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Søren Kierkegaard

Collected Works



Series Fourteen

The Collected Works of
SØREN KIERKEGAARD

(1813-1855)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

S. Kierkegaard

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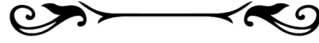
The Collected Works of
SØREN KIERKEGAARD



By Delphi Classics, 2023

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Collected Works of Søren Kierkegaard



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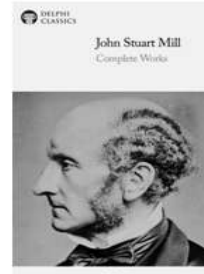
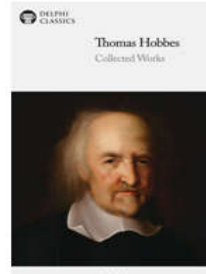
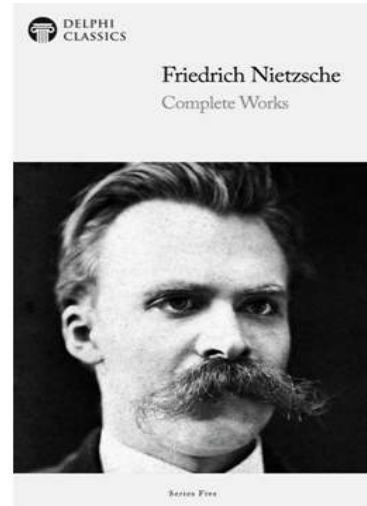
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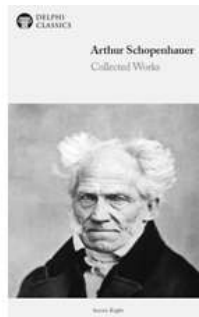
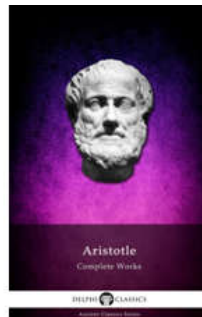
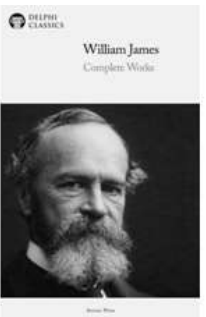
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PHILOSOPHY



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The Books



View of Copenhagen, 1808 — Kierkegaard's birthplace



Nytorv 2, Copenhagen, c. 1890 — Kierkegaard's birthplace and family home was the property on the far right.



Today, the site of the birthplace serves as a Danske Bank branch.



Unfinished sketch of Kierkegaard by his cousin Niels Christian Kierkegaard, Royal Library, Copenhagen, c. 1840

Either/Or (1843)



Translated by David F. Swenson, Lillian Marvin Swenson (Volume I) and Walter Lowrie (Volume II), 1941

Søren Kierkegaard's first published work, *Either/Or* appeared in two volumes in 1843 under the pseudonymous editorship of Victor Eremita (Latin for "victorious hermit"). The book outlines a theory of human existence, marked by the distinction between an essentially hedonistic, aesthetic mode of life and the ethical life, which is predicated upon commitment. The treatise portrays two life views, each written and represented by a fictional author, with the prose reflecting and depending on the view. The aesthetic life view is written in short essay form, with poetic imagery and allusions, discussing aesthetic topics such as music, seduction, drama and beauty. The ethical life view is structured as two long letters, with a more argumentative and restrained prose, discussing moral responsibility, critical reflection and marriage. The views are expressed as 'lived' experiences embodied by the "authors". The book's central concern is Aristotle's primal question, "How should we live?" His motto comes from Plutarch, "The deceived is wiser than one not deceived."

Kierkegaard argues that the aesthetic is the personal, subjective realm of existence, where an individual lives and extracts pleasure from life for its own sake. This realm offers the possibility of both the highest and lowest experiences. The ethical, on the other hand, is the civic realm of existence, wherein value and identity are judged and at times superseded by the objective world. The choice is whether to remain oblivious to the outside world or to become involved. More specifically, the ethical realm starts with a conscious effort to choose one's life. Either way, it is possible to go too far in one direction and lose sight of the self. Only faith can rescue the individual from these opposing realms. The treatise concludes with a brief sermon, hinting at the religious sphere of existence, which had occupied most of Kierkegaard's publishing career. Ultimately, his challenge is for the reader to "discover a second face hidden behind the one you see" internally, and then in others.

