

**CHAUCER TO LONGFELLOW, A CHOICE
SELECTION OF LECTURES ON ENGLISH
LITERATURE; GIVING A
COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE
SAXON LANGUAGE; AND HOW TO
MASTER IT; VOL. II; PP. 377-356**

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JOHN FRASER

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CHAUCER TO LONGFELLOW

A CHOICE SELECTION OF

LECTURES ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

GIVING A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE SAXON
LANGUAGE; AND HOW TO MASTER IT.

WITH CRITICAL REVIEWS ON

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY; SCOTCH POETRY; CHAUCER; SURREY; WYATT; SIDNEY;
RALEIGH; SPENSER; BACON; MARLOWE; SHAKESPEARE; WEBSTER; BEAUMONT;
FLETCHER; SHELLEY; BEN JONSON; MILTON; BURNS; HOOD; GEORGE
ELIOT; MRS. E. B. BROWNING; MME. DE STAEL; THE BRONTE
SISTERS; MARGARET FULLER; MRS. H. B. STOWE
AND THE MODERN NOVEL; TENNYSON;
LONGFELLOW; ETC., ETC.

BY

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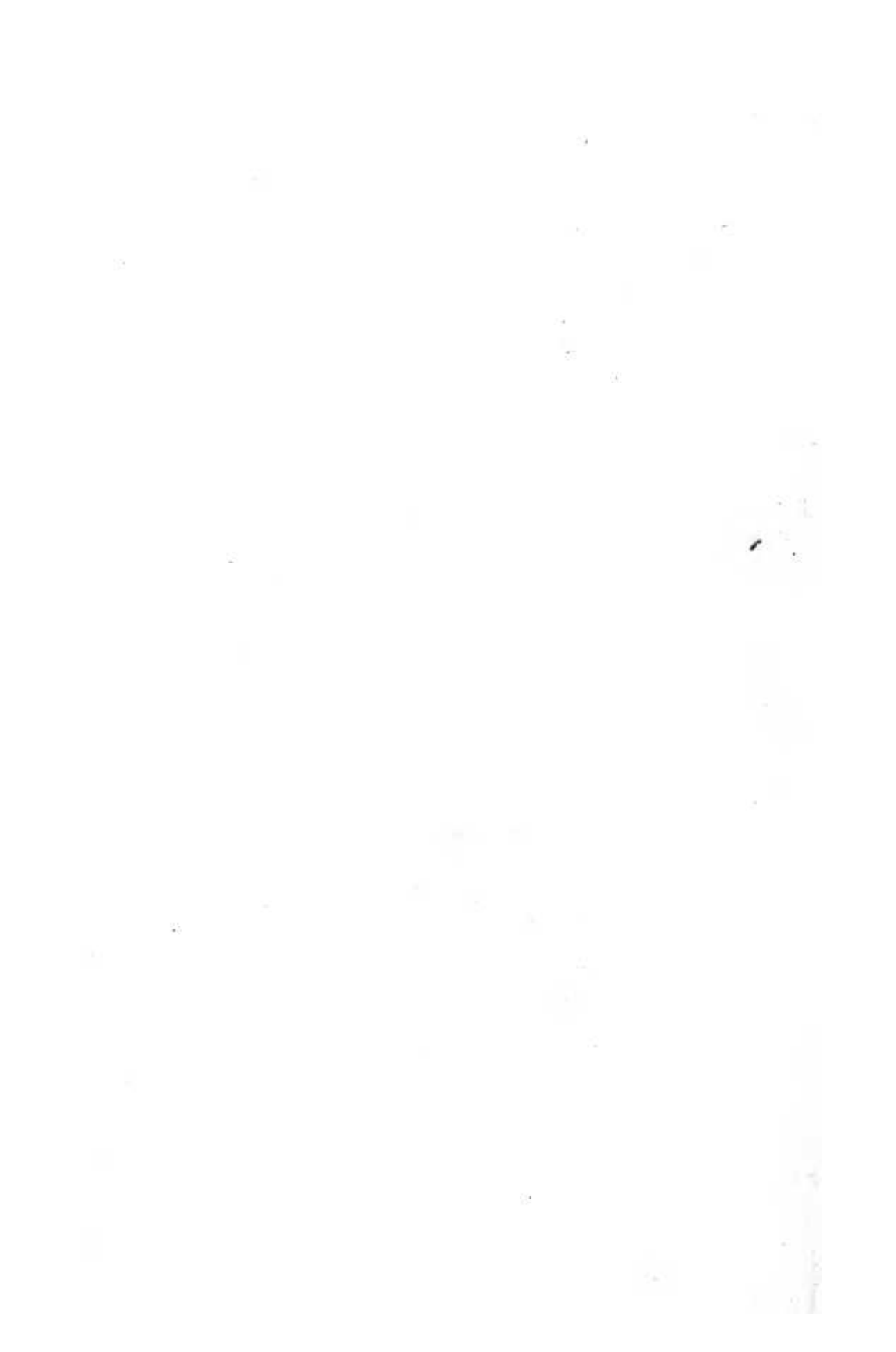
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SYNOPSIS LECTURE XVII.

