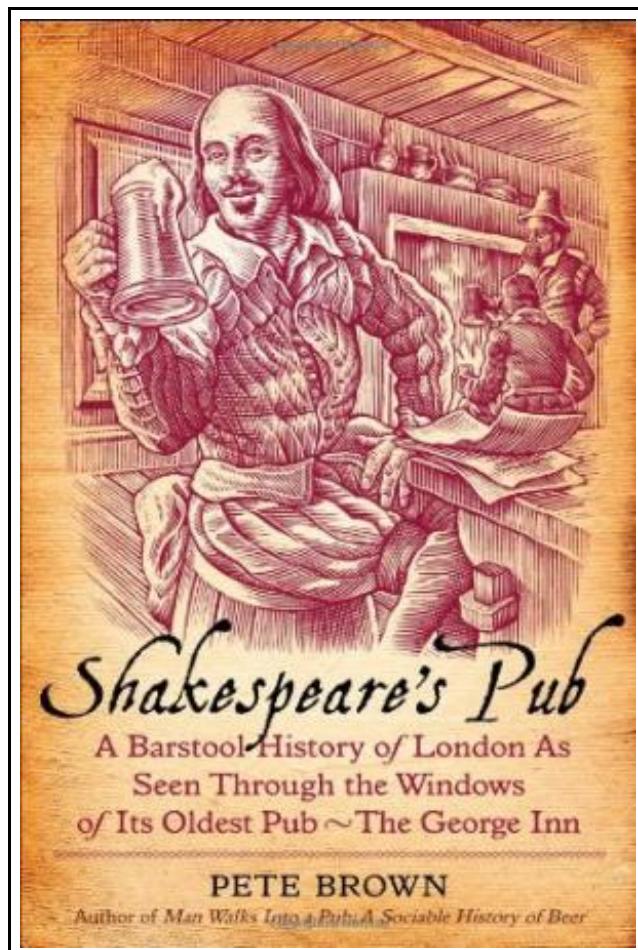


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St. Martin's. 1 Cloth(s), 2012. hard. Book Condition: New. The author of *Man Walks into a Pub* and the travel book *Three Sheets to the Wind* London's Times Literary Supplement called him "the beer drinker's Bill Bryson" Pete Brown here gives us a cheery history of Britain in the life and times of one special pub. The George Inn, near London Bridge, is a cozy, wood-paneled, galleried coaching inn a few minutes' walk from the Thames. Brown invites you to grab a pint, lean back against the wall, and then consider this: who else has rested their head against that wall, over the last 600 years? Chaucer, almost certainly, and likely Shakespeare; Dickens for a fact; and scads of mail carriers and highway travelers on their way to and from all parts of the British Empire. "Brown's fourth book on the world of beer is a history of innkeeping in England, because inns found it essential to brew. At the center of the centuries-long story is London's oldest inn, the George, just a hop-skip south of London Bridge in Southwark. The George's heritage is traceable from Chaucer's day, though the Canterbury pilgrims embarked from the Tabard next door, and it figures in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. Whether Shakespeare patronized the George can't be nailed down, but Southwark was London's theater district, so why not assume? The connections of inns and literature form one strand of Brown's exposition throughout, with wagoning (i.e., hauling goods), quartering both long-term and overnight, victualing, and conventioneering (local councils, clubs, political factions) constituting others. Less enduring but of immense importance is the great age of coaching, from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, during which inns flourished as never before or since. As befits his convivial subject, Brown writes as a spellbinding raconteur, keeping to each chapter's...



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