

**THE SHAKESPEARE
SOCIETY'S
PAPERS. VOL. I**

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P R E F A C E.

This work has originated in a desire, on the part of the Council of the Shakespeare Society, to afford a receptacle for papers illustrative of our early drama and stage, none of which, by themselves, would be of sufficient length and importance to form a separate publication.

It is to be borne in mind that the Society was formed, not merely for the elucidation of the productions of our great Dramatist (although that was certainly the main design), but of those of his predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate followers; so that few points connected with our popular literature, anterior to the Restoration, do not come within the scope of the Society.

This remark is the more necessary, because it does not always seem to have been understood, because some of the ensuing articles are of a general character or relate to a remote period, and because it is the wish of the Council to invite contributions illustrating, directly or incidentally, the opinions, manners, and peculiarities of the times in which Shakespeare lived, so distinctly and vividly reflected in his pages.

The Council has confined the volume, in the first instance, to five and twenty papers; but others are in

reserve, and, by the aid of zealous Members in different parts of the kingdom, it is hoped that succeeding volumes may be issued of larger dimensions and of a wider range of criticism and reflection. It is known that several individuals, friendly to the design, would have sent contributions to the Secretary, had they been aware of the precise form it was wished they should assume.

The Council has to return its thanks for various articles not found in the following pages, and to apologize to the writers for the non-insertion of them in the present publication, which has been put forth rather as a specimen of what has been done, than of what may be accomplished.

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