

**A SUPPLEMENT TO THE  
PLAYS OF WILLIAM  
SHAKSPEARE: COMPRISING  
THE SEVEN DRAMAS**

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A supplement to the plays of William Shakspeare: comprising the seven dramas by William Shakespeare & William Gilmore Simms

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS**

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SHAKSPEARE: COMPRISING  
THE SEVEN DRAMAS**



*William Shakespeare*

A  
SUPPLEMENT TO THE PLAYS  
OF  
WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE:  
COMPRISING  
THE SEVEN DRAMAS

WHICH HAVE BEEN ASCRIBED TO HIS PEN, BUT WHICH ARE NOT INCLUDED  
WITH HIS WRITINGS IN MODERN EDITIONS, NAMELY:

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN,  
THE LONDON PRODICAL,  
THOMAS LORD CROMWELL,  
SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE,

THE PURITAN, OR THE WIDOW  
OF WATLING STREET,  
THE YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY,  
THE TRAGEDY OF LOCRINE.

EDITED,

With Notes, and an Introduction to each Play,

BY WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS, ESQ.

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AUBURN AND ROCHESTER:  
ALDEN AND BEARDSLEY.

NEW YORK:  
J. C. DERBY, 119 NASSAU STREET.

1855.

TO THE  
REV. ALEXANDER DYCE,

OF ENGLAND:

The acute and laborious worker in the old, but still ample and green,  
fields of British Dramatic Literature, this humble labor, a FIRST  
American edition of the imputed Plays of SHAKESPEARE, is

Very Respectfully Inscribed,

By THE EDITOR.

WOODLANDS, SOUTH CAROLINA,  
*January 20, 1848.*





## GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

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IN undertaking to supply the American reader with an edition of the plays which have been ascribed to Shakspeare, but which are not usually included among his writings, the publishers do not, by any means, propose to decide upon their authenticity. They prefer to leave this question, as they find it, to future criticism and the sagacity of the reader. It is enough for them that the question of authorship is still under discussion, and may long remain so — that some of the best critics of the age that is passing incline to the belief that several, if not all, of these imputed productions, however inferior to the generally-received performances of Shakspeare, are nevertheless from his pen — and, that the weight of external testimony clearly corresponds with this opinion. For this matter, the reader will see the separate prefaces to the several plays, as they occur in this edition, where an endeavor has been made to bring together, for the purpose of facilitating the popular judgment, all the known facts in the history of their production and publication in past periods. The object of the present publishers is to afford to the general reader an opportunity, if not of deciding for himself upon the genuineness of these plays, at least of becoming familiar with their merits. Such a purpose, indeed, appears to belong particularly to the duties of a publisher, who, though his aim be gain, is yet required to regulate his selfish desires by a due and equal regard to the claims of the public, and the writer whose works he brings before them. He stands in a relation of double responsibility; and it seems scarcely proper that



the publisher of Shakspeare's writings, or of any writings, should presume to settle a difficulty so important to his author, by excluding, on the merest conjectures of criticism, a large body of literature which has been confidently ascribed to his pen, either by his contemporaries or by those nearest to him in point of time; — and this, simply because of their inferiority, whether obvious or only supposed, to the average merits of his received performances. They do not see that they enjoy the right, in the case of any author, of rejecting testimony, however inadequate as proof, at the simple instance of shrewd but conjectural criticism; and are persuaded, in the case of so great a master, that, while the incorporation, with his recognised productions, of the plays which are doubtful, can by no means disparage or impair his acknowledged excellences, their exclusion, while any doubt exists, is an absolute wrong and injustice to the reader, who should at least be permitted to enter into a similar inquiry with his critic, and to decide for himself upon what is intrinsic in the discussion. At all events, he should be permitted to believe that he possesses all of the writings of his favorite, though this conviction be coupled with the misgiving that he possesses something more. That he should arrive at the ordinary opinion — the justice of which the present publishers do not propose to gainsay — that these doubtful plays are, in point of merit, far below those which usually complete the body of Shakspeare's writings, will not, in any respect, lessen the propriety — assuming it as possible that the former are really his — of bringing the two classes together. They may, or may not, form a part of the same great family — changelings, perhaps — sons of premature birth — of inferior stature and proportion — “scarce half made up,” “and sent into the world before their time;” but this inferiority, or even deformity, should constitute no sufficient objection to the scheme of uniting them in the same household. There shall be a decrepit, a mute, or an idiot, in a noble family, while the true heir shall be of erect and symmetrical figure, with all attributes perfect and superior; but the practice would be pronounced Scythian and barbarous, which should destroy summarily, or banish to a desert cave to perish, the imperfect or inferior progeny, because of its unhappy disparity with him upon whom the hopes of the family are placed. The case finds its exact parallel in these instances of premature birth and imperfect organization in the literary world; and there is an equal cruelty and impolicy in our consigning to oblivion the more homely or feeble production, because it so strikingly contrasts with that which we have learned to study and to love. This very contrast has its uses, since the defects of the one more strikingly impress us with the beauties of the other; and we frame our own standards of excellence quite as frequently from the contemplation of the humble and the faulty, as of the perfect and the high.

