

**THE FEMALE
CHARACTERS
OF SHAKSPEARE**

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The Female Characters of Shakspeare by William Shakespeare & Charles Heath

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & CHARLES HEATH

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THE
FEMALE CHARACTERS
OF SHAKSPEARE.

ENGRAVED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

MR. CHARLES HEATH,

FROM DRAWINGS BY EMINENT ARTISTS.

NEW YORK:
WILEY AND PUTNAM, 161 BROADWAY.

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A D D R E S S .

WHAT a celebrated critic (Mrs. Jameson) has applied to *one* of Shakspeare's Female characters may without much license be extended to *all*. Darting her far-glancing look from earth to heaven for some exquisite comparison, "to what," she asks, "shall we compare *them*?—to the silvery summer clouds which, even while we gaze on them, shift their hues and forms, dissolving into air and light and rainbow showers?—to the May morning, flush with opening blossoms and roseate dews, and 'charm of earliest birds'?—to some wild and beautiful melody, such as some shepherd-boy might 'pipe to Amarrillis in the shade'?—to a mountain streamlet, now smooth as a mirror, in which the skies may glass themselves, and now leaping and sparkling in the sunshine—or rather, to the very sunshine itself—for so His genial spirit touches into life and beauty whatever it shines on!"

"No one," remarks Hazlitt, in his "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays,"—"no one ever hit the true perfection of the female character—the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support—so well as SHAKSPEARE; no one ever so well painted natural tenderness, free from affectation and disguise; no one ever so well showed how delicacy and timidity, when driven to extremity, grow romantic and extravagant, for the romance of his heroines (in which they abound) is only an excess of the habitual prejudices of their sex, scrupulous of being false to their vows, truant to their

affections, and taught by the force of feeling when to forego the forms of propriety for the essence of it."

To embody such conceptions—to give to each exquisite creation a "local habitation" in the mind's eye—is the object of the present work. Artists of the highest reputation have been engaged to produce characteristic portraits of the great Shakspeare Heroines, to show them "not mere poetical abstractions, nor, as they have been termed, mere 'abstractions of the affections:'

But common clay ta'en from the common earth,
Moulded by God, and tempered by the tears
Of angels to the perfect form of—*woman*."

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