

SHAKSPERE AND TYPOGRAPHY

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Shakspere and Typography by William Blades

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WILLIAM BLADES

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By
William Blades



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The INTRODUCTION

IN the good old days when printing was better recognized as a mystery than as an art, one could call a printer 'a man of letters' without being guilty of a pun. Books were for the few then, and the man who would print them must be somewhat of a scholar himself.

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To-day, amid the whirr of many presses, and the hurrying to and fro of the printing office, the printer finds little or no time for literary pursuits, despite the fact that printing is, in very truth, the handmaid of literature. It is the more admirable, therefore, when a successful printer attains to a degree of scholarship—particularly scholarship in matters that enlighten and dignify his own handicraft.

Such a printer was *William Blades*. During

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fifty years of active business life he contributed to the history of printing, a goodly number of books and a mass of miscellaneous articles. Among these is the most complete and authoritative life of Caxton, England's first printer, representing an immense amount of study and research.

The book from which the following pages are reprinted is perhaps the least familiar of Blades' works, and it evidently was written as a literary recreation. The thought

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that reading it may afford recreation to those busied about the making of books, and the comparative scarcity of the only edition, are the excuses for reprinting the more interesting portion.

The first chapter (merely a resumé of the theories that have been advanced by various professions and callings to claim Shakspeare for their own) has been omitted; likewise the appendix, which is a suggestion that many of the obscurities in the text of Shakspeare may be cleared up by a

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study of the typographical errors in the first editions. With these exceptions, the work is given here entire, and, it is hoped, in such form as accords with the spirit of the author, whose tastes were those of the scholarly printer.

*Editorial Dept.,
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November, 1877*