Enten – Eller.

Et Livs-Fragment

udgivet

af

Victor Eremita.

Første Deel

indeholdende A's Papirer.

Et de Fornuftens alene tabt,
ere Livsfabernes Ledninger?
Young.

Kjøbenhavn 1843.

Saas hos Universitetsboghandler **C. A. Weitzel.**

Trykt i Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri.

Title page of the original Danish edition from 1843

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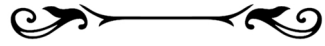


Kierkegaard became a student at the Borgerdydskolen high school in Copenhagen in 1830.

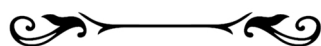


Like his older brother, P.C. Kierkegaard, he studied theology at the University of Copenhagen.

VOLUME I.



PREFACE BY VICTOR EREMITA



DEAR READER: I wonder if you may not sometimes have felt inclined to doubt a little the correctness of the familiar philosophic maxim that the external is the internal, and the internal the external. Perhaps you have cherished in your heart a secret which you felt in all its joy or pain was too precious for you to share with another. Perhaps your life has brought you in contact with some person of whom you suspected something of the kind was true, although you were never able to wrest his secret from him either by force or cunning. Perhaps neither of these presuppositions applies to you and your life, and yet you are not a stranger to this doubt; it flits across your mind now and then like a passing shadow. Such a doubt comes and goes, and no one knows whence it comes, nor whither it goes. For my part I have always been heretically-minded on this point in philosophy, and have therefore early accustomed myself, as far as possible, to institute observations and inquiries concerning it. I have sought guidance from those authors whose views I shared on this matter; in short, I have done everything in my power to remedy the deficiency in the philosophical works.

Gradually the sense of hearing came to be my favorite sense; for just as the voice is the revelation of an inwardness incommensurable with the outer, so the ear is the instrument by which this inwardness is apprehended, hearing the sense by which it is appropriated. Whenever, then, I found a contradiction between what I saw and what I heard, then I found my doubt confirmed, and my enthusiasm for the investigation stimulated. In the confessional the priest is separated from the penitent by a screen; he does not see, he only hears. Gradually as he listens, he constructs an outward appearance which corresponds to the voice he hears. Consequently, he experiences no contradiction. It is otherwise, however, when you hear and see at the same time, and yet perceive a screen between yourself and the speaker. My researches in this direction have met with varying degrees of success. Sometimes I have been favored by fortune, sometimes not, and one needs good fortune to win results along this road. However, I have never lost my desire to continue my investigations. Whenever I have been at the point of regretting my perseverance, an unexpected success has crowned my efforts. It was such an unexpected bit of luck which in a very curious manner put me in possession of the papers which I now have the honor of offering to the reading public. These papers have afforded me an insight into the lives of two men, which has confirmed my hunch that the external is not the internal. This was especially true about one of them. His external mode of life has been in complete contradiction to his inner life. The same was true to a certain extent with the other also, inasmuch as he concealed a more significant inwardness under a somewhat commonplace exterior.

Still, I had best proceed in order and explain how I came into possession of these papers. It is now about seven years since I first noticed at a merchant's shop here in town a secretary which from the very first moment I saw it attracted my attention. It was not of modern workmanship, had been used a good deal, and yet it fascinated me. It is impossible for me to explain the reason for this impression, but most people in the course of their lives have had some similar experience. My daily path took me by this shop, and I never failed a single day to pause and feast my eyes upon it. I gradually made up a history about it; it became a daily necessity for me to see it, and so I did not hesitate to go out of my way for the sake of seeing it, when an unaccustomed route made this necessary. And the more I looked at it, the more I wanted to own it. I realized very well that it was a peculiar desire, since I had no use

for such a piece of furniture, and it would be an extravagance for me to buy it. But desire is a very sophisticated passion. I made an excuse for going into the shop, asked about other things, and as I was leaving, I casually made the shopkeeper a very low offer for the secretary. I thought possibly he might accept it; then chance would have played into my hands. It was certainly not for the sake of the money I behaved thus, but to salve my conscience. The plan miscarried, the dealer was uncommonly firm. I continued to pass the place daily, and to look at the secretary with loving eyes. "You must make up your mind," I thought, "for suppose it is sold, then it will be too late. Even if you were lucky enough to get hold of it again, you would never have the same feeling about it." My heart beat violently; then I went into the shop. I bought it and paid for it. "This must be the last time," thought I, "that you are so extravagant; it is really lucky that you bought it, for now every time you look at it, you will reflect on how extravagant you were; a new period of your life must begin with the acquisition of the secretary." Alas, desire is very eloquent, and good resolutions are always at hand.

