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**Dramatic Works of John Ford ...**

**Ford John**

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**Title: Dramatic Works of John Ford ...**

**Author: Ford John**

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THE  
DRAMATIC WORKS  
OF  
J O H N F O R D,  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

WITH  
NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY,  
BY  
W. GIFFORD, Esq.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED  
FAME'S MEMORIAL, AND VERSES TO THE MEMORY  
OF BEN JONSON.

..... I, SECUNDO  
OMINE!

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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# C O N T E N T S

OF

## VOLUME I.

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**ERRATA.**

Page *xcv*, line 3 from bottom, *for* G. 158, *read* G. 153.  
c, line 7 from bottom, *for* G. 222, *read* G. 242.

## INTRODUCTION.



It is incidentally observed by Dr. Farmer, (Essay on Shakspeare,) “ that play-writing in the poet’s days was scarcely thought a creditable employ.” To this, perhaps, may in some measure be attributed the slight notice which is taken of the personal history of the dramatic writers by their contemporaries, and the little degree of interest which they appear to have excited. Of the immortal bard himself, scarcely any thing is known but what is told by Jonson; and Mr. Malone, who had been foraging for anecdotes of him nearly half a century, and had dwelt, over and over, with full conviction on the reports current about him down to the times of Rowe and Theobald, ends with rejecting the whole of them, and discomfortably but honestly confesses, that his Life is a blank.\*

\* Even the cherished peccadillo of *deer-stealing*,

That last infirmity of noble mind,

the crown and ornament of Shakspeare’s youthful vivacity, must now be given up—for Mr. Malone has proved with immense effort, that Sir T. Lucy had *no park*, and could therefore have no deer to be stolen!



The two bulky volumes of Dr. Drake scarcely add a single fact to history or criticism ; and we are doomed to the same *crambe recoccta* in all who treat on the subject.

It would seem as if the Dramatic Poets themselves (for the rest are not so chary of names and circumstances) entertained some such idea as Farmer mentions; and either from mortification or humility, commonly abstained from dwelling, or even entering, upon their personal history. Though frequent in dedications, they are seldom explicit; and even their prefaces fail to convey any information except of their wants, or their grievances from evils which are rarely specified.

The stock of the FORDS was highly respectable: they appear to have settled at an early period in the north-west of Devonshire, and to have possessed considerable property in the contiguous parishes of Ashburton, Ilsington, &c. Some account, or, rather, some mention, of them may be found in Prince; but that worthy chronicler of nameless names has contrived to perplex the little manual of their pedigree, with such indescribable success, that it is scarcely possible to appropriate a single circumstance. To spare the reader, therefore, it will be sufficient to say, that the family mainly consisted of two branches, which ran collateral with each other, and from the junior of which the ancestors of our poet ap-

pear to have sprung. Frequent intermarriages, and a singular attachment to the name of JOHN, bewilder the early inquirer from step to step; but thus much may be relied on by those who are content to take up the poet's pedigree from a comparatively modern period.

John Ford of Ashburton, by his fourth wife, Joan, daughter of John Trobridge, Esquire, relict of Gilbert St. Clair, had issue John. George Ford of Ilsington, the son of the above John Ford by a former marriage, wedded Joan, a daughter of Gilbert St. Clair, (his relation John's wife,) and had issue several children, the eldest of whom, Thomas Ford of Ilsington, married the sister (daughter) of the famous Lord Chief Justice, John Popham, and had issue John (the poet), and several others. John Ford of Bagtor, in Ilsington, (the cousin, I take it, of the poet,) married the daughter and sole heiress of George Drake Spratshays, Esquire, and had issue Henry Ford of Nutwell Bagtor and Spratshays, whose life is a part of the general history of the times, and who was also a piece of a poet.

John (our author) was the second son of Thomas Ford. His elder brother probably lived in tranquil obscurity, and died on the spot which gave him birth. John was destined to a wider range, and to a life of somewhat more energy.

From an extract of the Baptismal Register of

Ilsington, procured by Mr. Malone, from the vicar,\* it appears that Ford was baptized there on the 17th April, 1586; and as he became a member of the Middle Temple, November 16, 1602, he could scarcely have spent more than a term or two (if any) at either of the Universities: there was, however, more than one Grammar School in the immediate vicinity of his birth-place, fully competent to convey all the classical learning which he ever possessed, and of which, to say the truth, he was sufficiently ostentatious in his earliest work, though he became more reserved when age and experience had enabled him to compare his attainments with those of his contemporaries.

It appears from Rymer's *Fœdera*,† that the father of our poet was in the commission of the peace. Whether this honourable situation was procured for him by the interest of his wife's father cannot be told; it may however be reasonably surmised, that his connection with one of the first law officers of the crown led to the course of studies subsequently pursued by both branches of

\* The Rev. Jonathan Palk. From this worthy man, who was my associate both at the Grammar School and at Exeter College, I indulged a hope of procuring through the medium of our common schoolfellow, the Dean of Westminster, a few additional notices respecting the poet's connections; but the long and severe illness which afflicted him, and which terminated in death a few months since, took away the power of all communication.

† Tome xviii. p. 575.

the family. Popham was made Attorney-General in 1581; and in 1592 he was advanced to the rank of Chief Justice of the King's Bench, which he held for many years; so that his patronage, which must have been considerable, (as he appears to have been in some favour both with Elizabeth and her successor,) probably afforded many facilities to his young relatives in the progress of their studies, and opened advantages of various kinds.

Our poet had been preceded in his legal studies by his cousin John Ford, son of an elder brother of his father's family, to whom he appears to have looked up with much respect, and to have borne an almost fraternal affection: this gentleman was entered at Gray's Inn; but Popham seems to have taken his young relation more immediately under his own care, and placed him at the Middle Temple, of which he had been appointed Treasurer in 1581.

It is probable that Ford was not inattentive to his studies; but we hear nothing of him till 1606, (four years after his admission,) when he published "Fame's Memorial, or the Earl of Devonshire deceased," &c. an elegiac poem, in 4to. which he dedicated to the Countess, his widow. Why he came forward in so inauspicious a cause, cannot now be known. He was a stranger to both parties; yet he appears to bewail the death of the Earl, as if it had been attended with some failure