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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE
RELIGION AND MORALITY
OF
SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS ;

BEING A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SUNDAY LECTURE SOCIETY,

THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER, 1873.

BY CHARLES J. PLUMPTRE,

Lecturer at King's College, London.

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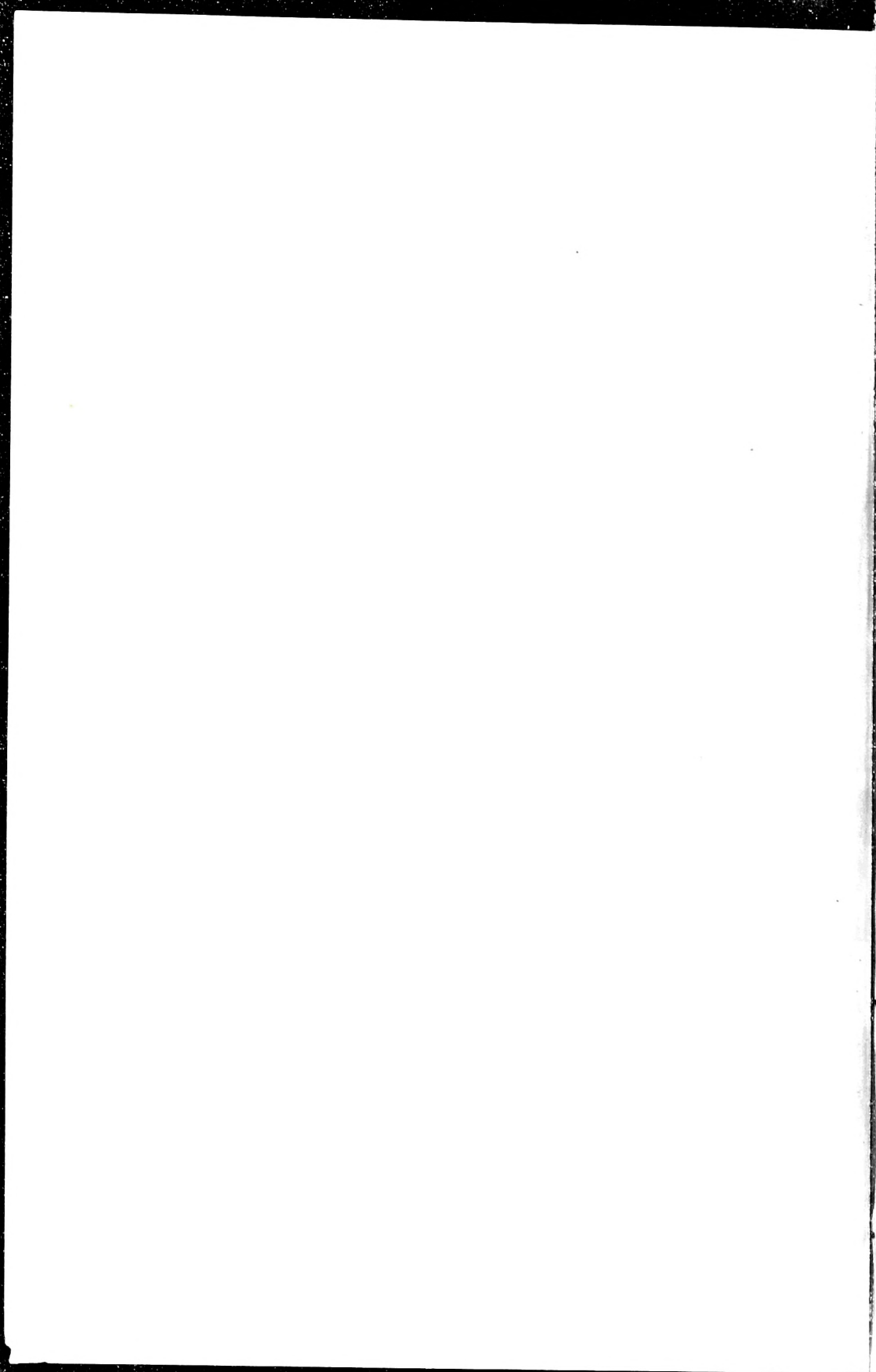
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P R E F A C E .

The Author of this Lecture has to acknowledge the assistance rendered him in its preparation from three different sources, viz., the Rev. George Gilfillan's Lecture on Shakespeare ; a very interesting little work entitled 'Bible Truths and Shakespeare Parallels' by James Brown ; and a most learned critique on 'Gervinus on Shakespeare' which appeared in the *Westminster Review* about ten years ago.



