

THE SOLDIER IN SHAKESPEARE

MORE PARACHMENT

100% BAC U.S.A.

STRATHMORE PAPER

100% BAC U.S.A.

THE SOLDIER IN SHAKESPEARE

By

E. LOUISE SHELTON

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1943

Submitted to the Department of English
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

1947

APPROVED BY:

George H. White
Chairman, Thesis Committee

Sherman M. Kuhn
Member of the Thesis Committee

Hans H. Anderson
Head of the Department

D. C. M. Tolson
Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my appreciation to Professor George H. White for his helpful suggestions and criticisms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	The Place of the Soldier in Elizabethan England	1
II	The Common Soldier	4
III	The Officer	16
IV	Important Soldiers in Shakespeare	29
V	The Battlefield	63
VI	Wine, Women, and Song	73
VII	Conclusion	86
	Bibliography	87

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF THE SOLDIER IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

While Shakespeare was still under the thatched roof of his Stratford-on-Avon home, before the narrow life-packed streets of London claimed him as part of, and yet as an observer apart from, their pageant of living, England expanded into a new era. It was an era in which all men were aware of the greatness of living and the imminence of death, an epoch during which England stretched long arms of exploration and colonization towards a new world, a time which marked for Britain a seething within herself. Collectively as a nation and individually as Englishmen, England felt an adventurousness, a daring to explore, to question, to doubt, to conquer, and to live quickly while there was yet time.

This sense of being born at an auspicious moment laden with opportunities for rich living was not the possession of one class of society alone. All sorts of men were early aware of possibilities in themselves and the time. The Elizabethan matured at an early age, and often his life was crowded into a short span of full years. A man must be quickly about this wonderful business of living. He had no time to be over-cautious, to feel out his path, to weigh consequences. He plunged. It was exhilarating; it was often tragic; it was swift. And it left on history a great highly-colored page at which men marvel when they look.

Chronicled for us with faithfulness and imagination by

those men, led by Shakespeare, of whom Dryden said, "Theirs was the giant race before the flood," that page has in it a representation of all English living. The tailor is there to remind us that his contribution consisted of more than the skillful wielding of his scissors in their endless task of clothing the courtiers, whose velvet and ruffled elegance was so pleasing to Elizabeth and her ladies-in-waiting. The money lender is there with those who borrowed from him. Life as it stemmed in abundance from the dark alleys of London appears. Not forgotten are those who directed across virgin waters the venturesome prows of ships, and forever present is the soldier on the battlefield and he who has come home from the wars.

These were the men who remade the world's geography and revolutionized its philosophy.

"The Elizabethans were spiritual geographers. They chartered the countries of the mind as well as re-mapped the earth. The desire to enlarge life was strong in them; for they risked the little security of their souls to discover new emotions and ideas, and came home staggering under the load."¹

Influential in remapping the earth was the soldier, who was in war and in peace an important factor in the life of the time.

In the long line of characters who made their way across the sixteenth century stage, there were many identified as soldiers. Those men in the audience who followed the wars were interested both in their fellows who were marching with Leicester and Sidney to the wars of the Low Countries and in their predecessors who had determined the fates of the Yorks and the

¹ Esther Cloudman Dunn, Eight Famous Elizabethan Plays (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), p. vii.

Lancasters. For their counterparts on the stage these men held a peculiar sympathy and understanding. And Elizabethans who had never been soldiers recognized in those stage-characters people they knew and problems of which they were aware.

Of these problems was that of the unemployed soldier in peace time. Then he was one of the "cankers of the commonwealth."² Bred to his profession, living from the spoils he could collect (and keep from the spoil-hungry hands of his fellows), the professional soldier was not one to stop at theft and murder in his job of keeping himself alive and clothed and amused during periods of peace. When he had pawned his weapons and, piece by piece, his soldier's dress, he must turn into a knave or a beggar, must be of those who lie in wait for travellers on Gadshill or infect the hamlets of England in the garb of fortune tellers or conjurors, or become one of London's "conny-catchers," preying upon rustics and widows. Small wonder that he should pray for war and welcome any cause leading to it; nor could his fellow Englishmen always be blamed for wishing him away at war.

In war time he was an important man in aggregate and insignificant individually as were all his spiritual ancestors and as have been most soldiers who have followed him. Fighting as a mercenary or as a trusted general, fighting for kingdoms or lost causes or disputed crowns, the soldiers of Shakespeare made up the armies whose loud clamour we hear in history and in the pages of his plays.

² G. B. Harrison, England in Shakespeare's Day (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), pp. 53 - 57.

CHAPTER II
THE COMMON SOLDIER

Making up the majority of any army must be the common soldier. Taking part in wars instigated by princes to gain ends of their own, the soldier fought as he was told or as his mettle determined he should.

Many of these men were mercenaries, soldiers of fortune, who fought for sack and bread and clothing, who were a wolf-pack straining through a battle toward its end and the cry of "havoc." Recruited from the streets and pubs and squalid living quarters of London and all England, they were impressed into service to fill quotas left unfilled because richer or cleverer men had been able to bribe themselves out of service or elude their impressors.

Of such were Falstaff's company, and of them even the brazen Falstaff said:

"If I be not ashamed of my soldiers, I am a soused gurnet. I have misused the King's press damnably. I have got, in exchange of a hundred and fifty soldiers, three hundred and odd pounds. I press me none but good householders, yeoman's sons; inquire me out contracted bachelors, such as had been asked twice on the banns; such a commodity of warm slaves, as had as lieve hear the devil as a drum; such as fear the report of a caliver worse than a struck fowl or a hurt wild-duck. I pressed me none but such toasts-and-butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins' heads; and they have bought out their services; and now my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies, slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores; and such as, indeed, were never soldiers, but discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dis-

honourable ragged than an old feazed ancient; and such have I, to fill up the rooms of them as have bought out their services, that you would think that I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me I had unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead bodies. No eye hath seen such scarecrows. I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat: nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had gyves on; for indeed I had the most of them out of prison. There's not a shirt and a half in all my company; and the half shirt is two napkins tacked together and thrown over the shoulders like an herald's coat without sleeves; and the shirt, to say the truth, stolen from my host at Saint Alban's, or the red-nose inn-keeper of Daventry. But that's all one; they'll find linen enough on every hedge."¹

That the people who owned those hedges from which Falstaff's men assembled their linen feared and resented the common soldier was natural. A fore-shadowing of scenes such as those enacted by Sherman's army in their March to the Sea centuries later, the actions of Falstaff's soldiers in their thefts from inn-keepers and citizens alike presented a problem no later war has been without. A soldier for whom adequate provisions of clothing and food and shelter have not been made must of necessity obtain them as best he can from whatever source presents itself. Some of the men who ransacked the houses in their path did so merely to satisfy their immediate and pressing needs. Others either liked or learned to like stealing and looting. Some of them were already experienced thieves, as was Falstaff, who had saved himself from being imprisoned after the Gadshill episode by becoming a soldier and as such temporarily immune from civil law.

¹ Thomas Marc Parrott, *Shakespeare* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), Henry IV, Part I, IV, ii, 12 - 52. (All references to the plays are from this edition of Shakespeare.)

Many common soldiers were fleeing prisons, soldiers primarily because in so being they could elude the law. All of them together constituted a menace to any country through which they passed and made on the whole but an indifferent army of fighters when the battle began.

Though Fortinbras assembled his army for reasons different from those prompting Falstaff's abuse of his duties as an impressor, the Prince from Norway was content to "shark up a list of lawless resolute."² Since his was an untried arm and his purpose merely that of proving that arm strong, his army were adequate. With them behind him, he gained a reputation and the throne of Denmark.

Of a different sort were soldiers like Francisco, who helped keep watch during the troubled days of the visits of the ghost of Hamlet's father. Francisco was hailed by Marcellus as an honest soldier. He was faithful to his watch, grateful for his relief, and sick at heart over the state of Denmark and its youthful Prince Hamlet.

There were regular soldiers like Iago, men who had found in soldiering a career to their liking, who took pride in their knowledge and efficiency, who were eager for deserved promotions, and who lived by a code of honor peculiar to the professional soldier. Often knowing more than their superiors about the business of war, these soldiers could be -- and often were -- of infinite assistance to their officers.

² Hamlet, I, i, 98.

In uniform too were many men whose impressment had forced them to leave reluctantly their work benches and families to serve unwillingly until the battle's end would release them. The captains who marched into Simon Eyre's shop in Dekker's Shoemaker's Holiday took the workman, Ralph, away to war in spite of his wife's cries and his master's attempt to bribe his impressors with a promise to supply them with shoes for seven years. Ralph's unwillingness to march away identified him as one of many soldiers who were never willing bearers of staves. They fought because they had to, not for honor or for a livelihood or for spoils.

They were not always impressed into service by Falstaff or a more honest officer of the king. Nor were they always like Antony's mariners, of whom Enobarbus said:

"Your mariners are muleteers, reapers, people
Ingross'd by swift impress."³

Sometimes they were borrowed from a lord who led an army of his own, as Siward's men were borrowed and his leadership of them counted on by Macduff. York, left with the crown of England to defend while he who wore it went to war in Ireland, made repeated requests to those lords remaining true to Richard:

"Gentlemen, will you go muster men?"⁴

and

"Gentlemen, go, muster up your men."⁵

³ Antony and Cleopatra, III, vii, 35 - 37.

⁴ Richard II, II, ii, 108.

⁵ Ibid., II, ii, 118.

Sometimes they were soldiers by choice as were those "cull'd and choice-drawn cavaliers"⁶ who accompanied Henry V to France.

Trained only to the extent provided by previous experience, these soldiers were given weapons and clothing and marched into actual participation on the battlefield. If their swordsmanship was inferior or their ability to run away undeveloped, they died. Those men whom Falstaff purposely led into the thick of the battle of Shrewsbury included many who had seen service only in the prisons of England, and all of them had been poorly outfitted by the grossly fat man who held their lives in contempt.

There were deserters in those armies, and there were men who disobeyed civil and military laws. For them punishment was quick and drastic. Though Henry V told his soldiers at Agincourt that any who did not want to fight were free and would be given means of acquiring transportation from Calais to Dover, the Roman Coriolanus, fighting the Volsces, decreed that "He that retires, I'll take him for a Volscce, and he shall feel mine edge."⁷ Bardolph, a soldier of Henry V, was hanged for having stolen a pax from a church.

The soldier's pay was a variable thing, ranging from the pay of those like Falstaff's men who battled for little if any compensation beyond food, clothing and spoils to Antony's "well-paid ranks."⁸ The soldier had billets, for Roderigo is told

⁶ Henry V, III, Chorus, 24.

⁷ Coriolanus, I, iv, 28 - 29.

⁸ Antony and Cleopatra, III, i, 32.

by Iago to "go where thou art billeted."⁹ He had weapons and soldier's dress. He was given food. And to him, were he victorious, went the spoils of war.

Uniforms and rings and all other articles of lesser or greater value could be taken from dead bodies lying on battle fields. There were towns to be sacked, virgins to be despoiled, country homes to be pillaged for food if they unluckily stood in the paths of any army. There were rewards in the shape of promotions for men like Iago. And in some rare instances there was the satisfaction of the victor in seeing something he hoped for accomplished.

Pistol's increasing his pay by forcing the trembling Frenchman, Le Fer, to contribute two hundred crowns as payment for safety from the Englishman's brandished sword is an example of one more source of revenue for the common soldier with few scruples.

Soldiers under Brutus were so eager to begin collecting their pay in the form of spoils that they stopped fighting before the battle was finished and so completed the defeat of the noblest Roman of them all.

Those common soldiers who followed Marcius into Corioli were eager despoilers of that city and were held in contempt for it by their stern general:

"See here these movers that do prize their hours
At a crack'd drachma! Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up. Down with them!"¹⁰

⁹ Othello, II, iii, 386.

¹⁰ Coriolanus, I, v, 5 - 9.

Death came, of course, to many soldiers. The fields of battle were always red. To the common soldier a military funeral was not accorded. He was given burial sometimes, sometimes left to infect the air of the country where he died. In reporting that Sweno, Norway's king, craved peace terms, Ross told Duncan, "Nor would we deign him burial of his men till he disbursed at Inchcolm ten thousand dollars for our general use."¹¹ Montjoy said pityingly (and prematurely) of the English under Henry V that their "poor bodies must lie and fester"¹² on the field. Later this same Frenchman was begging leave to go about the field and bury at least the noble dead the day had cost the French. Whether or not he would bury the common soldier whose blood was defiling the bodies of noblemen as they lay dead together is not clear.

The use of camouflage in battle was practiced by those soldiers under Macduff who came bringing Birnam Wood to Dunsinane and consternation to the heart of Macbeth. Each soldier marched behind or beneath a branch from a tree in that eventful journey prophesied by the witches.

The soldier in Othello's army may not have been subject to personal inspection, but the fortifications he held were inspected. Othello himself escorted some visiting gentlemen on a tour of inspection.

The soldier in any army had his own ideas of himself, his

¹¹ Macbeth, I, ii, 60 - 61.

