

William Shakespeare a Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. 1 (Classic Reprint)

E. K. Chambers



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William Shakespeare a Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. 1 (Classic Reprint) E. K. Chambers Shakespeare, and of the English stage as a background for Shakespeare; and this has been throughout my theme, although I have not found it possible to use quite that brevity of words which the confident surmise of youth anticipated. My remaining purpose is threefold. The present volumes complete the design of The Elizabethan Stage by a treatment of its central figure, for which in that book I had no space proportionate to his significance, .1 collect the scanty biographical data from records and tradition, and endeavour to submit them to the tests of a reasonable analysis. And thirdly, I attempt to evaluate the results of bibliographical and historical study in relation to the canon of the plays, and to form a considered opinion upon the nature of the texts in which Shakespeare swork is preserved to us. In so doing, I am led to a confirmation of the doubts expressed in my British Academy lecture of 1924 on The Disintegration of Shakespeare as to the validity of certain drifts of speculation, which tend to minimize at once the originality of that work and the purity of its transmission. I am not so much perturbed as some of my critics seem to think that I ought to be, by finding that my conclusions do not differ essentially from those which have long formed part of the critical tradition. That is itself the outcome of study through many generations by men of diverse tempers, starting from diverse standpoints. They have no doubt left something for modern scholarship to contribute, especially as regards the causes of major textual variations.

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