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William Shakespeare

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The Sweet Silvery Sayings of Shakespeare on the Softer Sex

The anonymous 'Old Soldier' who compiled this anthology, published in 1877, states in the preface that he was inspired to make his selection by a passage in *The Gentle Life: Essays in Aid of the Formation of Character*, by the now large forgotten Victorian essayist James Hain Friswell: 'If a man wanted to make a sugar-sweet book ... let him go through the plays of the great national Poet, and make an extract of those passages wherein he has exalted woman.' In thirty-three sections (four plays are omitted), extensive quotations present examples of 'exalted woman' and give an insight into the taste of the educated middle class in the mid-Victorian period.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
EDITED BY 'AN OLD SOLDIER'



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HENRY S. KING AND CO. LONDON

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“IF a man wanted to make a little sugar-sweet book, which young men in love, and young maidens who are enamoured of their own sex would buy, let him go through the plays of the great national Poet, and make an extract of those passages wherein he has exalted woman.”—*Gentle Life*.

“And moreover I know, both from my own sense and from the greatest of all great poets, that there are, and always have been, plenty of women good and gentle, warm-hearted, loving and loveable; very keen, moreover, at seeing the right, be it by reason or otherwise.”
—Chapter 49 of “*Lorna Doone*,” a romance by R. D. BLACKMORE.

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PREFACE.

IN a far distant dependency, where the howling of the wind, the roar of the surf, and the whistle of wild fowl were night-sounds more familiar to the ear than was the voice of man, I lighted on the passage quoted on the fly-leaf, in Hain Friswell's "Gentle Life."

During the stormy evenings of one long winter I endeavoured to carry out the idea of an author whose works have given an intellectual treat to readers of the present generation. If the selection prove successful, it will meet the requirements suggested; if not, I can only regret that the compilation was not made by a more skilful pen; but none will ever be made by one who has a deeper reverence for the writings of a poet whose knowledge of human passions in all their various phases has never been surpassed.

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Often in the dusk of the evening on the banks of the Ganges the river is seen glittering with lights—a pretty superstition of the Indian girls, who commit little frail fire-ships, consisting of a small hollow gourd with oil and lighted wick, to the mighty swift stream; if the floating lamp sinks directly, the omen is disastrous; but if it sails down, still shining, for a considerable distance, then the omen is favourable.

So with this little labour of love. I push it down the stream of criticism, towards, as they say in Spain, the “honoured public.”




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