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HUMAN LIFE

IN

SHAKESPEARE.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING been invited, several years ago, to deliver a course of lectures before the Lowell Institute, in Boston, I accordingly delivered those which I now venture to print. The hall would, I believe, hold twelve hundred; but such was the desire to hear, that a sufficient number could not be accommodated. Each lecture was therefore repeated, at three o'clock in the afternoon, on the day following. I was then in health and spirits; now, alas! I am in an illness which will close but with my death. In sending forth my book, therefore, in my weakness, I hope it may be as generously received by the public, as the lectures spoken from my lips were by the audience.

HENRY GILES.

QUINCY, *January 1*, 1868.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE GROWING AND PERPETUAL INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE.	9
II. HUMAN LIFE IN SHAKESPEARE.	62
III. MAN IN SHAKESPEARE.	97
IV. WOMAN IN SHAKESPEARE.	134
V. SHAKESPEARE'S COMIC POWER.	172
VI. SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC POWER.	213
VII. SHAKESPEARE'S PERSONALITY.	250

HUMAN LIFE IN SHAKESPEARE.

THE GROWING AND PERPETUAL INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE.

WHETHER Shakespeare did or did not study law, — Lord Campbell implies that he did, — is of interest only as every inquiry is which concerns the personal existence of a poet who has fully revealed man, and entirely concealed himself. Shakespeare is, indeed, as to his individuality, THE GREAT UNKNOWN; so, instead of knowledge, we strive after hints, conjectures, guesses, and we are excited if any one of them serves even as an illusive link by which we can connect our common life with his. So it is that association with the mighty confers dignity on trifles. When, therefore, we ridicule contemporary gossip about the peculiarities of distinguished characters, we are ridicul-