SUBJECT — DRAMATISTS AROUND SHAKESPEARE.

- 1.—RISE OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA. Beginnings of regular drama in reign of Henry VIII; rapid growth; Elizabethan dramatists nearly all scholars. Exuberance of every form of literature. Marlow, Peele, Lyly, Lodge, Kyd and Nash, the real founders of the English drama. John Lyly, the inventor of Euphuism; Thomas Nash, the most brilliant pamphleteer of the period; Thomas Peele, author of "King David and Fair Bethsabe;" Thomas Lodge, a physician, wrote "Rosalynde," from which Shakespeare derived "As You Like It;" Thomas Kyd, author of "Jeronimo" and the "Spanish Tragedy;" Robert Greene, author of five plays.
- 2.—CHRISTOPHER MARLOW, 1562-1593, son of a shoemaker; educated at Cambridge; led a wild life, and killed in a brawl; wrote early for the stage; greatest dramatic writer before Shakespeare; his "Tamburlaine the Great;" tragic conclusion of "Faustus;" conclusion of "Edward the Second," much admired; his Barabus compared with Shylock, powerfully and splendidly drawn.
- 3.—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, dramatists nearest to Shakespeare, yet far below; they form one individuality. Francis Beaumont, the younger, and died first, 1585-1616; John Fletcher, born 1576, died 1625; the latter sole author of the "Faithful Shepherdess;" wrote thirty-seven or thirty-eight plays together; comedy of the "Woman Hater," the first published in 1607. Knowledge of stage effect and brilliance of dialogue; analysis of "The Maid's "Tragedy," a powerful but repulsive drama, a noble moral; "Philaster; or, Love Lies a Bleeding," well written and interesting, but with a needlessly complicated plot; "A King and No King," ingenious and entertaining, but with an unfortunate plot;

"The Scornful Lady" has some good situations and sprightly dialogue, affords insight into fashionable life and morals; "The Custom of the Country," an objectionable drama.

- 4.—PHILIP MASSINGER, 1584-1639, son of a retainer of the Earl of Pembroke; received a classical education; shy, reserved and inclined to melancholy; has characteristics as a dramatist; knew Shakespeare's writings well, but does not plagiarize. "The Roman Actor," well conceived, with strong characters and rapid action, language dignified and noble; "The Great Duke of Florence" ought still to be a good acting play, altogether unobjectionable; "The Maid of Honor," well conceived and told, on the whole, a pure play; "The Picture," ingeniously contrived, humor sprightly and abundant; "The Emperor of the East," artistically unsatisfactory, and more than usually objectionable; "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," in some respects the most complete and satisfactory; "Sir Giles Overreach"; "The City Madam," meant to ridicule the airs and extravagance of city ladies; "Luke"; "The Guardian," ingenious and pleasing.

- 5.—JOHN FORD, 1586-1639, a gentleman of means, bred to the law; tragic power, tenderness and pathos; weak in comedy; choice of subjects unfortunate. "The Broken Heart," a noble drama; "Perkin Warbeck," pure and wholesome; "The Elder Brother," sketchy, but the main idea pleasantly developed; "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," an admirable play, but immoral; "The Queen of Corinth" illustrates the triumph of purity over vice—a parody of Don Quixote; "The Double Marriage," unsatisfactory and unnatural. Other plays; Gifford's criticism.

End of the Elizabethan drama.

DRAMATISTS AROUND SHAKESPEARE.

MARLOW, BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, MASSINGER, FORD.

The greatness of Shakespeare has caused the utter eclipse of many sons of genius, who might otherwise have remained visible in the literary heavens. He is like the sun before whose presence the planets pale and vanish. In the popular mind, it may be said, so far as literature goes, the reign of Elizabeth means only Shakespeare. He is a lofty mountain, towering mid-ocean in a waste of waters. Such a conception is, however, altogether false, and the same evolution is distinctly discernible in the English drama, that scientists have noted elsewhere. If we would figure to ourselves its rise and decline, we might do so by imagining a gradually ascending mountain range, rising peak above peak, till it culminates in a height that pierces the heavens, and descending step by step again, until it is lost in cloud and gloom. Thus from the miracle play, in which we find the origin of the English drama, we proceed to the moral play, and thence to the interlude, a species of farce, and so on until, in the reign of Henry VIII., we meet with the beginnings of the regular drama. After its inception its growth was marvelously rapid. It is worthy of note that nearly all the dramatists of the Elizabethan period were scholars—Oxford and Cambridge men. It seems as if a passion, or craze if you will, had suddenly sprung up for this species of composition. It was, in fact, a consequence of the extraordinary life and energy of the time. Everything seemed to conduce to awaken and stimulate the imagination of men. Old shackles had been thrown off, and new ideas filled men's minds. A new world had been discovered, the spirit of freedom was in the air, and visions of boundless glory dawned on the eyes. There was peace and prosperity in the land. A long "winter was past, the rain was over and gone; the flowers appeared on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come." It was not the drama alone that found a new berth and grew sturdily, but every form of literature flourished. If we