

**THE TEMPLE
DRAMATIST THE TWO
NOBLE KINSMEN**

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The Temple Dramatist the Two Noble Kinsmen by William Shakespeare & John Fletcher & C. H. Herford

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & JOHN FLETCHER & C. H. HERFORD

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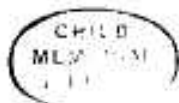


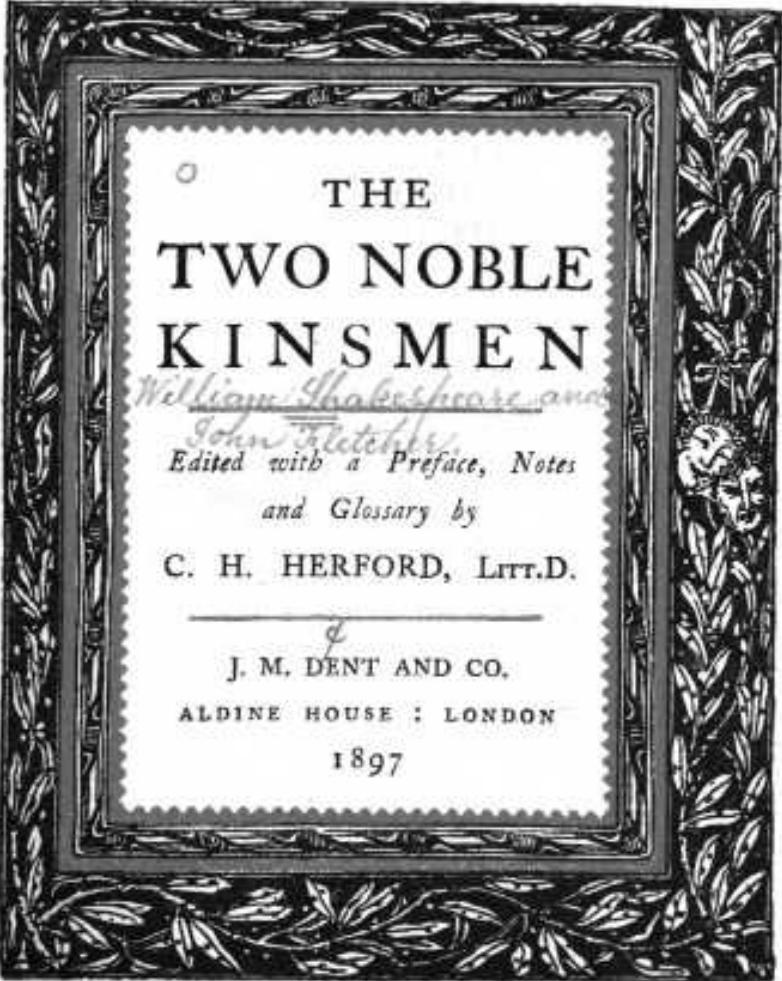
THE TEMPLE DRAMATISTS
THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN





John Fletcher.





THE
TWO NOBLE
KINSMEN

William Shakespeare and

John Fletcher,
Edited with a Preface, Notes
and Glossary by

C. H. HERFORD, Litt.D.

J. M. DENT AND CO.

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1897

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' It fel ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lillie upon his stalkē grene,
And frescher than the May with floures newe—
For with the roos colour stroof hir bewe,
I noot which was the fairer of hem two—
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
She was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wol han no alogardye anight . . .
Hire yelwe heer was broyded in a tresse,
Behinde hir bak, a yerds long, I gesse.
And in the gardin, at the sonne up-riste,
She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a sotill gerland for hir hede,
And as an sungel heavenly she song . . .
Bright was the sonne and cleer that morweninge,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by love of his gayler
Was risen, and romed in a chambre ou heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh
And oek the gardin, ful of braunches grene
Ther-as this fresche Emelye the shene
Was in hir walk, and romed up and down . . .
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a window, thikke of many a barre
Of yren greet, and square as any sparre
He caste his eye upon Emilya,
And therewithal he bleynte, and cryde "a!"
As though he stongen were unto the herte.'