In the recognition of this opinion, the literary student has a leading interest, since he is naturally curious to see in what manner his predecessor has worked — from what small beginnings, against what obstructions, and with what inferior tools. It is important, indeed, that he should see where, and how frequently, the great master has faltered, or has fallen, in his experiments. The very inequalities of the exemplar commend him somewhat more to our sympathies, as they tend to bring him within the laws of a humanity which is notoriously imperfect. We are pleased to see how much was toil and trouble — how much was care and anxiety — how much was industry and perseverance — how much was in mortal powers, in the secret of his successes; — to discover that it was not all Genius — all inspiration — all the fruit of a special gift of Heaven, to a chosen individual, which no follower may hope to share. We are pleased to see how, feebly, step by step, he has continued to struggle, onward and upward, until, from awkwardness, he arrives at grace; from weakness, he has grown to strength; from a crude infancy, he has risen into absolute majesty and manhood. Those inequalities which declare the transition periods in the progress of the mind, and show the natural but laborious advance of the thinking faculties, from sentiment to idea, and from idea to design and structure, are particularly grateful to the student, who, delighting in the excellences of a favorite author, acquires a personal and familiar interest in him, when thus permitted to follow him into his workshop — to trace his gradual

progresses — the slow marches of his intellect through its several stages of acquisition and utterance, infancy preparing the way for childhood, childhood for youth, and youth for manhood, as naturally as in the physical world; and the curiosity which requires to behold the singular processes of each individual self-training, the results of which have been eminence and fame, is the fruit of a just ambition, enlivened by instincts, which make it equally profitable and pleasant to survey the *modus operandi* of the great genius, not yet fairly conceiving the peculiar mission which follows from his endowment, yet preparing, step by step, for the consummation of its objects. It is, indeed, by the faults and errors, rather than by the more symmetrical achievements of the masters, that we improve. The perfect models, seen by themselves, and totally uncoupled with those qualifying exuberances and failings, which are the necessary shadows to their successes, are rather more likely to discourage us by their manifest superiority, than invite by their examples. The difficulty of the model might impair our hope to excel or equal it, were we not permitted to know how frequently its author has failed, and how many abortive efforts have fallen from his hands, before he attained the degree of success in which he felt that his art could go no farther. We are encouraged when the laborious artist takes us into his studio, and reveals to us the painful difficulties which he has been compelled to overcome — the rudeness of his own first conceptions and designs — the feeble prurience of his childish fancies — the unsymmetrical crudenesses of his thought, and the huge, ungainly fragments that lie about his workshop, which prove the pains, the labors, and frequent miscarriages, which preceded the perfect birth. This study of the artist in his cell, or of the author in his garret — the familiarity thus acquired with his tools, and a proper idea of the toils, the obstacles, and the trials, which his patience, courage, study, and genius, have finally overcome, is, indeed, the true field of research for all those who would follow in his footsteps; — discouraging the vain and feeble, humbling the presumptuous, and fully unfolding, to the resolute and endowed worker, the true nature of that destiny for which he was chosen. It is mere *dilettantism* alone, which shrinks from such a development — preferring only the knowledge of the perfect results of labor, without being troubled with its processes. The mind of the true worker is best seen in these very processes. The genuine student — and to such alone is it permitted to behold and to appreciate the highest objects and excellences of art — prefers this survey, in connexion with the final results attained, simply as it unveils the peculiar processes of an individual mind: giving birth to an original thought, a new truth, shaped by imagination into a form which the world finally receives as a model and a law.

