

**SHAKESPEARE THE PLAYER,
AND OTHER PAPERS
ILLUSTRATIVE OF
SHAKESPEARE'S INDIVIDUALITY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649181254

Shakespeare the player, and other papers illustrative of Shakespeare's individuality by
Alexander Cargill

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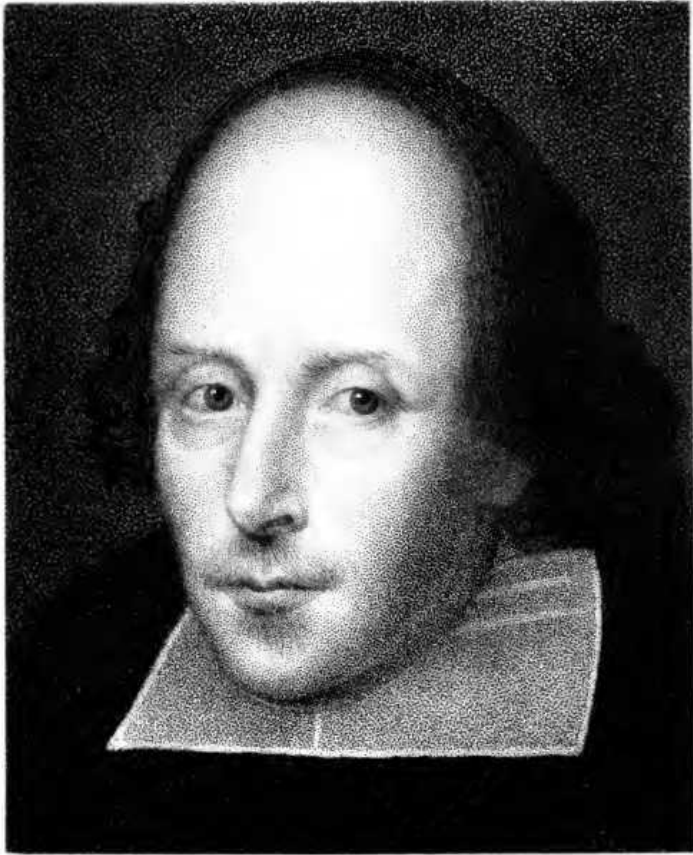
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ALEXANDER CARGILL

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

THE FELTON PORTRAIT

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BY ALEXANDER CARGILL



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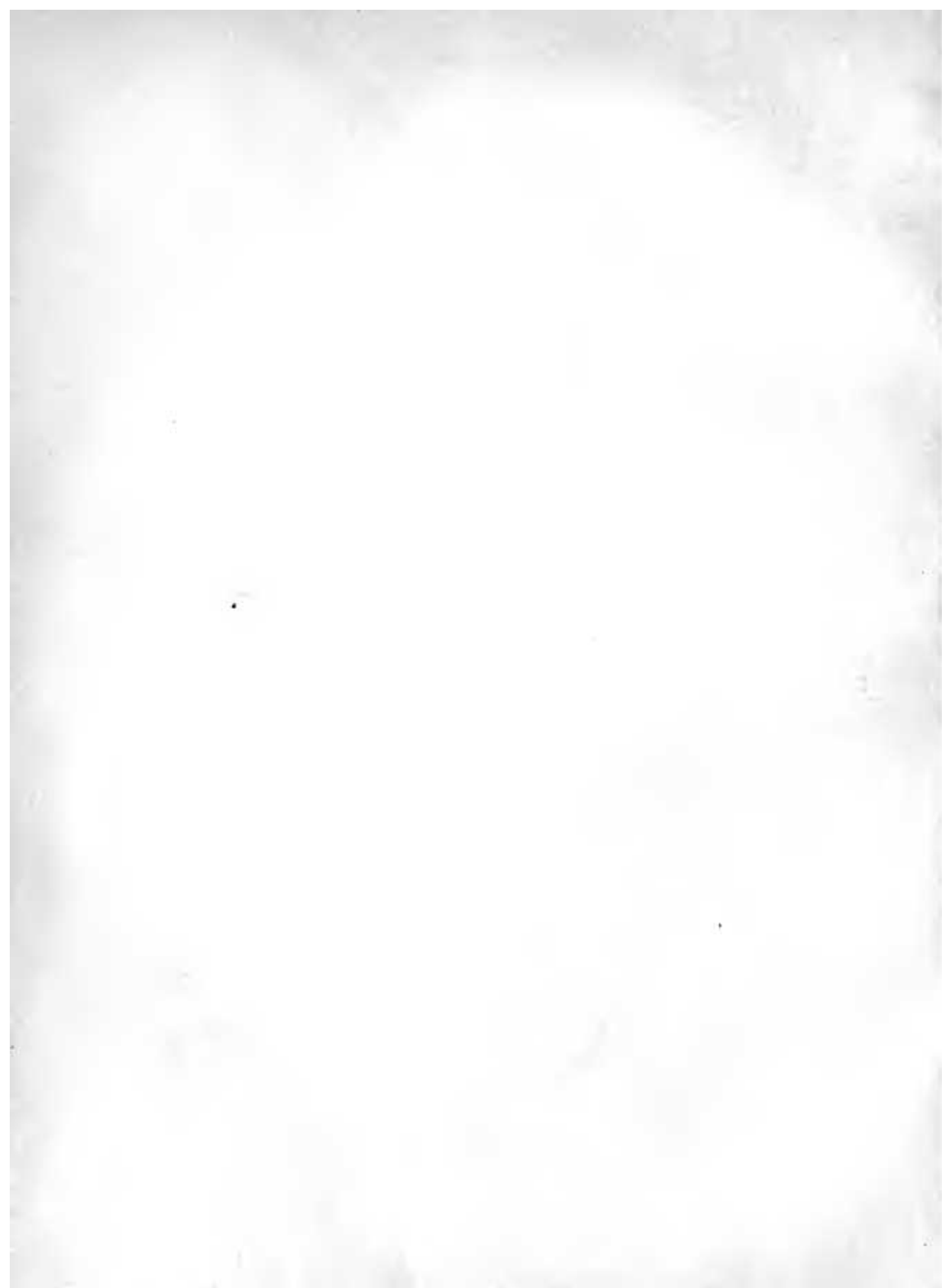
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Memory of the late J. O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, of London and Brighton, the distinguished Shakespearean biographer and commentator, who not only inspired the writer with enthusiasm for the study of the life and works of the great Dramatist, but rendered him many services while inquiring into the *personalia* of Shakespeare.

