

ETCHINGS OF SHAKESPEARE.

BY THE REV. S. B. DUNN.

"I'LL write it straight;
The matter's in my head, and in my heart."
—*As You Like It*, iii. 5.

"He that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail."
—*Romeo and Juliet*, i. 4.

I. THE APPARITION OF LITERATURE.

"Stay, illusion !
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me :
If there be any good thing to be done
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me."

Hamlet, i. 1.

"Remember thee ?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee ?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there ;
And thy commandments all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmixed with baser matter."

—*Hamlet*, i. 5.

Surprise has sometimes been expressed that while so much is known about Shakespeare's mind, so little should be known about his history. Outside of his works the scantiest records are all that remain of this most gifted of men, and first of all "the laurelled gods of song." That he was probably born on the twenty-third of April in the year fifteen hundred and sixty-four, and that he died on the fifty-second anniversary of his birthday, is about all we know of his mortal life. During that brief period the immortal Shakespeare flits across "the disc of Time" like an apparition. In the drama of his day, he was accustomed, it is said, to play the part of the Ghost in *Hamlet* ; so he moves among "the choice and master spirits of the age" a spectral form, sheeted