

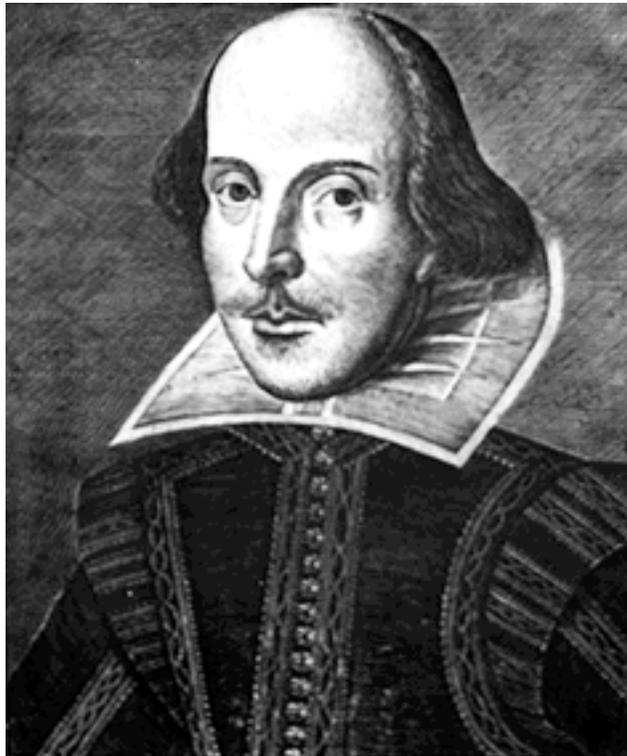
To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
with Nature, to out-doo the life :
O, could he but haue drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face ; the Print would then surpass
All, that vvas euer vvrit in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES

COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



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TO THE MOST NOBLE

AND

INCOMPARABLE PAIRE

OF BRETHREN.

WILLIAM

Earle of Pembroke, &c. Lord Chamberlaine to the
Kings most Excellent Maiesty.

AND

PHILIP

Earle of Montgomery, &c. Gentleman of his Maiesties

Bed-Chamber. Both Knights of the most Noble Order

of the Garter, and our singular good

LORDS.

Right Honourable,



Hilst we studie to be thankful in our particular, for the many fauors we haue receiued from your L.L we are falne vpon the ill fortune, to mingle two the most diuerse things that can bee, feare, and rashnesse; rashnesse in the enterprize, and feare of the successe. For, when we valew the places your H.H. sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles: and, vvhile we name them trifles, we haue depriu'd our selues of the defence of our Dedication. But since your L.L. haue beene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, heertofore; and haue prosequuted both them, and their Authour liuing, vvith so much fauour: we hope, that (they out-liuing him, and he not hauing the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings) you will vse the like indulgence toward them, you haue done

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

vnto their parent. There is a great difference, vvwhether any Booke choose his Patrones, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so muche were your L.L. likings of the seuerall parts, vvhen they were acted, as before they vvere published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We haue but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; vvithout ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow aliue, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we haue iustly obserued, no man to come neere your L.L. but vvith a kind of religious addresse; it hath bin the height of our care, vvho are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H.H. by the perfection. But, there we must also craue our abilities to be considerd, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruite, or what they haue: and many Nations (we haue heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leauened Cake. It vvvas no fault to approach their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H.H. these remaines of your seruant *Shakespeare*; that what delight is in them, may be euer your L.L. the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the liuing, and the dead, as is

Your Lordshippes most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGE.

HENRY CONDELL.



To the great Variety of Readers.



From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd. We had rather you were weigh'd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends vpon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & you wil stand for your priuiledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies.

Then, how odde soeuer your braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Iudge your fixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your fiue shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates, and welcome. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue a Trade, or make the Iacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at *Black-Friers*, or the *Cock-pit*, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes haue had their triall already, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation.

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; and so to haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious imposters, that expos'd them: euen those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued thé. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and others. And such Readers we wish him.



To the memory of my beloued, The AVTHOR

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE :
AND
what he hath left vs.

