William Shakespeare, his family and friends

Thompson A Hamilton
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Author: Thompson A Hamilton

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

BY THE LATE CHARLES ISAAC ELTON
ONE OF HER LATE MAJESTY'S COUNSEL
AUTHOR OF THE TENURES OF KENT
THE ORIGINS OF ENGLISH
HISTORY
&c.,

EDITED BY A. HAMILTON THOMPSON
WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR BY
ANDREW LANG

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
1904
Printed in Great Britain
PREFATORY NOTE

The following chapters have been formed from the greater portion of a series of papers, which the author evidently intended to be the nucleus of an exhaustive work upon Shakespeare. This series dealt with two special subjects. One part of it concerned the biography and family-history of Shakespeare, and the various places with which his name can be connected. The other division embraced several historical studies, relating to the sources and production of The Tempest.

The shape in which these papers were left by Mr. Elton was incomplete and disconnected. Some had undergone revision: in some cases, two almost parallel versions, apparently of the same chapter, existed, testifying to the scholarly care with which the work had been undertaken and planned. There was no definite indication, however, of the final shape which it had been intended to assume. To the state of completeness at which the various parts had arrived, inference was the only guide; their purposed order was matter for pure conjecture.

A number of representative chapters, therefore, have been selected from the papers, which may define, in some measure, the scope and character of the book thus begun. By a collation of all the existing versions
of chapters and separate details, the editor has endeavoured to retain everything that seemed to him ready for publication, while giving each chapter completeness and continuity, so far as was possible, within itself. Almost all the matter in the first of the divisions mentioned above has been included. Much of the portion relating to *The Tempest* was in so unfinished a condition that it could not have been inserted without fundamental alteration. Fortunately, three of the existing chapters on that subject were in such a state that they could be printed, to all intents and purposes, as they were left: the fourth is the result of a collation of two parallel chapters, in which Mr. Elton’s text, with a few necessary changes, has been carefully preserved. The chief portion of the editor’s task has lain in verifying the quotations with which the book abounds, and supplying the footnotes and references. As the papers supplied few clues, beyond the names of the authors, to these quotations and references, this task has involved some time; and the publication of the book has been delayed unavoidably thereby.

It has been the one object of the editor, in undertaking his part in the work, to present these papers in their true light as a sound and weighty contribution to Shakespearean scholarship. If, in many cases, they deal with familiar aspects of the subject, their attitude seems to him to be distinguished by singular independence of view, and by a characteristic ability to produce and handle the complex details of evidence, often of a confusing and contrary nature. They bear convincing witness to the learning and wide research of their accomplished author.

A. H. T.

Chichester,
*January, 1904.*
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