The secretary was duly set up in my apartment, and as in the first period of my enamourment I had taken pleasure in gazing at it from the street, so now I walked back and forth in front of it at home. Little by little I familiarized myself with its rich economy, its many drawers and recesses, and I was thoroughly pleased with my secretary. Still, things could not continue thus. In the summer of 1836 I arranged my affairs so that I could take a week's trip to the country. The postilion was engaged for five o'clock in the morning. The necessary baggage had been packed the evening before, and everything was in readiness. I awakened at four, but the vision of the beautiful country I was to visit so enchanted me that I again fell asleep, or into a dream. My servant evidently thought he would let me sleep as long as possible, for he did not call me until half-past six. The postilion was already blowing his horn, and although I am not usually inclined to obey the mandates of others, I have always made an exception in the case of the postboy and his musical theme. I was speedily dressed and already at the door, when it occurred to me, Have you enough money in your pocket? There was not much there. I opened the secretary to get at the money drawer to take what money there was. Of course the drawer would not move. Every attempt to open it failed. It was all as bad as it could possibly be. Just at this moment, while my ears were ringing with the postboy's alluring notes, to meet such difficulties! The blood rushed to my head, I became angry. As Xerxes ordered the sea to be lashed, so I resolved to take a terrible revenge. A hatchet was fetched. With it I dealt the secretary a shattering blow, shocking to see. Whether in my anger I struck the wrong place, or the drawer was as stubborn as myself, the result of the blow was not as anticipated. The drawer was closed, and the drawer remained closed. But something else happened. Whether my blow had struck exactly the right spot, or whether the shock to the whole framework of the secretary was responsible, I do not know, but I do know that a secret door sprang open, one which I had never before noticed. This opened a pigeonhole that I naturally had never discovered. Here to my great surprise I found a mass of papers, the papers which form the content of the present work. My intention as to the journey remained unchanged. At the first station we came to I would negotiate a loan. A mahogany case in which I usually kept a pair of pistols was hastily emptied and the papers were placed in it. Pleasure had triumphed, and had become even greater. In my heart I begged the secretary for forgiveness for the harsh treatment, while my mind found its doubt strengthened, that the external is not the internal, as well as my empirical generalization confirmed, that luck is necessary to make such discoveries possible.

I reached Hillerod in the middle of the forenoon, set my finances in order, and got a general impression of the magnificent scenery. The following morning I at once began my excursions, which now took on a very different character from that which I had originally intended. My servant followed me with the mahogany case. I sought out a romantic spot in the forest where I should be as free as possible from surprise, and then took out the documents. Mine host, who noticed these frequent excursions in company with the mahogany case, ventured the remark that I must be trying to improve my marksmanship. For this conjecture I was duly grateful, and left him undisturbed in his belief.

A hasty glance at the papers showed me that they were made up of two collections whose external differences were strongly marked. One of them was written on a kind of vellum in quarto, with a fairly wide margin. The handwriting was legible, sometimes even a little elegant, in a single place, careless. The other was written on full sheets of foolscap with ruled columns, such as is ordinarily used for legal documents and the like. The handwriting was clear, somewhat spreading, uniform and even, apparently that of a business man. The contents also proved to be very dissimilar. One part consisted of a number of aesthetic essays of varying length, the other was composed of two long inquiries and one shorter one, all with an ethical content, as it seemed, and in the form of letters. This dissimilarity was completely confirmed by a closer examination. The second series consists of letters written to the author of the first series.

