

**THE ORNITHOLOGY OF
SHAKESPEARE. THE BIRDS OF
SHAKESPEARE: CRITICALLY
EXAMINED, EXPLAINED, AND
ILLUSTRATED**

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The Ornithology of Shakespeare. The Birds of Shakespeare: Critically Examined, Explained, and Illustrated by James Edmund Harting

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JAMES EDMUND HARTING

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CRITICALLY EXAMINED, EXPLAINED, AND ILLUSTRATED.

BY
JAMES EDMUND HARTING, F.L.S., F.Z.S.,

MEMBER OF THE BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION,
AUTHOR OF "THE BIRDS OF MIDDLESEX,"
ETC., ETC.



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1871

PREFACE.

OF no other author, perhaps, has more been written than of Shakespeare. Yet whatever other knowledge his commentators professed, few of them appear to have been naturalists, and none, so far as I am aware, have examined his knowledge of Ornithology.

An inquiry upon this subject, undertaken in the first instance for my own amusement, has resulted in the bringing together of so much that is curious and entertaining, that to the long list of books already published about Shakespeare, I have been bold enough to add yet another. In so doing, I venture to hope that the reader may so far appreciate the result of my labour as not to consider it superfluous.

As regards the treatment of the subject, a word or two of explanation seems necessary. In 1866, from the notes I had then collected, I contributed a series of articles on the birds of Shakespeare to *The Zoologist*. In these articles, I referred only to such birds as have a claim to be considered British, and omitted all notice of domesticated

species. I had not then considered any special arrangement of grouping, but noticed each species *seriatim* in the order adopted by Mr. Yarrell in his excellent "History of British Birds." Since that date, I have collected so much additional information on the subject, that, instead of eighty pages (the extent of my first publication), three hundred have now passed through the printers' hands. With this large accession of material, it was found absolutely necessary to re-arrange and re-write the whole. The birds therefore have been now divided into certain natural groups, including the foreign and domesticated species, to each of which groups a chapter has been devoted; and I have thought it desirable to give, by way of introduction, a sketch of Shakespeare's general knowledge of natural history and acquaintance with field-sports, as bearing more or less directly on his special knowledge of Ornithology, which I propose chiefly to consider.

After I had published the last of the series of articles referred to, I received an intimation for the first time, that, twenty years previously, a notice of the birds of Shakespeare had appeared in the pages of *The Zoologist*. I lost no time in procuring the particular number which contained the article, and found that, in December, 1846, Mr. T. W. Barlow, of Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, had, to a certain extent, directed attention to Shakespeare's knowledge as an Ornithologist. His communication, however, did not exceed half a dozen pages, in which

space he has mentioned barely one-fourth of the species to which Shakespeare has referred. From the cursory nature of his remarks, moreover, I failed to discover a reference to any point which I had not already investigated. It would be unnecessary for me, therefore, to allude to this article, except for the purpose of acknowledging that Mr. Barlow was the first to enter upon what, as regards Shakespeare, may be termed this new field of research.

The labour of collecting and arranging Shakespeare's numerous allusions to birds, has been much greater than many would suppose, for not only have I derived little or no benefit from the various editions of his works which I have consulted, but reference to a glossarial index, or concordance, has, in nine cases out of ten, resulted in disappointment. It is due to Mr. Staunton, however, to state that I have found some of the foot-notes to his library edition of the Plays very useful.

Although oft-times difficult, it has been my endeavour, as far as practicable, to connect one with another the various passages quoted or referred to, so as to render the whole as readable and as entertaining as possible. With this view, many allusions have been passed over as being too trivial to deserve separate notice, but a reference to them will be found in the Appendix at the end of the volume,* where all the words quoted are arranged, for

* Such words are there enclosed in brackets [].

convenience, in the order in which they occur in the plays and poems.

In spelling Shakespeare's name, I have adopted the orthography of his friends Ben Jonson and the editors of the first folio.*

As regards the illustrations, it seems desirable also to say a few words.

In selecting for my frontispiece a portrait of Shakespeare as a falconer (a character which I am confident could not have been foreign to him), I have experienced considerable difficulty in making choice of a likeness.

Those who have made special inquiries into the authenticity of the various portraits of Shakespeare, are not agreed in the results at which they have arrived. This is to be attributed to the fact that, with the exception of the Droeshout etching, to which I shall presently state my objection, no likeness really exists of which a reliable history can be given without one or more missing links in the chain of evidence.

There are four portraits which have all more or less claim to be considered authentic. These are "the Jansen portrait," 1610; "the Stratford bust," prior to 1623; "the Droeshout etching," 1623; and "the Chandos portrait," of which the precise date is uncertain, but which must

* Amongst the entries in the Council Book of the Corporation of Stratford, during the period that John Shakespeare, the Poet's father, was a member of the Municipal body (he filled the office of Chamberlain in 1573), the name occurs one hundred and sixty-six times under fourteen different modes of spelling.

have been painted some years prior to 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death.

It would be impossible, within the compass of this preface, to review all that has been said for and against these four portraits. Neither will space permit me to give the history of each in detail. I can only briefly allude to the chief facts in connection with each, and state the reasons which have influenced me in selecting the Chandos portrait.

Mr. Boaden, who was the first to examine into the authenticity of reputed Shakespeare portraits,* has evinced a preference for the so-called "Jansen portrait," in the collection of the Duke of Somerset, considering it to have been painted by Cornelius Jansen, in 1610, for Lord Southampton, the great patron, at that date, of art and the drama.

The picture, indeed, bears upon the face of it an inscription—*E*^o 46—which gives much weight to the views
1610
expressed by Mr. Boaden.

It is certain that, in the year mentioned, Jansen was in England, and that he painted several pictures for Lord Southampton; it is equally true, that at that date Shakespeare was in his forty-sixth year. But Mr. Boaden fails to prove that this particular picture was painted by

* "An Inquiry into the Authenticity of various Pictures and Prints, which, from the decease of the Poet to our own times, have been offered to the public as Portraits of Shakespeare." By James Boaden. London, 1824.