¹² Henry V, IV, iii, 87 - 88.

place in whatever battle it was his lot to fight, his companions, his superiors, and the purpose and results of war in general, though his ideas were his own and not necessarily those of the man standing watch with him.

In Henry V, Michael Williams, in a discussion of the right or wrong of the king's cause -- a cause he and his companions thought would cost them their lives -- disagreed with Bates, who felt that the king's cause was justified, right or wrong. Williams asserted that the king, if the cause was not good, must have a heavy reckoning to make

"When all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together, at the latter day and cry all, 'We died at such a place'; some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left."¹³

Williams in that same scene said of Sir Thomas Erpingham, "A good old commander and a most kind gentleman."¹⁴

The Boy who watched the soldiership of Bardolph, Nym and Pistol had his opinion of them:

"As young as I am, I have observed these three swashers. I am boy to them all three; but all they three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man. For Bardolph, he is white-livered and red-faced; by the means whereof 'a faces it out, but fights not. For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword; by the means whereof 'a breaks words, and keeps whole weapons. For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men; and therefore he scorns to say his prayers, lest 'a

¹³ Henry V, IV, i, 140 - 147.

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, i, 97.

should be thought a coward. But his few bad words are matched with as few good deeds; for 'a never broke any man's head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk. They will steal anything, and call it purchase. Bardolph stole a lute-case, bore it twelve leagues, and sold it for three half-pence. Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calais they stole a fire-shovel: I knew by that piece of service the men would carry coals. They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers; which makes much against my manhood, if I should take from another man's pocket to put into mine; for it is plain pocketing up of wrongs. I must leave them, and seek some better service. Their villainy goes against my weak stomach, and therefore I must cast it up."¹⁵

The Boy knew Falstaff and his companions well. Bardolph had faithfully served his master for the thirty-two years since Falstaff acquired him in Saint Paul's churchyard where bad servants could be hired.¹⁶ Such a service would involve a thorough training in theft and petty criminal activity, and Bardolph as a soldier reflected the civilian Bardolph. That the servant of a master like Falstaff should become corporal to Captain Falstaff and be hanged for stealing a pax is not only necessary in Shakespeare's destruction of all the evil influences in the life of Henry V, but it is also a reflection of a certain type of soldier in the king's army.

Pistol acquired the rank of ancient and behaved in an equally unsoldierly manner when he learned of Doll's death. He left the army as a deserter to make his way back to England to steal and to swear that the scars from Fluellen's cudgel were honorable marks from the Gallic wars. His desertion was no

¹⁵ Henry V, III, ii, 28 - 58.

¹⁶ J. B. Priestley, Falstaff and His Circle, Maclean and Holmes, Men and Books (New York: Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1932), p. 67.

uncommon phenomenon. Many men in Shakespeare's London had at one time or another deserted. The unfortunate traveller about whom Thomas Nashe wrote -- the rascal, Jack Wilton -- had been such a soldier. And Ben Jonson left Vere's army in the Lowlands and made his way back to London to lay bricks for his step-father.¹⁷

Both deserting from an army and bragging about exploits -- real or fictitious -- in the wars were common enough among returnees in Shakespeare's London. Back of Falstaff, who "exhibits himself as at once the supreme comic soldier of English literature and a variation of a time-worn theme, the miles gloriosus of Plautus,"¹⁸ there are both real and literary soldiers whose relation to the "braggart of Roman comedy"¹⁹ is evident.

Sometimes the common soldier was considered important enough to occupy the stage alone and voice his opinions to his officers. It was a common soldier who dared come into Antony's presence and urge his opinion that the army should fight on land, never by sea. His advice, though sound, was not taken. This same venture by sea was the topic of discussion in one short scene in Antony and Cleopatra during which a company of soldiers occupied the stage alone and discussed the truth of the rumour that Antony intended to fight at sea and the wisdom or folly of such an intention.

As to whether or not the common soldier was given medical attention there is no evidence in the plays, though for the

¹⁷ Eric Linklater, Ben Jonson and King James (London: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, _____), pp. 25 - 27.

¹⁸ John Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1944), p. 35.

¹⁹ Ibid., loc. cit.

near-dead captain who brought word to Duncan that his forces were winning there was medical aid. Of him Duncan said, "Go get him surgeons."²⁰ And in William's assertion of the heaviness of the king's responsibilities for the dead in battle he mentioned the fact that some of the dying would be crying out for surgeons.

When the need for his services was past, the soldier was unceremoniously discharged. Demobilization was quickly accomplished. Hastings reported to Lancaster:

"My lord, our army is dispers'd already.
Like youthful steers unyoked, they take their
courses,
East, west, north, south; or, like a school broke
up,
Each hurries toward his home and sporting-place."²¹

And Bardolph, reporting to Falstaff, remarked that "The army is discharged all and gone."²²

For the soldier who went home, wounded, from the battlefield there was no provision made. Falstaff said of the three of his one-hundred fifty men who were alive after Shrewsbury that they were "for the town's end, to beg during life."²³

So the common soldier, his usefulness over for the time, made his way home. Perhaps he had gained enough to make his part of the war profitable to himself. Perhaps he joined Falstaff's men at the town's end. Perhaps he remained with his lord in preparation for coming battles. Perhaps he went

²⁰ Macbeth, I, ii, 44.

²¹ Henry IV, Part II, IV, ii, 102 - 105.

²² Ibid., IV, iii, 136.

²³ Ibid., V, iii, 39.

to ally himself with a leader who needed men to fight for some unpublished cause. Wherever he went from the battlefield and in whatever condition, he carried with him memories and experiences which made him akin to all the other soldiers, real or strutting on a stage, whom he might know thenceforward.

CHAPTER III

THE OFFICER

Though there were no West Point and no Officer Candidate School in Shakespeare's plays, there were officers like Cassio, whose appointment to the place coveted by Iago brought from that "honest" soldier a description of the young lieutenant as:

" . . . a great arithmetician,
 One Michael Cassio, A Florentine,
 (A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife)
 That never set a squadron in the field,
 Nor the division of a battle knows
 More than a spinster, unless the bookish theoretic,
 Wherein the togged consuls can propose
 As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice
 Is all his soldiership."¹

Iago further complained that

"Preferment goes by letter and affection,
 And not by old gradation, where each second
 Stood heir to the first."²

That Cassio was weak and honest was proved when those two characteristics combined to make him the tool in the hands of one whose unscrupulousness has been attributed to his adherence to his honour as a soldier. Yet, still relatively inexperienced, he was given command of Cyprus when Othello forfeited both his command and his life.

Officers like Othello were less common, but they did exist. They were men who had behind them long years of experience engendering in them self-command and an easy command of

¹ Othello, I, i, 20 - 27.

² Ibid., I, i, 36 -38.

others. These were qualities apparent in Othello from his first stirring, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them."³ He was given by his men that highest praise, "The man commands like a full soldier."⁴ Mercy was not his, but stern justice was, and both those he commanded and those at whose hands he received that command recognized in him the fine officer, the splendid soldier.

Of different mettle were officers like Coriolanus made. All the hard qualities of a commander were his -- valor; pride; cruelty; self-confidence; near-fanaticism in prosecuting wars; stubborn unforgiveness; contempt for commoners, soldiers or civilians. The softer qualities were not discernible in him. Mercy, pity, kindness, tolerance, forgiveness, understanding, democracy -- he knew them not. Fighting was fierce under Coriolanus; soldiers who followed him were perforce of steel.

The fat captain Falstaff was as false an officer as was Ben Jonson's Face in the borrowed captain's uniform which he wore to decoy customers to the alchemist. There were others whose commands were as unmerited and as grossly abused, though no others with the genius Falstaff possessed in thus abusing his charge.

There were few officers who possessed the whole list of virtues Malcolm recited as those a king should possess -- "Justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness, bounty, perserverance,

³ Ibid., I, ii, 59.

⁴ Ibid., II, i, 35 - 36.

mercy, lowliness, devotion, patience, courage, fortitude."⁵ To King Henry V belonged all of these. The ideal officer as he was the ideal king, the man who had been a frequent visitor to Dame Quickly's broke through "the foul and ugly mists of vapours that did seem to strangle him"⁶ to become an officer whose men could be proud to follow him.

The officer was not, of course, impressed as were the common soldiers. He was part of a conspiracy or the head of his own army fighting for a cause he understood. As a professional soldier he led armies against his country's enemies as Coriolanus against the foes of Rome. As a king he protected his crown or fought to regain kingdoms lost by his predecessors, as did Henry V at Agincourt. Sometimes he fought for his country's honor against her civil foes as Brutus believed he was doing. Often he fought to keep a kingdom illegally his own, as did Macbeth. Sometimes he was placed at the head of a great command by his king or lord as was Othello. Always great honor was gained or lost by him on the strength of the day's battle.

Training for the officer was his by right of proving his knighthood or of riding in lists, never by any formal and rigid process. Othello had been in uniform since his seventh summer. Kings must needs be warriors or they were not long kings. In a century of wars, men were expected to be warlike.

⁵ Macbeth, IV, iii, 92 - 94.

⁶ Henry IV, Part I, I, ii, 225 - 226.

Officers were expected to be leaders. They did not sit in their tents while lesser men went forth to war. After the armourers had riveted them into their armour, these men led the way to the battlefield and across it. Though Henry IV took the precaution of having "many marching in his coats,"⁷ he himself was there, fighting as valiantly as the young Hotspur. Coriolanus bore many wounds for Rome, though he would not show them to the people. Antony, though he fled in pursuit of Cleopatra, whose ship lost courage with its mistress, was never afraid of swords. The lesser officers who led their charges gained for themselves much honor (and frequently death) by their boldness in battle.

Confused as the battles in Shakespeare seem, there is much evidence that they were planned. This planning was, of course, undertaken by the officers. King Henry V, just before Agincourt, after the five-to-one odds had been again mentioned, said, "You know your places. God be with you all."⁸ Richard III called for men of sound direction to help him make a survey of the vantage of the ground. Richmond, fighting against Richard, called for ink and paper in his tent on which, he said,

"I'll draw the form and model of our battle,
Limit each leader to his several charge,
And part in just proportion our small power."⁹

Later he announced the order of his battle and gave commands that his plans be carried out.

⁷ Henry IV, Part I, V, iii, 25.

⁸ Henry V, IV, iii, 78.

⁹ Richard III, V, iii, 23 - 25.

York, on his knees before Henry V, asked for and received permission to lead the attack. Thus it was planned who should have the "leading of the vaward."¹⁰

Lancaster and Westmoreland discussed the leaders who had received their instructions from Prince John and would not "go off until they hear you (Lancaster) speak."¹¹

Octavius and Antony were still opposing each other in the plan of attack on Brutus even as the battle was beginning.

The strategy and efficiency of the plans made and the skill with which they were executed were determined by the personal qualities of the leaders. Sometimes battles were fought in spite of the fact that carefully made plans could not be carried out. Hotspur was so eager to fight that he could not wait until his army was in better condition, nor could he wait until the remainder of the forces, already due, came in. His life and his cause were lost as a result of too little patience and too little intelligent planning.

The officer made use of propaganda. It was Richard III who dismissed as enemy propaganda -- "a thing devised by the enemy"¹² -- the note found on Norfolk's tent the morning of the battle. In his oration to his own army he made use of propaganda against the enemy, told his men that the enemy was a milk-sop, a scum of Bretons, a base lackey peasant, a threat to the wives and daughters and lands of Richard's men.

¹⁰ Henry V, IV, iii, 130.

¹¹ Henry IV, Part II, IV, ii, 100.

¹² Richard III, V, iii, 306.

The democracy of death has long been pointed out by those who have seen its universality, but even on Shakespeare's battle-fields there was a distinction drawn between the noble dead and the common dead. A messenger reporting to King Henry V on enemy dead brought word that of the 10,000 that lay dead 1,600 were mercenaries; "the rest are princes, barons, lords, knights, squires, and persons of blood and quality."¹³ Montjoy complained that on the field where he craved permission to go that he might "book our dead, and then to bury them"¹⁴ he needed to "sort our nobles from our common men."¹⁵

Montjoy explained:

"For many of our princes -- woe the while --
Lie drown'd and soak'd in mercenary blood;
So do our vulgar drench their peasant limbs
In blood of princes . . ."¹⁶

The nobles died deaths suiting their station in life. Even those men summarily killed when their conspiracies were discovered and they themselves captured met death with a romantic severity and outthrust chin. Cawdor, dying for treason, accomplished his death so admirably as to be given praise from one who saw him die:

". . . Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death

¹³ Henry V, IV, viii, 94 - 95.

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, vii, 76.

¹⁵ Ibid., IV, vii, 77.

¹⁶ Ibid., IV, vii, 78 - 81.

To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd,
As't were a careless trifle."¹⁷

Condemned to death by Henry V for conspiring to kill their king, Richard Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop of Masham, and Sir Grey of Northumberland begged forgiveness for their sins though they were most ready to pay for having committed them. Noble forgiveness was granted them by Henry, but there was nothing in that pardon which could or did delay their execution.

