

**THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: WITH A
LIFE OF THE POET, EXPLANATORY
FOOT-NOTES, CRITICAL NOTES,
AND A GLOSSARIAL INDEX. VOL. III**

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The complete works of William Shakespeare: with a life of the poet, explanatory foot-notes, critical notes, and a glossarial index. Vol. III by Henry N. Hudson

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HENRY N. HUDSON

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A LIFE OF THE POET, EXPLANATORY FOOT-NOTES, CRITICAL
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Harvard Edition.

BY THE
REV. HENRY N. HUDSON, LL.D.

IN TWENTY VOLUMES,

VOL. III.

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A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

REGISTERED at the Stationers' October 8, 1600, and two quarto editions of it published in the course of that year. The play is not known to have been printed again till it reappeared in the folio of 1623, where the repetition of certain misprints shows it to have been printed from one of the quarto copies. Few of the Poet's dramas have reached us in a more satisfactory state as regards the text.

The play is first heard of in the list given by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. But it was no doubt written several years before that time; and I am not aware that any editor places the writing later than 1594. This brings it into the same period with *King John*, *King Richard the Second*, and the finished *Romeo and Juliet*; and the internal marks of style naturally sort it into the same company. Verplanck, however, thinks there are some passages which relish strongly of an earlier time; while, again, there are others that have such an energetic compactness of thought and imagery, mingled occasionally with the deeper tonings of "years that bring the philosophic mind," as to argue that they were wrought into the structure of the play not long before it came from the press. The part of the Athenian lovers certainly has a good deal that, viewed by itself, would scarce do credit even to such a boyhood as Shakespeare's must have been. On the other hand, there is a large philosophy in Theseus' discourse of "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet," a manly judgment in his reasons for preferring the "tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe," and a bracing freshness in the short dialogue of the chase, all in the best style of the author's second period.

There is at least a rather curious coincidence, which used to

be regarded as proving that the play was not written till after the Summer of 1594. I refer to Titania's description, in ii. 1, of the strange misbehaviour of the weather, which she ascribes to the fairy bickerings. For the other part of the coincidence, Strype in his *Annals* gives the following from a discourse by the Rev. Dr. King: "And see whether the Lord doth not threaten us much more, by sending such unseasonable weather and storms of rain among us; which if we will observe, and compare it with what is past, we may say that the course of Nature is very much inverted. Our years are turned upside down: our Summers are no Summers; our harvests are no harvests; our seed-times are no seed-times. For a great space of time scant any day hath been seen that it hath not rained." Dyce, indeed, scouts the supposal that Shakespeare had any allusion to this eccentric conduct of the elements in the Summer of 1594, pronouncing it "ridiculous"; but I do not quite see it so, albeit I am apt enough to believe that most of the play was written before that date.

The Poet has been commonly supposed to have taken the ground-work of this play from *The Knight's Tale* of Chaucer. But the play has hardly any notes of connection with the *Tale* except the mere names of Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, the latter of which is the name assumed by Arcite in the *Tale*. *The Life of Theseus*, in North's translation of Plutarch doubtless furnished something towards the parts of the hero and his "bouncing Amazon"; while Golding's translation of Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe probably supplied hints towards the interlude. So much as relates to Bottom and his fellows evidently came fresh from Nature as she had passed under the Poet's eye. The linking of these clowns with the ancient tragic tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, so as to draw the latter within the region of modern farce, is not less original than droll. The names of Oberon, Titania, and Robin Goodfellow were made familiar by the surviving relics of Gothic and Druidical mythology. But it was for Shakespeare to let the fairies speak for themselves. So that there need be no scruple about receiving Hallam's statement of the matter: "*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is, I believe, altogether original in one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet, — the fairy machinery. A

few before him had dealt in a vulgar and clumsy manner with popular superstitions; but the sportive, beneficent, invisible population of the air and earth, long since established in the creed of childhood, and of those simple as children, had never for a moment been blended with 'human mortals' among the personages of the drama."

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.	OBERON, King of the Fairies.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.	TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies.
LYSANDER, } in love with Hermia.	PUCK, or ROBIN-GOODFELLOW, a Fairy.
DEMETRIUS, }	PRAS-BLOSSOM, } Fairies.
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.	COBWEB, }
QUINCE, a Carpenter.	MOTH, }
SNUG, a Joiner.	MUSTARD-SEED, }
BOTTOM, a Weaver.	
FLUTE, a Bellows-mender.	PYRAMUS, } Characters in the Interlude.
SNOUT, a Tinker.	THISBE, }
STARVELING, a Tailor.	WALL, }
	MOONSHINE, }
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons.	LION, }
HERMIA, in love with Lysander.	
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.	
Other Fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.	

SCENE.— *Athens, and a Wood near it.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.— *Athens. A Room in the Palace of THESEUS.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another Moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old Moon wanes! she lingers my desires,