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A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
ENGLISH DRAMA

BY

BENJAMIN BRAWLEY

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WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

TEACHER AND FRIEND

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PREFACE

This book makes no special effort to be either original or profound. It aims simply to set forth in brief compass the main facts that one might wish to have at hand in his first course in the English Drama. The great revival of interest in this subject within recent years has produced many noteworthy studies, especially in the literature of the age of Elizabeth; but, singularly enough, most of the books that have been written have been for those who already knew most about the subject. The present work presupposes only that the student has had an elementary college course in the history of English Literature, and with just so much as a basis it endeavors to assist him as he passes on to the study of the greatest of the forms that this literature has so far assumed.

The book holds itself strictly to the history of the drama. There is accordingly no introductory discussion of technique. Such information may be given at the pleasure of the instructor, or it may be found in convenient form in Dr. Elizabeth Woodbridge's *The Drama, its Law and Technique* or in Professor Baker's comprehensive *Dramatic Technique.* The bibliography is necessarily selective. While emphasizing the books that one might need in an introductory course, it also contains some suggestions for more advanced study.

In presenting the subject of the English Drama in this form I have naturally had to be indebted to many students of special men or periods. Quotations are frequent, especially where statements are so final in their precision as

to leave no chance for me to improve upon them. All students regard with respect Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature* and are grateful for the Cambridge *History of English Literature,* while such works as Lee's *Life of William Shakespeare* and Baker's *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* have become simply a part of the general tradition. In the *Cambridge History* I feel especially indebted to the several articles by Mr. Harold Child, and also to the one on "The Drama and the Stage" by Professor G. H. Nettleton, while the latter writer's *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* has proved altogether indispensable. Some simply written but very accurate works for school use have helped again and again. Such are the Introduction to Professor C. G. Child's edition of *The Second Shepherd's Play, Everyman, and other Early Plays,* MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham's *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* and Neilson and Thorndike's *The Facts about Shakespeare.* Constantly I have had to avail myself of the results of the studies of Professor F. E. Schelling; to Professor Barrett Wendell I must ever be grateful for helpful criticism; while to President W. A. Neilson and Professor J. M. Manly I feel an indebtedness difficult to express. Back and forth between these last two teachers it was long my happy lot as a student to pass; their works are frequently cited in the notes; and while neither of course is responsible for any statement on my own part, it is a pleasure to take this occasion to thank two men who in themselves so excellently represent the highest ideals of modern scholarship.

BENJAMIN BRAWLEY.

CAMBRIDGE,
January 15, 1921.

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

1. **Origin.**—The English Drama, of which we now think as a highly developed form of entertainment, found its origin not in any accepted centers of amusement but in the dignified service of the Church. While moreover in later centuries the drama of Greece and Rome had considerable influence on the English stage, there was no real connection between the classic drama and the origins of the new form that arose in the Middle Ages. If in the earlier mediaeval centuries in England people could not go to anything like a modern theatre, the theatre could at least come to them; and it came in the shape of the minstrel, the scop, or the gleeman, who went from one great home to another, and of whom we hear so much in early song and story. The minstrels gave entertainments that we should now term recitals, and into their work the idea of impersonation was frequently introduced. Toward the end of the ninth century, however, there began on the Continent a development that was destined ultimately to revolutionize all such means of passing tedious hours away. "The Church, though it had sternly repressed the classic drama, in time came itself to use dramatic action to enrich its

liturgy and to enforce its teachings."[1] Elaboration of the liturgy developed by means of "tropes," which are defined more generally as "any interpolations of liturgical texts,"[2] and more specifically as "texts appropriate for special days, adapted for choral rendering in the musical portions of the Mass."[3] "Some of these tropes were simply lyric, or hymnal, in character; some, involving dialogue, were from the first dramatic in character. Certain tropes used at Easter, Christmas, and Ascension were of special importance as starting points of dramatic expansion."[4] Of first importance is the *Quem Quaeritis,* an Easter trope based on the words of the angel who addressed the holy women who went to anoint the body of Christ and announced to them the Resurrection, and preserved for us from the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gall. "It was originally sung as a choral addition to the music of the Introit of the Mass, that is, the procession with which the Mass begins. In course of time, however, as its dramatic possibilities were developed, it was detached from this position, where elaboration in the way of action was impossible, and inserted in the services preceding the Mass." The words of the trope were as follows:

Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae?
Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, O caelicola.
Non est hic; surrexit sicut praedixerat:
Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.

