

**SHAKESPEAREAN BREVIATES. AN
ADJUSTMENT OF TWENTY-FOUR
OF THE LONGER PLAYS OF
SHAKESPEARE TO CONVENIENT
READING LIMITS**

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Shakespearean Breviates. An Adjustment of Twenty-Four of the Longer Plays of Shakespeare to Convenient Reading Limits by Samuel Ferguson

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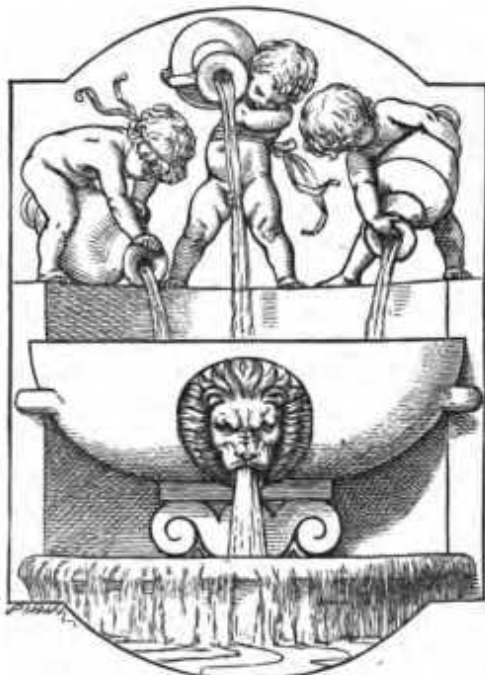
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Shakespeare, William

SHAKESPEAREAN BRIEVATES.

AN ADJUSTMENT OF
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TO
CONVENIENT READING LIMITS.

BY
SAMUEL FERGUSON, KNT., Q.C., LL.D., P.R.I.A.



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EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO

THE REV. ROBERT PERCEVAL GRAVES, M.A.,

Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal,
Vice-Warden of Alexandra College, Dublin.

GRAVES, first to light the lamp that brightest burns
Amidst our City's cinerary urns,
Whose voice, interpretive of every shade
Of thought and feeling, has so often made,
In Shakespeare Readings 'mongst our joint compeers,
Dublin delightful, these last twenty years;
Accept,—and view it with a favouring mind,—
This Book of Breviates by your friend designed
To bring the Plays you love within the reach
And compass of a two hours' reading each.

A five-act Shakespeare Play, read through, requires
Three hours of time; and oft, ere ended, tires.
For, choice of Play and choice of Readers take,
You want the Scene to keep the wits awake;
And, after two hours of the book, methinks
There's danger in the air of longer winks:
So, to confine your longer Plays inside
That two hours' limit, and such links provide,
In lieu of what's omitted, as may hold
The story's thread unbroken, I've been bold,
Here, to essay: two hours at most; and less
As shorter matter suited to compress.

Of Shakespeare's seven-and-thirty Plays, are four
Already short enough; and these pass o'er.

To wit, the *Tempest*; *Dromios*' puzzles; then,
Midsummer Dream; and the *Two Gentlemen*.
 Four more there are which, fitted to engage
 Delight and pity, witnessed on the stage,
 Yet deal in subjects I may well assume
 Our tastes, to-day, forbid the Drawing-room.
 For, as, at Church, the congregation's ear
 Takes reverently that 'twere hard to hear
 Unshamed at home, the moving Scene no less
 Absorbs an audience's self-consciousness.
Othello, therefore, with a fond alas,
 And noble *Isabella's* part I pass.
All's Well that Ends Well, (with enough to do
 To part from *Helena*,) I banish too;
 And, while respect with inclination strives,
 I pinch my Breviates of the *Merry Wives*.
 With these, though parted by a wide ha-ha,
 Prince *Pericles* and wanton *Cressida*
 I set aside. Two other more are sped
 Because (if *his*, with reverence be it said)
 Too dull for reading. Yea, exclude I must,
Titus, your tale of butchery and lust;
 And, trifling as the euphuistic art
 It caricatures, *Love's Labour* leave apart;
 While, less by humours of *Christophero Sly*,
 (The Prologue better than the Piece, *perdy*.)
 Within the 'foresaid limit of hours two,
 Who lists may read the *Taming of the Shrew*.
 Thirteen, deducted, leave us twenty-four.
 Five lovely Comedies: we'd wish them more;
 Nine Histories, in lofty buskin dressed;
 Who reads, will know old England at her best;
 Nine Tragedies; and one that shares the Scene,
 Part tragic, part non-tragic, *Cymbeline*.

These, then, supply the matter of the book,
Whereon I pray you favouringly look.

Note that, besides the omitted parts in chief,
Of which the verse-links give the sum in brief,
Things, here and there, there are demand the wit
Of the Reader's self, to censure and omit;
Things which, though ruder times might bear to hear,
Would now offend the purer social ear.
Nor can we look for Readings unperplex'd
By some misprisions, till we have a text
Complete in all constituents of the Play,
Save what a modest mind would wish away,—
Th'expurgate text—so printed, as the eye
Would tell what part to read, and what pass by,
In public exercise; nor hindrance do
To private study of the residue:
(In which the "links," as blushing to be said
To speak in Shakespeare's presence, might print *red*.)
But this beyond our present purpose strays,
And craves a New Edition of the Plays.

Farewell, old friend; may many a union yet
Of gentle spirits give us to forget,
In *his* perennial youth, our weight of years,
Our cares of duty, and our country's tears.

Dublin, 10th May, 1882.