It was the misfortune of Shakspeare, perhaps, that his early critics and commentators — to say nothing of their more modern and recent successors — have not been willing to acknowledge these considerations. Regarding their idol, most properly, as, perhaps, the most various wonder that mortal genius ever displayed, they were not willing that he should be found mortal in any respect. They entertained the vulgar notion that, in order to enhance his merits, they were to depreciate his advantages — overlooking the notorious truth, that all successful art, no matter what has been its social fosterings or privileges, must still depend upon self-education — a training of the inner nature, adapted particularly to the individual characteristics of the man, and to be conceived and carried on wholly by one's self. The achievements of Shakspeare, according to these philosophers, were to derive their value from the fact that his genius was totally unassisted by the usual school acquisitions, and his successes were to flow to him in spite of a condition of social life more than commonly unfriendly and adverse. He was to be wretchedly poor and destitute of training, and it was for accident alone, or a call of Providence rather, to prompt his mind to that direction, by which it was to effect its wondrous performances. Banished from his native hamlet, as a profligate and deer-stealer, he was to wander off to London as a link-boy, and the merest appanage of a theatre; and, all of a sudden, he was to confound the world with the wonders of a genius to which his domestic fortunes had shown themselves hostile to the last. Most of this history is untrue, and much of it is absurd. The life of Shakspeare is gradually to

be rewritten. The earnest activity of such workers as Dyce, Collier, Knight, and the gentlemen connected with the Shakspeare Society, in England, will continue to make discoveries, such as they have already made, which will most probably lead us to such an approximation of the true, in Shakspeare's career, as, at least, to relieve his biography of the gross exaggerations and errors which have disfigured it. We shall probably learn, as in part we do already, that his family was one of good repute and condition, though somewhat reduced in fortune, and not so much stinted but that his education was quite as good as could be afforded in that part of England during his boyhood — that he was not only somewhat informed in Greek and Latin, as Jonson, indeed, tells us, — though the wilful biographers of Shakspeare have perversely construed his line —

"And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,"—

into the possession of neither — but that he was probably, in some degree also, acquainted with the French and Italian, and visited the continent, at some early period of his life — making a personal acquaintance at Venice with the Rialto, and receiving his prompting for that most perfect of all love stories, *Romeo and Juliet*, at the very tomb of the Capulets in Verona. It is also highly probable that, on leaving the grammar-school of Stratford, he passed into the office of an attorney, and picked up that familiarity with legal phrases, which his writings betray to a greater extent than those of all his contemporary dramatists together. Here, it is probable — we will suppose at fifteen or sixteen — that his mind received its first dramatic direction. Several of his townsmen seem to have been players — several of those who afterward appeared in his pieces — the famous Burbage among them; and Stratford had its theatre when John Shakspeare, the father of William, was bailiff of the town. It might be that the office of the father procured for the son some peculiar theatrical privileges. Here, then, at this period, relieving the daily toils of an attorney's office by an occasional nocturnal frolic with the players, at the expense of Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, he most probably commenced his first feeble career as a dramatic author. To suppose that he wrote any of the plays usually ascribed to him, at this early period, or, indeed, at any period of his life before his twenty-fifth year, unless *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles*,\* is almost an absurdity. These all betray, in addition to the manifest possession of the highest genius, the equal maturity of experience and reflection, — the fruits of contemplation — a knowledge only derivable from long and active association among men — an art made confident by frequent successes — a taste polished and refined by repeated and long exercise — an imagination invigorated by habitual training — a fancy curbed in its excesses by attrition with rival wits, and a constant familiarity with books from the best hands, not to dwell upon the singular knowledge of dramatic situation and stage effect, which his more mature pieces exhibit — a knowledge which could only arise, as in the case of Sheridan Knowles, from a long practice in theatricals. These possessions are not gifts, but acquisitions. They are the work of time and practice. They are not to be found in youth, even in the case of the highest genius, since they contemplate human standards which fluctuate — arts which depend upon a social condition, and a knowledge which is not derived from the natural or external world, but the capricious world of man, and the appreciation of his finite characteristics and conditions.

If, then, the great masterpieces of Shakspeare, such as his *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, were not likely to have been the work of his boyhood — not likely to have been produced before his twenty-fifth year at least — in what manner did he employ his genius during the ten years which preceded this period? To suppose that he remained idle, pursuing a mere

\* Shakspeare went to London in his twenty-third year, and *Titus Andronicus* appeared soon after, and became instantly popular. Indeed, it was one of the best pieces that had yet appeared on the English stage, however much we may despise it now; and the very horrors and stateliness for which we condemn it, were the peculiar and distinguishing features of the English drama at that period, and commended it more especially to the taste of its unlettered audience. In Shakspeare's subsequent improvement, it is his merit, as it was that of Chaucer, to have lifted his people with him.