Prince Hal met Hotspur on the battlefield and after an interchange of praise on one side and self-congratulation on the other, the two fought. It was Percy who died at the hands of the Prince of Wales, and it was the Prince who praised his foe after death.

The chivalric courtesy of the Prince, who took his feathers, the insignia of the Prince of Wales, and laid them on the mangled face of Hotspur, was indeed unostentatious. Hotspur, in his attitude toward honor and glory on the battlefield, was an embodiment of medieval chivalry, degenerated into form and ritual. Prince Hal's action was a sincere tribute to a good fighter, a tribute no-one saw him pay. Hal lived by no formal code which demanded such an action of him. The quality of true chivalry in his maturing character responded naturally to the death of a great heart and the frustration of so much "ill weav'd ambition."¹⁸

¹⁷ Macbeth, I, iv, 7 - 11.

¹⁸ Henry IV, Part I, V, iv, 88.

Very different was Hal's tribute to Falstaff, feigning death close by. To him Prince Hal said:

"What, old acquaintance! Could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spar'd a better man:
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee,
If I were much in love with vanity!
Death hath not struck so fat a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
Embowell'd will I see thee by and by;
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie."¹⁹

The contrast between the lives of Hotspur and Falstaff and the quality of their soldiership was echoed in the difference between Hal's speeches to them lying there, the one dead, the other apparently so.

It was Lancaster who by trickery trapped and killed for treason Lord Hastings, Scroop (Archbishop of York), and Mowbray, who went to their deaths resentfully, complaining that Lancaster's conduct had been dishonorable.

An orgy of bloody love was the last hour in the lives of the Earl of Suffolk and York. The description of their deaths as Exeter recited it to Henry V indicates that they died nobly:

"In which array, brave soldier, doth he (York) lie,
Larding the plain; and by his bloody side,
Yoke-fellow to his honour-owing wounds,
The noble Earl of Suffolk also lies.
Suffolk first died; and York, all haggled over,
Comes to him, where in gore he lay insteeped,
And takes him by the beard; kisses the gashes
That bloodily did yawn upon his face.
He cries aloud, 'Tarry, my cousin Suffolk!
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven;
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast,
As in this glorious and well-foughten field
We kept together in our chivalry!'
Upon these words I came and cheer'd him up.

¹⁹ Henry IV, Part I, V, iv, 102 - 110.

He smil'd me in the face, raught me his hand,
 And with a feeble gripe says, 'Dear my lord,
 Commend my service to my sovereign.'
 So did he turn and over Suffolk's neck
 He threw his wounded arm and kiss'd his lips;
 And so espous'd to death, with blood he seal'd
 A testament of noble-ending love.
 The pretty and sweet manner of it forc'd
 Those waters from me which I would have stopp'd;
 But I had not so much of man in me,
 And all my mother came into mine eyes
 And gave me up to tears."²⁰

The officer had his ideas on his men and himself and his reasons for fighting. Henry V said even of the army he had culled from the best of England's fighting men to cross the Channel that no man could try out any arbitrement of swords with all unspotted soldiers. In an answer to himself after the incognito discussion with his common soldiers on the duties and responsibilities of a king who leads his men to battle and probable death, Henry refuted the charge that he was responsible for the unforgiven sins his men had on their consciences when they died. He felt, as he told his men, that the king was as human as his men, his sense of smell the same, his fears as potent. The king was not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers any more than was the father bound to answer for his son or the master for his servant. Henry felt also that the peasant reaped more advantages from peace than any other and that the slave, who also benefitted from the country's peace, had no inkling of an idea of the watch the king must keep to maintain the peace.

²⁰ Henry V, IV, vi, 7 - 32.

The officer's reward was not that of food and drink and spoils, but victory meant to him gaining the particular end for which he fought. He who wanted a crown seized it and those who helped him expected places of honor in his new court and kingdom. Those who fought to dethrone a bad king had as their reward the placing on the throne of one in whose hands they were willing to trust their country's welfare. He who fought to gain honor (as Coriolanus) came triumphant home, the garland on his brow. He who fought to prove himself valorous (as Fortinbras) came valiantly in to find himself a king. Often, so like the people of today were our ancestors, the reward was not considered adequate by those who had fought, and newer battles were waged with those who had fought as friends fighting as enemies.

Then as now leadership meant the winning or the losing of a battle. Antony's unwise withdrawal from a naval battle was the signal for his men to turn their ships and flee. Brutus' mistaken and too hurried commands coupled with his soldiers' haste to collect spoils lost the battle for him and Rome. Othello's leadership was of the sort that commanded his followers' respect. However, the qualities of leadership were most clearly evidenced in the character of King Henry V.

The chorus at the beginning of Act IV of Henry V presents a picture of the king before Agincourt:

" . . . O now, who will behold
The royal captain of this ruin'd band

Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
 Let him cry, 'Praise and glory on his head!'
 For forth he goes and visits all his host,
 Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
 And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.
 Upon his royal face there is no note
 How dread an army hath enrounded him;
 Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour
 Unto the weary and all-watched night,
 But freshly looks, and over-bears attaint
 With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;
 That every wretch, pining and pale before,
 Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks.
 A largess universal like the sun
 His liberal eye doth give to every one,
 Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all
 Behold, as may unworthiness define,
 A little touch of Harry in the night."²¹

Henry's behavior against overwhelming odds inspired his men to do ferocious battle on the shining French army and added further evidence of good leadership on the part of the king.

The loss of Hotspur's leadership was a costly one for his confederates. Morton's report of the young soldier's death included a description of what the troops lost when Hal killed Percy:

". . . his death, whose spirit lent a fire
 Even to the dullest peasant in his camp,
 Being bruited once, took fire and heat away
 From the best-temper'd courage in his troops;
 For from his mettle was his party steel'd;
 Which once in him abated, all the rest
 Turn'd on themselves, like dull and heavy lead.
 And as the thing that's heavy in itself,
 Upon enforcement flies with greatest speed,
 So did our men, heavy in Hotspur's loss,
 Lend to this weight such lightness with their fear
 That arrows fled not swifter toward their aim
 Than did our soldiers, aiming at their safety,
 Fly from the field."²²

²¹ Henry V, IV, Chorus, 28 - 47.

²² Henry IV, Part II, I, 1, 112 - 124.

A problem common to officers but one felt only rarely by the common soldier was that of raising funds with which to fight battles. Richard II seized the "plate, coins, revenues and moveables"²³ of John of Gaunt to help finance the Irish wars. When Gaunt lay dying, his son banished for six years from England, the King prayed,

"Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
To help him to his grave immediately!
The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars."²⁴

To finance those same wars Richard commanded that rich men be sought out and large sums exacted of them. Gaunt, whose love of England found expression in one of the most poetic descriptions of his island country in literature, accused the king of being England's landlord, of parceling the country out for gain, of betraying the dignity of the crown and the glory of England to raise money for his own purposes -- among which was the purpose of financing wars.

Ross, conversing with Northumberland and Willoughby, mentioned the fact that the king had not money for the Irish wars in spite of the burdensome taxations he had levied. York, left behind to face those lords who had taken advantage of the king's absence to force their rights upon the throne, asked, "How shall we do for money for these wars?"²⁵

The Archbishop of Canterbury promised King Henry V that

²³ Richard II, II, i, 161.

²⁴ Ibid., I, iv, 59 - 62.

²⁵ Ibid., II, ii, 104.

the clergy would raise "such a mighty sum as never did the clergy at one time bring in to any of your ancestors"²⁶ with which to fight France.

Those nobles who risked their lives for their king's or their own cause risked also their fortunes. Presumably those men who were killed as traitors thus forfeited their revenues and fortunes to the king who could use the money thus gained to pay for wars.

Whatever methods they used to finance their projects, evidently kings and nobles were not stopped in their intentions to wage new wars by the fact that there was no money in their coffers. They waged wars, and the clamour of arms and of armour resounds throughout Shakespeare.

²⁶ Henry V, I, ii, 134 - 135.

CHAPTER IV
IMPORTANT SOLDIERS IN SHAKESPEARE

A cursory reading of the dramatis personae of all the plays would convince any reader that to strike from that list the names of Hamlet, Falstaff, Iago, Coriolanus, Othello, Henry V, and Hotspur would be to leave a most inadequate picture of the genius of Shakespeare. In presenting these men as soldiers, Shakespeare revealed their soldierly qualities, or their lack of them.

That most of these outstanding characters are officers and nobles is true and in keeping with the political philosophy of the time. The common man and the common soldier were held in as much contempt by many Englishmen as were the commoners of Rome by Coriolanus. Therefore, the great soldiers in the plays are noblemen, though there are exceptions to this exclusion of the common soldier from the category of the great.

There are fine soldiers among the important names in the list of Shakespeare's military men, and there are those in whom the soldierly qualities are not to be found. There are those who are good fighters but ignoble men. There are those whose qualities of goodness and of nobility are great but in whom there is no promise of competent soldiership. And there are many in whom some flaw of character has destroyed both soldier and man.

Every rank had its good soldiers and its failures. A discussion of some of the most important soldier-characters

considered according to rank will serve to show that the caste system, which has ever been part of the world's military systems, could determine whether a Shakespearean character was a corporal or a general but could not decide the kind of man he was or the quality of soldier he became.

Shakespeare's kings were necessarily soldiers, but not always good soldiers. More poet and child than soldier or king was Richard II. Forced to become the soldier to continue being the king, Richard levied heavy taxes, seized property without scruples, and leaned heavily upon private fortunes of his realm. Unwisely he "leas'd out"¹ his kingdom. As an untrained but confident soldier he left for the war against Ireland. Only after he returned from that war did he realize that he, God's substitute, for whom in heaven an angel fought, could not stand against the army of Bolingbroke or against the popular wish that the crown be taken from his anointed head. Flattered into believing he was a leader, Richard inspired no-one, nor had he that quality to make men follow him which every great general must have. More valiant at his death than he had been in life, the murdered Richard left behind him two dead among his attackers and with his last breath reiterated his belief in his divine right to the throne. That throne had been ascended by Bolingbroke, a realist, an opportunist, and a soldier.

Richard III hated the "weak piping time of peace."² With

¹ Richard II, II, 1, 59.

all the craftiness of Iago -- and less justification for the evil his busy brain conceived -- Richard, Duke of Gloucester, set his brothers against each other, set murderers upon his foes (kinsmen, most of them), and won a crown. His first appearance as a soldier was made "in rotten armour, marvellous ill-favored."³ Yet he was brave where Buckingham, riding with him, was almost mad with terror. In Bosworth Field the king was almost gay. His forces trebled those of the rebels. He felt that the king's name would be a tower of strength which "the adverse faction want."⁴ He saw to his armour the night before the battle, yet confessed himself less cheerful than usual. The dreams which visited him that night struck more fear into his heart than Richmond and his ten thousand soldiers had done. Yet his oration to his army was undisturbed by any hint other than to urge the soldiers on to keep from the things they held most dear the "scum of Bretons"⁵ led by a "milk-sop."⁶ A soldierly speech it was, and as insincere as Richard himself. Valiant was his command which set his army forward against Richmond's victorious forces, himself at their head:

"A thousand hearts are great within my bosom.
Advance our standards, set upon our foes;

² Richard III, I, i, 24.

³ Ibid., III, v, Stage Directions.

⁴ Ibid., V, iii, 12 - 13.

⁵ Ibid., V, iii, 317.

⁶ Ibid., V, iii, 325

Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms."⁷

Having killed five "Richmonds" in the field and made his famous plea to exchange his kingdom for a horse, Richard met the true Richmond and was slain. There was no loss to England in his death. He was an evil man, an unscrupulous king. Yet of his soldiership it could be said that he was courageous and a swordsman of skill.

A crown gained by violence was kept by the suppression of violence in the kingdom of Henry IV. Leading an army

"Glittering in golden coats, like images,
And full of spirit as the month of May,"⁸

Henry IV proved himself able to hold his crown and pass it on to his son. That crown was to him the embodiment of honour. He felt that his own longing for it was shared by others, and therefore he quickly misunderstood the actions of the Prince of Wales, caught with the crown on his head. Henry IV admired military achievement in others. He found in Percy's behavior much which he wanted to find in his son's. The future welfare of England was important to him, and he believed Hotspur more capable of or suited to caring for England than was Hal.

The day at Shrewsbury convinced Henry IV of Hal's ability as a soldier, but the king still felt that the prince's fondness for dissolute and improper company boded no good for the kingdom. He was conscious that he had usurped the throne, but he was also sure of his fitness to rule.

⁷ Ibid., V, iii, 347 - 351.

⁸ Henry IV, Part I, IV, 1, 100 - 101.

