

**MASTER SKYLARK; OR, WILL
SHAKESPEARE'S WARD; A
DRAMATIZATION OF THE STORY
OF THE SAME NAME BY JOHN
BENNETT, IN FIVE ACTS**

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Master Skylark; or, Will Shakespeare's ward; a dramatization of the story of the same name by
John Bennett, in five acts by Edgar White Burrill

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EDGAR WHITE BURRILL

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"Master Skylark, thou shalt have thy wish," said Queen Elizabeth.

MASTER SKYLARK

OR

WILL SHAKESPEARE'S WARD

A Dramatization from the Story of the
same name by John Bennett

IN FIVE ACTS

BY

EDGAR WHITE BURRILL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
REGINALD B. BIRCH



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To J. E. B.
Whose unfailing sympathy and encouragement
Has been an inspiration to so many,
But most of all to me.

883083

PREFACE

The number of people who have been delighted with Mr. Bennett's charming story of Elizabethan England since it first appeared in the *ST. NICHOLAS* magazine nearly twenty years ago continues to increase steadily. No contemporary presentation in fiction of the life of that age is more faithful; no other has succeeded so well in reproducing the atmosphere of the times. To the winsome figure of Nicholas Attwood himself there clings a sort of Peter Pan quality which endears him to old and young alike. It is this fine sentiment that raises "Master Skylark" quite above the level of the ordinary historical romance.

At the same time it should be remarked that the story has been deemed of such historical accuracy as to warrant its use in colleges and schools in this country to give to students an adequate sense of the local color of the brilliant Elizabethan age; and to many it has had the effect of awakening an appreciation not only of the times, but of the literature of the period as well. So careful has the author been, in fact, that his book has been used

in England as an auxiliary guide to Stratford-on-Avon, while in Berlin,— for the minute study of all pertaining to Will Shakespeare has in some ways been more at heart to the German than to the Briton,— in addition to the regular German edition of the story, there has been issued a school edition with notes, glossary, etc., for German academic use.

The attempt made here to visualize the story upon the stage has had certain manifest difficulties, yet the continued superiority of this romance to all others in the field has justified such an attempt, particularly on this three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, when clubs, high schools, colleges, communities, and cities everywhere are searching for dramatic material to use in connection with the nation-wide Shakespeare tercentenary celebration.

Many critics have felt that in the story which forms the basis of the play Shakespeare the *man* has for the first time in literature been adequately presented. In the play more prominence might have been given to the part if it had not been the desire of the dramatist to keep as closely as possible to the original version of the story. For the play, like the story, aims to set before the eye the fabric of the times as a whole; and perhaps the proportion is thus historically truer, since, so far