

Degree 2 English Honours

Paper 3 (Drama)

Christopher Marlowe's Edward The Second

Christopher Marlowe is a great product of Renaissance in the 16th Century along with the great Shakespeare. Marlowe occupies a significant place in the field of English Drama especially in Tragedy. He is also known as a father of Blank Verse, it is said that the invention of blank verse has got its origin before Marlowe but this this technique has been best and skilfully used by Christopher Marlowe, he has given a new dimension and a new dramatic skill to English Drama. Even the great Shakespeare was also influenced by the technique and style of Christopher Marlowe. The present Drama Edward the Second is a historical play based on the life of the kind Edward Two in the Elizabethan Period. The main theme of the Drama is love, passion and homosexuality.

The historical Edward was son to the famous Edward Longshanks, the first of his name to rule England, a great king as well as a great conqueror who overcame the Welsh. Edward I took great pains in preventing the future king from acquiring the habits of extravagance and frivolity, which he retained all through his life. The old king attributed his son's defects to the bad influence of his friend, the Gascon knight Piers Gaveston thus driving the favourite into exile.

Soon after Edward I's death, his son, now king of England, was to recall Gaveston granting the favourite lands, titles, power... The young king's next act was to

abandon the Scots campaign, which his father had set his heart on. Edward II was a very fine-looking man who cared for nothing but his own hedonistic pleasures. He was wanting in all serious interests and was always in the hands of a favourite with a stronger will than his own. Gaveston was his minion in the early years of his reign and acted as regent when Edward went to France to marry Isabella, daughter of Philip the Fair. Gaveston then received the earldom of Cornwall and married Margaret of Gloucester, the king's niece.

The barons insisted on his banishment from England as they watched Gaveston's growing influence. Twice Gaveston was exiled and twice recalled back. The earl of Lancaster, the King's cousin, went to war against Edward and his favourite, and in 1312 treacherously put Gaveston to death. Edward lost his power to the barons. But Robert Bruce was steadily conquering Scotland occupying all the fortresses save Stirling in 1314. The barons then joined forces with Edward, marching against Bruce but were completely defeated at Bannockburn. Edward's defeat made him even more dependent on his barons. Edward 'elected' another favourite, Hugh Despenser, the Younger, making the barons infuriated against both. In 1321, they procured the banishment of the Despensers but Edward's reply was to wage war against his own barons. The leader, his cousin Lancaster was executed at Pontefract.

The Despensers 'ruled' for a while making the queen, Isabella of France indignant at their power. In 1325 she went to France to visit her brother, the new French king Charles IV. When the time came for her return she declined to go back to

her husband as long as the Despencers held power. Isabella associated herself with Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, first Earl of March, and a year later she landed in England with her son openly against her husband, the king. Edward's followers deserted him; he fled from London to the west but was captured after a while. He was then sent prisoner to Kenilworth Castle his son chosen to be King as Edward III. He was made to resign his crown and renounce his office too, before a committee of the estates.

Isabella and Mortimer did so badly in their government that they feared Edward's existence. Edward was secretly removed to Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire where two attendants of Mortimer, Matrevis and Gourney inflicted every indignity upon him. With this, they hoped Edward would become ill and die but their plotting was in vain. Then, he was cruelly put to death on September 21, 1327. It was announced Edward II had died a natural death... Three years later, Edward III had Mortimer tried for corruption and executed.

**By, Arshad Khan
Dept. of English
J N College Madhubani**