

***GEORGE
FREDERICK KUNZ***



***SHAKESPEARE
AND PRECIOUS
STONES***

George Frederick Kunz

Shakespeare and Precious Stones

EAN 8596547366003

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

ILLUSTRATIONS

SHAKESPEARE AND PRECIOUS STONES

PRECIOUS STONES MENTIONED IN THE PLAYS OF
SHAKESPEARE

PRECIOUS STONES MENTIONED IN POEMS OF
SHAKESPEARE.

FOREWORD

[Table of Contents](#)

As no writer has made a more beautiful and telling use of precious stones in his verse than did Shakespeare, the author believed that if these references could be gathered together for comparison and for quotation, and if this were done from authentic and early editions of the great dramatist-poet's works, it would give the literary and historical student a better understanding as to what gems were used in Shakespeare's time, and in what terms he referred to them. This has been done here, and comparisons are made with the precious stones of the present time, showing what mines were known and gems were worn in Shakespeare's day, and also something of those that were not known then, but are known at this time.

The reader is also provided with a few important data serving to show what could have been the sources of the poet's knowledge regarding precious stones and whence were derived those which he may have seen or of which he may have heard. As in this period the beauty of a jewel depended as much, or more, upon the elaborate setting as upon the purity and brilliancy of the gems, the author has given some information regarding the leading goldsmith-jewellers, both English and French, of Shakespeare's age. Thus the reader will find, besides the very full references to the poet's words and clear directions as to where all the passages can be located in the First Folio of 1623, much material that will stimulate an interest in the subject and promote further independent research.

The author wishes to express his thanks to Dr. Appleton Morgan, President of the Shakespeare Society of New York; Miss H.C. Bartlett, the Shakespearean bibliophile; the New York Public Library and H.M. Leydenberg, assistant there; Gardner C. Teall; Frederic W. Erb, assistant librarian of Columbia University; the Council of the Grolier Club, Miss Ruth S. Granniss, librarian of the Club, and Vechten Waring, all of New York City.

G.F.K.

NEW YORK April, 1916

ILLUSTRATIONS

[Table of Contents](#)

- PAGE
 -
 - WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ENGRAVED BY MARTIN DROESHOUT) [Frontispiece](#)
 -
 - FIVE OF THE SIX AUTHENTIC SHAKESPEARE SIGNATURES [45](#)
 -
 - DIAMOND CUTTER'S SHOP, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY [59](#)
 -
 - FROM A PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH [61](#)
 -
 - PRINTER'S MARK OF RICHARD FIELD [102](#)
-

SHAKESPEARE AND PRECIOUS STONES

[Table of Contents](#)

So wide is the range of the immortal verse of Shakespeare, and so many and various are the subjects he touched upon and adorned with the magic beauty of his poetic imagery, that it will be of great interest to refer to the allusions to gems and precious stones in his plays and poems. These allusions are all given in the latter part of this volume. What can we learn from them of Shakespeare's knowledge of the source, quality, and use of these precious stones?

The great favor that pearls enjoyed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is, as we see, reflected by the frequency with which he speaks of them, and the different passages reveal in several instances a knowledge of the ancient tales of their formation and principal source. Thus, in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act i, sc. 1) he writes: "Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl"; and Pliny's tales of the pearl's origin from dew are glanced at indirectly when he says:

The liquid drops of tears that you have shed Shall
come again, transform'd to orient pearl. Richard III,
Act iv, sc. 4.

First Folio, "Histories", p. 198, col. A, line 17.

This is undoubtedly the reason for the comparison between pearls and tears, leading to the German proverb, "Perlen bedeuten Tränen" (Pearls mean tears), which was then taken to signify that pearls portended tears, instead of

that they were the offspring of drops of liquid. The world-famed pearl of Cleopatra, which she drank after dissolving it, so as to win her wager with Antony that she would entertain him with a banquet costing a certain immense sum of money, is not even noticed, however, in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. In the poet's time pearls were not only worn as jewels, but were extensively used in embroidering rich garments and upholstery and for the adornment of harnesses. To this Shakespeare alludes in the following passages:

The intertissued robe of gold and pearl. Henry V, Act iv, sc. 1.

First Folio, "Histories", p. 85 (page number repeated), col. B, line 13.

Their harness studded all with gold and pearl. Taming of the Shrew, Introd., sc. 2.

"Comedies", p. 209, col. B, line 33.

Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl. Ibid., Act ii, sc. 1.

"Comedies", p. 217, col. B, line 32.

Laced with silver, set with pearls. Much Ado About Nothing, Act iii, sc. 4.

"Comedies", p. 112, col. B, line 65.

Moreover, we have a simile which might almost make us suppose that Shakespeare knew something of the details of the pearl fisheries, when the oysters are piled up on shore and allowed to decompose, so as to render it easier to get

at the pearls, for he makes one of his characters say, speaking of an honest man in a poor dwelling, that he was like a "pearl in your foul oyster". (As You Like It, Act v, sc. 4.)

In the strange transformation told of in Ariel's song, the bones of the drowned man have been turned to coral, and his eyes to pearls (Tempest, Act i, sc. 2). The strange and sometimes morbid attraction of opposites finds expression in a queer old English proverbial saying given in the Two Gentlemen of Verona: "Black men are pearls in beauteous ladies' eyes". The likeness to drops of dew appears where we read of the dew that it was "Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass" (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act i, sc. 1), and a little later in the same play we read the following injunction:

I must go seek some dewdrops here And hang a pearl
in every cowslip's ear. A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act
ii, sc. 1.

First Folio, "Comedies", p. 148, col. A, line 38.

And later still we have the lines:

That same dew, which sometime on the buds Was
wont to swell like round and orient pearls.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act iv, sc. 1.

"Comedies", p. 157, col. B, line 10.

The pearl as a simile for great and transcendent value, perhaps suggested by the Pearl of Great Price of the Gospel, is used of Helen of Greece in the lines (Troilus and Cressida, Act ii, sc. 2):