These four sentences appear in all Easter plays. At first they were of course not produced dramatically, but even in

[1] Child, Introduction to *The Second Shepherds' Play, Everyman, and other Early Plays,* xii.

[2] Manly.

[3] Child, Introduction, xii.

[4] Child.

the tenth century they passed the boundary of non-drama and drama.[5]

2. **Artistic Connections.**—From such a germ as the *Quem Quaeritis* one can easily see that expansion could take place in various ways. Especially could there be introduced various preliminaries to the actual dialogue at the tomb. As the service of the Church moreover was so universal in the western world in the Middle Ages, any innovation that was countenanced on the Continent would in course of time naturally find a place in England. Dialogue seems to find its ultimate origin in the antiphons, or choral chants, of the sixth century, in which the two sides of the choir alternately responded to each other. Along with dialogue developed dramatic action, tableaux being recognized as a means of impressing upon the unlearned the principles of Christian truth. Everywhere, from the tenth century on, the production in churches of a certain species of alternating song was combined with some kind of theatrical staging; and, simultaneously with the progress of this staging, the texts of the songs were enlarged by free poetical additions.[6] "Most of the literary monuments that enable us to reconstruct the gradual rise of the Christian drama are of German or French origin;" but one, *Concordia Regularis*, composed during the reign of Edgar (959-975) and containing rules for divine service in English monasteries, furnishes us in the *Quem Quaeritis* "the oldest extant example in European literature of the theatrical recital of an alternating song in church."[7]

[5] Manly.

[6] Creizenach: "The Early Religious Drama," *Cambridge History of English Literature* (hereafter referred to as *C. H. E. L.*), V, 40.

[7] Creizenach.

Upon all of the very earliest plays, however, severe limitations were everywhere placed; the language was always Latin, the subject was always taken from the Scriptures, and the performance was in a church. Unconsciously everybody waited for the day when removal to the outside of the sacred edifice would do away with a severely repressive atmosphere and give freer play to genuine dramatic emotion.

3. **Miracle Plays.**—A few definitions [8] may now be in place. A *Mystery* play is one originating in the liturgy and presenting an event or series of events taken from the Holy Scriptures. A *Miracle* play is a dramatization of an event or legend from the life of a saint or martyr. A *Morality* is a dramatization of an allegory intended to inculcate some useful lesson of religion, morality, or science. With the Morality we shall deal in our next chapter. The word *mystery* was not originally in use in England; [9] on the other hand, as compared with France, strict miracle plays were very few in number. In England, however, the name of the thing of which the country had little became attached to that of which it had much, so that for this country at least it is generally best to speak of the early productions as miracle rather than mystery plays. In course of time the early religious plays came to consist of three main groups of scenes: from the Old Testament, scenes of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Death of Abel,

[8] To be credited in substance to Manly. Note this editor's *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspherean Drama*, the best and most accessible collection of early English plays. For general discussion, in addition to the work of Ward and Creizenach, note for a brief and popular study Bates: *The English Religious Drama*, and, for further study, Chambers: *The Mediaeval Stage*.

[9] Ward: "The Origins of English Drama," *C. H. E. L.*, V, 15.

and the Deluge; and, from the New Testament, scenes centering around the Birth of Christ, such as the Annunciation, the Visit of the Shepherds, the coming of the Three Kings and the Flight into Egypt, and also scenes connected with the Resurrection, such as those of the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, and the Walk to Emmaus. The chronological order of development in the three groups, however, was exactly the reverse of the order just given.

