

NEW PARTICULARS

REGARDING

THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE

IN A LETTER TO

THE REV. A. DYCE, B.A.

EDITOR OF THE WORKS OF PEELE, GREENE, WEBSTER, &c.

FROM

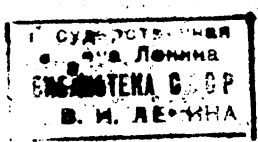
J. PAYNE COLLIER, F.S.A.

LONDON:

THOMAS RODD,

GREAT NEWPORT STREET, LONG ACRE.

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LONDON:

F. SHOBERL, JUN., LEICESTER STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present letter, like the “New Facts regarding the Life of Shakespeare,” is limited to a small number of copies—very small in comparison with the interest of the subject.

It relates to some of the most important of Shakespeare’s dramatic works—*Richard the Second*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, &c. ; and assigns to him poems recently discovered, and only existing in manuscript. The information thus supplied the author apprehends is entirely new.

Other circumstances connected with our early Poets, Stage, and Players, will be found incidentally illustrated.

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MY DEAR DYCE,

As I do not well know how to arrange the materials, (miscellaneous in their nature, though uniform in their purpose), of my present communication, I shall refrain from making any attempt of the kind: of course, you feel so lively an interest in all that relates to Shakespeare and his works, that an inevitable degree of desultoriness will not deter you from reading what follows with more than mere curiosity. Were such a letter addressed to me, I am not sure that I should not like it the better for the very reason which, were I more systematic in my reading, would make me like it the worse. However, you must take it "for better for worse," and we are told that,

"Books are like wives, in sheets or bound,
Seldom without digressions;
And children, as the years come round,
Are only new impressions."

At all events, as you have made the one a substitute for the other, to send you any thing new of a literary

nature is a species of charity, since it furnishes you with a fresh source of enjoyment. Without more preface, therefore, I shall begin.

When I was at Oxford, six or seven years ago, looking for materials for the "History of Dramatic Poetry and the Stage," I heard of the existence, in the Bodleian Library, of a Manuscript containing notes on the performance of some of Shakespeare's plays, written by a person who saw them acted during the life-time of the poet. These would have been a great prize to me, and I made long and repeated searches for them, but without success. The fact is, that I was accidentally put upon a wrong scent; and, had I been upon a right one, in that immense receptacle of rarities, I might easily have failed in making the wished-for discovery. The MSS. were not then as well arranged as at present, and even now, without previous and correct information, the most eager hunt might sometimes be ineffectual. Not long since a gentleman of my acquaintance, of peculiar acquirements, was employed to make a catalogue of the Ashmolean MSS. only, and he, very unexpectedly, found among them the notes I had anxiously sought in a different direction. He instantly forwarded a copy of them to me.

They are contained in the Ashmolean volume, No. 208, and bear the following title:—"The Booke of Plaies and Notes therof, & Formans, for common Pollicie," and they were written by Dr. Simon For-