Grids & Guides

	A Midsammer Night's Dreams	An introduction to William Shakespeare's Life
	OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SHAKESPEARE	playhouse fell under the ban of polite conversation, and
	No one in Shakespeare's day seems to have been inter-	was lost.
	ested in learning about the private lives of the drama-	Under such conditions we cannot wonder that we
	tists. The profession of play writing had scarcely begun to	know so little of Shakespeare, and that we must go to
100	be distinguished from that of play acting, and the times	town records, cases at law, and book registers for our
	were not wholly gone by when all actors had been classed	knowledge. Thanks to the diligence of modern scholars,
	in public estimation as vagabonds. While the London citi-	however, we know much more of Shakespeare than of
	zens were constant theatregoers, and immensely proud of	most of his fellow-actors and playwrights. The life of
	their fine plays, they were content to learn of the writers	Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's great predecessor,
S) S	of plays merely from town gossip, which passed from lip	is almost unknown; and of John Fletcher, Shakespeare's
-	to lip and found no resting	great contemporary and successor, it is not even known
	place in memoirs. There	whether he was married, or when he began to write plays.
1	were other lives which	Yet his father was Bishop of London, and in high favor
	made far more exciting	with Queen Elizabeth. We ought rather to wonder at the
	reading. English sea-men	good fortune which has preserved for us, however scanty
- Land Barry	were penetrating every	in details or lacking in the authority of its traditions, a
POSE STATE	ocean, and bringing back	continuous record of the life of William Shakespeare from
A 1000 A	wonderful tales. English	birth to death.
	soldiers were aiding the Dutch nation towards	STRATFORD
	freedom, and coming back	The notice of baptism on April 26, 1564, of William, son
	full of stories of heroic	of John Shakespeare, appears in the church records
	The Globe Theatre in London deeds. At home great polit-	of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire. Stratford was
	ical, religious, and scientific movements engaged the	then a market town of about fifteen hundred souls.
	attention of the more serious readers and thinkers. It is	Under Stratford Market Cross the farmers of northern
	not strange, therefore, that the writers of plays, whose	Warwickshire and of the near-lying portions of
	most exciting incidents were tavern brawls or imprison-	Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire carried
	ment for rash satire of the government, found no biog-	on a brisk trade with the thrifty townspeople. The citizens
	rapher. After Shakespeare's death, moreover, the theatre	were accustomed to boast of their beautiful church by the
	rapidly fell into disrepute, and many a good story of the	river, and of the fine Guildhall, where sometimes plays
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Chilis Jehrnings 2017

Grids & Guides

A Midsummer Night's Dream

An introduction to William Shakespeare's Life

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SHAKESPEARE

No one in Shakespeare's day seems to have been interested in learning about the private lives of the dramatists. The profession of play writing had scarcely begun to be distinguished from that of play acting, and the times were not wholly gone by when all actors had been classed in public estimation as vagabonds. While the London citizens were constant theatregoers, and immensely proud of their fine plays, they were content to learn of the writers of plays merely from town gossip, which passed from lip to lip and found no resting place



The Globe Theatre in London

in memoirs. There were other lives which made far more exciting reading. English sea-men were penetrating every ocean, and bringing back wonderful tales. English soldiers were aiding the Dutch nation towards freedom, and coming back full of stories of heroic deeds. At home great political, religious, and scientific movements engaged the attention

of the more serious readers and thinkers. It is not strange, therefore, that the writers of plays, whose most exciting incidents were tavern brawls or imprisonment for rash satire of the government, found no biographer. After Shakespeare's death, moreover, the theatre rapidly fell into disrepute, and many a good story of the playhouse fell under the ban of polite conversation, and was lost.

Under such conditions we cannot wonder that we know so little of Shakespeare, and that we must go to town records, cases at law, and book registers for our knowledge. Thanks to the diligence of modern scholars, however, we know much more of Shakespeare than of most of his fellow-actors and playwrights. The life of Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's great predecessor, is almost unknown; and of John Fletcher, Shakespeare's great contemporary and successor, it is not even known whether he was married, or when he began to write plays. Yet his father was Bishop of London, and in high favor with Queen Elizabeth. We ought rather to wonder at the good fortune which has preserved for us, however scanty in details or lacking in the authority of its traditions, a continuous record of the life of William Shakespeare from birth to death.

STRATFORD

The notice of baptism on April 26, 1564, of William, son of John Shakespeare, appears in the church records of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire. Stratford was then a market town of about fifteen hundred souls. Under Stratford Market Cross the farmers of northern Warwickshire and of the near-lying portions of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire carried on a brisk trade with the thrifty townspeople. The citizens were accustomed to boast of their beautiful church by the river, and of the fine Guildhall, where sometimes plays were given by traveling companies. Many of their gable-roofed houses of timber, or timber and plaster, are still to be found on the pleasant old streets. The river Avon winds round the town in a broad reach under the many-arched bridge to

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