

DRAMATIC SERIES
OF
THE FAMILY LIBRARY.

[~~9~~ The number of volumes composing the "Dramatic Series" will be limited, and will be bound and numbered in such a manner as to render it not essentially necessary to obtain them to complete sets of the Family Library.]

The Old English Dramatists, the friends and contemporaries of Shakespeare, have contributed one of the most valuable portions to the poetic literature of our country. But—abounding as they do in wit and fancy, in force and copiousness of expression, in truth and variety of character, in rapid change of incidents, in striking and interesting situations, and, above all, in justice and elevation of sentiment—their works are totally unknown to the generality of readers, and are only found in the hands of an adventurous few, who have deviated from the beaten paths of study to explore for themselves less familiar and exhausted tracts of literary amusement. The neglect of these authors, in an age so favourable to works of imagination as the present, can only be ascribed to that occasional coarseness of language which intermixes with and pollutes the beauty of their most exquisite scenes. . . . Under these circumstances, the editors of the Family Library have determined on publishing a selection from the plays of Massinger, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford, Sbriley, Webster, Middleton, and others, omitting all such scenes and passages as are inconsistent with the delicacy and refinement of modern taste and manners. Whenever it is possible, the play will be printed entire. If there be a double plot, the one, as in the case of the *Virgin-Martyr*, eminently beautiful, and the other as eminently offensive, the living beauty will be separated from the dead weight of corruption to which it is unnaturally joined, and be presented to the reader in a form which may afford an unmixed and flowing enjoyment to his imagination. When there is a radical evil in the groundwork of the play, only a single act or a few scenes may be given; but, in such cases, care will always be taken to preserve the interest of an entire and connected story. The work will be accompanied with short explanatory notes, and occasional critical remarks.

"There can be little doubt that the works of those dramatists who flourished in the time of Shakespeare will be eagerly purchased, as they are very much wanted in this country. Although containing the essence of poetry, few on this side of the Atlantic are acquainted with their merits. It is singular that they have not been reprinted here before. A little of the solid thought and laboured composition of those days might be advantageously substituted for much of the frippery now cut down into tedious metre, and eked out with forced and hackneyed rhyme."—*N. Y. Mirror*.

"The Dramatic Series of the Family Library has been planned in such a manner as to promise to make it one of the most important features of that admirable collection. Hitherto there has been scarcely any attempt, certainly no successful one, at opening the immense source of poetical treasure which is to be found in the works of those dramatists who flourished contemporaneously with the mightiest of them all. The editor of this series is liberal of explanation and elucidation too, where they are called for by any obvious difficulty in the text. Cases of obvious necessity alone, however, obtain his interference; he supplies the requisite assistance without obtruding it; sometimes from his own resources, at others from unobjectionable authorities."—*Monthly Review*.