THE RELIGION AND MORALITY

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS.

IF any Englishman were asked who is the greatest Poet that ever adorned his country's Literature, he would answer, without any hesitation, I imagine, 'Milton' or 'Shakespeare.' Two great minds indeed, enriched with the highest powers of that *creative* faculty which is the very essence of the Poet's nature; and which the word in its original signification literally means:—but how different in their natures and attributes! Milton, it seems to me, might fitly be compared to some grand Alpine mountain range, rising majestically above the sunny smiling plains by which it is surrounded. As we strive, with adventurous spirit, to ascend to its loftiest heights, we soon leave the green pastures and the golden cornfields, the village spires and the peasants' *châlets*, with all their sweet human associations, far, far away beneath us. We pass through the thick, dark forests of fir and pine, which belt the mountains' side. We emerge from their gloomy shades to find (it may be), as I have known it in my wanderings but a few weeks ago,

the sunlight gone, the blue sky vanished—and, in their place, clouds, almost as black as midnight, riven only by the incessant flashes of the lurid lightning; while above, around, the roar of the thunder is heard, echoing and re-echoing in the seemingly fathomless ravines and gorges on every side. We seek what shelter we may for awhile; and then, when the violence of the storm is past, and the lightning flashes remotely in the distance, and the sound of heaven's artillery is heard only far away, we continue our ascent. Through dense clouds, through huge shadowy masses of vapour and mist, that rise slowly and solemnly like vast spectral forms from the depths below, we make our way, until at length we seem to have left this lower world altogether, and emerge on a scene which leaves on the minds of those who for the first time behold it an impression that can never be forgotten. We are no longer in the regions of Life—on every side are wide plateaus of snow and ice—we stand upon a mountain crag, 'and on the torrent's brink beneath, behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs in dizziness of distance;' we hear, from time to time, the avalanches below 'crash with a frequent conflict'—while still, far up the heights, shoot forth those monarch peaks crowned with their diadems of eternal snow, now blushing like the rose, as they are kissed by the first beams of Day—then, standing pure and dazzling in their snowy whiteness against the deep, dark blue of noon—anon glowing in lurid light of crimson, gold and amethyst, as they are lit up by the fiery radiance of the setting sun—then slowly, in the approaching

twilight and darkness, fading 'like the unsubstantial fabric of a vision,' silently and solemnly away; until, a few hours later, they gleam forth again, robed in fresh garments of unearthly beauty, and shining pale and spectral-like in all the mysterious loveliness of moonlight on the Alps.

Now, such a scene as this, on which my eyes so lately rested, seems to me no inapt type of the genius of Milton; and of the visions of grandeur, wonder, sublimity, and awe through which 'he bodies forth the forms of things unknown.' Regions peopled by beings of supernatural origin and dark malignity, whose dwellings are like the halls of Eblis in Eastern mythology; realms of celestial happiness tenanted by angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, over whom reigns as sovereign the Eternal Father, and only inferior to him in the poet's description, the Eternal Son; the formation of the universe out of chaos; the creation of the human race; the entrance of evil in the world; all these, surely, are the very elements of sublimity and awe, and well may Milton be compared in the loftiness of his range of thought to the sky-aspiring monarchs of the mountains. But I venture to think the analogy holds further yet. The mountain has its attendant *shadow*, and the loftier the mountain the *further* does its shadow extend. Dare I then say, with all the admiration I feel for Milton's genius, with all the veneration with which I regard the purity of his motives, and the sterling independent worth of his character, that I yet think a *shadow* has been cast by the very altitude of all these, over much of the theological thought of

England, and which has only comparatively of late years begun to fade away before the advancing light of a cultured reason—surely man's noblest, greatest prerogative, which I, for one, believe to have been given him by his Creator, to be rightly used, to discover all the wise laws by which He rules; to see His power and goodness in all nature; and to worship him as the All-Father: and which right man ought not to put aside, to bow down in slavish submission before any unreasonable dogma, however venerable for its antiquity, or sanctioned by an authoritative name.

I do not think I go too far, when I say, such a shadow has been cast by the very height of Milton's genius over much of our popular theology. To take one instance only, I would ask, Is not the embodiment of Satan as the Principle of evil, in the Serpent form that persuaded Eve in Paradise, rather an idea we owe to Milton, than to anything that is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures? I remember well the late Frederic Denison Maurice in a remarkable sermon of his that is published, commenting on this narrative, asks why we should presume to be wiser than the record, whatever it may mean, and add statements for which that record affords in itself no foundation. But I venture not further in this direction.

