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SHAKSPERE'S PREDECESSORS

IN THE

ENGLISH DRAMA

BY

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'STUDIES OF GREEK PORTS' 'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY'
'SKETCHES IN ITALY AND GREECE' ETC.

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TO

MY NEPHEW

JOHN ST LOE STRACHEY

I DEDICATE THESE STUDIES

RESUMED AND CONTINUED AT HIS REQUEST

P R E F A C E.

BETWEEN the years 1862 and 1865 I undertook a History of the Drama in England during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. With this object in view I composed a series of essays, embracing the chief points in that history, and discussing the leading playwrights from the period of the Miracles down to that of Shirley. Having so far advanced toward the completion of this plan, I laid my manuscripts aside, discouraged partly by ill-health, partly by a conviction that the subject was beyond the scope and judgment of a literary beginner.

These early studies I have now resumed. The present volume is the first instalment of a critical inquiry into the conditions of the English Drama, based upon work which I began some twenty years ago, but which has been entirely re-handled and revised.

In the space of those twenty years the origins and evolution of our Drama have been amply treated and diligently explored by more than one distinguished and