CHAUCER: *The Knights Tale.*

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PREFACE

Literary History. The earliest known edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is a quarto of 1634, bearing the title: 'THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN: Presented at the Blackfriars by the King's Majesties servants with great applause: Written by the venerable Worthies of their time {Mr. John Fletcher, } Gent.
{Mr. William Shakspeare, }

Printed at London by Tho. Cotes . . . The play was reprinted in the second folio edition of Fletcher's works, 1679, but neither in the first nor in any subsequent edition of Shakspeare during the seventeenth century, not even in that of 1663, which added seven, mostly apocryphal, plays to those contained in the first authentic collection. It was thus excluded from the Shakspearean canon, and throughout the eighteenth century shared the editorial fortunes and misfortunes of Fletcher's plays. With the growth, however, of a finer appreciation of the Elizabethans, early in the present century, traces became obvious in many scenes of a manner quite unlike Fletcher's, and yet more potent than his; and the title-page of the original quarto suggested an obvious solution. Lamb and Coleridge emphatically pronounced the second hand to be Shakspeare's; and De Quincey declared the scenes in question unsurpassed in the language. At length, in 1833, William Spalding, a young graduate of Aberdeen, undertook, in his classical *Letter on Shakspeare's Authorship of the . . . Two Noble Kinsmen*, both

to demonstrate the fact of Shakspeare's participation, and to define its extent, on the basis of a critical analysis of the style of the two writers. He put his case with a combination of critical and forensic ability which made it appear even more plausible than it was; but it convinced the judicious Hallam and the sober Dyce, and the latter included *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in his edition of Shakspeare. Hickson, in an important review (1849), substantially corroborated his results; and Harold Littledale, who lavished the best years of his short life on what will long remain the classical edition of the play, admitted them with even less qualification. From the first, however, sceptical voices have not been wanting. Shelley, a less profound Elizabethan, doubtless, than Lamb, but as competent a judge of what is great in poetry, declared in a letter to his wife: 'I do not believe Shakspeare wrote a word of it.' Hazlitt took the same view. Spalding himself, in 1840, admitted that his opinion was not so positive as it had been, and finally declared the whole question insoluble. The sceptical case has never lacked adherents; and the arguments for it have latterly been put with much trenchancy by Dr. Th. Bierfreund in his *Palamon og Arcite* (Copenhagen, 1891).

Sources and Structure. The plot, in its main outlines, follows with much fidelity Chaucer's *Knights Tale*. The story of Palamon and Arcite had already furnished the matter of two Elizabethan plays (both lost) in 1566 and 1594, and Shakspeare, in or about the latter year, had used the opening situation as a groundwork for the faery fabric of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Several close correspondences, and some blunders, make it probable that our play was directly dramatised

The Two Noble Kinsmen

PREFACE

from Chaucer. Most of the divergences are such as were involved in shaping a narrative poem into a stage play. Thus the grim silence of Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite as they arm each other for their death-struggle becomes an interchange of chivalrous courtesies in Fletcher's most generous vein; the subsequent tournament of two hundred knights is reduced to one of eight, and is moreover carried on behind the scenes. Chaucer's Theseus forgives his captives after the discovery of the duel, and the remainder of the tale, though it retains almost every other poetic virtue, loses henceforth that of tragic suspense. In our play this defect is somewhat drastically cured, by making Theseus not only insist, as the price of pardoning the victor in the tournament, that the loser shall die, but require (with a fine oriental irrelevance) that all his comrades shall die with him. Lastly, dramatic orthodoxy in the early seventeenth century demanded a second or underplot, and the pauses in the adventures of Palamon and Arcite are accordingly filled up, clumsily enough, by the tale of the unhappy love of the gaoler's daughter. This underplot is largely made up of undisguised, but mostly fatuous and provoking, imitations of Shakspeare. The gaoler's daughter is sufficiently Fletcherian in type, but her ravings are coloured by reminiscences, now of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking, now of Ophelia's mad songs, and Ophelia's watery death has palpably suggested that which threatens her. The pedant Gerrold is a journeyman's copy of Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, his rustic show before Theseus a journeyman's copy of the mummery of the Nine Worthies. Unimpressive in itself, the underplot is rather imbedded in the main plot than interwoven with it. The sole link between them is the love-sick daughter's liberation of her father's prisoner, and the purse which he generously bequeaths