, al-
ways difficult to use in dialogue, is not
Mr. Phillips's native element.

The first act opens with a page or two
of decidedly prosy prose; but with the
appearance of Athene, the words fall into
the stately beat of Mr. Phillips's blank
verse. Mr. Phillips has been criticised
for writing lines which resist all attempts
at scansion; but when the pedants give
up trying to scan English verse by Latin
feet, and measure it instead by accentual
stress, his lines will be found to present
few difficulties. Athene's opening
speech is a good example of his more
complex rhythms, and one may conceive
that the Latin measuring-rod must fly
into splinters in contact with such un-
coercible lines as:

When he leapt among them, when he flashed,
when he cried,
When he flew on them, when he struck, when
he stamped them dead.

Those who refuse to test English verse
by the rules of Latin prosody may main-
tain that in such measures Mr. Phillips
is at his best, and that his courage and
originality in the use of rhythm are his
surest safeguard against a certain effe-
minacy—a leaning to the Tennyson of
the Idylls rather than of the Ulysses.

The first scene of the first act undoubt-
edly contains some of the best verse in
the play, and not only its finest line, but,
perhaps, on the whole, the finest line the
author has ever written: when Athene,
striving to turn Telemachus against the
suitors, replies to his whining

Goddess, I am but one and they are many—
with the godlike cry:

Thou art innumerable as thy wrongs!

The scene shifts to the sea-cave of
Calypso, where the blandishments of the
enchantress are interspersed with lyrics
unfortunately reminiscent of an opera

libretto: as when the nymphs declare in chorus:

Alas! we have seen the sailor asleep
Where the anchor rusts on the ooze of the deep,
But never, never before
Have we seen a mortal dance on the long sea-shore.

One hastens on to escape the pursuing remembrance of Ariel's song.

There are high imaginative touches in the leave-taking between Ulysses and Calypso, and here again Mr. Phillips is at his best in Calypso's cry:

And now I do recall
Even in your wildest kiss a kiss withheld.

Indeed, the whole scene is effective in verse and movement, and provokingly suggests how well it might have served as the nucleus of a drama.

Mr. Phillips, however, hurries us on to Hades; and here, it must be owned, one is inclined to address to him the warning which Charon gives Ulysses:

Back to the earth or fear some monstrous doom!

Mr. Phillips's doom is that of inadequacy; a fact the more to be regretted as there is one profoundly imaginative touch in the scene—where Ulysses, as he passes in turn "the woes" of the mighty doomed, recognises his own sufferings in each, and cries out:

There is no torment here that is not mine.

In the second part of *Faust*, where Mephistopheles tells Faust that, to evoke the phantom of Helen, he must descend to the *Mothers*, the hero shudders at the mysterious word, and the reader feels the recoil of the shudder. This is the effect which Mr. Phillips has failed to produce: he does not transmit his *frisson*. *Facile est* can no longer be said of the literary descent into Avernus: two great seers have been there, and we carry the reflection of their vision in our eyes. Compared with that dark, unbottomed infinite abyss, Mr. Phillips's Hades seems chiefly the product of stage-mechanism and lime-lights, and one is glad, for a different reason, to emerge and behold the stars.

The third act opens on the seashore of

Ithaca. Athene reappears with a fresh stock of rhymed couplets; but her rhymes happily giving out, she murmurs some beautiful lines over the sleeping Ulysses. There follows an episodical scene of no great merit in the swine-herd's hut, and the action is then transferred to the banquetting-hall of the palace of Ulysses. It is the day on which Penelope is finally to choose between the suitors, and these in turn press their claims, while Ulysses, an unheeded beggar, crouches in the ashes by the hearth. This scene is dramatically the finest in the play; but precisely for this reason one most resents the intervention of Athene, whose promise to tell Ulysses when he is to arise and smite reduces the climax to a purely mechanical effect. There remains, however, much to praise, especially in Penelope's answers to the suitors; and the whole scene moves at a stirring pace, with a fine accord between rhythm and action.

Mr. Phillips's explanatory note seems, by its very tone of self-defence, to admit the dramatic inferiority of his subject, and it is almost superfluous to say that as a play *Ulysses* will not bear comparison with *Herod*. Unfortunately, the same must be said of it as a poem. There are still those who question whether Mr. Phillips has ever crossed the line dividing rhetoric from poetry. If, as Flaubert says, continuity constitutes style as constancy makes virtue, then Mr. Phillips has not, perhaps, established his claim to take rank among the poets; but assuredly he has written poetry. There are lines in *Ulysses* that prove it, though they are less frequent than in *Herod*. There are fewer passages where imaginative passion has moulded speech to its own glowing shape, where the mystical fusion of word and meaning has taken place; but the existence of one such line suggests the possibility of others, and encourages the optimistic reader to hope that Mr. Phillips may yet be capable of sustaining life permanently on Parnassus.

Edith Wharton.

V. WASHBURN HOPKINS'S "INDIA, OLD AND NEW."

VI. WASHBURN HOPKINS'S "THE GREAT EPIC OF INDIA."

To a Milton "the wealth of Ind" was a synonym for showers of barbaric pearls