Many of England's lords and young noblemen had joined with Bolingbroke against Richard. Among those who fought was Hotspur. The subsequent battle against Hotspur and Worcester, a battle the king tried to avoid and to stop by fair terms of peace once it had started, resulted from Hotspur's refusal to give up prisoners except as their surrender would mean ransom for Kate's brother, Mortimer. Hotspur's first decision to keep his Scottish prisoners arose from his wrath and disgust over the appearance of Henry's foppish messenger on the battlefield. His later refusal to surrender the captured Scots and his insistence on the ransoming of Mortimer, termed a traitor by Henry IV, were the reasons for the battle of Shrewsbury. Henry's refusal to ransom Mortimer was politically wise, since Richard II had designated Mortimer as the successor to the throne. Henry IV was an efficient king and a good soldier.

Shakespeare's ideal king was Henry V. As Hal, the wayward and dissolute prince, Henry was a source of worry to his father. Though he learned with his companions much of England that the court could not have taught him, the king and the members of the English court found in his conduct much to censure. Hal himself knew that he was offending and that his reformation would be more attractive when he chose to display it, set against the foil of his faulty behavior. A genuine affection for his father and a knowledge that his reputation was far worse than his actions made Harry resolve to

show the king and those of his court who were so ready to slander the Prince that he was of as good mettle as Hotspur. The beginning of trouble with the rebels was for Henry IV the beginning of a faith in his son. Though the Prince of Wales did give a charge of men to Falstaff and confess for him still no little fondness, yet he went joyously to battle, as eager to meet Hotspur as that young soldier was to meet him. It was Hal who seconded his father's plea for peace to Worcester. He offered to fight Percy in single combat. Had his offer been accepted, many lives would have been saved. Begun by the statement that many souls would pay full dearly for the encounter should the armies meet, Hal's speech contained much sincere praise of Hotspur and reflected a dignity and a wisdom which he showed fully developed in his role of king of England.

As a soldier, Hal conducted himself nobly. Before his rescue of his father from Douglas and after his attempt to borrow a sword from the retreating Falstaff, Hal's father urged him to quit the field and tend to his bleeding wounds. Upon Westmoreland's offer (at the king's command) to lead Hal from the field, Harry answered:

"Lead me, my lord? I do not need your help:
 And God forbid a shallow scratch should drive
 The Prince of Wales from such a field as this,
 Where stain'd nobility lies trodden on,
 And rebels' arms triumph in massacres!"⁹

Capable of brotherly affection, Hal showed himself also capable of respecting the soldierly qualities in his brother John, a boy whom neither he nor the king expected to find "lord of

⁹ Ibid., V, iv, 10 - 14.

such a spirit"¹⁰ and one who "Lends mettle"¹¹ to them all. In the encounter with Douglas and the subsequent conversation with his father, Hal's determination to show himself as he was gained new strength.

The fight with Percy proved more than the good swordsmanship of the Prince. His praise and treatment of the dead Hotspur showed him gentle in victory and fair even to his foes. The chivalry of Hotspur -- a kind of chivalry fostered by medieval England and clung to in all its set codes by Percy -- was very different from the innate courtesy which prompted Hal's tribute to Percy and the placing of the feathers over Percy's face. Hotspur's whole conception of honor was one discarded by most 16th century Englishmen, while Hal's courtesy was fundamental and sincere, a genuine respect accorded regardless of codes or of time.

Hal was more than fair to Falstaff, who came with Percy's lifeless body on his back and a bold lie in his mouth. To his reiteration that he killed Hotspur the Prince finally replied:

"Come, bring your luggage nobly on your back.
For my part, if a lie will do thee grace,
I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have."¹²

To repay those who had fought well with him Hal begged of his father permission to dispose of Douglas and passed that honor on to John. Hal's praise of Douglas and his admiration

¹⁰ Ibid., V, iv, 18.

¹¹ Ibid., V, iv, 24.

¹² Ibid., V, iv, 160 - 162.

for that Scotchman's valor were freely given and showed him to be a soldier without rancor against a worthy enemy.

In his speech at the death of his father and his ascension to the throne of England, Henry V assured the nobles of his court that they together would govern the country so that war or peace would be as things familiar to them. Their opinion of him in the first scene of Henry V showed him to be well trained in divinity, in affairs of state, and in war. The Archbishop of Canterbury praised him in this:

"Hear him but reason in divinity,
And all admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire the King were made a prelate;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You would say it hath been all in all his study;
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle render'd you in music;
Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter . . ."13

This same Archbishop urged on Henry V his right to the throne of France and his ability to finance and execute an expedition of soldiers to take by force what was his own. Henry V was loath to declare such a war and waste the lives of his soldiers unless the right of such a declaration were proven to him -- a rare quality in a Shakespearean general or one of our day. That all England was behind him was shown by the chorus which chanted of the youth of England all on fire and the thriving armourers outfitting the expedition. It was on the eve of the departure across the Channel that the three traitors guilty of plotting for French gold the death

13 Henry V, I, i, 38 - 47.

of their king were forgiven and unrelentingly executed. The culled army which Henry led into France followed him into Harfleur and, sick and weak, prepared to do battle with the fresh French army. Henry himself made the rounds of the tents and took part in a conversation with some of his common soldiers. He was interested in their ideas of him and what the outcome of the battle would be, though he did not agree with some of their ideas.

Henry's prayer for victory was a soldier's prayer to the God of battles. It was Henry's promise to all his men that

"He today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:"¹⁴

In making that promise Henry excused all those soldiers who did not want to fight with him that day from participation in the battle and any blame which could be attached to them for leaving the battle. More, he furnished them means of getting back across the Channel. Led by Henry V, the English army proved dauntless against the French at Agincourt.

There is no ferociousness in the soldiership of Henry as there is in that of Coriolanus. There is not the colorfulness of a Macbeth or the poetry of a Richard in his career as a general. But there is valor and stability and a regard for right which characterized Shakespeare's Henry V both as a king and as a soldier.

Macbeth, king for a time, appeared first as a fierce soldier, battling courageously for King Duncan. The near-dead

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, iii, 61 - 63.

captain reported on the battle as he had last seen it. His speech was a paean in praise of Macbeth, who had saved the day for the king's cause. The captain reported that Macbeth and Banquo were dismayed by the fresh attack of the Norwegian lord

"As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
 If I say sooth, I must report they were
 As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks;
 So then doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.
 Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
 Or memorize another Golgotha,
 I cannot tell."¹⁵

The next time Macbeth entered the battle field, he held his sword in bloody hands and wore a stolen crown. In his armour, which he put on too soon and which he swore he would wear until from his bones his flesh was hacked, he decided to remain within the castle which he felt could defy siege. The approach of Birnam Wood -- behind boughs of which marched the forces of Macduff -- to Dunsinane brought Macbeth to the field. He still felt himself a soldier to be feared and proved his sword's strength by killing young Siward. Not until Macbeth met Macduff did he wish to sheathe his sword, already too stained with blood of his kinsmen. Forced to fight, and learning in that fight that his foe was not of woman born but ripped too early from his mother's womb, Macbeth sensed his failing courage. The last of the witches' prophecies was fulfilled when Macduff appeared before Malcolm bearing upon his sword the crownless head of Macbeth.

¹⁵ Macbeth, I, ii, 35 - 41.

Though Fortinbras did gain a throne when Denmark's prince was killed, in the scope of Hamlet the young Norwegian was but a prince. He was a soldier strong in arm as his name implied. Fortunate in his search for trouble, Fortinbras,

"Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't . . ."16

Reaching Denmark at the time to find corpses of kings and nobles strewn about its palace, his volley sounding in the dying ears of Hamlet, the man who acted without thinking found himself chosen as king by him who thought ever without acting. That, too, is perfect irony, though one wonders a little about the fate of Denmark in the hands of Fortinbras and would not predict a completely peaceful reign.

Denmark was never in the hands of Prince Hamlet, nor does Shakespeare give us the man's soldierly qualities in the scope of the play. Hamlet's father had been a military hero. His ghost walked "armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe."17 Horatio, in explaining the activities of young Fortinbras and discussing the ghost's appearance, described Hamlet's father as

"Our valiant Hamlet --
For so this side of our known world esteem'd
him . . ."18

For his father Hamlet had a deep respect. His comparison of his father with his uncle and the sincerity of his grief over

16 Hamlet, I, 1, 96 - 100.

17 Ibid., I, 111, 200.

18 Ibid., I, 1, 84 - 85.

his father's death showed both love and admiration for the late King of Denmark.

Hamlet was a scholar of note. He was a courtier, though his perfect courtesy was not adhered to during his feigned madness. Even then his words, taken with a single meaning, would be courteous. Identifying him as a soldier was his skill in swordsmanship; nor did the pirates he encountered find him an easy or cowardly foe. Shakespeare's soldierly Fortinbras accorded high praise to Hamlet's abilities as a soldier and for the Prince a military funeral was ordered. The sound that wrote finis to the play and its main character was the peal of ordnance shot off to signify that a soldier had died and was being buried.

Neither Brutus nor Hotspur was a king or a prince. Each was a nobleman; each led an army. Each had much confidence in his own ability as a soldier.

Brutus was descended from men who had driven kings from Rome, and he felt himself not only capable of leading armies and making decisions for his country, but honor-bound to be a protector -- and if need be, a savior -- of Rome. Working with an elder and a better soldier, Cassius, Brutus used his position to veto plans of conspiracy and of battle and substitute for them his own unwise plans. His plan for a peaceful Rome after Caesar's assassination was never executed because Brutus made the mistake of permitting Antony to speak, and thus the conspirators were forced into a war. Brutus failed in his leadership of his armies because he expected

even his mercenaries to be honest and unselfishly patriotic like himself, he was at odds with his own generals, and he was a poor military strategist. His strategy reflected his character. He wanted to go straightforwardly down to meet Antony and Octavius. He ignored the warning against descending to the plain, over-ruling Cassius' opposition with no doubts as to the superiority of his own judgment. Cassius was more calculating, his tactics based on knowledge of men and of battles. The same quality of insight which made possible the success of his campaign to enlist Brutus among the assassins of Caesar enabled him to understand the opposing generals and the men in his own army. Even though Brutus' tactics were unwise, they might have carried the day had he not concluded too soon that victory was his and had not his soldiers fallen to their spoils while they were needed in another part of the field. Brutus died like the defeated Roman he was. Strato, on whose sword point he had died, was there to declare to Antony:

"For Brutus only overcame himself,
And no man else hath honour by his death."¹⁹

Brutus was given sincere tribute by Antony. The tribute was to the man and the Roman, but it said nothing of him as a soldier except whatever military content the word "Roman" implies. Octavius added the promise of a military funeral:

"According to his virtue let us use him,
With all respect and rites of burial.

¹⁹ Julius Caesar, V, v, 56 - 57.

Within my tent his bones tonight shall lie,
Most like a soldier, ordered honourably."²⁰

A less mature and less patriotic man was Hotspur. He was a valiant and impatient soldier, youthful, honorable, proud. His idea of honor was such that he valued it more than Kate's love, more than "brittle life."²¹ Honor was the most important attribute of living, and Percy would have plucked it from the pale-faced moon. The heroic quality of Percy's speech on honor reflects the military training he had acquired in the tournaments where honor was a divinity. Medieval traditions of fighting were still powerful enough at the lists to engender fanatic worship of them in men like Hotspur. He wanted a personal honor greater than that achieved by anyone else, and he wanted that honor to dazzle his world.

The great difference between young Percy and young Hal had long been a reason for the king, Hal's father, to feel the sadness he expressed to Westmoreland:

"Yea, there thou mak'st me sad, and mak'st me sin
In envy that my Lord Northumberland
Should be the father to so blest a son,
A son who is the theme of Honour's tongue,
Amongst a grove the very straightest plant,
Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride;
Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,
See riot and dishonor stain the brow
Of my young Harry. O that it could be prov'd
That some night-tripping fairy had exchange'd
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,
And call'd mine Percy, his Plantagenet!
Then would I have his Harry, and he mine."²²

²⁰ Ibid., V, v, 76 - 79.

²¹ Henry IV, Part I, V, iv, 78.

²² Ibid., I, i, 78 - 90.

That this same Percy was at that moment preening himself on the prisoners he had captured and bristling up his crest of youth against the dignity of the king was a thing commanding a half smiling respect for the fiery soldier.

His impatience was a source of much friction between him and the important ally, Glendower. His haste made him forget important things like the map necessary for planning a battle. His youthful eagerness to meet his enemy and his particular opponent, Prince Hal, made him decide to do battle before the auspicious moment for waging war arrived. He over-ruled older and wiser soldiers, and by his impetuosity he carried points which had been better uncarried. Yet he was ready to accept honorable peace terms from the king, and only Worcester's refusal to allow Percy to know the terms offered by Henry IV was responsible for the final battle.

In a confidence stemming from his knowledge of his own past and of the Prince's former unprincely and unsoldierly conduct, Percy faced Hal with no thought of defeat. In his cry to the young Prince, Percy echoed his regret for his loss of youth and glory rather than for his loss of life:

"O, Harry, thou hast robb'd me of my youth!
I better brook the loss of brittle life
Than those proud titles thou hast won of me:
They wound my thoughts worse than thy sword my
flesh: . . ." ²³

He was still worshiping honor when he died.

