SHAKESPEARE'S MORALS: SUGGESTIVE SELECTIONS, WITH BRIEF COLLATERAL READINGS AND SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

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Shakespeare's morals: suggestive selections, with brief collateral readings and Scriptural references by William Shakespeare & Arthur Gilman

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & ARTHUR GILMAN

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Trieste

Julius Cæsar did write a Collection of Apothegms, as appears in an Epistle of Cicero; I need say no more of the worth of a writing of that nature. It is a pity his book is lost; for I imagine they were collected with judgment and choice; whereas that of Plutarch and Stobæus, and much more the modern ones, draw much of the dregs. Certainly they are of excellent use. They are MUCRONES VERBORUM, POINTED SPEECHES. *Cicero prettily calls them* SALINAS, SALTPITS, *that you may extract salt out of, and sprinkle it where you will. They serve to be interlaced in continued speech. They serve to be recited upon occasion, of themselves. They serve, if you take out the kernel of them and make them your own.*

SIR FRANCIS BACON.

SHAKESPEARE'S MORALS:

Suggestive Selections,

WITH BRIEF COLLATERAL READINGS AND SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES.

"Wherever the bright sun of Heaven shall shine,
His honor and the greatness of his name
Shall be."

EDITED BY

ARTHUR GILMAN, M.A.,

EDITOR OF THE POETICAL WORKS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

NEW YORK:

DODD, MEAD, AND COMPANY.

1880.

TO

My Father,

WHOSE LOVING STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE AND GENERAL LITERATURE,

DURING MANY YEARS OF BUSINESS LIFE,

HAS BEEN

A LITERARY STIMULUS AND AN INSPIRATION TO HIS CHILDREN,

AND REMAINS IN ITS UNPUBLISHED RECORDS

A PRECIOUS INHERITANCE FOR HIS

CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reader of this little volume will not expect to find within its modest limits a complete presentation of the ethical principles involved in the writings of the great Dramatist.

It was not the intention of Shakespeare in his literary work to elaborate a system of morals, nor to give his hearers maxims for their guidance in life; though, by making true presentations of the workings of the human heart and of the actions of men in society, he in a measure accomplished both ends.

Though the selections here offered are the result of original study, most of them are familiar to intelligent readers and probably they all will seem like memories of golden thoughts that have been but temporarily lost. Their value is not in themselves alone, for each one shines with a glory reflected

from the others of the group in which it appears, while the readings from other masters of thought show the brotherhood of great minds, and still further illustrate the themes, at the same time that they give emphasis to the wealth of the Dramatist's genius.

It was Coleridge who said, "I greatly dislike beauties and selections in general, but as proof of his unrivalled excellence I should like to try Shakespeare by this criterion." The same acute critic says in another place, "Let the morality of Shakespeare be contrasted with that of the writers of his own or the succeeding age, or of those of the present day who boast their superiority in this respect. No one can dispute that the result of such comparison is altogether in favor of Shakespeare."

The Right Reverend Charles Wordsworth, in his work on Shakespeare's knowledge and use of the Bible, ventures to use the following language: "Take the entire range of English literature; put together our best authors who have written upon subjects not professedly religious or theological, and we shall not find, I believe, in all united, so much evidence of the Bible having been read and used as we have found in Shakespeare alone." A few,

among the very large number of Scriptural texts which are suggested by the Dramatist's expressions, are given in the notes. Many more, which it has not been thought necessary to quote, will occur to the reader.

The following pages will enable the reader to form some opinion upon these subjects, but their greatest value will be found in the truths they convey and the practical wisdom they express. While they are not the whole, they are a part of Shakespeare's Morals.

CAMBRIDGE, September, 1879.

The quotations from Sophocles are from the version of the Rev. Dr. Plumptre. For Shakespeare, resort has been had to the text of Messrs. Clark and Wright (found in the *Globe* edition), though in a few instances the reading of Mr. Dyce has been preferred. Extracts from Chaucer are from the edition of the editor.