

**SHAKESPEARE, THE MAN: AN  
ATTEMPT TO FIND TRACES  
OF THE DRAMATIST'S  
CHARACTER IN HIS DRAMAS**

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Shakespeare, the Man: An Attempt to Find Traces of the Dramatist's Character in His Dramas  
by Goldwin Smith

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HIS DRAMAS

*By*



**GOLDWIN SMITH**

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## Preface

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AN attempt to find traces of the personal character of Shakespeare under the dramatist is, it need hardly be said, a different thing from an interpretation of Shakespeare's art. In making it the writer does not trespass on the ground occupied by Coleridge, Gervinus, Dowden, and Hiram Corson.

An apology may seem necessary for quoting in full some well-known passages of Shakespeare; but the writer does not feel sure that "in these most brisk and giddy-paced times," when a tidal-wave of popular and sensational fiction is flowing, familiarity with Shakespeare is so common as it was in former days.



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## Shakespeare: the Man

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SUCH materials as there are for Shakespeare's personal history, or for the history of any one connected with him, have been gathered with the most loving and persevering industry. Unhappily, they amount to very little. Entries in municipal records, names in a will, a lease, or an inventory, tell hardly anything of the life or character of the man. That orange has now been squeezed dry.

It would seem better worth while to consider under what general influences—social, political, and religious—the life was passed.

Shakespeare was a poet of the Renaissance and of the Elizabethan era. Of the Renaissance, with its passion for beauty and art, its joyous release from

### Shakespeare: the Man

asceticism, and not only from asceticism, but from strict morality, its tendency to scepticism in religion; of the Elizabethan era with its springtide of national life, its heroic struggle against the powers of the past, its love of adventure, its galaxy of active and aspiring spirits in every sphere.

Born in 1564, he would by 1580 be observant and open to impressions. Between 1580 and his death there are thirty-six years full of momentous events; the struggle with Spain; the proclamation of the Papal curse against England in her Queen; the Armada; the conflict in France between the League and the Huguenots; the insurrection and tragic end of Essex; the death of Elizabeth; the accession of James; the union of the Crowns; the Gunpowder Plot; the opening of the contest between the Stuart King and his Parliament; the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth with the Elector Palatine; the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. During the last two decades