Three very different kinds of people were Othello, Antony,

²³ Ibid., V, iv, 77 - 80.

and Coriolanus, nor were they alike as soldiers. Yet all three were generals, commanding armies and expeditions, feared by their foes and respected by those under whose auspices they led their armies.

From his seventh year Othello was a soldier. The military life was the only one he knew. Because of it and his tales of long years and rough adventures he gained a wife as gentle as his life had been hard. His years of experience had engendered in him a mature self-command, a strength bred of knowledge and confidence, and an ability to direct men and armies with intelligence and courage. Without conceit Othello could say,

"Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter."²⁴

Though Othello had been enslaved, he was never slave born. His generalship was based on family as well as ability and experience. To Iago he proclaimed:

". . . I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbanned to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd . . ."²⁵

Stern justice was manifested by Othello in his dismissal of Cassio, though had Iago been only a trustworthy ancient and not the wronged soldier he felt himself to be, Desdemona's suit to the general might have set aside his first hard decree.

His greatness and fitness to lead his men were expressed by Montano's:

²⁴ Othello, I, ii, 83 - 84.

²⁵ Ibid., I, ii, 21 - 24.

"For I have serv'd him, and the man commands
Like a full soldier."²⁶

Othello's military services to the duke had been great. Even Brabantio recognized the importance of the duke's call for Othello. Desdemona's welcome to the general was no more sincere than that accorded to him by Cassio and the gentlemen who waited for his ship, last seen tempest-tossed.

Othello's opinion that

". . . t'is the soldier's life
To have their balay slumbers wak'd with strife."²⁷

was one based on sure knowledge.

It is curious that Othello, primarily the soldier as he is, took part in no actual battles in the scope of the play. Yet each who reads about the Moor has a definite picture of the man's conduct under battlefield conditions. Othello himself in his narration of the tales which won Desdemona reveals himself as a soldier in action. Montano's praise of his general is praise conceded for action on a battlefield. The duke told something of Othello's active career in his explanation of the reason for Othello's being put in charge of the expedition to Cyprus. And Desdemona greeted her husband,

"O my fair warrior."²⁸

Othello's soldiership was of the greatest importance to him. When he was convinced of Desdemona's guilt, he was also convinced that his occupation as a great and honourable soldier was gone. His farewell to his profession gives a picture of

²⁶ Ibid., II, i, 35 - 36.

²⁷ Ibid., II, iii, 257 - 258.

²⁸ Ibid., II, i, 184.

the glory of war:

" . . . O, now, for ever
 Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
 Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
 That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!
 Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill
 trump,
 The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
 The royal banner, and all quality,
 Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
 And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
 Th' immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
 Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!"²⁹

Desdemona's unfaithfulness lost for Othello the splendid soldier's life, and it was that loss, rather than the loss of Desdemona herself, which was foremost in the general's mind. Othello is one of the most admirable of Shakespeare's soldiers, and his praise of the splendours of war is an impressive tribute to the military profession.

Antony, whom Cleopatra called "the greatest soldier of the world,"³⁰ could be made to forget his duties as a soldier. Yet when he was aroused, his movements were swift. With a simple "Let our officers have notice what we purpose"³¹ he set his army in motion to leave Egypt to help Caesar. Before he left he declared himself Cleopatra's soldier and informed her that he would make peace or war as she pleased. Caesar, in lamenting Antony's forgetfulness of his martial greatness and responsibilities, gave a picture of the soldier he had been:

"When thou once
 Was beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st

²⁹ Ibid., III, 111, 347 - 357.

³⁰ Antony and Cleopatra, I, 111, 38.

³¹ Ibid., I, 11, 183 - 184.

Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
 Did famine follow; whom thou fough'st against,
 Though daintily brought up, with patience more
 Than savages could suffer. Thou didst drink
 The stale of horses, and the gilded puddle
 Which beasts would cough at; thy palate then did
 deign
 The roughest berry on the rudest hedge;
 Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets,
 The barks of trees thou brows'd; on the Alps
 It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh
 Which some did die to look on; and all this --
 It wounds thine honour that I speak it now --
 Was borne so like a soldier, that thy cheek
 So much as lank'd not."³²

Of Antony, whom he compared with Caesar and Lepidus, Pompey
 said:

"Menas, I did not think
 This amorous surfeiter would have donn'd his helm
 For such a petty war. His soldiership
 Is twice the other twain."³³

Enobarbus felt keenly his desertion of Antony. He had seen
 Antony's mistakes, his attachment to Cleopatra with all that
 meant to the soldier's career and the fate of those allied
 with him. Yet his love for his master was genuine, and his
 remorse over his desertion sincere. Not in women alone did
 the soldier Antony inspire love.

Antony married Octavia in a political alliance, then
 hurried to Egypt to promise Cleopatra that he would piece
 her throne with kingdoms. His military might he laid at her
 feet. Could he have gone from her and fought single-mindedly
 far from Egypt he could have led Roman soldiers triumphantly
 across the world.

³² Ibid., I, iv, 56 - 71.

³³ Ibid., II, i, 32 - 35.

Ventidius, having achieved some renown for himself in battle against Parthia, said of Caesar and Antony that both had ever won more credit due to their armies' excellence than they achieved through personal greatness as soldiers. He very carefully gave credit for the Parthian victory to Antony's men, Antony's banners, Antony's well-paid ranks. Yet without his leadership Antony's men were unable to conquer the world, notwithstanding the fact that his officers remained to lead them.

Antony played traitor to those ranks on the sea after he had refused to listen to Enobarbus and the common soldier who counselled that he fight by land, never by sea. Because Cleopatra fled, frightened, from the battle, Antony turned his ship to follow hers. His sense of having disgraced himself as a general and forced his followers into defeat was only part of his anguish. His pride, that pride which had carried him through many a triumphal march, was wounded. Antony told Cleopatra:

"Now I must
 To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
 And palter in the shifts of lowness; who
 With half the bulk o' th' world play'd as I pleas'd,
 Making and marring fortunes. "34

The turn of fortune followed Antony through death. After Eros refused to kill the handsome general, Antony attempted to stab himself. His sword was not as sure as once it had been against his foes, and his wound was not instantly fatal. He lived to learn that Cleopatra was yet alive and to ask that she remember

34 Ibid., III, xi, 61 - 64.

him as he had been,

" . . . the greatest prince o' th' world,
The noblest,"³⁵

and to boast that he did not now

" . . . basely die,
Not cowardly put off my helmet to
My countryman, -- a Roman by a Roman
Valiantly vanquish'd."³⁶

Of the dead Antony Cleopatra said,

"O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n!"³⁷

A different sort of Roman was Coriolanus. Born of and bred by a woman who was a true Roman in the sense of being unrelentingly purposeful, the boy was dedicated to soldier-ship from his conception. All the hard characteristics were his, and he expected their like in his men. There was no laughter in him. A spiritual kinship united him to that Cassius, with his lean and hungry look, whom Caesar feared. To Coriolanus perhaps martial music was acceptable, but the intensity of the fire kindled by a desire to bring glory and tribute to a Rome in whose rule he would then deserve a part had burned all gaiety from his grim heart. He possessed an unswerving adherence to his ideals amounting to fanaticism, a pride based on self-knowledge and as unbending as his sword. He clung with closed mind to any purpose, once determined. His honesty was that sort born of disdain to stoop to falsehood. Widows and orphans he left in his wake, their

35 Ibid., IV, xiv, 54 - 55.

36 Ibid., IV, xiv, 55 - 58.

37 Ibid., IV, xv, 64 - 65.

husbands and fathers killed gloriously for Rome and honor. His soldiers would be the first to feel the sword of Coriolanus were they weak enough to flee from even such ferocious combatants as Aufidius and the Volsces. The fierceness with which his patrician hatred of the commoners erupted in bitter speech even as he sought to bend a knee never taught to bend to those he considered beneath him is the concentrated form of the contempt of the commoner felt to a lesser degree by the Englishmen of Shakespeare's day. His fearfulness as a foe and his prowess as a soldier were well known to Aufidius. Further proof of the excellence of his soldiering is found in the fact that Aufidius embraced him and accepted him as an ally against Rome.

In the ensuing campaign against Rome, before the arrogance and steel-like stubbornness of Coriolanus were touched by his mother's pleas, Aufidius became an officer under Coriolanus. Though the agreement had been that the two generals would share the direction of the forces against Rome, by simple precedence and unconscious egoism Coriolanus became the one leader. He was never born to share or beg for honors, nor did he stoop to flattery.

He drove his common soldiers before him rather than led them. His contempt for them they felt and on the field feared, but when he entered the open gates of Corioli the soldiers stayed without, calling their commander fool-hardy, thinking him surely dead. It was then that Lartius said of him,

"O noble fellow!
 Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,
 And when it bows, stands up. Thou art left, Marcius;
 A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,
 Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier
 Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
 Only in strokes; but, with thy grim looks and
 The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds,
 Thou mad'st thine enemies shake, as if the world
 Were feverous and did tremble."³⁸

Later when Aufidius struck at Cominius, Coriolanus went to the assistance of his Romans and gained a victory, a surname, and a garlanded entrance into Rome.

At the time when his mother was entering Rome, hailed as that city's deliverer as once her son had been hailed, Coriolanus was being mobbed by Volscies who had just discovered in their new friend an old enemy. Those to whom he had brought fear and loss at Corioli killed him. Yet even then, when Aufidius stood on his fallen body, there were those who honored him for the mighty soldier he had been. A lord commanded,

"Tread not upon him,"³⁹

and another lord pronounced:

"Bear from hence his body;
 And mourn you for him. Let him be regarded
 As the most noble corse that ever herald
 Did follow to his urn."⁴⁰

Aufidius, a soldier grown naturally jealous of honors wrested from him to be bestowed on Coriolanus, and instrumental in his murder, seconded the suggestion of honor in death for the

³⁸ Coriolanus, I, iv, 53 - 61.

³⁹ Ibid., V, vi, 135 - 136.

⁴⁰ Ibid., V, vi, 145 - 146.

Roman soldier and spoke to his men:

"My rage is gone,
 And I am struck with sorrow. Take him up.
 Help, three o' th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.
 Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully.
 Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he
 Hath widowed and unchilded many a one,
 Which to this hour bewail the injury,
 Yet he shall have a noble memory."⁴¹

Though generals like Coriolanus and Antony were treated seriously, Shakespeare sometimes used lesser officers as sources of comedy. The two captains, Falstaff and Fluellen, were both sources of comedy in the Henry trilogy. As a soldier the fat Sir John served as an example of the abuses of the military system, while the Welshman was an idealization of the typical soldier.

The soldiership of Falstaff consisted in feigned death, stolen feats, and abuse of his privileges as a captain. His military reputation was founded on his killing of Percy at Shrewsbury -- an act of which he was completely innocent. Shakespeare uses in Falstaff something of the braggart soldier of Roman comedy, but Sir John is more than miles gloriosus or Ralph Roister Doister. He is the old soldier, serving himself first and his country last or not at all. He is a representation of the tricks old soldiers used to keep themselves alive and amused in the 16th century world.

To him honor was a mere scutcheon, yet whatever portion of it came his way he was quick to seize and profit by. After Shrewsbury he became, on the strength of the honor gained there, Sir John Falstaff to all Europe.

⁴¹ Ibid., V, vi, 148 - 155

His first thought when he was presented with his charge was to make as much money as possible in impressing his men. He ended with a company of which even he was ashamed, and of them only three escaped alive from the battle. His leadership of them was sufficiently exercised only to march them in a round-about way to battle and, arrived in the thickest part of that battle, to desert them there. From that point on Falstaff scurried about the field, fleeing from danger, lying as if dead to hear Hal address him in a mixture of affection and scorn. Yet he was bold enough to seize upon the body of Percy and declare even to Hal that his sword had caused Hotspur's death.

To Falstaff war was a dangerous but remunerative game. With that same brazenness, wit, and absolute refusal to shoulder any responsibility or admit himself ever in the wrong which characterized him as a civilian, the fat man went through battle. His part in it became a farce, a thing to produce laughter.

To the many in Shakespeare's audience who thought about such matters, Falstaff represented the vicious impressment system, which Shakespeare evidently thought in need of reform. Falstaff's joining the military system just in time to escape arrest by civil authorities pointed to one way in which criminals could at least temporarily escape justice. All of the encounters between Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice and the deep fear Falstaff had of the gallows are an indication that Shakespeare's 16th century audiences were aware that entering

military service was often a means of escaping prison and death by hanging.

The necessity for Falstaff's men to steal in order to clothe themselves pointed to a serious social problem which received much attention in the reform literature of the age. Falstaff's limping along with his small page upon his triumphant return from the war suggests the braggart soldier, calling his gout a wound, advertising that here was a returned hero to whom homage was due.

Falstaff's reluctance to expose himself to danger on the battlefield resulted in his capturing Sir John Coleville at Gaultree Forest. This capture was made because the reputation of Falstaff as a soldier had preceded him to the war. The sight of such a distinguished person as Coleville surrendering to a laggard, unsoldierly captain like Falstaff must have been greeted with much laughter by the soldiers and civilians in Shakespeare's audiences. So fond did they grow of the tun of man that Shakespeare, by way of advertising Henry V, promised them more of Sir John Falstaff in the third of the Henry plays.