4. **Early Development.**—It took in England more than two hundred years (or until about 1250) for all the changes to be made from the little dialogue that was simply a part of the liturgy to Bible scenes or plays that were regularly presented for public instruction or entertainment. As the presentation of liturgical plays became more elaborate, and as more space was required both for them and for the audience, the place of performance changed from the church to the churchyard, and then to the street or marketplace or convenient open spaces about the town. "Latin gave way to the vernacular, and the priests to laymen; and miracle plays representing the lives of patron saints were given by schools, trade gilds, and other lay institutions."[10] While moreover the scenes gathered around the Birth of Christ were especially appropriate to the Christmas season, and those of the Resurrection to Easter, more and more it became evident that because of the weather at these seasons, some day in the late spring or early summer would be preferable for the most elaborate productions. In course of time Corpus Christi day (the Thursday after Trinity Sunday) came to surpass all other

[10] Neilson: Introduction to *Julius Caesar* in Lake English Classics, 12.

occasions. The feast of Corpus Christi was instituted in 1264 by Pope Urban IV; after an intermission it was re-instituted in 1311; and very soon the celebration came to represent within itself all the splendor and solemnity of the Church. "This feast commemorated a miracle which was believed to have given ocular evidence of transubstantiation, that is, the change of the bread and wine of the sacrament to the actual Body and Blood of Christ, and its characteristic feature was, and in certain Continental cities is still, a procession in which the Host was carried through the streets so as to make a circuit of the parish or town." [11] This procession became a sort of triumphal progress by which the Church not only emphasized her own power but also "satisfied the perennial inclination of the people for disguisings and festal shows." [12] In England especially these processions assumed a dramatic character, the different scenes being distributed in such a way as to bear some relation to the craft that performed it; thus the carpenters or shipbuilders would be given the scene or play of Noah's Flood, and the goldsmiths that of the Adoration of the Magi. The actors stood on a stage ("pageant") moving about on wheels. In the course of the procession a certain number of stations was appointed, at which the several pageants stopped as they went along, and on which the respective scenes were performed. Naturally the progress of the action was interrupted as one pageant rolled away and another approached; meanwhile the attention of the people had to be held if disorder was to be prevented. "The function of calling the people to order was, wherever possible, intrusted to a tyrant, say Herod, the murderer of the Innocents, or Pilate, who, dressed up grotesquely and

[11] Child, Introduction, xviii. [12] Creizenach.

armed with a resounding sword, raged about among the audience and imposed silence on the disturbers of peace." [13]

5. **Cycles.**—More and more the control of plays and of processions such as those just remarked passed from the Church to the municipal authorities, and especially to the gilds. These organizations were associations of men engaged in the same craft and they had the advantage of being able to assist financially in the performance of productions that showed a tendency to be increasingly expensive. Gradually in some of the larger centers the town took entire charge of the presentation, and a complete series of plays or pageants might embrace as many as forty or fifty scenes running all the way from the Creation through the Prophets and the Life of Christ to Doomsday. Four great series or cycles have been preserved for us. These are the York cycle, with forty-eight scenes (exclusive of the Innholder's fragment); [14] the Chester cycle, with twenty-five scenes; the Wakefield cycle (commonly called the "Towneley cycle" from the family that owned the manuscript), with thirty-two scenes or plays, and the so-called Coventry cycle, with forty-two scenes. In these four great cycles are to be found not less than one hundred and fifty distinct plays. The York cycle is marked by many original features; for instance, the presentation of Judas is especially dramatic and impressive, both in the scene in which he offers his services as betrayer and in the one in which he begs the high priest to take back the money he received for selling his Lord. The Chester cycle is on the whole more didactic and less dramatic than the others.

[13] Creizenach.

[14] The rest of the paragraph is chiefly indebted to Creizenach, *C. E. L.*, III, 50-54.

