

**SHAKSPERE AND MONTAIGNE:  
AN ENDEAVOUR TO EXPLAIN THE  
TENDENCY OF 'HAMLET' FROM  
ALLUSIONS IN CONTEMPORARY  
WORKS**

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Shakspere and Montaigne: an endeavour to explain the tendency of 'Hamlet' from allusions in contemporary works by Jacob Feis

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**JACOB FEIS**

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IN CONTEMPORARY WORKS.

BY

JACOB FEIS.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

B.

## I.

## INTRODUCTION.

IT has always been a daring venture to attempt finding out Shakspeare's individuality, and the range of his philosophical and political ideas, from his poetical productions. We come nearest to his feelings in his 'Sonnets;' but only a few heavy sighs, as it were, from a time of anguish in his life can be heard therefrom. All the rest of those lyrical effusions, in spite of the zealous exertions of commentators full of delicate sentiment and of deep thought, remain an unsolved secret.

In his historical dramas, a political creed has been pointed out, which, with some degree of certainty, may be held to have been his. From his other dramas, the most varied evidence has been drawn. A perfect maze of contradictions has been read out of them; so much so that, on this ground, we might almost despair of trustworthy results from further inquiry.

The wildest and most incongruous theories have been founded upon 'Hamlet'—the drama richest in philosophical contents. Over and over again men have hoped to be able to ascertain, from this tragedy, the great master's ideas about religion. It is well-nigh impossible to say how often such attempts have been made, but

the reward of the exertions has always remained unsatisfactory. On the feelings which this master-work of dramatic art still excites to-day—nearly three hundred years after its conception—thousands have based the most different conclusions ; every one being convinced of the correctness of his own impressions. There is a special literature, composed of such rendering of personal impressions which that most enigmatical of all dramas has made upon men of various disposition. Every hypothesis finds its adherents among a small group, whilst those who feel differently smile at the infatuation of their antagonists. Nothing that could give true and final satisfaction has yet been reached in this direction.

It is our intention to regard 'Hamlet' from a new point of view, which seems to promise more success than the critical endeavours hitherto made. We propose to enter upon a close investigation of a series of circumstances, events, and personal relations of the poet, as well as of certain indications contained in other dramatic works—all of the period in which 'Hamlet' was written and brought into publicity. This valuable material, properly arranged and put in its true connection, will, we believe, furnish us with such firm and solid stepping-stones as to allow us, on a perfectly trustworthy path, to approach the real intentions of this philosophical tragedy. It has long ago been felt that, in it, Shakspeare has laid down his religious views. By the means alluded to we will now explain that *credo*.

We believe we can successfully show that the ten-