When the loss of the original Falstaff, William Kemp, and the necessity for completing the development of Hal into Henry V made it advisable that Shakespeare kill the character rather than allow his entrance into Henry V, a change was made in the personality of the man. He became disgusting rather than funny. Yet still there were many who regretted his passing from the chronicles of Henry V, though there were none

who could have granted to Captain Falstaff even passing competency as a soldier.

Captain Fluellen was a good soldier. King Henry, overhearing a conversation between the peppery Welshman and Gower, remarked:

"Though it appear a little out of fashion,
There is much care and valour in this Welshman."⁴²

Fluellen was a loyal person, quick to act, his tongue quick in abuse or in praise. He followed right as he saw it. He refused to save Bardolph from a death he believed the corporal deserved.

Typical of the soldier's joke was Fluellen's forcing Pistol to eat the leek worn by the Welshman well past St. David's Day. Since Pistol was an ancient and Fluellen a captain, the aggressive superior officer found it relatively simple to force the ancient to eat the leek.

King Henry knew

"Fluellen valiant
And, touched with choler, hot as gunpowder."⁴³

There is something very likeable about Captain Fluellen. Laughter at him does not become tinged with contempt or with even a shadow of disgust as it eventually did with Falstaff. Something of King Henry's respect for fineness and courage in others was Fluellen's. The Welshman was quick to acknowledge that William had "mettle enough in his belly."⁴⁴

⁴² Henry V, IV, i, 85 - 86.

⁴³ Ibid., IV, vii, 187 - 188.

⁴⁴ Ibid., IV, viii, 67.

Though the Welsh captain was not the colorful character Sir John Falstaff was, he did have an honesty, a forthrightness, and a degree of competency as a soldier that the fat man could never equal. He was quick to see the error in Captain Macmorris' plan to use the mines as trenches and equally quick to pronounce that officer an ass. His advice to Gower about imitating the enemy in being noisy and thus disclosing the army's position was cause for praise from Henry V. The Welshman had read or listened to the history of warfare and talked a great deal of ancient practices and military discipline. Fluellen was a fiery addition to Henry V's army and to the list of Shakespearean soldiers.

A study of Lieutenant Cassio would produce some basis for Iago's bad opinion of him. A young man who had behind him a good family but no experience of war, Cassio proved himself to be weak, though also to have "a daily beauty in his life"⁴⁵ that Iago felt made his own life ugly. Having something of that quality which blinded Othello to dishonesty and deception in others -- complete honesty in himself -- Cassio was important and despised as a tool in Iago's hands. Young enough to be shamed into too much drinking, Cassio was also conscientious enough to be bitterly ashamed of his part in a brawl and his abrupt dismissal by Othello, whom he respected. That "Cassio, I love thee, but nevermore be officer of mine"⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Othello, V, i, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid., II, iii, 248 - 249.

directed at the young lieutenant just beginning his soldier's career carried to him a weighty punishment for the innocent part he played in Iago's designs. His feeling of being forever disgraced as a soldier and as a man and of desperation to regain his place in Othello's favor was an echo of the soldier's belief in his honor as his one indispensable possession.

Cassio's speech:

"Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!"⁴⁷

is related to Othello's farewell to the military life in that each had lost honor and each felt the end of his soldier's career to be a wound "past all surgery."⁴⁸

It is surprising that Cassio was ceded the command left vacant by Othello. One wonders how inexperience and youth could cope with problems easily solved by Othello's maturity and experience. There is almost perfect irony in Iago's working so hard to set his enemy so high and cut his own position away from himself.

Iago was "a mercenary soldier of the late Renaissance."⁴⁹ Parrott explains the real motives behind Iago's villainy as follows:

". . . It is not without significance that Shakespeare has given him a specifically Spanish name, thus identifying him to his English audience with the treachery and cold-blooded cruelty for which the Spaniard was notorious. He has the manners of a soldier; he is blunt, outspoken,

⁴⁷ Ibid., II, iii, 262 - 265.

⁴⁸ Ibid., II, iii, 260.

⁴⁹ Thomas Marc Parrott, Shakespeare (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 727

careless of etiquette, and humorously cynical -- 'hard-boiled' one might call him today. He has in the minds of those who know him best many of the soldier's virtues, a quick and practical intelligence, a comradely readiness to help a friend, and above all a sterling honesty. 'Honest' is indeed Iago's standing epithet; it is applied to him by almost every one in the play -- Shakespeare's device, of course, to show his reputation in the world about him -- and he himself accepts it with a characteristic sneer. Now the term 'honest' in Shakespeare's day carried a different implication from that it bears in our commercial age; it meant foursquare, upright and trustworthy. The trust reposed in Iago by all who knew him, even by his shrewd and worldly wife, shows how well he had imposed his mask upon the world. . . . When this mask of soldierly honesty is dropped we see what his associates never perceived until too late, the real man, a complete egoist, a hard materialist, contemptuous of moral standards, and devoured by a sense of his own intellectual superiority. He does not seem to have been a man of strong passions or of high ambition. In Cinthio the prime motive of the plot is the lust turned to hate of the ensign for the Moor's wife; in the play Iago shows, except for a passing moment, neither lust after nor hatred of Desdemona. Against Othello on the other hand he cherishes positive malice. He has long despised him for the simplicity that lets him trust his fellow-men; he hates him for the scandalous rumor that has linked the name of Othello and his own wife; and the Moor's refusal to gratify his petty ambition with the promotion that he deserves makes his cup of hate boil over. But the real motive for his action lies deeper, in his wounded sense of intellectual superiority and his craving to assuage this wound by making those who had inflicted it the puppets of his will. It must be remembered, moreover, that Iago begins his action without realizing its fatal consequence. There is no hint in the play that he originally contemplated the double murder of Cassio and Desdemona. When he aroused the Moor's suspicions he unloosed a storm whose course he was unable to control, and at last he is wrecked upon an obstacle whose existence he was incapable of suspecting, the heroic self-sacrifice of his own wife. When we sum up all these points, Iago's professional indifference to human suffering, his peculiar

contempt of moral standards, his wounded pride and desire to demonstrate his power, we get, it would seem, an explanation of his conduct which reveals it as humanly credible without forcing us to attribute to him a superhuman and Satanic malignity."⁵⁰

The fact that Iago was a soldier, living by a soldier's code under which he was obliged to defend his honour, is important in any discussion of Othello. On that fact hinges the play.

Another Shakespearean soldier to bear the rank of ancient was Pistol. An old actor forever ranting and declaiming tag ends of remembered speeches, Pistol went to war to serve only himself. He stole continually, used his sword to extract money from the Frenchman, Le Fer, at Agincourt, and disgusted the Boy with his unsoldierly conduct.

Pistol's oratory convinced Fluellen that he was a good soldier, but the ancient's subsequent petition for Bardolph and his reviling of Fluellen for refusing that petition changed the captain's opinion. The wish to punish Pistol for his insolence was partial reason for the leek-eating scene after the battle was over.

The ancient ate the captain's leek and was beaten by the captain's cudgel in a scene which must have delighted the advocates of slap-stick in the audience. Certainly it presented to the soldiers a typical soldier's joke.

Typical of his kind of unsoldierly recruit was Pistol's desertion and his determination to swear that the scars from Fluellen's cudgel were scars from honorable wounds.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 727.

Pistol was only one of many soldiers masquerading as heroes. London was full of them. They constituted a social problem, and Shakespeare's audiences recognized their symbol in Ancient Pistol.

In the common soldiers of Shakespeare's plays there is often displayed evidence of inherent nobility and manliness. To be sure, there is a soldier like Nym, whose very name indicates that he is a thief and whose actions in the play of Henry V reveal him as Pistol's unsoldierly companion. But there is also Francisco, a soldier in Hamlet, who was "sick at heart"⁵¹ over the state of affairs in Denmark. He stood his watch well and thanked those who relieved him in the bitter cold night.

The men in Henry V who conversed with the king had no thought of running away from an unequal battle. They were not all sure the king's cause was just, but they were sure they were going to fight lustily for Henry V. There is a stability, a suggestion of solid British strength, in the characters of Henry's common soldiers. The farce of Pistol's soldiership is forgotten in the sincerity with which William and Bates try to understand their presence on the battlefield and assert their intentions to conduct themselves as soldiers. Knowing that they and others like them were part of Henry's army makes the defeat of the French by the tattered English more understandable.

⁵¹ Hamlet, I, i, 9.

In King Lear a nameless common soldier revolted against the ignoble conduct of his lord and died as a result. He showed himself more noble and manly than his master, and in doing so revealed Shakespeare's growing awareness that the common soldier in war was of importance, was inherently good. The climax of King Lear turned on the soldier's crying out against Cornwall's cruelty to Gloucester. Though Regan immediately killed the peasant, his standing up for right was the beginning of the triumph of good over evil. The common soldier was an important factor in Renaissance England and consequently also important in Shakespeare's plays.

In presenting all types of characters as soldiers and in revealing the good and bad qualities of soldiership in his characters, Shakespeare indicates that the military profession attracted all kinds of men. Some were soldiers because they loved the military life. Some were in soldier's dress because such a costume protected them from the Lord Chief Justice. There were soldiers who sought Hotspur's brand of personal honor and glory on the battlefield. Kings protected their crowns there. Common soldiers tried to evolve a philosophy including reasons for fighting there.

There was a social stratification in Shakespeare's armies, but within each stratum there was a variety of soldiers. Abuses of the military system were shown through individual soldiers. The social problem of the war's returned soldiers was suggested through individual members of the military profession.

A picture of an ideal soldier was given in King Henry V, with his qualities of courageous leadership, absence of greed for personal honor, realization of his responsibility, and sincere admiration for noble qualities in others.

Shakespeare gives the soldier at his best and at his worst and plainly shows that Elizabethan England knew both extremes.

CHAPTER V
THE BATTLEFIELD

To present a battle on one small stage would be difficult for any set of actors, Shakespearean or modern. On that stage must be represented the camps of the opposing generals; on it must be enacted the events of the day; leaders must fight each other there; the fates of the armies must be seen by the spectators. The wildness and confusion of battles must be part of the play seen there.

Shakespeare's stage presented even more difficulties in the staging of a battle than does our modern one. For him there were no curtains. Dead men on his stage must be carried off by actors, as Hamlet dragged the body of Polonius away with him, or a dance must be arranged so that the actors representing corpses might rise and walk away, their exit concealed by the dancers. Therefore, it was necessary that battles be given through descriptions by those just come from the field or by those standing watching a distant clash of men.

In spite of handicaps in staging, Shakespeare does manage to give a reasonably clear account of the preparation for battle, the spirit of the men and their leaders as they begin to fight, the course of the battle as victory hovers and then lights on one side or the other, the end of the battle with a view of the battlefield itself, philosophy of war on the battlefield, and the disposal of the defeated army.

Many battles were planned in the camps pitched close together so that the morning would bring them within sword's distance of each other. Richard III called for a council and a survey of the vantage ground; Richmond called for ink and paper in his tent on which to draw the form and model of the battle. Hotspur, against the advice of Worcester, planned a battle in spite of his father's absence and the approach of Henry IV's superior forces. Henry IV sent every leader to his charge. Brutus made plans to send his soldiers down to Philippi, even as Antony and Octavius were hoping he might commit such a blunder. Antony weighed Cleopatra's sixty sails against good advice to fight on land rather than water and decided on the sea, a step his foes rejoiced to see him take. Coriolanus planned the annihilation of Rome even as the Romans planned new ways to touch his mercy.

Men and armour for the day's battle were important to all generals. The number of the foe and their strength were often asked by generals for their own and the audience's information. Richard III was glad to declare his own army thrice the size of Richmond's, while Richmond comforted himself and his co-rebels with the feeling that Richard's army fought not from love but fear and each of the king's men was a potential rebel. Brutus received letters telling him of a mighty power led by Mark Antony and Octavius, coming down upon him. Macbeth could see the moving forest of Birnam and knew that behind and beneath it moved his enemies.

Their own men were important, too. King Henry V made the rounds of his camp, cheering his men. Before Agincourt he promised to be brother with any man who fought with him, knowing as he did that slim were the English chances against the French. Richmond promised a harvest of peace for one war, and in an oration to his soldiers assured them that God and the prayers of holy saints fought with them in a just cause -- to tear a tyrant from the throne. Their reward would be to share all benefits of victory. Richard's oration to his army was one holding up the foe to contempt as rats, famished beggars, but withal potential threats to the wives and virgins of England. His men were defending themselves and their homes, and for those reasons were counselled to fight. Richard had not made the circle of his camp, hearing that Lord Northumberland and Thomas of Surrey had already gone to cheer the men and knowing himself to be less cheerful than he usually was.

Armour was made ready during the night before the battle. While some men slept and others lay awake thinking ominously of the coming day, "the armourers, accomplishing the knights, with busy hammers closing rivets up, gave dreadful note of preparation."¹ Richard III gave orders that his white Surrey be saddled for the coming day and that his staves be sound and not too heavy. He asked Ratcliff to come to his tent about

¹ Henry V, IV, Chorus, 12 - 14.

the mid of night to help him arm.

