

**THE HEART OF  
HAMLET'S  
MYSTERY**

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The heart of Hamlet's mystery by Karl Werder & Elizabeth Wilder & W. J. Rolfe

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**KARL WERDER & ELIZABETH WILDER & W. J. ROLFE**

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MYSTERY**



# The Heart of Hamlet's Mystery

Translated from the German of

Karl Werder

By Elizabeth Wilder

With Introduction by W. J. Rolfe

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"You would pluck out the heart of my mystery!"



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**In Memoriam**  
**KARL WERDER**







### PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS translation has largely grown from the interest excited in this country and abroad by the extracts from Werder's *Lectures on Hamlet* in Dr. Furness's admirable edition of the play.

The lectures, as delivered at the University of Berlin, included extended quotations and discussions upon various German theories of *Hamlet*; but as most of this matter had no necessary connection with the main subject, it was deemed best to limit the present version to Werder's presentation of his own theory, with only so much of his comments on opposing views as it seemed desirable to retain. For this reason the first lecture of the series was wholly omitted, and the translation begins with the second.

All lovers of Shakespeare will clearly perceive my grateful obligation to Dr. W. J. Rolfe,

both for the masterly guidance in my student days which rendered this work possible, and for his untiring interest in the translation, the revision of which he has superintended, besides contributing the introduction.

My thanks are also due to Professors Wesselhoeft and Rolfe, of the University of Pennsylvania, for kindly counsel and encouragement.

E. W.



## THE HEART OF HAMLET'S MYSTERY

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### Introduction

BY W. J. ROLFE

THE Hamlet problem has been well called "the Sphinx of modern literature." Its deep mystery baffles us, but we return to it again and again in the vain hope of solving it. Some one has said that "a man ought, perhaps, to change his opinion concerning this drama once every decade during the first forty years of existence; it would, in most cases, be a good sign of increased culture and maturer intellect." While studying it for more than forty years I may have modified my own opinion in some measure oftener than that; but since I became acquainted with the Werder theory I have been more and more inclined to believe that it sub-