

THE DIGBY MYSTERIES

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The Digby mysteries by F. J. Furnivall

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F. J. FURNIVALL

**THE DIGBY
MYSTERIES**

THE DIGBY MYSTERIES.

TO
MRS GEORGE WHERRY,

Corpus Buildings, Cambridge.

MY DEAR MRS WHERRY,

You and I once studied SHAKSPERE for a time together.

I well recollect your capital acting of Nerissa in the *Merchant of Venice*, and the arch way in which you tost up your handkerchief when you heard the news that Bassanio was coming, as if you divined that the right man was near.

Some friends asserted that you actually winkt at him, to let him know which were the wrong caskets, and which the right; but that was doubtless a libel. At any rate you chafft delightfully that saucy *Gratiano*—the impertinent!—who dared to say that it was a 'youth,' 'a little scrubbed boy,' to whom he gave your Ring.

Then you left such merrymaking to nurse "the speachleffe sicke," "enforce the maimed impotent to smile"; and for two years you toiled in the Hospitals.

You have your reward in your pretty, happy home, in the affection of the able and accomplit gentleman to whom you have linkt your life—the tender of the suffering, the helper of the poor, "who are Christ's friends," as Chaucer says.

I think of your choice and lot with pleasure, and I venture to dedicate to you this edition of a few of the Early Religious Dramas before Shakspeare's time, as just a reminder of the days when his triumphant art was the subject of our mutual work. Believe me to be,

Always sincerely yours,

F. J. FURNIVALL.

New Shakspeare Society
Publications

Series 7 Vol
THE English mysteries etc

DIGBY MYSTERIES.

1. THE KILLING OF THE CHILDREN.
2. THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL.
3. MARY MAGDALENE.
4. CHRIST'S BURIAL AND RESURRECTION,

WITH AN INCOMPLETE
MORALITY
OF
WISDOM, WHO IS CHRIST
(PART OF ONE OF THE MACRO MORALITIES).

EDITED FROM THE MSS.

BY

F. J. FURNIVALL,

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE NEW SHAKSPEARE SOCIETY, ETC.

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↪ The Committee of the *New Shakspeare Society* give express notice that the Editor of any of the Society's Books is alone responsible for the opinions exprest in it.

FOREWORDS.

THIS book opens the Seventh Series of the *New Shakspeare Society's* publications, that of the "English Mysteries, Miracle-Plays, Interludes, &c. up to Shakspeare's time." Tho it is later and far less complete than the other sets of Mysteries—the Towneley, Chester, Coventry, and Lord Ashburnham's York one, still kept in MS.—it has been hitherto printed in so few copies¹—50, by the Abbotsford Club in 1835—that I chose it, on that account, as our first work of the kind, in order that it might get more generally known. As too I have been able to add to the old set one more Mystery in 2 Parts,—that of the 'Burial and Resurrection of Christ,' which evidently once belonged to the Digby MS. 133, from which these Mysteries get their name,—the present edition has a fresh value of its own, however slight that value may be.

But to every play-goer and every student of the drama, all the old Mysteries have an interest independent of their literary merit. They show him the stories and scenes in which his forefathers before and up to Shakspeare's time were content to find edification and amusement. They prove to him that these old plays were but parts of the Romish Church service, developept and taken out into the streets (p. 227-8, below). They give him the origin of that mixture of comedy in deepest tragedy, and of tragedy in highest comedy, nay in roaring farce, which is a leading note of Shakspeare's

¹ Hawkins printed the first play, *Candlemas Day*, in his *Origin of the English Drama*, 1773, and Marriott reprinted it in his *Collection of English Miracle-Plays, &c.*, Basel, 1838.—P. A. DANIEL.