In further preparation for battle prayers were offered up, prayers in which God was addressed in military terms. King Henry's prayer began, "O, God of battles!"² and Richmond identified himself in his plea for divine assistance as God's captain and asked that he and his forces be ministers of God, armed with His bruising irons of wrath.

Frequently echoed on the Shakespearean battlefields was the philosophy -- not yet dead -- that the side on which God fights will win. King Henry V comforted Gloucester as the English army, sick and weak, faced a fresh and overwhelmingly large French army by the statement, "We are in God's hands, brother, not in theirs."³ A prayer on the eve of battle asking for God's help ascended from this same young king. It was Salisbury, one of his men, who exclaimed, "God's arm strike with us!"⁴ These Englishmen were careful, after the battle was over, to ascribe all credit for their miraculous victory to God. King Henry declared,

". . . O God, thy arm was here;
And not to us, but to thy arm alone,
Ascribe we all! When, without stratagem,
But in plain shock and even play of battle,
Was ever known so great and little loss
On one part and on the other? Take it, God,
For it is none but thine!"⁵

To the Welshman, Fluellen, Henry gave permission to tell

² Ibid., IV, i, 306.

³ Ibid., III, vi, 178

⁴ Ibid., IV, viii, 5.

⁵ Ibid., IV, viii, 111 - 117.

how many were killed at Agincourt provided the acknowledgement that God fought for the English accompanied the telling.

An anonymous lord, in a conversation with Lennox in Macbeth, mentioned the necessity for divine aid in winning a man-made and man-prosecuted war:

" . . . Thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward;
That by the help of these -- with Him above
To ratify the work -- we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights . . ."6

That same lord ends his speeches with,

"I'll send my prayers with him."7

That

"Every man's conscience is a thousand men
To fight against this guilty homicide"8

was Oxford's opinion of the men, led by him, who were fighting for God's cause against Richard III. Richmond, fighting also against Richard III, asked his army to remember that

"God and our good cause fight upon our side."9

Richard II believed so absolutely in his divine right to rule that he was confident God was furnishing an angel to fight for him and that

"Heaven still guards the right."10

Westmoreland, ambassador from Henry IV to Mowbray, in

6 Macbeth, III, vi, 29 - 34.

7 Ibid., III, vi, 49.

8 Richard III, V, ii, 17 - 18.

9 Ibid., V, iii, 240.

10 Richard II, III, iii, 62.

summarizing the advantages his army had over the rebel forces included not only bigger names, better armour and better-trained men, but also a better cause. Henry IV himself had previously declared,

"For, on their answer, will we set on them;
And God befriend us, as our cause is just!"¹¹

Another evidence of "God's will be done" is found in Siward's reaction to the news that his son was killed. In Ross's words, "Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt,"¹² is found a hard philosophy. Siward's answer, "Why, then, God's soldier be he,"¹³ and his affirmation that his son was worth no more sorrow than that already accorded him reflected the general attitude of the living towards the battle's dead. Living in an age when death was frequently violent, inured by experience and a certain feeling of stoicism, those who were left alive after a battle carried corpses from the field, gave praise to the dead, and accorded them burial.

Often heralds or ambassadors were sent from one headquarters to another, offering last peace terms, one last chance before accepting annihilation. In this manner the plot was developed, a picture of parleys given, and the audience presented with a clear picture of the purposes of both sides. Montjoy kept re-appearing to King Henry V with offers to accept on certain conditions the English king's surrender. Cocksure as he was, honest as was Henry V with him, Montjoy in his

¹¹ Henry IV, Part I, V, 1, 119 - 120.

¹² Macbeth, V, vii, 39.

¹³ Ibid., V, vii, 47.

fresh uniform was a symbol of the fresh power of his French king and must have made Henry's sick and tattered men look weak indeed.

Worcester and Vernon, in a parley with Henry IV, were granted fairest terms of peace. Yet their report to Hotspur was purposely false, and a battle easily avoidable was fought. To Coriolanus went many ambassadors suing for mercy. And in the parley held on the plains of Philippi, Brutus said, "Words before blows; is it so, countrymen?"¹⁴ and was insulted by Octavius for saying so. There was little dignity in that parley, seemingly arranged so that the three generals could taunt each other.

There were last minute signs of disagreement between the generals of a camp. Cassius and Brutus disagreed before Philippi. Antony accused Octavius of crossing him in the latter's refusal to hold in his attack (just beginning) to the left hand of the even field. Octavius must march upon the right hand of the field, and so he did.

A last minute plea by York who begged "the leading of the vaward"¹⁵ was granted by Henry V. Nor was it unusual to find nobles pushing forward, eager to try their steel. Though it was planned who should lead the battles and each man led his own charge, it was the hero who stormed first across the field -- and in Shakespeare's armies the hero was noble.

¹⁴ Julius Caesar, V, i, 27.

¹⁵ Henry V, IV, iii, 130.

The common soldier was very rarely seen on the stage-battlefield, and then he was not shown heroically. Rather one saw him as Coriolanus discovered his mercenaries, telling one another and the audience of the spoils they were picking up to carry back to Rome. There were exceptions, as the soldier in King Lear who revolted against Cornwall. Slaves were shown, as was Brutus' Strato, but they were there to wait on their masters, not to exhibit their qualities as soldiers.

The French Dauphin was so eager to meet the day and that battle to be so ingloriously finished that he made his preparations joyously. His spirits shone like his new armour. He was noisily boastful in his praise of his horse, loud in his intentions to trot a mile on a way paved with English faces. Prepared for battle though he was, he was not ready for defeat.

Resembling the son of the French king was the son of the English king, Henry IV, when he was prepared for battle.

Vernon described him:

"I saw young Harry, with his beaver on,
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly arm'd,
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat,
As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus
And witch the world with noble horsemanship."¹⁶

Meeting that same day differently were Falstaff and The Boy.

The elder wished for bed-time and the battle's end, the younger for a cup of ale and safety in London.

The battle on the stage was a series of duels, usually

¹⁶ Henry IV, Part I, IV, 1, 104 - 110.

between two main combatants. In the duels the swordsmanship of the noblemen was displayed. Evidently all men of noble birth were given training in handling the chivalric weapon. Hamlet and Laertes were almost evenly matched in skill with the sword. Fortinbras used a sword to prove his arm strong. Brutus, who loved peace and incited war, was a good swordsman. With his sword Lear killed the slave who was hanging Cordelia.

Interspersed in the stage duels were meetings between nobles of one side or the other to discuss the trend of the day and so inform the audience how the battle went. There were some comic episodes, too. The spectators were given a view of Hal killing Hotspur, but they also saw Falstaff rise up from his feigned death and walk away with the body of Percy on his back. They watched the Prince of Wales rescue his father from Douglas, but they were also witnesses while the trembling Frenchman paid Pistol for his life. On the battlefield Brutus ran upon the sword of Strato, and to the battlefield Macduff brought the head of Macbeth.

On the stage Cassius and Titanius met to report that Brutus too early gave the word to vanquish Octavius and left Antony to vanquish his own army. The French nobles met to express their amazement and anger at the way their forces were fleeing from the unprepared English.

The leaders of the defeated forces who were not killed were brought often before the victor for disposal, but their execution was ordered only, never performed, there on the stage.

Worcester and Vernon were condemned to death and led away after the battle of Shrewsbury. Douglas, a prisoner in Hal's tent, was discussed and his liberty decreed. It was to avoid a death at the hands of the victorious enemy that Brutus ran upon a fellow Roman's sword, and his death was witnessed by the audience.

Battlefields after the battle could not be shown to the audience, but they were described in vivid language so that he who listened or read could see in his mind's eye a picture of devastation and blood and stench. Montjoy, the herald who had so frequently brought messages to Henry V, came, his eyes more humble than they had been, to seek permission to bury the French dead. His description of the battlefield over which he had come left a picture of many dead, the blood of the mercenaries mingling with that of the nobles, of wounded and dying horses goring into their dead masters. That same Montjoy had once prophesied that on the battlefield the bodies of Englishmen would lie and fester. That prophecy had been answered by Henry V, who proclaimed that English bodies, buried in French dunghills, would breed a plague to kill their enemy. Indications that mercenaries were given none too careful -- if any -- burial would mean that a battlefield remained a gruesome place for long weeks after the battle.

It was on a battlefield after the battle that Percy stood "dry with rage and extreme toil, breathless and faint, leaning upon his sword,"¹⁷ when a lord, neat and perfumed, holding a perfume box ever and again beneath his offended nose, came to

¹⁷ Ibid., I, iii, 31 - 32.

demand of the hot-headed young victor his prisoners. The contrast between the fastidious lord (who, but for the guns would have been a soldier) and his own bloody self proved too much for Percy's temper. It is interesting to note that

". . . as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
He call'd them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
Betwixt the wind and his nobility."¹⁸

Such a scene would indicate something of the activity taking place on the battlefield after the battle was finished.

On the field after the battle the mercenary collected a large part of his reward for his share in creating the field. Those soldiers in Julius Caesar who "fell to spoil"¹⁹ were discussed by the officers of Brutus' forces, while those who stopped to pick up spoils in Coriolanus are present on the stage and seen by the audience.

To the reader both the suggested scenes and those actually portrayed are vivid. To a member of Shakespeare's audience his battlefields may have been less convincing; the handicaps of staging would certainly have made it difficult to present a battlefield in its many phases.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, iii, 42 - 45.

¹⁹ Julius Caesar, V, iii, 7.

CHAPTER VI
WINE, WOMEN, AND SONG

That trilogy so close to the traditional soldier -- wine, women, and song -- is not neglected by Shakespeare and his soldiers. The plays make some mention of the first, tell much of the second, and reveal some instances of the third.

Without his love of sack and his enormous capacity for it, Falstaff would not be himself. His meticulous taste called for a certain type of sack compounded exactly as he wanted it. It must be old -- the Prince chided him for being fat-witted with drinking of "old" sack. There must be no lime in his sack. To him only a coward was more to be despised than adulterated sack. The papers found in Falstaff's pockets and perused by the Prince and Veto included a list of purchases. The major item -- five shillings, eight pence -- was for sack. The second largest item -- two shillings, six pence -- was for anchovies and sack. For bread only one half-penny was spent. Of the twenty-four pounds he owed Dame Quickly some was for "by-drinkings."¹ Mixed with his captain's orders to Bardolph about the marching of soldiers to battle was one, "Fill me a bottle of sack,"² and when Prince Hal would have borrowed a pistol from his huge friend on the battlefield he found that

¹ Henry IV, Part I, III, 111, 85.

² Ibid., IV, 11, 2.

the pocket where a pistol should have been contained a bottle of sack. Of all the loves Falstaff had, food, sleep and drink were first, and of these drink was nearest his heart.

Not so Hamlet. The sound of his uncle's revels during the watch for his father's ghost moved Hamlet to declare his opinion on the old custom of keeping wassails, a revelry accompanied by the baying out of kettle drums and trumpets. To Hamlet, born to the custom it was still one "more honor'd in the breach than the observance."³ He felt that:

"This heavy-headed revel east and west
 Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations;
 They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
 Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
 From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
 The pith and marrow of our attribute."⁴

Of Richard's commands the night before a battle, one that was given among orders concerning his horse, his armour and a watch was "Fill me a bowl of wine."⁵ A few minutes later the order was repeated.

Iago used wine as a tool to help him carry out the evil he conceived. He plied with wine a Cassio who had admitted his weakness where drink was concerned. He and other soldiers with less susceptibility to liquors joined the shamed Cassio in consuing the wine. Cassio was drunk when he was cashiered by an angry Othello.

³ Hamlet, I, iv, 16.

⁴ Ibid., I, iv, 17 - 22.

⁵ Richard III, V, iii, 63.

Macbeth used wine to help make ready for the murder of Duncan. Those guards who should have saved their king from the sword were drunk while Duncan was being murdered. They were not fully sober when Macbeth killed them to show others his anger at finding his king and guest murdered.

Brutus, in his tent after reconciliation with Cassius, ordered from Lucius a bowl of wine. After hearing of his wife's death he repeated his command. He ordered, "Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine. In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius."⁶ And he and Cassius pledged their renewed love in bowls of wine.

In Egypt Antony consumed much wine. Revelling there with the queen, he was called from his "wassails" by Caesar. After a victory when Caesar, Antony, Lepidus, Pompey, Agrippa, Maccenes, Enobarbus and Menas gathered on board Pompey's galley,

"The lives of the triumvirs (were) saved only by a reluctant scruple on the part of Pompey; what might have been a massacre (turned) into an Alexandrian revel, and the third part of the world in the person of Lepidus (was) carried off dead drunk."⁷

There is something in the exotic connotations of the word "Egypt" that includes wine as surely as the Frenchman's remembrance of American soldiers includes cognac. Wine must

⁶ Julius Caesar, IV, iii, 160 - 161.