But I must try to find some briefer designation to identify the two authors. I have examined the letters very carefully, but I have found little or nothing to the purpose. Concerning the first author, the aesthete, the papers yield absolutely nothing. As for the second, the letter writer, it appears that his name was William, and that he was a magistrate, but of what court is not stated. If I were to confine myself strictly to this data, and decide to call him William, I should lack a corresponding designation for the first author, and should have to give him an arbitrary name. Hence I have preferred to call the first author A, the second B.

In addition to the longer essays, I have found among the papers a number of slips of paper on which were written aphorisms, lyrical effusions, reflections. The handwriting indicated A as the author, and the nature of the contents confirmed my conjecture.

Then I tried to arrange the papers as well as I could. In the case of those written by B this was fairly easy. Each of these letters presupposes the one preceding, and in the second letter there is a quotation from the first; the third letter presupposes the other two.

The arranging of A'S papers was not so simple. I have therefore let chance determine the order, that is to say, I have left them in the order in which I found them, without being able to decide whether this order has any chronological value or ideal significance. The slips of paper lay loose in the pigeonhole, and so I have had to allot them a place. I have placed them first because it seemed to me that they might best be regarded as provisional glimpses of what the longer essays develop more connectedly. I have called them *Diapsalmata*, and have added as a sort of motto: *ad se ipsum*. This title and this motto are in a manner mine, and yet not altogether so. They are mine in so far as they are applied to the whole collection, but they also belong to A, for the word *Diapsalmata* was written on one of the slips of paper, and on two of them, the phrase, *ad se ipsum*. A little French verse which was found above one of the aphorisms, I have placed on the inside of the title page, a common practice with A himself. Since many of the aphorisms have a lyric form, it seemed proper to use the

word *Diapsalmata* as the principal title. If the reader should consider this choice unfortunate, then I must acknowledge that this was my own device, and that the word was certainly in good taste as used by A himself for the aphorism over which it is found. I have left the arrangement of the individual aphorisms to chance. That these individual expressions often contradict one another seemed quite natural, since each one of them belongs precisely to an essential mood. I did not think it worth while to adopt an arrangement that would make these contradictions less striking. I followed chance, and it is also chance that has directed my attention to the fact that the first and the last aphorisms correspond to one another, as the one is touched by the suffering that lies in being a poet, while the other enjoys the satisfaction which lies in always having the laugh on its side.

As to A'S aesthetic essays, I have nothing to emphasize concerning them. They were found all ready for printing, and in so far as they contain any difficulties, they must be permitted to speak for themselves. For my part I may state that I have added a translation of the Greek quotations scattered through the essays, which is taken from one of the better German translations.

The last of A'S papers is a story entitled, *Diary of the Seducer*. Here we meet with new difficulties, since A does not acknowledge himself as author, but only as editor. This is an old trick of the novelist, and I should not object to it, if it did not make my own position so complicated, as one author seems to be enclosed in another, like the parts in a Chinese puzzle box. Here is not the place to explain in greater detail the reasons for my opinion. I shall only note that the dominant mood in A'S preface in a manner betrays the poet. It seems as if A had actually become afraid of his poem, as if it continued to terrify him, like a troubled dream when it is told. If it were an actual occurrence which he had become privy to, then it seems strange that the preface shows no trace of A'S joy in seeing the realization of the idea which had so often floated before his mind. The idea of the seducer is suggested in the essay on the *Immediate-Erotic* as well as in the *Shadowgraphs*, namely, the idea that the analogue to Don Juan must be a reflective seducer who comes under the category of the interesting, where the question is not about how many he seduces, but about how he does it. I find no trace of such joy in the preface, but rather, as was said, a certain horror and trembling, which might well have its cause in his poetical relationship to this idea. Nor am I surprised that it affected A thus; for I, who have simply nothing to do with this narrative, I who am twice removed from the original author, I, too, have sometimes felt quite strange when, in the silence of the night, I have busied myself with these papers. It was as if the Seducer came like a shadow over the floor, as if he fixed his demoniac eye upon me, and said: "Well, so you are going to publish my papers! It is quite unjustifiable in you; you arouse anxiety in the dear little lassies. Yet obviously, in return you would make me and my kind harmless. There you are mistaken; for I need only change the method, and my circumstances become more favorable than before. What a stream of lassies I see running straight into my arms when they hear that seductive name: a seducer! Give me half a year and I shall provide a story which will be more interesting than all I have hitherto experienced. I imagine a young, vigorous girl of spirit who conceives the extraordinary idea of avenging her sex upon me. She thinks to coerce me, to make me feel the pangs of unrequited love. That is just the girl for me. If she does not herself strike deeply enough, then I shall come to her assistance. I shall writhe like the eel of the Wise Men of Gotham. And then when I have brought her to the point I wish, then is she mine!"