Let me turn then to that poet, who is so essentially the poet, not of an age, but of all Time—Shakespeare.

If I likened Milton in his sublimity, to the Alpine mountain, soaring upwards to the sky, I

would compare Shakespeare to a majestic river, on whose vine-clad steeps I was lately standing, in a foreign land. Springing forth at first, from its remote birthplace in the rocks, a few scarcely noticeable threads of water, it slowly gathers strength and size; flowing through tranquil valleys, and gently laving the grass and flowers that fringe its banks, it receives tributary streams on every side, and begins now to broaden and deepen rapidly, as it passes onward in its course, associated in every age with momentous events in the history of the neighbouring nations. As it gradually pursues its appointed course, this mighty river, to which I refer, calls up before our minds, the memory of Roman conquests and defeats; of the chivalrous exploits of feudal times; of the coronations of Emperors, whose bones repose by its side; of the wars and negotiations in more recent days. Its scenery becomes as varied as its history—now it flows through wild and picturesque rocks and lofty mountain crags, crowned with castles, fortresses, and ruins, with which a thousand wild and romantic legends are connected; then through thick forests and fertile plains; then through wild ravines and gorges, with vineyards sloping from their summits to the water's edge; then through populous cities, flourishing towns, and quiet villages; bringing to them all, on its broad bosom, the riches of Trade and Commerce, and all the varied products of its shores: until at last its magnificent course is run; and nearly a thousand miles away from its secluded birthplace, it is absorbed in the all-embracing ocean.

Now, I think, to such a river the course of Shakespeare's genius may be well compared, and the influence of his works likened. But comparatively little felt at first were 'the earnest thought and profound conviction, the homely yet subtle wisdom, the deep, historical interest, the poetic truth, the sweet lyrical effusion, the soaring imagination, and grand prophetic insight.' But, as the noble river broadens and deepens, so does the intellect, the genius, the influence of Shakespeare. As the ages roll on, and one generation succeeds another, still more deeply, still more widely, is that influence felt; enriching men's minds, exalting their souls, humanising their affections with all its precious stores, its boundless wealth of Religion and morality.

'Next to the Bible' (we are told by a brilliant critic), 'next to the Bible, I believe in Shakespeare!' once exclaimed to him, an intelligent woman; who, like most of us, had felt something of the catholic wisdom enshrined in the writings of the world's greatest Poet: and, echoes a learned Professor, 'his works have often been called a secular Bible.' Common sense and erudition thus agree in recognising the same broad simplicity and universal natures, in the splendid utterances of Hebrew and English intelligence, preserved in these perennially popular books. Both alike deal with the greatest problems of Life; both open those questions which knock for answer at every human heart; both reflect the humanity which is common to us all; both delineate the features which mark and distinguish individual men. (a)

(a) *Westminster Review*, No. 48—New Series.

A true and just comment indeed, for it is in the highest sense of the word, this catholic spirit which vivifies Shakespeare's works, that forms one of their chief and special characteristics.

And now I proceed to the task I have more particularly undertaken, to gather from the broad river of Shakespeare's genius, some of the precious wealth of Religion and morality with which his priceless argosies are so richly laden. And first, as regards Religion. Nothing strikes me as more beautiful than the religious element which marks Shakespeare's writings. Here is nothing gloomy, nothing narrow, nothing ascetic. It is not thrust obtrusively upon us ; but it breaks forth as naturally and spontaneously as the sunlight which irradiates and warms, which cheers and comforts this lower world. It is this spirit of love, of trust, and confidence in an all-wise and all-merciful Creator which is the Religion that Shakespeare preaches and inculcates. Hear how he tells us all that 'we are in God's hand,' that 'though our *thoughts* are ours, their *ends* are none of our own ;' that 'heaven has an end in all ;' that 'God is the wisdom's champion and defence ;' and in one of his noblest passages he bursts forth in the sublime exclamation :—

God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide and lantern to my feet !

The last finishing touch, which he gives to the portraiture of one of his finest historical characters is, when he tells us, that 'to add greater honours to his age, than man could give him, he died, fearing God.'

Again, how beautifully does the religious spirit in reference to God's highest attributes, as we conceive them, continually break forth in his pages,—like a fountain in the golden sunshine. Take, for instance, one of these divine attributes and that the loveliest—Mercy. Does he not tell us that

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd ;
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes ;
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown ;
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway ;
 It is an *attribute to God himself* ;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's,
 When mercy seasons justice.

