

THE PORTFOLIO.

Vita Sine Literis Mortis Est.

VOL. 3.

HAMILTON, DECEMBER, 1880.

No. 3.

Poetry.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

RING out sweet bells! ring loud and free,
Till the whole air thrills with your melody!
Ring out, and girdle the earth around
With your golden chain of joyful sound.
Ring out the glad old song again,
"Peace on earth; good will to men."

The little ones love the cheerful strain,
There are faces pressed 'gainst the window-pane;
There's many a young heart keeping time
To the joyous peal of the merry chime.
"Glory to God!" let the children know
The angel's message of long ago.

Ring out sweet bells! there are gray old men
Bowed 'neath their threescore years and ten;
Let the dull ears catch the glorious song,
Like a far off voice from the angel throng;
Ere you herald another Christmas day,
The gray-haired men may have passed away.

Ring loud on the frosty morning air!
Ring into the heart of the man of care!
Harsh discords meet him on every side,
Let him hear the music of Christmas-tide:
Ring out with a voice he must hear and heed,
For he needeth thy message with bitter need.

Ring out sweet bells! ring soft and low;
Steal gently into the home of woe,
Where the heart's exceeding bitter cry
Goes up to God in a prayer to die;
Whisper of peace in the home of grief,
For the Christ ye tell of can give relief.

There are some who have waited and listened long,
For the first glad note of your Christmas song,
Tossing all night on beds of pain,
Longing for morning to come again;
Let the sweet strains linger upon the air,
Tell them of heaven—they'll soon be there.

There's a message for all in the silvery chime,
For every place, for every time,
"Glory to God!" the heavenly choir
Sing it forever, yet never tire.
'Tis a melody passing mortal ken,
"Peace on earth; good will to men." s. w.

Essays.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

IT was left for England to produce the world's greatest dramatist, one who has never been equalled in the wealth of his imagination, the play of his fancy, his intimate acquaintance with all phases of human life and character, and above all the marvellous facility with which he places these before our wondering eyes. In the year 1564, at the quiet, dreamy, little town of Stratford-on-Avon, William Shakspeare was born. The son of a burghess in comfortable circumstances, he would probably have received a fair education, but while still in his thirteenth year, the little family was beset by pecuniary difficulties, and amidst the general ruin Shakspeare had to do his part in providing for the necessaries of life. Thus early thrown upon his own resources, he seems for a while to have followed his father's trade as glover and dealer in wool, and to have led anything but a regular life. This part of his career, however, as indeed the whole of his life, is, so far as certain knowledge can be obtained, almost a blank; and most of the stories told of his youthful escapades have so little authority as to be unworthy of repetition.

Before the age of nineteen he married Ann Hathaway, a woman seven or eight years his senior. He is said to have been unhappy with her, at any rate we find him soon after occupying one of the lowest positions in a London theatre. Although he probably began when very young to write verses, his first appearance before the public was not as an author, but as a remodeller or improver of old plays. Among these "Titus Andronicus" is thought to have been the first. In 1593, the poetic and literary world was enchanted by the first product of his genius in the "Venus and Adonis." The plan was perhaps sketched before he left the