

**THE SONNETS OF
WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE; NEW
LIGHT AND OLD EVIDENCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649758050

The Sonnets of William Shakespeare; New Light and Old Evidence by William Shakespeare & Clara Longworth de Chambrun

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & CLARA LONGWORTH DE CHAMBRUN

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The Sonnets of
William Shakespeare

New Light and Old Evidence

By

The Countess de Chambrun

Illustrated

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

1913

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BY
CLARA LONGWORTH DE CHAMBRUN

TO MIMI
AMBROGLIO

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

IN REVERENTIAL MEMORY
OF MY
GRANDFATHER

JOSEPH LONGWORTH

BORN IN CINCINNATI

OCTOBER 2ND, 1813

DIED AT ROCKWOOD

DECEMBER 29TH, 1883

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN

PREFACE

ANY writer who offers new ideas to the public on such a well-worn theme as the "Shakespeare problem," so called, is sure to encounter criticism, merely for writing on Shakespeare; because, so runs the stock phrase, "such a number of books have already been made on this subject."

Like many platitudes, this one contains only a half-truth. Though good books on the sonnets exist, the best being probably by Gerald Massey and Professor Tyler, these works have been out of print for twenty years. It is even difficult to obtain a casual reading of either, owing to the scarcity of copies in the public libraries. The earliest published biography of Shakespeare, Rowe's *Life*, is even more difficult to obtain, and, being the chief source from which we draw our knowledge of the poet and his works, I have appended it, *in extenso*, to this volume.

Largely owing to the efforts of Mr. Gerald

Massey, the pioneer sonnet-critic, much important evidence has recently been brought to light, so that his *Drama of the Sonnets* is no longer "up to date" with modern criticism and research. I have found, in following some of his clues to their historical source, much that is new in this connection, contained in documents so old as to be often contemporary with Shakespeare himself.

Should my grouping of the sonnets seem audacious, it may be remembered that their first publisher only claimed to give the public a large number of Shakespeare's minor poems, as they reached his hands (probably from three distinct sources). I disclaim, in altering Thorpe's arrangement, any attempt to alter Shakespeare.

In my judgment, every lover and student of these poems has as good a right to change the order in which they are printed as their first pirate-publisher, even a better right, if by so doing their interest is enhanced and their meaning clarified.

I am the more emboldened to set down the sonnets according to my own views, because on broad general lines they concord with the opinions of Professor Dowden, Mr. Acheson, and Mrs.

Stopes. I believe that the present arrangement will be found satisfactory to the amateur, as it is founded on the rules of simplicity and common sense, which place a reconciliation *after*, and not *before*, a quarrel.

Mr. Acheson has had the great kindness to offer me his own arrangement, which is divided into seven books, each of which should contain twenty sonnets. My best thanks are due to him not only for this, but also for a most interesting and valuable correspondence, and the immense moral support of his commendation.

Mr. Acheson has promised us his own version of the sonnets later, for which he will give those "reasons of settled gravity" that his mastery of Elizabethan literary history entitles him to pronounce with an authority far other than I could pretend to.

When facts are quoted, it may be understood that they are sanctioned by Sir Sidney Lee, whose clear exposition and scholarly research have made his *Life* the generally accepted authority on the time of Shakespeare.

Older authorities are named, when cited in the