⁷ Thomas Marc Parrott, op. cit., p. 860.

have been at least as important to Antony's soldiers stationed there as it was to him and the majority of all the other soldiers the world has known.

More important than wine to some soldiers, and certainly more influential in many cases, were women. Shakespeare presents many kinds of women whom his soldiers loved or fancied, some of them noble, some of them bawds, all of them part of the soldiers' lives and thoughts.

Cleopatra destroyed "the greatest soldier in the world."⁸ She influenced the general to forget his duty and to follow her advice. His doing so cost him a battle, the respect of his men, the support of his officers, and his own self-respect. Antony was never able to say "no" to any woman. He could not, therefore, be expected to resist a woman of Cleopatra's beauty. Though she was a coquette, Cleopatra was also indisputably Queen of Egypt. She was extremely jealous of Antony; her temper flared at any evidence of his neglecting her. For her Antony wanted to conquer a world of kingdoms, but because of her he was conquered.

Only for a woman would Coriolanus find it in himself to lessen his passionate hatred for his native Rome and fail in his nearly-accomplished purpose of utterly destroying the city and all who lived within its walls. Though he had a wife whom he apparently loved, it was his mother, Volusia, who could most easily influence him. It was she who succeeded

⁸ Antony and Cleopatra, I, iii, 38.

in beating down his stubborn refusal to beg of commoners so that he might win their voices and assume his rightful position as a Roman Senator. She had made him into the fiercely patrician general he was, had wanted him to be just such a stern conqueror. Yet to her kneeling figure he capitulated in a decision that meant his death and the salvation of his birth city. While her son marched away with Aufidius, Voluana marched into Rome, hailed as its benefactress and noble savior, the one woman who could handle Shakespeare's fiercest soldier.

The woman loved by Shakespeare's general, Othello, was Desdemona. That love was responsible for her death and his own and for the end of a brilliant military career. Othello had known other women before he met Desdemona. His reference to Emilia as Desdemona's keeper when he considered Desdemona unfaithful to him proved his knowledge of more than one sort of woman. His reluctant parting from his wife and his glad reunion with her on Cyprus, his

"But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again"⁹

reveal his deep love for Desdemona, his dependence upon her, and his helplessness as a man or a soldier without his absolute faith in her. His honor would not brook betrayal by her, nor would his conception of honor allow him to be merciful. His death at his own hand constituted a tragic loss of an excellent soldier.

⁹ Othello, III, iii, 91 - 92.

The woman whom Cassio fancied was hardly a Desdemona. Her name was Bianca, and to her Cassio gave the handkerchief which was so important in Iago's circumstantial evidence against Desdemona. Cassio did not love Bianca. She was subject for jests; she was part of his soldier's life away from home; she was his mistress as she had been mistress of others before Cassio's arrival in Cyprus. She represented the kind of alliance frequently made by soldiers stationed away from home. She belongs to every age and every land where soldiers are.

To Falstaff women were important, too. To Nell Quickly and Doll Tearsheet he was cause for jealousy, a source of insults, an incorrigible liar and beggar of shillings, and the frequent cause for the visits of the bailiffs to Dame Quickly's establishment. Next to sack, Falstaff loved women. Though he was but a false soldier, his fondness for both was shared by many whose soldier's dress his more valiant hearts and slimmer bodies than his own.

Pistol married Dame Quickly before he left for Gaultree. Perhaps her ownership of the Boar's Head Tavern attracted Pistol more than her doubtful charms. Certainly his departure for war was accompanied by much advice from him on how to conduct a business she had run for many years without his advice. When news came of Nell's death, Pistol mentioned it with some faint suggestion of sorrow, but his chief concern was one of how to make a living alone.

Hotspur characteristically refused to tell Kate anything at all of his affairs of war. His opinion of women in general extended to his wife, and though he loved her, he loved honor and glory more. In his chivalric code, women were to be fought for on the battlefield, their honor guarded, their homes kept safe. They themselves were to remain at home, satisfied to praise a returning victor or mourn a hero dead on the field. Their ignorance of important matters -- of which war was most vital -- was natural and necessary, considering their inability to grasp or guard information about matters other than those domestic or feminine. A woman as an individual existed for Hotspur only when there was no chance to mount his horse and ride away to war. Once he had left Kate, he seemed not to remember her again. No thought of her disturbed his dying, and her tears at his leaving did not haunt him. To Percy, as to many like him, women were secondary, necessary perhaps at times, but not meant to build one's life upon.

Lady Macduff's opinion was that her husband behaved unnaturally, since he left her and his children to be killed by Macbeth's murderous hirelings. She felt that even the tiny wren showed more courage in caring for his family than did Macduff, flying into England where there was no danger. Macduff felt that a man's country was more important than his individual family. He sacrificed his domestic happiness to save Scotland from Macbeth. When Malcolm and Ross told him of Lady Macduff's death and of the savage slaughtering of the babies, the soldier

remarked:

"Oh, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue!"¹⁰

But instead of weeping over his lady's death, Macduff made ready to march immediately upon Macbeth and avenge by duel with the "fiend of Scotland"¹¹ not only his country's wrongs but his wife's death.

Related to each other and to many modern soldiers were Henry V and Mortimer, both of whom loved ladies whose language was foreign to them. Mortimer knew no Welsh, his wife no English. Henry's French was as inadequate as Katherine's English. Mortimer said, "I understand thy kisses and thou mine"¹² -- a statement reiterated recently by many soldiers along the Champs-Élysées and Wilhelmstrasse. Henry achieved marriage without knowing Katherine's language; many soldiers have married women whose language they could not understand.

Brutus loved his wife, Portia; yet his first stern acceptance of her death was hardly proof of that affection. His "No man knows sorrow better. Portia is dead."¹³ speaks something of the grief his stoicism forbade his showing. His wife was to him dear almost as was his honor, beloved almost

¹⁰ Macbeth, IV, iii, 230 - 231.

¹¹ Ibid., IV, iii, 233.

¹² Henry IV, Part I, III, i, 205.

¹³ Julius Caesar, IV, iii, 147.

as much as Rome. She had no power to swerve him from his purpose to save his country from a tyrant, but she was important to him and he felt her loss keenly.

Caesar proclaimed himself as constant as the northern star, but he could be swayed by Calpurnia. She had persuaded him to stay at home on the Ides of March before the subtle flattery of the conspirators lured him to the Capitol. Had she been a little more subtle than Cassius, Calpurnia might have saved Caesar to take his place as Emperor of Rome.

Mightier men and stronger soldiers than Caesar have been influenced by their wives, and they include the common soldier as well as the noble whose life is more clearly chronicled in Shakespeare's plays.

Part of the spoils of war were the women of conquered countries. In their attempts to make their soldiers fight more aggressively, generals included warnings that the wives and sisters and sweethearts of those soldiers were in danger from the attacking foe. Before the gates of Harfleur Henry V delivered a last call for surrender, including in it a warning that if the city must be taken by force he would release on it "the flesh'd soldier, with conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass your fresh fair virgins and your flowering infants,"¹⁴ and asked:

"What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause,
If your pure maidens fall into the hand
Of hot and forcing violation?"

¹⁴ Henry V, III, iii, 13 - 14.

What rein can hold licentious wickedness
When down the hill he holds his fierce career?"¹⁵

So women were a part of every soldier's life. The general, the regular old soldier, the soldier fighting only for the duration of a war, the mercenary, the pseudo-soldier hiding in corners of the battlefield -- all of them Shakespeare shows us, and with them their women.

Music is brought into the lives of Shakespeare's soldiers enough to indicate its importance to them. The range is as wide as the range in variety of soldiers. Iago's Canakin Song, the Welsh songs of Lady Mortimer, the music Lucius made for Brutus on his harp -- all are there.

Pistol sings a snatch of a "plain-song"¹⁶ or simple melody at a time when at least one of his companions would prefer being safely in London rather than on the battlefield. The song contained some reference to bloody death, which would make it an unwise choice to sing on a battle-ground, but Pistol would hardly have been one to be tactful in song or in speech.

The "Clink clink" of Iago's Canakin Song must have long resounded in Cassio's ear. Montano and the gentlemen who were his drinking companions made no comments on that song or the second one Iago sang, nor did anyone join the ancient in his singing. The drunk Cassio appreciated and praised the

¹⁵ Ibid., III, iii, 19 - 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., III, ii, 7.

songs with a thick tongue. In the Paul Robeson recording of this scene from Othello, Iago does get some assistance from the other men. The records make the clink of the song and the wine bottles and the laughter of the soldiers into a very familiar pattern of sounds, a pattern frequently followed by groups of uniformed men.

When Lady Mortimer wanted to show her lord she loved him, she asked him in Welsh to put his head in her lap and let her sing to him. Glendower translated Lady Mortimer's request:

"She bids you on the wanton rushes lay you down
 And rest your gentle head upon her lap,
 And she will sing the song that pleaseth you
 And on your eyelids crown the god of sleep,
 Charming your blood with pleasing heaviness,
 Making such difference 'twixt wake and sleep
 As is the difference betwixt day and night
 The hour before the heavenly-harness'd team
 Begins his golden progress in the east."¹⁷

A setting for music it was, indeed, and her singing made the soldier's hard life seem farther off than it was for Mortimer just then.

Falstaff, grown more arrogant -- or less pleasingly so -- than he had been before his captaincy was granted him, sent his page to order musicians for his evening with Doll Tearsheet, who sat on his lap while the music was played.

That music must have been very different from the tunes played by Lucius for Brutus, a Brutus upon whom weighed heavily the cares of generalship and the loss of Portia. The sleepy

¹⁷ Henry IV, Part I, III, i, 214 - 222.

song the boy played relaxed his fingers from his instrument and lulled him to sleep before his master could find the marked page in the book he had been reading.

Most languorous of all the music mentioned in connection with the soldiers in Shakespeare's plays is that of the flutes to which the silver oars of Cleopatra's barge kept stroke. The beauty of Egypt's queen was enhanced by that music. She herself was a lover of music which she termed "moody food of us that trade in love,"¹⁸ and it is difficult to imagine any of the revels in which she was joined by Antony without hearing music made for her by the servants she alternately whipped and petted.

Suiting those people for whom they were meant, varied as are his soldiers, the songs Shakespeare included in his plays help develop his plot or create an interlude for contrast or show something of the character of that soldier who sings or listens to the song.

¹⁸ Antony and Cleopatra, II, v, 1 - 2.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The soldier in the sixteenth century was of great importance numerically, economically, and socially. He created problems, particularly economic ones, which his period found hard to solve.

The system of which he was a part attracted men of all types from all social levels. The faults of the military system were known and criticized by Shakespeare through the medium of soldiers in his plays.

The soldier is presented in every phase of his life; the effect of his profession on his thinking and on the non-military aspects of his existence is shown. Shakespeare makes extensive use of the soldier as character material for his drama. Many of his most important characters are soldiers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Dunn, Esther Cloudman. Eight Famous Elizabethan Plays.
New York: The Modern Library, 1932.
- Harrison, George Bagshawe. England in Shakespeare's Day.
London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1928
- Priestley, J. B. Falstaff and His Circle. Men and Books,
edited by Malcolm S. MacLean and Elisabeth K. Holmes.
New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1932.
- Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra. Shakespeare,
edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1938. pp. 859 - 907.
- Shakespeare, William. Coriolanus. Shakespeare, edited
by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 907 - 959.
- Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Shakespeare, edited by
Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 667 - 725.
- Shakespeare, William. Henry IV, Part I. Shakespeare,
edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1938. pp. 343 - 387.
- Shakespeare, William. Henry IV, Part II. Shakespeare,
edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1938. pp. 387 - 433.
- Shakespeare, William. Henry V. Shakespeare, edited by
Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 433 - 479.
- Shakespeare, William. Julius Caesar. Shakespeare, edited
Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 629 - 667.
- Shakespeare, William. Macbeth. Shakespeare, edited by
Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 823 - 859.
- Shakespeare, William. Othello. Shakespeare, edited by
Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1938. pp. 725 - 773.

Shakespeare, William. Richard II. Shakespeare, edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. pp. 301 - 343.

Shakespeare, William. Richard III. Shakespeare, edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. pp. 247 - 301.

Wilson, John Dover. The Fortunes of Falstaff. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941.

Secondary Sources

Greene, Robert. A Notable Discovery of Coosnage. 1591 - The Second Part of Conny-Catching. 1592. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923.

Greene, Robert. Conny Catching Last Part 1592: A Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-Catcher and A Shee Conny-Catcher. 1592. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923.

Harrison, George Bageshawe. The Story of Elizabethan Drama. London: Cambridge University Press, 1924.

Linklater, Eric. Ben Jonson and King James. London: Jonathan Cape.

Nashe, Thomas. The Unfortunate Traveller. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920.

Parrott, Thomas Marc. A Short View of Elizabethan Drama. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.

Shakespeare, William. King Lear. Shakespeare, edited by Thomas Marc Parrott. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938.

Tillyard, E. M. W. The Elizabethan World Picture. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944.

Typist: Mary Jolley