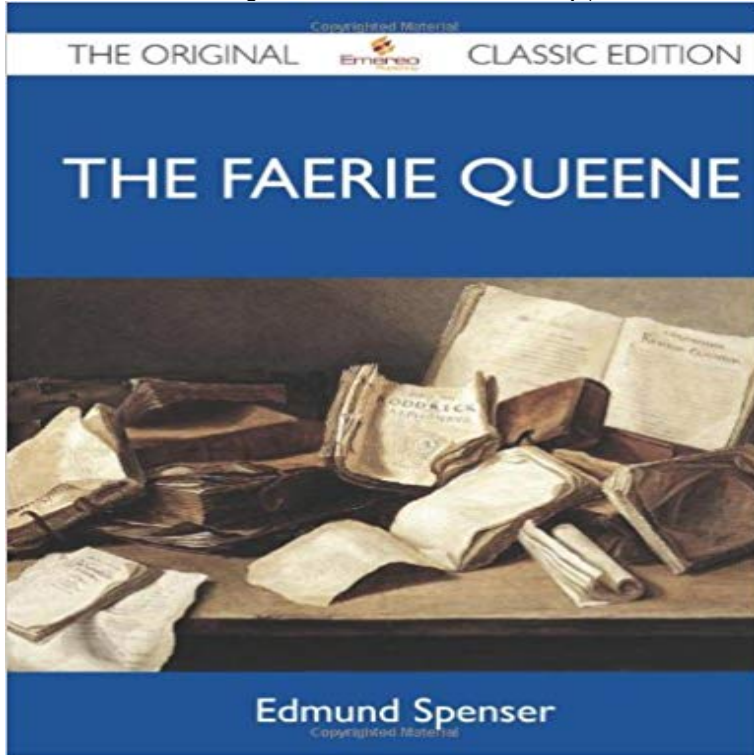


The Faerie Queene - The Original Classic Edition



Although everyone has heard of Edmund Spenser's amazing narrative poem, *The Faerie Queene*, it's a pity that few seem to read it. To a superficial glance it may appear difficult, although the truth is that it's basically a fascinating story that even an intelligent child can follow with enjoyment and interest. It appears difficult only because of Spenser's deliberately antique English. He needed such an English because he was creating a whole new dimension of enchantment, a magical world, a land of mystery and adventure teeming with ogres and giants and witches, hardy knights both brave and villainous, dwarfs, magicians, dragons, and maidens in distress, wicked enchanters, gods, demons, forests, caves, and castles, amorous encounters, fierce battles, etc., etc. To evoke an atmosphere appropriate to such a magical world, a world seemingly distant in both time and place from ours, Spenser created his own special brand of English. Basically his language is standard Sixteenth Century English, but with antique spellings and a few medievalisms thrown in, along with a number of new words that Spenser coined himself. The opening lines of the poem are typical: A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain, / Y cladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde, / Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remain, / The cruell markes of many a bloody field... (page 41). If, instead of reading with the eye, we read with the ear or aloud, the strange spellings resolve themselves into perfectly familiar words such as clad (clothed), mighty, arms, silver, shield, deep, cruel, marks, bloody, field. And Y cladd is just one of those Spenserian medievalisms that simply means clad or clothed (i.e., wearing). The only two words in this passage that might cause problems for the beginner are pricking and dints, and it doesn't take much imagination to realize that these must refer, respectively,

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