In another place too, dwelling on the same theme, how full of pathos is his eloquent appeal—

How would you be,
 If He who is the top of judgment, should
 But judge *you*, as *you* are ? Oh, think on that,
 And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
 Like man new-made !

Then, too, conspicuous, in innumerable places, is the sense of Shakespeare's abiding faith in the over-ruling Providence of God ; as when he says—

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
 When our deep plots do fail : and that should teach us,
 There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
 Rough-hew them how we will !

What a solemn warning, too, does he give us, in respect to prayer for mere temporal blessings and advantages, in the words—

We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harm, which the Wise Powers
Deny us for our good ; so we find profit
By losing of our prayers.

But prayer in the highest sense of the communion of our souls with God, and trust in his all-righteous dealings with us, he ever inculcates. 'God *knows* of pure devotion,' he says, and counsels us 'to put our quarrels to the will of heaven,' for

God will be avenged for the deed :
Take not the quarrel from his powerful arm ;
He needs no indirect or lawless course,
To cut off those who have offended him.

And in holy exultation raises the cry

Now, God be praised ! that to believing souls
Gives light to darkness—comfort to despair.

Repentance, with mere lip services, repentance, that would only be manifest in *words*, but not in *deeds*, that would strive to obtain pardon for the *act*, and yet enjoy all its sensual and worldly advantages, meets ever with the sternest and severest rebuke. Where was a self-tormented—a justly tortured soul, in its inmost workings, ever laid more awfully bare and naked before our eyes, than in the vainly attempted prayer of the wicked King in Hamlet ?

Oh, my offence is rank—it smells to heaven,
It hath the primal, eldest curse upon 't,

A brother's murder! Pray, I cannot ;
 Though inclination be as sharp as will :
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent ;
 And like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause, where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it, white as snow ? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence ?
 And what's in prayer, but this twofold force,
 To be forestalled, ere we come to fall ;
 Or pardon'd, being down. Then I'll look up,
 My fault is past. But, oh ! what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn ? ' Forgive me, my foul murder,'—
 That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence ?
 In the corrupted currents of *this* world,
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above ;
There is no shuffling ; there the action lies
 In its true nature ; and we ourselves compell'd,
 Even in the teeth and forehead of our faults,
 To give in evidence. What then ? What rests ?
 Try what *repentance* can ? What can it not ?
 Yet what can it, when one can not repent ?
 Oh, wretched state ! oh, bosom, black as death !
 Oh, limed soul that struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged ! Help, angels ! make assay !
 Bow, stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel,
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe !
 My *words* fly up ! my thoughts remain below !
Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go !

If there is any preacher who would deter us
 from sin and crime, by the *self*-punishment which
 they bring, and the tortures which, sooner or
 later, they inflict upon the human conscience, it

is Shakespeare. In this he is not surpassed even by the greatest of the Greek Dramatists. Truly, in his scenes, does the man of blood and crime create, out of his thoughts, his own Eumenides. What language can depict more vividly the horrors of a self-accusing conscience than passages such as these ?

I am alone, the villain of the earth,
And *feel* I am so most !
Oh ! when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal,
Witness against us to damnation.
How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes ill deeds done !

And, again, never surely were so much awe, dread, and terror at the close of a wicked life, suggested in three lines, as in those addressed to the dying Cardinal Beaufort :—

Lord Cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's bliss
Hold up thy hand ! make signal of thy hope !
He dies and makes no sign ! Oh, God, forgive him !

Shakespeare, indeed, is ever warning us that the hour must come to us all, when our vices and crimes will rise, like spectres before us, in all their horror, and stand 'bare and naked trembling at themselves.' What a sermon is contained in this brief text !

Death ! thou art he, that will not flatter princes,
That stoops not to authority ; nor gives
A specious name to tyranny ; but shows
Our actions in their own deformed likeness.

I shall offer but one quotation more in regard

to this solemn lesson which Shakespeare is so continually enforcing in all his greatest dramas—the sense of our responsibility to God and our accountability to him, for all the faculties, gifts, and talents which he has bestowed upon us; and that all the riches, honours and dignities of this world are but the merest vanities—are as nothing compared to a well-spent life, and a conscience void of offence to God and man. No solemn dirge, pealing forth from some great organ and rolling in waves of harmony down the ‘dim, mysterious aisles’ of some venerable cathedral, affects me more, whenever I read them, than the last words which Shakespeare has put into the lips of Cardinal Wolsey. I know no music more touching than the flow of their exquisite and melancholy rhythm:—

Nay, then, farewell !
 I have touched the highest point of all my greatness ;
 And from that full meridian of my glory,
 I haste now to my setting ! I shall fall,
 Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
 And no man see me more.
 This the state of man : to-day he puts forth
 The tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms,
 And bears his blushing honours thick upon him :
 The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
 And when he thinks—good easy man—full surely
 His greatness is a ripening, nips his root ;
 And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
 (Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders)
 These many summers in a sea of glory ;
 But far beyond my depth : my high-blown pride
 At length broke under me ; and now has left me,
 Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
 Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
 Vain pomp and glory of this world I hate ye !

