

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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A Midsummer Night's Dream by Edmund K. Chambers

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EDMUND K. CHAMBERS

**A MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM**

Heath's English Classics

William Shakespeare

A

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM

EDITED BY

EDMUND K. CHAMBERS

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD, EDITOR OF
"HAMLET," "MACBETH," ETC.

BOSTON, U. S. A.
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1898

GENERAL PREFACE.

IN this edition of SHAKESPEARE an attempt is made to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar. Criticism purely verbal and textual has only been included to such an extent as may serve to help the student in the appreciation of the essential poetry. Questions of date and literary history have been fully dealt with in the Introductions, but the larger space has been devoted to the interpretative rather than the matter-of-fact order of scholarship. Aesthetic judgments are never final, but the Editors have attempted to suggest points of view from which the analysis of dramatic motive and dramatic character may be profitably undertaken. In the Notes likewise, while it is hoped that all unfamiliar expressions and allusions have been adequately explained, yet it has been thought even more important to consider the dramatic value of each scene, and the part which it plays in relation to the whole. These general principles are common to the whole series; in detail each Editor is alone responsible for the play or plays that have been intrusted to him.

Every volume of the series has been provided with a Glossary, an Essay upon Metre, and an Index; and Appendices have been added upon points of special interest, which could not conveniently be treated in the Introduction or the Notes. The text is based by the several Editors on that of the *Globe* edition: the only omissions made are those that are unavoidable in an edition likely to be used by young students.

By the systematic arrangement of the introductory matter, and by close attention to typographical details, every effort has been made to provide an edition that will prove convenient in use.

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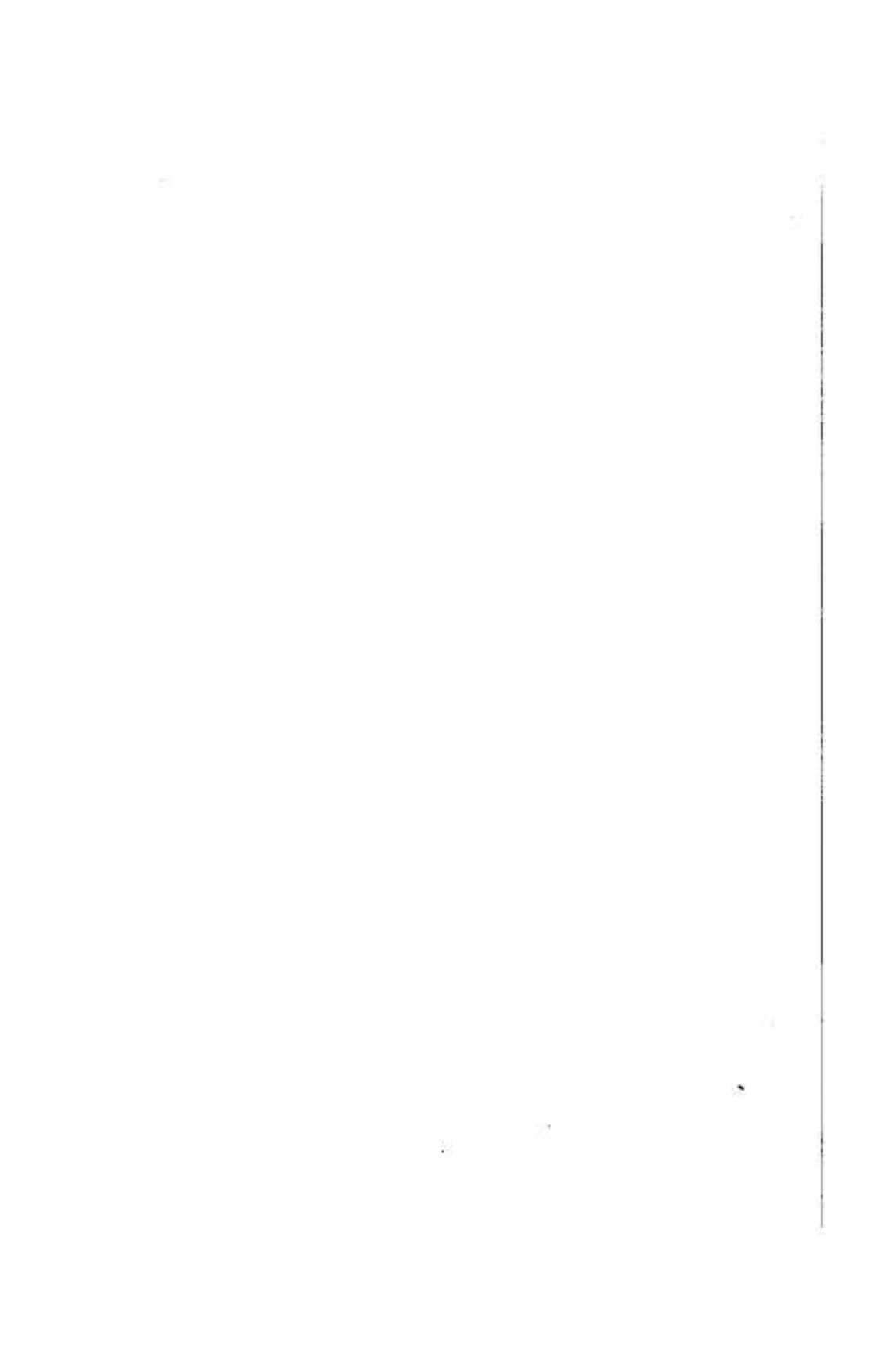
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INTRODUCTION.

I. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

The Registers of the Company of Stationers for the year 1600 contain, amongst other entries of books "allowed to be printed", the following: Entry in the Stationers' Register, Oct. 8th, 1600.

8 Octobris

Thomas ffysher Entred for his Copie vnder the handes of master Rodes and the Wardens. A booke called *A mydsommer nightes Dreame* vjd.

During the same year, that is, before March 25, 1600, two editions of the play in Quarto form appeared. A careful comparison has established the fact that the earliest of these, known as the First Quarto, or Q 1, is that which has the following title-page:— The First (Fisher's) Quarto of 1600.

"[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub- | *lickely acted by the Right honoura- | ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | seruants. | Written by William Shakespeare. | [Fisher's device: a kingfisher] | ¶ Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fisher, and are to | be soule at his shoppe, at the Signe of the White Hart, | in *Fleete streete.* 1600."*

This is often called Fisher's Quarto.

The Second Quarto, known also as Q 2 or Roberts' Quarto, is a reprint, page for page, of Q 1. The typographical details are better arranged, the spelling is less archaic, a few misprints are corrected, and a somewhat more than compensating number of errors have been allowed to creep in. The title-page runs as follows:— The Second (Roberts') Quarto of 1600.

"[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath beene sundry times pub- | *likely acted, by the Right Honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants.* | *Written by William Shakespeare.* | [Roberts' device: the Geneva Arms: a Half-Eagle and Key.] | *Printed by James Roberts, 1600.*"

It has been thought that Roberts' edition was merely a pirated version of that published by Fisher; but on the whole it appears more likely that Fisher, who was not himself a printer as well as a publisher, got the second edition, if not the first also, printed for him by Roberts, who was both; and that the issue of two editions in six months was simply due to the success of the play. No third edition was, however, printed before the great collection of all Shakespeare's plays, known as the First Folio (F 1) of 1623. The version of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* there given appears to have been printed from a copy of Q 2 kept for use in the library of the theatre. This is shown by the fact that the stage-directions which it contains are more numerous and elaborate than those given in either of the Quartos, and were evidently written for practical use.¹ The text of the First Folio was reproduced in the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios of 1632 (F 2), 1664 (F 3), and 1685 (F 4).

The text of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* has come down to us in a singularly perfect state. This is probably due to the First Quarto having been originally printed from a clear and authentic manuscript. The slight variations introduced from time to time in the later editions do not appear to rest upon any independent authority. When they are not mere mistakes, they are only conjectural emendations of the printer or editor. Sometimes, of course, they happily correct a slip in the First Quarto.

The date of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* has given rise to more than the usual amount of vain imaginings. The only

¹ See the notes on iii. 2. 415, 418, 463; v. 1. 128. A fuller account of the two Quartos, and of their relations to the First Folio, is given in Appendix B.