But perhaps I have already abused my position as editor in burdening the reader with my reflections. The occasion must provide the excuse. It was on account of the

awkwardness of my position, occasioned by A'S calling himself only the editor, not the author of this story, that I let myself be carried away.

What more I have to say about this story shall be exclusively in my role as editor. I think that I have perhaps found something in it that will determine the time of its action. The Diary has a date here and there, but the year is always omitted. This might seem to preclude further inquiry, but by studying the individual dates, I believe I have found a clue. Of course every year has a seventh of April, a third of July, a second of August, and so forth; but it is not true that the seventh of April falls every year upon Monday. I have therefore made certain calculations, and have found that this combination fits the year 1834. I cannot tell whether A had thought of this or not, but probably not, since then he would not have used so much caution as he has. Nor does the Diary read, Monday the seventh of April, and so on, but merely April 7. Even on the seventh of April, the entry begins thus: "Consequently on Monday" — whereby the reader's attention is distracted; but by reading through the entry under this date, one sees that it must have been written on Monday. As far as this story is concerned, I now have a definite date. But every attempt to utilize it in determining the time of the other essays has failed. I might have made this story the third in the collection, but, as I said above, I preferred to leave it to chance, and everything is in the sequence in which I found it.

As far as B'S papers are concerned, these arrange themselves easily and naturally. In their case I have permitted myself an alteration, and have provided them with a title, since their epistolary style prevented the author from using a title. Should the reader, therefore, after having become familiar with the contents, decide that the titles are not well chosen, I shall have to reconcile myself to the disappointment of having done something poorly that I wished to do well.

Here and there I found a remark set down in the margin. These I have made into footnotes, so as not to interrupt the even flow of the text.

As regards B'S manuscript, I have allowed myself no alterations, but have scrupulously treated it as a finished document. I might perhaps have easily corrected an occasional carelessness, such as is explicable when one remembers that the author is merely a letter writer. I have not wished to do this because I feared that I might go too far. When B states that out of every hundred young men who go astray, ninety-nine are saved by women, and one by divine grace, it is easy to see that he has not been very rigid in his reckoning, since he provides no place at all for those who are actually lost. I could easily have made a little modification in the reckoning, but there seemed to me something far more beautiful in B'S miscalculation. In another place he mentions a Greek wise man by the name of Myson, and says of him that he enjoyed the rare distinction of being reckoned among the Seven Sages, when their number is fixed at fourteen. I wondered at first where B could have got this information, and also what Greek author it was that he cited. My suspicion at once fell on Diogenes Laertius, and by looking up Jocher and Morèri, I found a reference to him. B'S statement might perhaps need correction; the case is not quite as he puts it, since there was some uncertainty among the ancients as to who the Seven Sages were. But I have not thought it worth while to make any corrections, since it seemed to me that while his statement is not quite accurate historically, it might have another value.

The point I have now reached, I had arrived at five years ago. I had arranged the papers as at present, had decided to publish them, but thought best to postpone it for a time. Five years seemed long enough. The five years are now up, and I begin where I left off. I need not assure the reader that I have tried in every conceivable way to find some trace of the authors. The dealer, like most of his kind, kept no books; he did not

know from whom he had bought the secretary; he thought it might have been at public auction. I shall not attempt to describe the many fruitless attempts I have made to identify the authors, attempts which have taken so much of my time, since the recollection gives me no pleasure. As to the result, however, I can describe it to the reader very briefly, for the result was simply nil.

As I was about to carry out my decision to have the papers published, one more scruple awakened within me. Perhaps the reader will permit me to speak frankly. It occurred to me that I might be guilty of an indiscretion toward the unknown authors. However, the more familiar I became with the papers, the more these scruples disappeared. The papers were of such a nature that since my most painstaking investigations had failed to throw any Light upon them, I was confident that no reader would be able to do so, for I dare compare myself with any such reader, not in taste and sympathy and insight, but in tirelessness and industry. For supposing the anonymous authors were still living, that they lived in this town, that they came unexpectedly upon their own papers, still if they themselves kept silent, there would be no consequences following the publication. For in the strictest sense of the word, these papers do what we sometimes say of all printed matter — they keep their own counsel.