I feel my heart new opened. O ! how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours !
There is betwixt that smile he would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes and his ruin,
More pangs and fears, than wars or women have ;
And when he falls, he falls, like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.
Oh, Cromwell ! Cromwell !
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies !

And now Time warns me that I must leave this first portion of my subject,—the religion contained in Shakespeare's works, and pass on to consider the morality with which they are imbued ; although I know well, that I have but barely opened this part of the mine of religious wealth with which his writings teem. Well indeed may Shakespeare be termed a Lay-Bible, and it is certain that it is to a diligent study of the English version of the Bible we are indebted to him for some of his finest thoughts and language. In his dramas alone I have myself counted upwards of eighty distinct allusions or paraphrases of scriptural characters, incidents, or language. But before I finally quit this division of my Lecture, I would notice, that what is so strikingly characteristic of Shakespeare's religion is, that it is so pre-eminently coloured with the *Spirit* of that religion which was taught by the Great Master. It has, indeed, been well said that the peculiarly *Christian* spirit, in the highest and most comprehensive sense of the word, leavening the whole of Shakespeare's philosophy, is everywhere observable in the fondness with which,

through the medium of his noble characters, he produces, in endless change of argument and imagery, illustrations of that wisdom, which is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated' In his allusions to the Deity, he delights in all those attributes that more particularly represent Him as the God of Love and Peace; and as between man and man, would rather inculcate the humanising doctrine of forgiveness, and recommend 'the quality of mercy' than the rugged justice of 'the eye for eye and tooth for tooth' morality of the Hebrew Code of Ethics. With what tenderness, and yet with what power, he advocates in innumerable passages, those virtues which the Christian spirit more especially enjoins upon us for our guidance. See how he holds up to our admiration that gentleness of soul 'that seeketh not her own,'

That hath a tear for pity, and a hand,
Open as day, for melting charity.

The true spirit of forgiveness breathes in the line 'I pardon him as God shall pardon me!'

Does he not tell us that

God's benison goes with us, and with those
That would make *good of bad*, and *friends of foes*;

that 'we are born to do benefits,' that 'kindness is the cool and temperate wind of Grace' 'nobler even than revenge,' and that to help another in adversity, we should

Strain a little;
For 'tis a bond in men.

'To revenge,' he says, 'is no valour, but, to

bear,' and that 'rarer *action* is in *virtue*, than in *vengeance*.' With what gems of epithets does he adorn the idea of Peace—'Peace that draws the sweet infant breath of gentle sleep;' but it is not the inglorious 'peace at any price' of the coward or the slave; not the peace of inaction or a shameful yielding up of what we hold to be good and true, at the command of tyrannical oppression, for he bids us remember also that

Rightly to be great,
Is greatly to find honour in a straw
When honour's at the stake.

But the Peace that he would commend to us is that self denying, self restraining, self victorious Peace which

Is of the nature of a conquest;
For then both parties nobly are subdued,
And neither party, loser.

Again, of Compassion, he does not merely say that it hates 'the cruelty that loads a falling man;' but he bids us remember, too,

That 'tis not enough to hold the feeble up
But to support him after.

Of Contentment, he speaks in passages more than I can dare quote; but it is ever an active, healthy contentment that he praises. He grandly exclaims:—

My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones;
Nor to be seen; my crown is called Content;
A crown it is, that seldom kings enjoy.

And he assures us—

'Tis better to be lowly born
And range with virtuous livers, in content,
Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.

And where can there be found a more beautiful picture of a contented mind than in these exquisite lines :—

Now my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The season's difference; as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which, when it bites, and blows upon my body
E'en till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
This is no flattery; these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.
Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and *good in everything*.

But it is not merely as a moralist of the higher grade that Shakespeare shines so conspicuously—it is not merely as a Preacher of the loftier virtues that he is so deserving of our admiration. View him on a lower level. Regard him as the exponent of sound practical wisdom in common life—in every-day experience. Where was ever more sensible advice given in regard to a young man's social intercourse with the world than in these memorable lines, and what pitfalls

would be avoided, if they were but borne in mind !

