

FAMOUS  
ELIZABETHAN PLAYS

*Expurgated and Adapted for Modern  
Readers*

BY

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OF WYOMING" (CLARENDON PRESS SERIES), ETC.

"Fly far from hence  
All private taxes, all immodest phrases,  
Whatever may but show like vicious!"

*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Induc., p. 93.

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## PREFACE.

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IT is much to be regretted that the dramatic masterpieces of Shakspeare's contemporaries, *in their entirety*, are wholly unfitted for general reading. The reason is obvious ; the plays in question abound in strong pictures of gross subjects, many passages being absolutely inconsistent with the delicacy of the present day, and some of the very finest scenes being polluted by occasional coarseness of language. Consequently they are totally unknown to the vast majority of readers, and are also necessarily excluded from all educational courses.

The present volume is an attempt to obviate these objections, by expunging or altering slightly all those passages and expressions which have appeared to the editor to be objectionable in point of morality or otherwise. It may be placed in the hands of all with the utmost confidence. These necessary erasures are much fewer in number, and more trivial in nature, than a casual observer might imagine (as will appear from the synopsis at the foot of the various "reading tables" prefixed to the plays) ; and

the six plays are given *practically* complete as connected stories, retaining all their original spirit and interest.

In the choice of plays a double aim has been kept in view :—first, to select those which contain very little that is exceptionable, having no radical evil in their plot ; avoiding all those (a numerous class, it is to be remarked) which in their very essence or groundwork are contaminating :—and, second, to select in each case a play which shall be among the best and most typical of the author's works, and thus combine in a single readable volume half-a-dozen masterpieces by various old English dramatists.

It is hoped that this book may be found of service for educational purposes, opening up and rendering available one of the most valuable portions of English poetic and dramatic literature, which has hitherto of necessity been closed to all youthful students. With a view to this object, the obscurities and archaisms of the text are explained in short foot-notes, and each play is preceded by an introduction dealing concisely with the life and works of the author.

Dramatic reading clubs and societies will find the volume most useful ; each play is preceded by a "reading table" of the characters, showing the number of lines spoken by every character in each scene, pointing out what characters may be grouped together, so as to be undertaken by a single reader, and showing what portions (enclosed in thick brackets) may be omitted, in order to shorten the

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play without injury to the thread or connection of the story. The fact of incidental music, songs, dances, &c., is also noted. The texts are as pure and correct as possible ; the fact of an omission is always denoted by an asterisk (\*) ; that of trivial alteration by an obelisk (†).

Should the present volume meet with sufficient approval at the hands of the public, it is purposed to publish a second series of plays selected from the works of other great Elizabethan dramatists, and also a volume of Restoration plays similarly treated.

H. M. FITZGIBBON.

DUBLIN, *September, 1889.*