

NEW READINGS AND NEW RENDERINGS

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES

VOL. II.

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NEW READINGS & NEW RENDERINGS  
OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES

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'Conjectural criticism demands more than  
humanity possesses; and he that exercises it  
with most praise has very frequent need of  
indulgence'

JOHNSON, *Preface to Shakespeare*

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## EXPLANATORY NOTICE.

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OF the four plays comprised in this volume the three latter, unlike the preceding historical tragedies, had, before its preparation for the press, not been the subject of any illustrative or emendatory notice on my part. Never attracting or affecting me quite as the other works of Shakespeare, nor indeed ever seeming to me to be his works, they had never been so perused as to engage me in spontaneous interpretation or restoration. Even up to the present hour too, of Shakespeare's close, bold, and subtle reasoning; his epigrammatic play of words and ideas; his grace and dignity of dialogue; his psychological curiosity; his metaphorical prodigality; his disclosed fruits of pensive experience; his encased kernels of consolidated thought; his touches of human nature, here finely caught, there mysteriously inspired; his world-wide illustration; his magical imagery of outward things reflected from the innermost sense of them; all involved in a stream of melody whose onflow becomes in itself pathetic;—of these from the three parts of Henry the Sixth I still miss some sensible measure.

On collecting, however, my notes on the other portions of English history dramatised by Shakespeare, I have felt that these pieces, if not wrought, yet wrought upon, by him, and forming with them one chronological series, would well be included in the same scheme. And whoever be their authors in the main, they still remain vigorous and stirring dramas, composed during the years of Shakespeare's earlier manhood, and therefore during a period of the English language in which words and phrases were employed in the same sense as Shakespeare habitually intends to convey by them. The following notes therefore, written first for this publication, yet upon the same plan as those in the first volume, are amenable to the same prefatory observations. But as the comments here are all or nearly all of the same date, so have they rarely, if ever, needed a postscript to mark the period when additional sources of information became open to me.

UPTON CASTLE, PEMBROKE :

*Nov. 25, 1880.*