Shakespeare as a dramatic artist, a popular illustration of the principles of scientific criticism

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SHAKESPEARE

AS

A DRAMATIC ARTIST

A POPULAR ILLUSTRATION OF

THE PRINCIPLES OF SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM

BY

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THIRD EDITION: REVISED AND ENLARGED

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The present edition is distinguished by two features. In the first place, the list of plays treated in Part First has been enlarged by three,—Othello, Love's Labour's Lost, and As You Like It. The Study of Othello has been made No. XI, to associate it with previous Studies of Julius Caesar and Lear, since it connects Character and Plot as these had connected Passion and Movement. The Studies of Love's Labour's Lost and As You Like It (Nos. XIV, XV) are placed after those on The Tempest, and carry further the topics of Central Ideas and Dramatic Colouring. The new matter is the substance of papers read at various times before the New Shakspere Society of London.

Such additions to Part First involve, according to the plan of the whole work, additions of detail and restatements of various points in Part Second. But besides these there is a change of a more general character in Part Second, which makes the other main feature of this edition. It has always been my contention that the Science of Dramatic Criticism admits at present of no systematisation other than a digest of critical topics,
and such a digest must always be provisional. One of the most difficult problems in this science is the proper treatment of Dramatic Movement, to determine whether its relations with Passion or with Plot are the closer, or whether indeed it does not constitute a fundamental division of Drama by itself. In previous editions I have treated this problem by making a compromise, which separated Motive Force from Motive Form, associating the former with Passion and the latter with Plot. Further experience has led me to think that it is more accurate—as it is certainly simpler—to treat the whole of Movement as a division of Plot, leaving Passion-Movement to be represented by successions of Tone. A glance at the Table of Topics on page 398 will make the new scheme clear.

December, 1892.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In this edition two new Studies, Nos. XI and XII, have been added to Part First, dealing with The Tempest, and bringing the treatment in that portion of the book, which has for its purpose to illustrate masterpieces of dramatic art in particular plays of Shakespeare, to a natural climax in the discussion of Central Ideas. The new Studies are the substance of a paper read before the New Shakspere Society of London in
January, 1887. Such addition to Part First carries with it, according to the plan of the whole work, additions of detail and restatement of various points in Part Second. A few verbal corrections and alterations have been made in other parts of the book.

July, 1888.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I have had three objects before me in writing this book. The first concerns the general reader. No one needs assistance in order to perceive Shakespeare’s greatness; but an impression is not uncommonly to be found, especially amongst English readers, that Shakespeare’s greatness lies mainly in his deep knowledge of human nature, while, as to the technicalities of Dramatic Art, he is at once careless of them and too great to need them. I have endeavoured to combat this impression by a series of Studies of Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist. They are chiefly occupied with a few master-strokes of art, sufficient to illustrate the revolution Shakespeare created in the Drama of the world—a revolution not at once perceived simply because it had carried the Drama at a bound so far beyond Dramatic Criticism that the appreciation of Shakespeare’s plays was left to the
uninstructed public, while the trained criticism that ought to have recognised the new departure was engaged in clamouring for other views of dramatic treatment, which it failed to perceive that Shakespeare had rendered obsolete.

While the earlier chapters are taken up with these Studies, the rest of the work is an attempt, in very brief form, to present Dramatic Criticism as a regular Inductive Science. If I speak of this as a new branch of Science I am not ignoring the great works on Shakespeare-Criticism which already exist, the later of which have treated their subject in an inductive spirit. What these still leave wanting is a recognition of method in application to the study of the Drama: my purpose is to claim for Criticism a position amongst the Inductive Sciences, and to sketch in outline a plan for the Dramatic side of such a Critical Science.

A third purpose has been to make the work of use as an educational manual. Shakespeare now enters into every scheme of liberal education; but the annotated editions of his works give the student little assistance except in the explanation of language and allusions; and the idea, I believe, prevails that anything like the discussion of literary characteristics or dramatic effect is out of place in an educational work—is, indeed, too 'indefinite' to be 'examined on.' Ten years' experience in connection with the Cambridge University Extension, during which my work has been to teach literature apart from philology, has confirmed my impression that the subject-matter of literature, its
exposition and analysis from the sides of science, history, and art, is as good an educational discipline as it is intrinsically valuable in quickening literary appreciation.

There are two special features of the book to which I may here draw attention. Where practicable, I have appended in the margin references to the passages of Shakespeare on which my discussion is based. (These references are to the Globe Edition.) I have thus hoped to reduce to a minimum the element of personal opinion, and to give to my treatment at least that degree of definiteness which arises when a position stands side by side with the evidence supporting it. I have also endeavoured to meet a practical difficulty in the use of Shakespeare-Criticism as an educational subject. It is usual in educational schemes to name single plays of Shakespeare for study. Experience has convinced me that methodical study of the subject-matter is not possible within the compass of a single play. On the other hand, few persons in the educational stage of life can have the detailed knowledge of Shakespeare’s plays as a whole which is required for a full treatment of the subject. The present work is so arranged that it assumes knowledge of only five¹ plays—*The Merchant of Venice, Richard III, Macbeth, Julius Caesar,* and *King Lear*. Not only in the Studies, but also in the final review, the matter introduced is

confined to what can be illustrated out of these five plays. These are amongst the most familiar of the Shakespearean Dramas, or they can be easily read before commencing the book; and if the arrangement is a limitation involving a certain amount of repetition, yet I believe the gain will be greater than the loss. For the young student, at all events, it affords an opportunity of getting what will be the best of all introductions to the whole subject—a thorough knowledge of five plays.

In passing the book through the press I have received material assistance from my brother, Dr. Moulton, Master of the Leys School, and from my College friend, Mr. Joseph Jacobs. With the latter, indeed, I have discussed the work in all its stages, and have been under continual obligation to his stores of knowledge and critical grasp in all departments of literary study. I cannot even attempt to name the many friends—chiefly fellow-workers in the University Extension Movement—through whose active interest in my Shakespeare teaching I have been encouraged to seek for it publication.

RICHARD G. MOULTON.

April, 1885.