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd unfledg'd comrade.
Beware of entrance to a quarrel ; but being in,
Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear ; but few thy voice :
Take each man's censure ; but reserve thy judgment.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be ;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend ;
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This, above all—to thine own self be true,
And it must follow—as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

I could go on, far beyond the scope to which I am limited, in my quotations illustrating the soundness of Shakespeare's ethical teaching, and his enforcement of every form of morality. But let us see how he deals with vice in every form, no matter under what mask its visage may be hidden. Injustice, in its broadest sense, ever meets with his sternest reprobation. He asks, with all the fire of enthusiasm :

What stronger breast-plate than a heart untainted ?
Thrice is he arm'd, that has his quarrel just ;
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

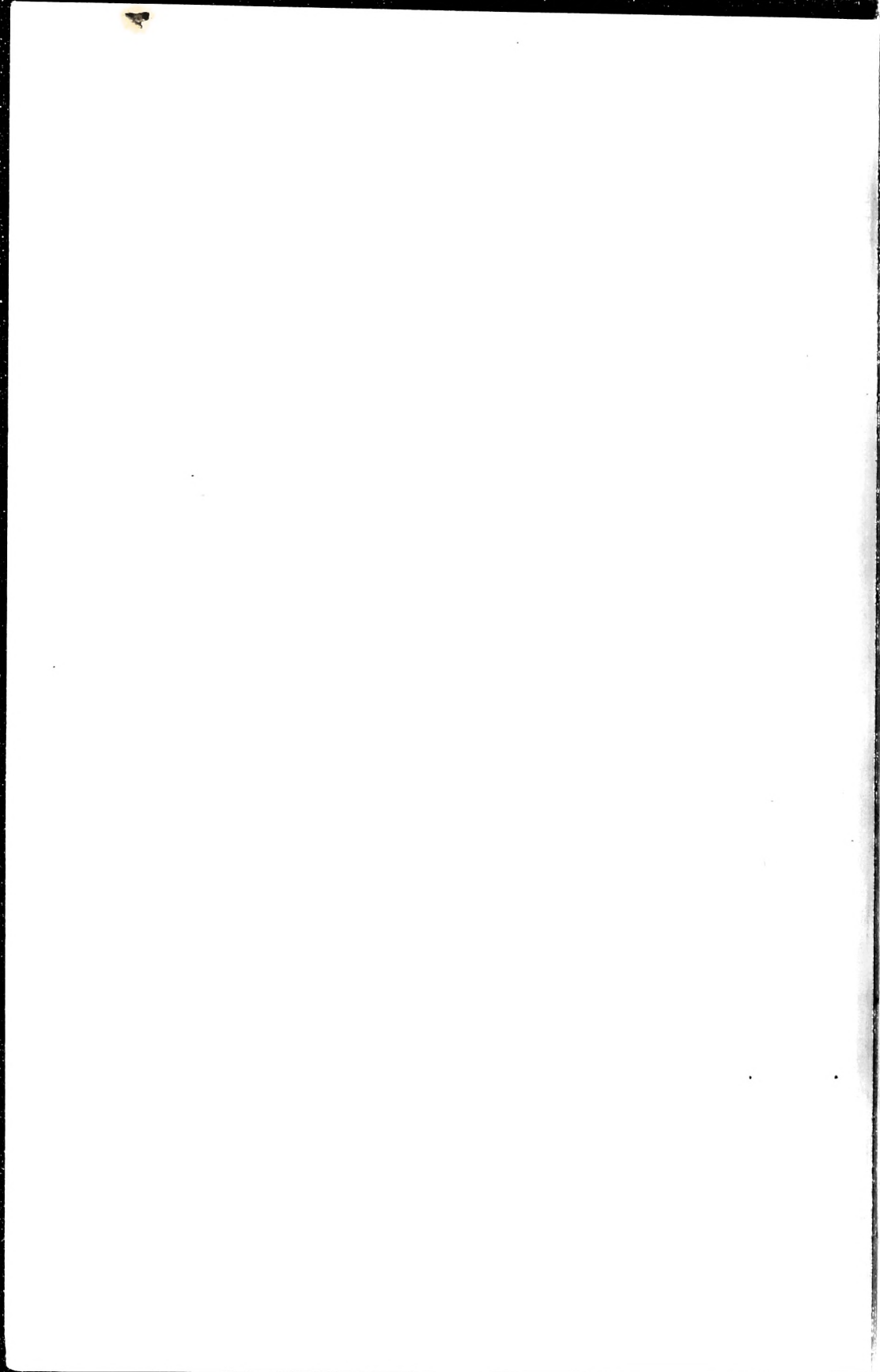
Hear, too, how he reprobates that assassin of the soul whose dagger has so often sought to slay the good and noble character that has at all risen above, or placed itself in opposition to, the false

