

musical scale, and that the orbs moving with different velocities gave out deep awe-inspiring music, heard only by the angels—was infinitely grander than its faint copy, earthly harmony, to be lost in it when this “muddy vesture of decay” was thrown off? How many note the fitness of the introduction of music just after this scene, to represent our best expression, feeble though it be, of the harmony to which we all ought to aspire? How many understand that the man that hath no music in his soul is not one who cannot sing or play or enjoy the sounds of instruments, but that he is a being without any appreciation of that eternal fitness of things of which I have just spoken: that the love of man for his fellows is like a “little candle,” eternal love like the moon in the heavens which dims the lesser light, and absorbs it just as “the main of waters” does “an inland brook”? How many divine that the episode of the rings would have us learn to acknowledge the spirit in preference to the letter? Those who do, but they are not all, catch the cheerful spirit with which the play ends, and lay to heart a great lesson so beautifully taught.*

In considering *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the points I shall bring before your notice will fall under one or other of these heads: 1. Skill in the management of dramatic material. 2. Consistency in portrayal of character—in brief, characterization.

In the books of the Stationers' Company, under the date October 8th, 1600, we find a notice of a book printed by “Tho. Fysher.” Thomas Fisher's title page commenced as follows: “A Midsommer nights dreame. As it hath been sundry

**Por.*—That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

Ner.—When the moon shone we did not see the candle.

Por.—So doth the greater glory dim the less.
A substitute shines brightly as a king
Until a king be by, and then his state
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
Into the main of waters. Music! hark!—[Act 5, Sc. 1.]