One other scruple that I have had was in itself of less significance and fairly easy to overcome, and has been overcome in even an easier way than I had anticipated. It occurred to me that these papers might be financially lucrative. It seemed proper that I should receive a small honorarium for my editorial services; but an author's royalty would be too much. As the honest Scotch farmers in *The White Lady* decided to buy and cultivate the family estate, and then restore it to the Counts of Avenel if they should ever return, so I decided to put the entire returns at interest, so that when the authors turned up, I could give them the whole amount with compound interest. If the reader has not already, because of my complete ineptitude, assured himself that I am neither an author nor a professional literary man who makes publishing his profession, then the naïveté of this reasoning must establish it indisputably. My scruples were probably more easily overcome because in Denmark an author's royalty is by no means a country estate, and the authors would have to remain away a long time for their royalties, even at compound interest, to become a financial object.

It remained only to choose a title. I might call them Papers, Posthumous Papers, Found Papers, Lost Papers, and so forth. A number of variants could be found, but none of these titles satisfied me. In selecting a title I have therefore allowed myself a liberty, a deception, for which I shall try to make an accounting. During my constant occupation with the papers, it dawned upon me that they might be looked at from a new point of view, by considering all of them as the work of one man. I know very well everything that can be urged against this view, that it is unhistorical, improbable, unreasonable, that one man should be the author of both parts, although the reader might easily be tempted to the play on words, that he who says A must also say B. However, I have not yet been able to relinquish the idea. Let us imagine a man who had lived through both of these phases, or who had thought upon both, A'S papers contain a number of attempts to formulate an aesthetic philosophy of life. A single, coherent, aesthetic view of life can scarcely be carried out. B'S papers contain an ethical view of life. As I let this thought sink into my soul, it became clear to me that I might make use of it in choosing a title. The one I have selected precisely expresses this. The reader cannot lose very much because of this title, for while reading the book he may perfectly well forget the title. Then, when he has read the book, he may

perhaps reflect upon the title. This will free him from all finite questions as to whether A was really convinced of his error and repented, whether B conquered, or if it perhaps ended by B'S going over to A'S opinion. In this respect, these papers have no ending. If anyone thinks this is not as it should be, one is not thereby justified in saying that it is a fault, for one must call it a misfortune. For my own part I regard it as fortunate. One sometimes chances upon novels in which certain characters represent opposing views of life. It usually ends by one of them convincing the other. Instead of these views being allowed to speak for themselves, the reader is enriched by being told the historical result, that one has convinced the other. I regard it as fortunate that these papers contain no such information. Whether A wrote his aesthetic essays after having received B'S letters, whether his soul continued to be tossed about in wild abandon, or whether it found rest, I cannot say, since the papers indicate nothing. Nor is there any clue as to how things went with B, whether he had strength to hold to his convictions or not. When the book is read, then A and B are forgotten, only their views confront one another, and await no finite decision in particular personalities.

I have nothing further to say except that the honored authors, if they were aware of my project, might possibly wish to accompany their papers with a word to the reader. I shall therefore add a few words with them holding and guiding the pen. A would probably interpose no objection to the publication; he would probably warn the reader: read them or refuse to read them, you will regret both. What B would say is more difficult to decide. He would perhaps reproach me, especially with regard to the publication of A'S papers. He would let me feel that he had no part in them, that he washed his hands of responsibility. When he had done this, then he would perhaps turn to the book with these words: "Go out into the world then; escape if possible the attention of critics, seek a single reader in a favorable hour, and should you meet a feminine reader, then would I say: 'My fair reader, you will perhaps find in this book something you ought not to know; other things you might well profit from knowing; may you so read the first that having read it, you may be as one who has not read it; may you read the other so that having read it, you may be as one who cannot forget it.'" I, as editor, only add the wish that the book may meet the reader in an auspicious hour, and that the fair reader may succeed in following B'S well meant advice.

The Editor November 1842

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End of Sample