grows with such pernicious root;’ ‘Deceitfulness, which to betray doth wear an angel’s face, to seize with eagle’s talons;’ ‘Implacability,’ relentless; that is, ‘beastly, savage, devilish;’ ‘Dupli-
city,’ ‘that can smile and smile and be a villain;’ and last ‘Hypocrisy,’ ‘with devotion’s visage and pious action,’ can ‘sugar o’er the Devil himself.’

Surely (as George Gilfillan says) Shakespeare was the greatest and most humane of all moralists. Seeing more clearly than mere man ever saw into the evils of human nature and the corruptions of society, into the natural weakness and the acquired vices of man, he can yet love, pity, forget his anger, and clothe him in the mellow light of his genius, like the sun, which in certain days of peculiar balm and beauty, seems to shed its beams, like an amnesty, on all created beings.’

I know full well that in the hour’s limit to which the lectures given before this Society are properly confined, I have been enabled only to bring to the surface comparatively a few of the precious ores of the religious spirit, the wisdom, and the morality, which lie in such rich profusion in the golden mine of Shakespeare’s works. But I think I have said enough, to justify the claim of Shakespeare to rank foremost amongst the world’s greatest, wisest, noblest, Preachers of Religion and Morality; and in conclusion, I know of no words that could serve me so eloquently as a peroration, as those of the writer and critic whom I last named. ‘If force of genius—sympathy with every form and feeling of humanity—the heart of a man united to the imagination of

a Poet, and wielding the Briarean hands of a Demigod—if the writing of thirty-two Dramas, which are colouring, to this hour, the literature of the world—if the diffusion of harmless happiness in immeasurable quantity—if the stimulation of innumerable minds—if the promotion of the spirit of Charity and universal brotherhood; if these constitute, for mortal man, titles to the name of Benefactor, and to that praise which ceases not with the sun but expands with immortality; then the name and the praise must support the throne which Shakespeare has established over the minds of the inhabitants of an earth which may be known in other parts of the Universe as Shakespeare's World.'



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PRESS NOTICES OF LAST EDITION.

Mr. Plumptre has now for several years fulfilled with signal ability the duties devolving upon him as the Lecturer on Public Reading and Speaking at King's College, London, in the Evening Classes Department. Happily he has afforded us, one and all, the opportunity for judging of him, not merely by hearsay—of estimating him not simply by the range or scope of his reputation. He has now given to the outer public the means of weighing in the balance his various capabilities as an instructor in Elocution. He has, in the shape of a goodly volume of 200 pages octavo, presented to every one who lists a series of fourteen of these famous King's College Lectures of his on Elocution—fourteen sub-divisions of a most instructive and comprehensive theme—the substance of the introductory Course of Lectures and Practical Instruction he has now for some time past been annually delivering. The book is Dedicated, by Permission, to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. It is followed by two very remarkable appendices—one of them singularly instructive, the other very curiously interesting. So far as any merely printed book on Elocution could accomplish its object, this one by Mr. Plumptre is entitled to our highest commendation. The eye, the face, the voice, the gesture are of course all wanting, but the argument throughout is so lucid in itself, while the illustrations of that argument are so animated and so singularly felicitous, that reading the work attentively page by page and lecture by lecture, is the next best thing to seeing and hearing the gifted Professor himself, when he is, in his own person, exemplifying the manifold and ever-varying charms of the all-conquering art of the Rhetorician and Elocutionist.—*SUN*, March 5, 1870.

This, although not a law book, is a book for lawyers. Practical treatises on various branches of the law may be essential to store the mind of the advocate with ideas, but unless he has the power of expressing them in such a way as to command the attention of the court, his learning will prove of but little avail. To a barrister the brains are of but little use without the tongue, and even the tongue, however fluent, may fail to give due expression to the ideas, unless the voice is properly regulated so as to pronounce with both clearness and force the words that are uttered, and the gestures of the body

enforce what the language has attempted to impress. Many are the failures of those who would otherwise have been successful advocates from want of attention to the principles of elocution. Their matter has been excellent, but their manner has been so bad as entirely to destroy the effect that their address must otherwise have produced. We would point to instances of this kind in Parliament, at the Bar, and in the Pulpit. To all such persons the work before us will be found invaluable; and indeed there are few, if any, whose duties require them to speak in public, who will fail to derive advantage from its perusal. The subject is treated in a thoroughly practical manner, and is fully investigated with care and judgment. Mr. Plumptre speaks with the authority of a professor, and he appears to understand his subject entirely, and in all its different branches. He is quite aware of all the difficulties to be encountered, and is ready with advice how to meet them. His work evinces considerable research, extensive classical and general knowledge, and is moreover full of interesting matter. We commend it heartily alike to those who aspire to become orators in Parliament, to the Clergy, and to the Bar.—*QUARTERLY LAW REVIEW*, May, 1870.

