

**THE UNFORTUNATE TRAVELLER:
OR THE LIFE OF JACK WILTON,
WITH AN ESSAY ON THE LIFE
AND WRITINGS OF THOMAS
NASH**

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The Unfortunate Traveller: Or the Life of Jack Wilton, with an Essay on the Life and Writings of Thomas Nash by Edmund Gosse

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EDMUND GOSSE

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Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.

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AN ESSAY
ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF THOMAS NASH.

It is mainly, no doubt, but I hope not exclusively, an antiquarian interest which attaches to the name of Thomas Nash. It would be absurd to claim for a writer so obscure a very prominent place in the procession of Englishmen of letters. His works proclaim by their extreme rarity the fact that three centuries of readers have existed cheerfully and wholesomely without any acquaintance with their contents. At the present moment, the number of those living persons who have actually perused the works of Nash may probably be counted on the fingers of two hands. Most of these productions

are uncommon to excess, one or two exist in positively unique examples. There is no use in arguing against such a fact as this. If Nash had reached, or even approached, the highest order of merit, he would have been placed, long ere this, within the reach of all. Nevertheless, his merits, relative if not positive, were great. In the violent coming of age of Elizabethan literature, his voice was heard loudly, not always discordantly, and with an accent eminently personal to himself. His life, though shadowy, has elements of picturesqueness and pathos; his writings are a storehouse of oddity and fantastic wit.

It has been usual to class Nash with the Precursors of Shakespeare, and until quite lately it was conjectured that he was older than Greene and Peele, a contemporary of Lodge and Chapman. It is now known that he was considerably younger than all these, and even than Marlowe and Shakespeare. Thomas Nash, the fourth child of the Rev. William Nash, who