TO draw no enuy (*Shakespeare*) on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy Booke, and Fame :
While I confesse thy writings to be such,
As neither *Man*, nor *Muse*, can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these wayes
Were not the paths I meant vnto thy praise :
For seeliest Ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but eccho's right ;
Or blinde Affection, which doth ne're aduance
The truth, but gropes, and vrgeth all by chance ;
Or crafty Malice, might pretend this praise,
And thinke to ruine, where it seem'd to raise.
These are, as some infamous Baud, or Whore,
Should praise a Matron. What could hurt her more ?
But thou art prooffe against them, and indeed
Aboue th' ill fortune of them, or the need.
I, therefore will begin. Soule of the Age !
The applause ! delight ! the wonder of our Stage !
My *Shakespeare*, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or *Spenser*, or bid *Beaumont* lye
A little further, to make thee a roome :
Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,
And art aliue still, while thy Booke doth liue,
And we haue wits to read, and praise to giue.
That I not mixe thee so, my braine excuses ;
I meane with great, but disproportion'd *Muses*:
For, if I thought my iudgement were of yeeres,
I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
And tell, how farre thou didstst [sic] our *Lily* out-shine,
Or sporting *Kid*, or *Marlowes* might line.
And though thou hadst small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seeke
For names; but call forth thund'ring *AEschilus*,
Euripides, and *Sophocles* to vs,
Paccuius, *Accius*, him of *Cordoua* dead,
To life againe, to heare thy Buskin tread,
And shake a Stage : Or, when thy Sockes were on,
Leaue thee alone, for the comparison

Of all, that insolent Greece or haughtie Rome
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
 Triúmph, my *Britaine*, thou hast one to showe,
 To whom all Scenes of *Europe* homage owe.
 He was not of an age, but for all time !
 And all the *Muses* still were in their prime,
 When like *Apollo* he came forth to warme
 Our eares, or like a *Mercury* to charme !
 Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
 And ioy'd to weare the dressing of his lines !
 Which were so richly spun, and wouen so fit,
 As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.
 The merry *Greeke* tart *Aristophanes*,
 Neat *Terence*, witty *Plautus*, now not please ;
 But antiquated, and deserted lye
 As they were not of Natures family.
 Yet must I not giue Nature all : Thy Art,
 My gentle *Shakespeare*, must enioy a part.
 For though the *Poets* matter, Nature be,
 His Art doth giue the fashion. And, that he,
 Who casts to write a liuing line, must sweat,
 (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
 Vpon the *Muses* anuile : turne the same,
 (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame ;
 Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
 For a good *Poet's* made, as well as borne.
 And such wert thou. Looke how the fathers face
 Liues in his issue, euen so, the race
 Of *Shakespeares* minde, and manners brightly shines
 In his well torned, and true filed lines :
 In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,
 As branish't at the eyes of Ignorance.
 Sweet Swan of *Auon* ! what a sight it were
 To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
 And make those flights vpon the bankes of *Thames*,
 That so did take *Eliza*, and our *Iames* !
 But stay, I see thee in the *Hemisphere*
 Aduanc'd, and made a Constellation there !
 Shine forth, thou Starre of *Poets*, and with rage,
 Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage ;
 Which, since thy flight frō hence, hath mourn'd like night,
 And despaires day, but for thy Volumes light.

BEN: IONSON.



Vpon the Lines and Life of the Famous
Scenicke Poet, Master WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE.



Hose hands, which you so clapt, go now, and wring
You *Britaines* braue; for done are *Shakespeares* dayes :
His dayes are done, that made the dainty Playes,
Which made the Globe of heau'n and earth to ring.
Dry'de is that veine, dry'd is the *Thespian* Spring,
Turn'd all to teares, and *Phoebus* clouds his rayes :
That corp's, that coffin now besticke those bayes,
Which crown'd him *Poet* first, then *Poets* King.
If *Tragedies* might any *Prologue* haue,
All those he made, would scarce make one to this :
Where *Fame*, now that he gone is to the graue
(Deaths publike trying-house) the *Nuncius* is.
For though his line of life went soone about,
The life yet of his lines shall neuer out.

HVGH HOLLAND.