

**THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT:
OR, SHAKESPEARE AND
THE FAIRIES**

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The Midsummer Night: Or, Shakespeare and the Fairies by Mary C. Rumsey

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MARY C. RUMSEY

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THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

OR SHAKESPEARE AND

THE FAIRIES.

FROM THE GERMAN OF LUDWIG TIECK.

BY MARY C. RUMSEY.



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To the Memory of
LUDWIG TIECK

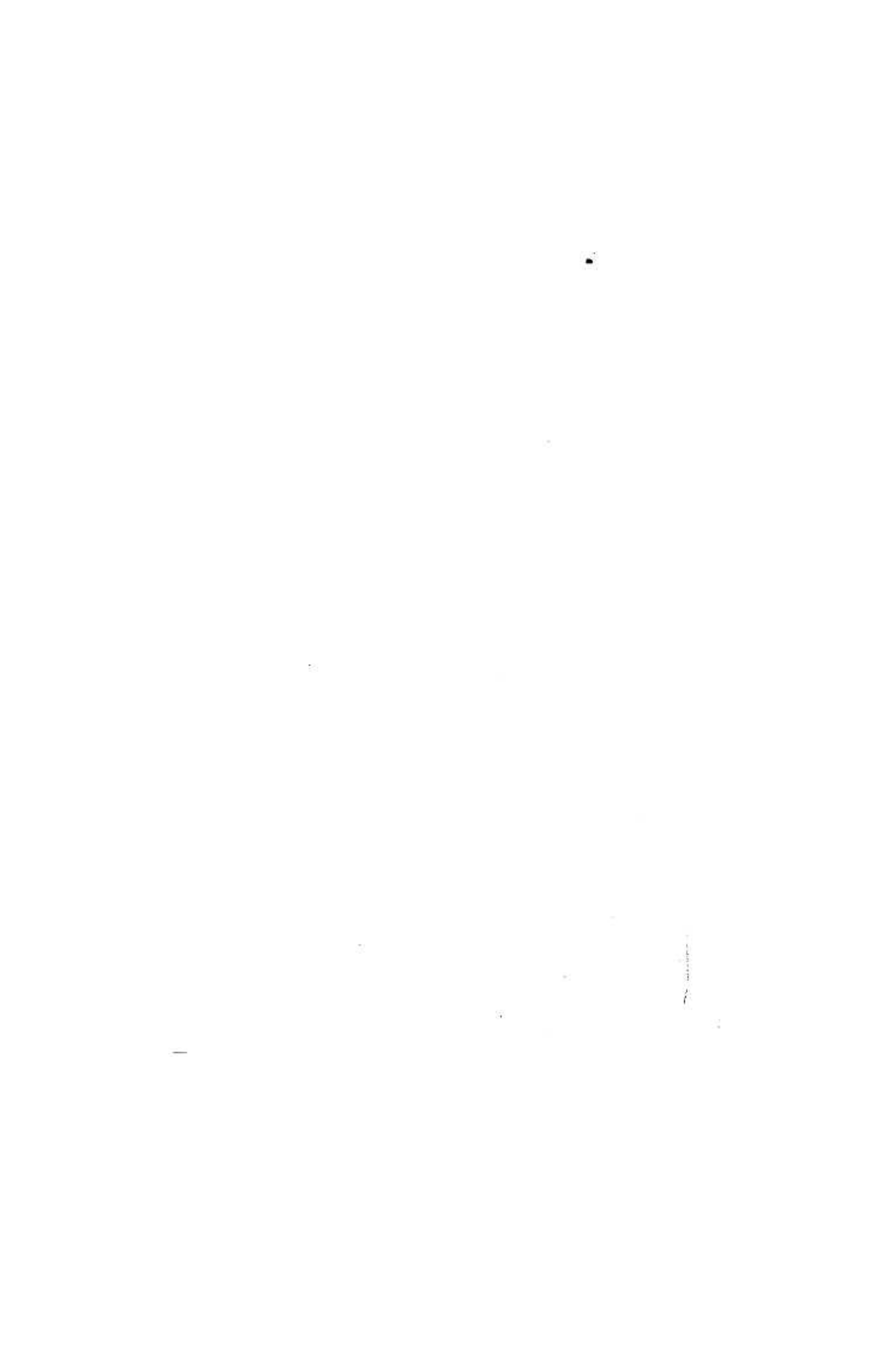
AND HIS DEVOTION TO

SHAKESPEARE

THIS VERSION OF HIS YOUTHFUL

TRIBUTE TO THE POET IS

DEDICATED



EDWARD BULOW being with his honoured old friend Tieck during the winter of 1847, their conversation often led to remembrances of the Poet's youth, and Bulow frequently had the pleasure to hear him read some of his earlier Poetical Essays, chiefly Dramas, which he had fortunately preserved.

I say fortunately, adds Bulow, not that I at all believed that these productions would be available now for the press, as Tieck had made his choice and already printed several of them in his collected works.

Yet, for the man of letters, even the least successful and defective attempts of a great genius that he has studied, loved, and honoured, must always be interesting as marking the youthful développement of his powers.

Tieck's brother, who had been his companion at the time of their production, was of the party; and Tieck occasionally read to them some of these early effusions. They afforded especial evidence of the two poetical elements by which the poet in later times had first obtained the favour and love of the public, by that intense and inexhaustible love of nature, evinced in his "Phantasia," and the deep overpowering pathos displayed in his "Lowell."

They undoubtedly manifested in him even then the same courageous derision of the follies of the time which is handled in so masterly a manner in his "Gestiefelte Kater," and repeated in his "Zerbino;" but the governing tone of his first poems remains always what we have named.

Of all these youthful poems, one appeared to Bulow the most remarkable, which Tieck had written in 1789, when he was only sixteen years old, entitled, "Die Sommernacht." This, even at the first reading, fixed Bulow's earnest attention. Tieck was surprised that he admired this poem so much above the others,

and did not rely on his judgment alone, but afterwards read it to other friends at Bulow's request, and the pleasure they all derived from this poetic trifle fully justified the impression it had made on him.

For a long time Bulow pressed Tieck in vain to let the "Sommernacht" be printed, but he was not able to overcome his dread of the interpretation which ill-natured criticism might put upon his compliance. At last, on Bulow's perseverance, Tieck gave him to understand that if he published it on his own responsibility he would not object.

Bulow gladly availed himself of this reluctant permission, and gave this little gem to the world in the "Rheinisches Taschenbuch" for 1851.

It is certainly a wonderful production considering the age at which it was written, and would not, I think, have been deemed unworthy of him at any time.

It is interesting as evidence of how deeply and early the foundation was laid of Tieck's enthusiastic devo-

tion to Shakespeare in after life, and there are few if any of the poetical tributes to his memory that at all approach it.

Like Bulow, I have obtained a reluctant consent from the fair friend to whom we are indebted for the following spirited version, to print it. I trust it is not saying too much to pronounce it worthy of the original; and I cannot but regret that Tieck did not live to see it. It would have gratified him living,—and I have therefore inscribed it to his memory.

S. W. S.

Mickleham,
December 10, 1853.