

**WILLIAM SHAKESPERE, OF
STRATFORD-ON-AVON. HIS
EPITAPH UNEARTHED, AND THE
AUTHOR OF THE PLAYS RUN TO
GROUND. WITH SUPPLEMENT**

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William Shakespere, of Stratford-on-Avon. His epitaph unearthed, and the author of the plays run to ground. With supplement by Scott Surtees

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SCOTT SURTEES

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BY

Frederick
SCOTT SURTEES.

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SHAKESPERE'S EPITAPH.

SHAKESPERE'S EARLY HOME.

SHAKESPERE'S CHAIRS.

STRANGE FORM OF MARRIAGE LICENCE.

SHAKESPERE'S LATER HOME AT NEW PLACE.

WHO WROTE SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS? A GUESS AT THE
TRUTH.

MR. DONNELLY AND THE CRYPTOGRAM, WITH SUPPLEMENT
AND NOTES ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

REV. SCOTT SURTEES,

OF

Dinsdale-on-Tees.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPERE.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM SHAKESPERE'S EPITAPHS AND CHAIRS AT STRATFORD- ON-AVON.

THERE is one point above all others which bears strongly against the theory that William Shakspere, of Stratford-on-Avon, was the author of the so-called Shakespeare's Plays, and that is the audacious doggerel which has been fathered on his memory. William Shakspere, after a disreputable youth, marrying at 17 or 18 a woman many years older than himself, whose child was soon after born, the son of a father who could not write his name, and in debt and difficulty, and who himself (père) had been within the clutches of the law, found his native place too hot to hold him, and if the universal tradition on the subject is worth anything, having a warrant out against him for poaching, "fitted" to London, became a stage-slayer, went in for speculation in building a theatre, laid out his modest earnings judiciously, bought a house in his native place, another in London "within the precinct of the late Black Fryers," retired to New Place, died, and was buried in the church of that dirty town, in

1616, in the chancel, and his epitaph inscribed at his request upon his tomb. He appears to have been in the habit of writing or quoting such, and got the credit for this sort of poetry from his companions. It is plain from the evidence I produce (p. 7) that in and about those years it was the custom in London churches to put verses of questionable merit on monuments and tombs, that it was usual to "crib" or copy them from some one else, and use them as their own. The instances I give (and their name is legion) shows this clearly to have been an every-day practice. The play-actor, with a memory sharpened "by learning his parts," had no doubt seen them on the walls of churches during his residence in London, and was in the habit of repeating and passing off as his own these doggerel rhymes for the edification and amusement of his companions and select friends; but when asked to give them an *extempore* one (evidently there was a leetle doubt as to his powers of composition), knocked off one or two much inferior to those his memory had retained (p. 11). What a specimen of their high literary taste and also of his own, requesting to have such rubbish inscribed upon his grave! No doubt there were many other such-like epitaphs in churches in London which have been destroyed or effaced by lapse of time, but these are a sufficient specimen to show how little variation there is in them, and that mainly in the spelling. The epitaph on the stone over Shakspeare's grave has been pressed into the service by a believer in his writings to prove—first, that he "curst those who should move his bones," because that he was fearful that when his renown was acknowledged, his bones would be moved from their last resting-place in the Stratford that he loved,