

**SHAKESPEARE'S A
MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM**

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Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream by George Pierce Baker

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GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

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LONGMANS' ENGLISH CLASSICS

EDITED BY

GEORGE RICE CARPENTER, A.B.

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH COMPOSITION IN COLUMBIA COLLEGE

WILLIAM SHAKSPERE

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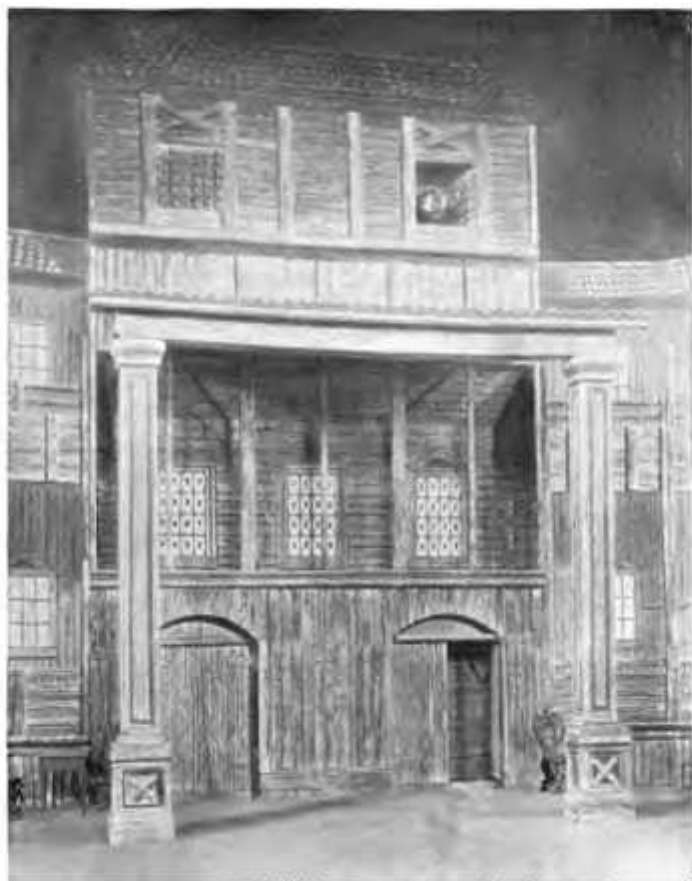
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SHAKSPERE'S
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM

EDITED
WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY
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PREFACE

THE aim of the editor in this edition of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has been to interest the boy or girl who chances to use it. Discussion of mooted passages, explanations of the growth of our language as shown in the play, research as to the sources of the material used in it, exposition of the dramatic construction it shows, may be important for a college student, they must be for the normal boy or girl tiresome. The editor believes that if a boy or girl can be made to see that the play is not simply a piece of literature prescribed for his preparatory reading for college examinations, but a play as vivid and interesting to the Londoners of nearly three centuries ago as is any play of today to him, and also that reading it will give him more knowledge of a time that has been made by its picturesqueness to rouse his curiosity and stimulate his imagination, the reading that would otherwise be a task will become a pleasure. Boys and girls once interested thus in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" must enjoy for themselves the story of the four lovers, the pranks of Puck, and the mistakes and antics of Bottom and his friends. If they can only be so thoroughly interested in the play as a play that they will read it not once but often, they must sooner or later come to realize for themselves the wealth of its imagery, the exquisiteness of its poetry. Until they do somewhat realize all this for themselves, critical study of the play is liable to check their growing appreciation of the play as literature. In brief, the edition is based on the idea that some appre-

ciation by pupils should precede criticism, if the play is to be for them anything but a dreary task.

For these reasons the editor has tried to make the Introduction a vivid picture of the London of 1600,—its streets, people, theatres, customs,—to make the old dramatists and the conditions under which they worked real and living. In order to avoid anything that might draw away the attention of the reader from the details given, he has willingly been so anachronistic as to let the Elizabethan of his Introduction talk in language not of his day. To have given him an Elizabethan vocabulary would have meant either using phrases that would not be clear to school-boys or filling the pages with foot-notes. Either would mean too serious a loss in vividness to be considered. The editor hopes that the Introduction will show a reader the picturesqueness of Shakspeare's time, and make him eager to read the play for itself.

Because, however, some teachers, not agreeing with the editor, may wish to give their students some of the critical matter that has overgrown the play, references are given in the Bibliography to the places where the best information on these matters may be found.

In the text the editor has followed, with one or two slight exceptions, which are noted, the Cambridge edition. In the notes he has aimed to explain only such unusual words or uses of words as cannot be readily found in any ordinary dictionary, obsolete customs, and references that have become vague with the passage of the years since the play was written. The title-page (page 1) follows that of the first quarto, that printed in 1600 for Thomas Fisher.

GEORGE P. BAKER.

HARVARD COLLEGE, November 30, 1895.