

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE LATEST PHASE
OF THE *CONTENTION-TRUE*
TRAGEDY PROBLEM

After the foregoing had originally gone to press I first had the opportunity of examining two articles by Mr. P. Alexander in the *London Times Literary Supplement* of October 9 and November 13, 1924, presenting strong, though fragmentary, evidence that the *Contention* and the *True Tragedy* are really "bad quartos" of 2-3 *Henry VI*, largely based on actors' reconstructions of the latter plays from memory with the aid of certain incomplete MSS. in their possession. If this theory be correct, the question as to the 1594-5 quartos has changed from "Who wrote the *Contention* and the *True Tragedy*?" to "Were the MSS. basic to the reconstruction those of the Shakespearean plays, or were they MSS. of pre-Shakespearean plays remaining in the hands of Pembroke's Men after the Shakespearean prompt-book (and presumably the players' parts) had passed into the possession of the Strange-Chamberlain company?" The determination of this question must rest upon a minute analysis of the four plays and an examination of all the evidence on the subject, internal and external, with the object of fixing, if possible, both the authorship of the manuscripts and the extent of their use. Meanwhile, in support of the view that in 2-3 *Henry VI* Shakespeare worked upon a basis of other plays, Marlowan in type, note: (1) That Halle's *Chronicle* (probably through Grafton) is certainly a source, a situation that never appears in any Shakespearean play except where Marlowe's or some other non-Shakespearean hand is either obvious (as in *Part 1*) or on other grounds to be suspected. (2) That in their verse-tests 2-3 *Henry VI* are strikingly uneven. For instance, in *Part 2*, I, i, Suffolk's opening speech (like other longer passages in both plays) has a feminine-ending percentage of at least 18.2, although the following passages dealing with Henry's reception of Queen Margaret and the terms of the marriage (ll. 17-75) drop to 6.8, and the concluding picture of the relations of Gloucester, Winchester, York, *et al.* (ll. 76-252) gives a percentage of 7.6. Further, in the cited scene the part of York's final speech that corresponds (almost without variation) to the same passage in the *Contention* (*Part 2*, I, i, 236-52) has only 4.1 per cent. of such endings (Marlowan figures), but lines 214-35, added in *Part 2* to the speech, show a percentage of 13.6 (Shakespearean figures). (3) That the specific reference in the *Contention* (IX, 134) to the "wilde Onele," which becomes merely a vague "rebels" in 2 *Henry VI* (III, i, 283), is historically correct, and is echoed, contrary to historical fact, in Marlowe's *Edward II* of before April 3, 1592 (Brooke, *Authorship*, etc., 175-6); and that there are also fourteen other parallels connecting the 1594-5 quartos with *Edward II* (owned by Pembroke's Men), fifteen parallels connecting them with 1-2 *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Massacre at Paris* (all owned by other companies), and two parallels with *Dido* (*ibid.*, 160-72); as well as ten parallels connecting them with A. scenes in 1 *Henry VI*. These facts obviously point toward a conclusion that while the *Contention-True Tragedy* may have a mixed origin, it yet has a Marlowan foundation. In the present volume the matter is of only minor importance, as it has no bearing upon the date of *Part 1* and but slightly affects the question of the quadruple authorship, which is established upon internal grounds; while I believe the identity of A. with Marlowe is also unmistakable without reference to the 1594-5 quartos. Nevertheless, the reader is warned that since the preceding pages were penned the problem as to these quartos seems to have altered, and that judgment as to the details of their history must be suspended pending further investigation.