In these days, when Lectures and "Penny Readings" are patronised by the "upper ten thousand," and Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts, Barons, Baronets, M.P.'s, and Esquires take part in them, and when at public dinners no one is supposed to be "unaccustomed to public speaking," it is highly desirable that those who appear on the platform, or who rise at public banquets, should be able to go through their parts satisfactorily. To accomplish this there are only two ways, one, to take lessons in Elocution, the other to read works published with a view of imparting as much practical instruction as can possibly be imparted by precept, where practice cannot be attained. Mr C. J. Plumptre, Lecturer at King's College, London, has just published a volume upon the Principles and Practice of Elocution, which will be found to be of the highest value to every one who is called on, either constantly or at intervals, to speak in public. As a teacher, Mr Plumptre is most skilful: he is a *Master of his Art*, and those who cannot avail themselves of his services will do well to study his treatise, which is lucid, sound, and practical. The "King's College Lectures" of Mr Plumptre have been honoured by the patronage of the Prince of Wales, to whom the volume is by permission dedicated.—*COURT JOURNAL*, Dec. 11, 1869.

Mr Plumptre has, in this volume, reproduced his lectures on public reading and speaking, which were delivered at King's College. We consider that the chief novelty in the book is that it contains instruction for public reading as well as speaking. The science of public reading is very much neglected, and we are very glad to see that Mr Plumptre favours the world with a tolerably comprehensive book, which is partly devoted to this science. We purposely rank Elocution as a science, as we agree with Mr Plumptre in thinking that it lies far above a mere art. We believe that if everyone who wishes to read and speak well were to read and learn by heart Lecture V., the benefit would be enormous, and the effect almost immediately appreciable. We find some practical directions for the management and preservation of the voice, and although we are not qualified to give an opinion on the medical part, yet we have the authority of the *Lancet* for saying that the suggestions are very practical and the curative measures recommended excellent. We believe that this is by far the best volume yet published on the subject, and it must succeed on account of its own worth, as no man who has to speak or read in public should be without a copy.—WILTS ADVERTISER, March 26, 1870.

Mr Plumptre will be known to most of our readers as a very scientific and successful Teacher of Elocution; and in this volume he has put forth the substance of the course of Lectures that he delivers at King's College, with such alterations and additions as may meet the wants of those who are unable to avail themselves of oral instruction. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the advantage of obtaining complete command of all the powers of the voice, or to point out how very much a good manner of delivery may promote the success of a medical practitioner. These considerations are obvious; and if they stood alone we should hardly have thought the lectures within our province as reviewers. We find, however, that Mr Plumptre enters at length, and with much ability, into the curative treatment of impediments of speech. We have perused this portion of the treatise with great care, and have much pleasure in bearing testimony to its great merit. The views advanced rest upon sound physiology, and the practice advocated is in complete accordance with them. Mr Plumptre states, and our experience enables us to confirm his opinion, that *all cases of stammering and stuttering are curable*, if only the patient will exercise a certain degree of care and perseverance. It is common for medical practitioners to be consulted

about such impediments; and we feel sure that in Mr Plumptre's Lectures they will find not only much *valuable practical information*, but also a *basis of sound principles*, upon which the details of treatment may be founded. We recommend the book very warmly to our readers.—LANCET, February 12, 1870.

Professor Plumptre, who is so well known for his elocutionary powers, has just published a volume of fourteen of his Lectures on Elocution, delivered some time since at King's College, London. The book is a handsome volume of more than 200 pages, and is dedicated to the Prince of Wales. A more entertaining work it would be difficult to find, and it is one which we cordially recommend to the student of divinity, the barrister, the debater; in a word, to all who desire to cultivate the faculty of speech, and to be able to express their ideas with clearness, force, and elegance.—IRISH GAZETTE, March 19, 1870.

This is a book from which we will not quote, but instead heartily commend, and advise all our readers to purchase and study it for themselves.—VICTORIA MAGAZINE, May, 1870.

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