The Towneley cycle is noteworthy for its realism and humor. The so-called Coventry cycle is, like that of Chester, especially didactic, and it introduces several curiosities of mediaeval theology. Obviously the York and Towneley cycles had most to do with the advance of the drama. The performance of a whole cycle of plays was a serious undertaking. It might consume several days. That of the Chester group took three days; that of the York cycle was completed within one day, but the first scene began at half-past four in the morning.[15]

6. Secular Elements.—The outline just given obviously gives no conception of the very strong human qualities that entered into the new literary form and that did so much to make for its ultimate success. Some of these were observable even while the miracle play was still a part of the church service; when it was removed from the church to the churchyard and to the streets, extraneous elements developed space. The actors began to capitalize anything that made for personal success, or for that of the business or gild which they represented. Especially important was an ever-increasing emphasis on the comic motive. As human nature loves to watch any kind of a contest, the unwillingness of Noah's wife to enter the ark was made more and more farcical. Herod, chagrined at the escape of the Wise Men, entertained his audience by roaring and ranting and tearing his beard. Episodes that had no generic connection with the main theme of a play were sometimes introduced, the most noteworthy instance being a little farce of sheepstealing in the *Second Shepherd's Play*. This same play also illustrates the portrayal of the life of the agricultural laborer of England in the Middle Ages,

[15] Child, Introduction, xxii.

there being stock complaints of bad weather, poor crops, and heavy taxes. Of an entirely different kind of dramatic portrayal, and noteworthy as the representation of pure sentiment, was the tender and pathetic pleading of Isaac in *Abraham and Isaac,* this faintly resembling little Arthur's entreaties to Hubert in Shakespeare's *King John.* Very important was the influence that crept into the drama from folk-lore, games, and festivals—in short, from the everyday customs of the people. Old pagan festivals of Summer and Winter incidentally cultivated many contributing elements, such as disguise or action, the procession or the combat. The sword-dance used as one of its chief characters the Fool, who wore the skin of a fox or some other animal; and it became mimetic in character. It seems to have had its origin in the conflict between Winter and Summer, with the expulsion of Winter (or Death) and the resurrection of Summer (or Life). "In several of the extant sword-dances in Britain and on the Continent, one of the dancers is, in different manners, attacked or killed, or, perhaps, merely symbolically surrounded or approached, with the swords; and this feature, which enshrines the memory of the sacrifice, becomes the principal point of action in the mummers' or St. George plays which developed from the sword-dance." [16] "The invariable incident of the death and restoration to life of one of the characters is the point upon which has been based the descent of this play from pagan festivals celebrating the death and resurrection of the year." Perhaps the best examples, however, of the turning of a folk-festival into a play was the development of the incidents of

[16] H. H. Child: "Secular Influences on the Early English Drama," *C. H. E. L.*, V, 35.

the May game into the play of Robin Hood. The great hero of the ballads seems to have had his origin in France, where in some old plays he was the type of the shepherd lover and Marion was his mistress. In course of time Marion became Maid Marian; and the Mayday king and queen became the central figures in a play in which secondary characters—Friar Tuck, Little John, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and others—found their places. Thus, although the drama ultimately placed emphasis on aristocratic elements, at the same time that the glorious Arthur was regnant in romance and legend, there arose a hero of the people who thus early became the first real representative of the "drama of democracy."

CHAPTER II

MORALITY AND INTERLUDE

7. **The Temper of the Middle Ages.**—Out of the dimness of the Middle Ages rise three great institutions, Chivalry, Feudalism, and the Church, respectively dominating the social, the economic, and the religious life of the people. Each of these, it will be observed, was in its own way aristocratic, and each subordinated the will of an individual to a power greater than itself. Courtesy, loyalty, and faith became ideals closely interwoven, and in the seeking of these all transitory things were worthless. Faith indeed was ever enjoined, and Augustine, Bernard, and Thomas Aquinas alike emphasized the wonders of a world not seen. Such a world, however, was an abstraction; and more and more the simple truths of life were expressed in terms of allegory and moralizing. So-called Debates were popular, the best being that between the Body and the Soul; and there were Dialogues or Disputations—between a Christian and a Jew, a Good Man and the Devil, and between the Child Jesus and the Masters of the Law. Bestiaries drew lessons for human conduct from the lives of lower animals; humanity struggled against the Seven Deadly Sins; and even the language of love became stilted and conventional. As such influences affected everything within reach, they not unnaturally left their impress on the drama.

