# THE CUTTING OF AN AGATE

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The cutting of an agate by William Butler Yeats

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### **WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

# THE CUTTING OF AN AGATE



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#### BY

### WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

AUTHOR OF "IDEAS OF GOOD AND EVIL," ETC.

## New York THE MACMILLAN COMPANY 1912

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### PREFACE

WHEN I wrote the essay on Edmund Spenser the company of Irish players who have now their stage at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin had been founded, but gave as yet few performances in a twelvemonth. could let my thought stray where it would, and even give a couple of summers to The Faerie Queene; while for some ten years now I have written little verse and no prose that did not arise out of some need of those players or some thought suggested by their work, or was written in the defence of some friend whose life has been a part of the movement of events which is creating a new Ireland unintelligible to an old Ireland that watches with anger or indifference. The detailed defence of plays and players, published originally in Samhain, the occasional periodical of the theatre, and now making some three hundred pages of Mr. Bullen's collected edition of my writings, is not here,

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but for the most part an exposition of principles, whether suggested by my own work or by the death of friend or fellowworker, that, intended for no great public, has been printed and published from a Hand Press which my sisters manage at Dundrum with the help of the village girls. I have been busy with a single art, that of the theatre, of a small, unpopular theatre; and this art may well seem to practical men, busy with some programme of industrial or political regeneration, of no more account than the shaping of an agate; and yet in the shaping of an agate, whether in the cutting or the making of the design, one discovers, if one have a speculative mind, thoughts that seem important and principles that may be applied to life itself, and certainly if one does not believe so, one is but a poor cutter of so hard a stone.

W. B. YEATS.

August, 1912.

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