

**AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE
MONUMENTAL BUST OF WILLIAM
SHAKSPEARE: IN THE CHANCEL OF THE
CHURCH, AT STRATFORD-UPON-AVON,
WARWICKSHIRE; WITH CRITICAL REMARKS
ON THE AUTHORS WHO HAVE WRITTEN ON IT**

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ABRAHAM WIVELL

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11305 IN THE
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WITH

Critical Remarks on the Authors who have written on it.

BY ABRAHAM WIVELL,

PORTRAIT PAINTER.

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PREFACE

TO

MY PAMPHLET OF 1825.

IN submitting to the public the following few pages on the subject of the Monumental Bust of our great Dramatic Bard, it is not my intention to enter into an account of the various portraits professing to resemble that celebrated man, but briefly to detail the facts relative to the bust; with such observations on the presumed likeness to Shakspeare, as my recent investigations have determined.

After a lapse of above two hundred years since the death of the poet, and the erection of the monument in his place of sepulture, so much interest continues to be attached to the spot, that the Church of Stratford-upon-Avon may be said to be almost daily visited by travellers from all parts of the civilized world.

The remark having been made to me, by a gentleman, who is an ardent admirer of Shakspeare, and of the arts, that amongst all the numerous engravings purporting to be done from the bust,

no satisfactory resemblance could be found, and some discussion upon the subject taking place, it was shortly followed by my being liberally commissioned to visit Stratford, for the purpose of making the drawing from which the plate was engraved, and to which these pages refer. Having bestowed much pains, and exerted my best abilities to produce a correct resemblance of the original, and presuming that a few observations to accompany the Print,* might not be found unworthy of attention by the purchasers of the work, I have ventured, with all due deference to the many and high-talented writers, who have given to the world their dissertations upon the bust of Shakspeare, to publish my own opinion as to its character, history, and authenticity, up to the present time.

A. W.

* The print of the bust of Shakspeare, has been engraved by Mr. J. S. Agar, from the original drawing in the possession of John Cordy, Esq. Published by George Lawford, Saville Place. Print, 6s. Proof, 7s. 6d.

SHAKSPEARE'S MONUMENT.

THE following remarks on the Monumental Bust of Shakspeare, in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, is printed from my Pamphlet, 1825, with additions. I have also given an interesting account of the Chancel of the above church, which is extracted from an elegant work* now in course of publication.

“ The town of Stratford-upon-Avon, illustrious in British topography as the birth-place of SHAKSPEARE, is situated on the south-western border of the county of Warwick, on a gentle ascent from the banks of the Avon, which rises in a small spring at Naseby, in Northamptonshire; and continuing its meandering course in a south-westerly direction, approaches Stratford in a wide and proudly swelling stream, unequalled in any other part of its course. The town is distant eight miles south-west from Warwick, and ninety-four miles north west from

* Vide No. 4, “ Views of Collegiate and Parochial Churches in Great Britain, from drawings by J. P. Neale.” The engravings of which are very suitable to the illustration of the present work, especially the fourth plate, which shows Shakspeare's monument, his grave stone, and those of his family, &c. &c.

London. The Church stands at the south-eastern extremity, from which it is approached by a paved walk, under an avenue of lime trees, which have been made to form a complete arcade."

"The chancel, the eastern part of which is represented in Plate IV., is the most beautiful as well as the most perfect division of this Church, and was erected between the years 1465 and 1491, by Thomas Balsall, D. D. who then held the office of Dean. It is separated from the transept by an oaken screen, which originally formed a part of the ancient rood-loft; and which was glazed in the year 1813. Five large ornamented windows on each side, give light to the chancel; they were formerly decorated with painted glass, the remains of which were taken out in the year 1790, and transferred to the centre of the great eastern window, where they still remain, though in a very confused state. On each side of the eastern window is a nich, boldly finished in the Florid style of pointed architecture. In the south wall, near the altar, are three similar niches, conjoined, in which are placed the *concessus*, or seats, for the priests officiating at mass; and immediately adjoining them is the *piscina*. These objects are all shewn in the Plate. On each side of the chancel is a range of stalls belonging to the ancient choir, remarkable for the grotesque carvings which ornament the lower part of each seat.

“ Erected against the north wall, within the communion rail, is a curious altar-tomb of alabaster, to the memory of Dean Balsall, who died in 1491. The front is divided into five compartments, in each of which is sculptured some remarkable event in the history of Our Saviour: 1st. The Flagellation; 2nd. The leading to the Crucifixion; 3d. The Crucifixion; 4th. The Entombment; 5th. The Resurrection. At the west end are two niches, in one of which is the figure of a saint, and in the other are three figures of doubtful appropriation. At the east end are likewise two niches, one containing the figure of a saint, and the other three figures, one of which appears to represent St. James. This tomb, which has formerly been painted, is seven feet six inches in length, by about three feet six inches in height, and is covered by a slab of marble, in which an engraved brass figure of Dean Balsall and an inscription, were originally inlaid, but have been long since torn away. The letters *t. b.*, the initials of his name, and *t h u*, carved in stone, still remain in several places. Against the eastern wall of the chancel is a monument, in memory of John Combe, Esq. the subject of a well known satirical epitaph, ascribed to Shakspeare; he died on the 10th of July, 1614.”

“ The next monument, that claims our attention, is against the north wall, (being elevated about five feet from the floor,) erected above the tomb