Also in affectionate remembrance of DAVID MASSON, LL.D., Litt.D., Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in the University of Edinburgh, and Historiographer Royal for Scotland; than whom there never was a truer admirer or abler exponent of Shakespeare's genius.



INTRODUCTION

IT is surely one of the most extraordinary examples of the irony of fate, in its relation to the affairs of men, that, of the personal history of one of the greatest human beings born into this world since the dawn of the Christian era, so very few trustworthy facts should be available for all who pause in wonder at mention of the name of William Shakespeare. It is now close on three hundred years since Shakespeare died; yet we know less about the man himself and his career than of certain famous men who lived a thousand years before him.

Personally, I prefer to think of Shakespeare as an ordinary flesh-and-blood creature indeed, but one ever wrapped about with a magic mantle as was Prospero, with a cloudy, an ethereal *something* to conceal his personality from the gaze of the world, and so to appraise him as a man supremely apart—a being, as it were, 'enskyed' by virtue of that amazing endowment of mind and spirit which he has bequeathed to us in his works. Some one has finely said of Shakespeare that, with that innate modesty which usually accompanies lofty genius, he, in the evening of his day, *gently tapped*, as it were, at the door of the world, handed in his amazing gift, *almost without a word about himself*, and passed on.¹ It is in this sense that I prefer to think of

¹ See Appendix A.

Shakespeare the man; and yet, the few facts concerning him and his work that have come down to us, how precious do we reckon them, and how eagerly do some of us search and rummage among our archives to add to them, though we may stumble upon no more than a mere reference to his name.

But of the accredited facts appertaining to the life of Shakespeare, those that concern his career *as a player* are certainly the most noteworthy in point of number, and also in regard to their actual human interest. If his career as a great creative poet and dramatist can only be surmised from a study of his works, that is, without actual evidence of the progression of his genius from height to height, we can nevertheless now and again visualise the superman Shakespeare, living and moving as a player among a throng of players, acting his own palpable part, alike on the stage of the theatre and on the stage of life, and acting it always honourably and successfully.

In the following chapters it is my aim to discern as far as possible something of the *real self* of Shakespeare—that is, his form and figure and human personality as revealed in his career as a player and as the ‘fellow’ of certain notable contemporaries of his time. The leading chapter, namely, that on ‘Shakespeare the Player,’ will suffice for this aspect of his workaday life. It was published some years ago as an article in *Scribner’s Magazine*, but as no fresh facts of any consequence appertaining to the theme have in the interval been discovered, its republication will, it is hoped, not detract from interest in the subject for all Shakespearean students, but may, in view of the tercentenary of his death, add not a little interest to it.