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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

POET, DRAMATIST, AND MAN

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POET, DRAMATIST, AND MAN

BY

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ELSEWHERE," "THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT," ETC.



NEW EDITION

WITH A NEW PREFACE

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To
MY MOTHER
and
To the Memory of
MY FATHER

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PREFACE

THIS account of Shakespeare, planned nearly four years ago, has been prepared with the hope that it may bring the greatest of English poets more distinctly before the minds of some of his readers, and widen the interest in a body of poetry rich beyond most literature in the qualities which not only give deep and fresh interest to life, but which make for the liberation and enrichment of the human spirit. As the Spokesman of a race to which has fallen a large share of the government of the modern world, and as the chief exponent in literature of the fundamental conception of life held by the Western world at a time when the thought of the East and the West are being brought into searching comparison, Shakespeare must be studied in the near future with a deeper recognition of the significance of his work and its value as a source of spiritual culture. In these chapters the endeavour has been made to present the man as he is disclosed by the results of the long and loving study of a group of scholars, chiefly English, German, and American, who have

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searched the whole field of contemporary literature, records, and history with infinite patience and with keen intelligence, by the history of his time, and by a study of his work. The plays have been presented in those aspects which throw light on the dramatist's life, thought, and art; the many and interesting questions which have been discussed with great ingenuity and at great length by Shakespearean scholars have been touched upon only as they directly affect the history, thought, or art of the poet. The writer is under obligations to the entire body of Shakespearean scholars, who have brought together a fund of knowledge open to the world, but collected at great cost of time and thought. He desires to acknowledge his special indebtedness to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, Mr. F. J. Furnivall, Dr. Horace Howard Furness, Mr. Sidney Lee, Mr. George Wyndham, Mr. Israel Gollancz, Professor C. H. Herford, and Mr. A. W. Ward.

As the result of independent study of the plays the writer found himself reaching conclusions with regard to the significance of the order in which they were written which follow, in certain respects, the lines marked out years ago by Dr. Edward Dowden, a critic who has rendered very important service to Shakespearean scholarship. The word

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Romance as happily descriptive of the later plays has been taken from Dr. Dowden, from whom the writer has received for years past, in this as in other fields, both suggestion and stimulus. To Dr. William J. Rolfe he is indebted for many kindnesses of a personal nature.

Mr. William Winter has made Shakespeare's country familiar to a host of readers in America and England, and has reproduced the atmosphere in which the poet lived as boy and youth with such sympathetic charm and fidelity that he has laid all lovers of Shakespeare under obligations which it is a pleasure to recognize.