

**SHAKESPERE'S
CURSE, AND
OTHER POEMS**

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Shakespere's curse, and other poems by Henry Gay Hewlett

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HENRY GAY HEWLETT

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LONDON

BOSWORTH & HARRISON, 215 REGENT STREET

1861

280.c.69

Inscribed

TO HIS MOST FAITHFUL MUSE

AND GENEROUS CRITIC

BY

HER HUSBAND

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SHAKESPERE'S CURSE.

IN crude vainglorious youth I scoffed

To hear the poets sing :

“ Soothe with your Art-Elysium

The ennui of a king !

But to what spirit that toils and weeps

Can ye nepenthe bring ? ”

* * * * *

As dreams will have it, in Stratford church

I watch when the moon is high :

Waves of light o'erflowing the brink

Of the window-tracery

Bathe in glory a sculptured shape

Standing the chancel by.

And the graven tablet seems to sound
With a herald's clarion-tones ;
Rising to shout its promise of "*Blest*
Be he y' spares the stones,"
Falling to mutter its menace of "*Curst*
Be he y' moves my bones."

"You mouth the prophet well," scoff I,
"As any actor can :
Ah ! an 'immortal dreamer' rots
Like any mortal man.
It were a dainty jest, methinks,
If one should tempt the ban."

Lo ! as I speak, the vaults unclose !
And I descend to see
Lidless coffin and cerements loose
Invite my mockery :
I stoop and scatter the dust : — I rise
With the chill of a curse on me !

In a trance of pain I feel the loss
Of a presence that may not stay ;
As though the twilight-veil of Life
From its face had shrunk away,
And thrust at once on my aching eyes
The nakedness of day.

Roused by the sharp grey gleam of dawn,
I pass through the open door —
Scaring with frowns the senseless play
Of a child, who fleeth before,
As though he had seen the spirit that stalked
On the tower of Elsinore.

My hearth is drear : *her* voice rings false,
Her spousal kiss is cold :
Strange that our chanted marriage-vows
Are scarce a twelvemonth old !
Meseems the circlet on her hand
Is only fairy-gold !

I scan my neighbour at the mart
With a stranger's sceptic eye :
Why should I trust his life-long fame ?
A saint may cheat and lie ;
Yea, though his proud cheek flame. We part,
With each an enemy.

Is this my curse, and must the names
Of child and friend and wife
Grate like rock-bells ringing above
The foam of social strife
Harsh memorial knells to me
Of a wrecked and drifting life ?

I shun the unlovely human face,
As Timon fled of yore—
Ye Heavens ! my tyrant's memories
Will haunt me evermore ! —
But read the story of my curse
Hath travelled on before.