8. **Moralities.**—Not so much out of as by the side of

the Miracle play in its later growth developed the Morality. We have already found in the definition of this particular form of play (§ 3) that it placed emphasis on a didactic motive and that its characters were abstractions. It is difficult to overemphasize the tendency toward allegory; in fact, it is hardly too much to say that a Morality was an allegory cast in the form of a play. The form has many points of contact with early French literature, with such a work, for instance, as the *Roman de la Rose;* and it "originated in the desire to bring into clear relief the great lesson of life—the struggle between good and evil to which every man is subjected, and the solution of which depends for every man upon his relation to the powers contending for his soul." [1] The form became very popular in the course of the fifteenth century, and it continued even until the close of the sixteenth. In the course of its later development it occasionally incorporated comic elements, and it even became a medium of controversy, in one way or another reflecting the changes of church policy in the difficult period from Henry VIII to the earlier years of Elizabeth. Something of this later development was represented by Sir David Lindesay's *Satire of the Three Estates* (1540), an attack upon the corruption of the Church in the period of the Reformation.

The Moralities that have come down to us generally date from about the middle of the fifteenth century, and they show an interesting transition from the more general treatment of the conflict of the powers of Good and Evil for the soul of a man throughout his whole career to the more particular consideration of a definite crisis in his life, especially that of approaching death. In *The Castle of Per-*

[1] Ward, *C. H. E. L.*, V, 23.

severance, Humanum Genus is portrayed in the different stages of child, youth, mature man, and old man. Led by his Evil Angel, he is brought to *Mundus,* who gives him various gay companions. As a young man he comes under the spell of *Luxuria* (Licentiousness), and he continues in his evil courses until he is at length brought by *Poenitentia* to *Confessio,* who leads him to the Castle of Perseverance (or Constancy), where he is surrounded by seven Virtues. The Castle, in a strong scene, is attacked by the powers of Evil, and by the Seven Deadly Sins; but the Virtues fight valiantly, the besiegers are driven back, and the Castle is saved. In his old age, however, Humanum Genus yields to the temptations of Avaritia, who has crept up to the walls, and under the spell of the new voice he goes forth from the Castle that has been his fortress. When he dies his soul is saved from his Evil Angel and Hell only by the entreaties of Mercy and Peace. In *Mankind,* a Morality which is of about the same date as *The Castle of Perseverance,* Mankind is portrayed "in the world." Warned by Mercy to beware of New Gyse, Now-a-days, and Nought, he applies himself diligently with his spade at his work of tilling the ground. Mischief comes on the scene, however, and Titivillus, "arrayed like a devil and with a net in his hand," makes temptation easy by his theft of the spade. When Mercy comes on the scene again he finds that Mankind has fallen. Repentance and forgiveness follow in approved fashion. It will be observed that this play, while not as great in scope as *The Castle of Perseverance,* had the special merit of fixing attention upon a climax, or definite critical moment in the life of the hero, and that it gave some distinct opportunity for characterization and humor.

Greater than either of these plays, however, was *Every-*

man, a work of art that in superb fashion combined moral import and histrionic effectiveness, and that even within recent years has seen a noteworthy revival on the stage. The date of the play is not fixed, but it was probably in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Everyman, suddenly called to a long journey by Death, protests that he is not ready, offers a thousand pounds for some delay of the summons, and begs for twelve years in which to make clear his account-book. No respite is given; he is told, however, that he might take with him any of his friends who will bear him company. Fellowship, a brilliant and gay character, who has lightly promised to stand by him even unto death, refuses to move when put to the test; Kindred and Cousin are also unwilling to go on the journey; and Riches, a friend at other times, scoffingly bids Everyman good-day. Only Good Deeds, who, bound by Everyman's sins, had long lain cold in the ground, seems willing to help him in his hour of need. At this point enters Knowledge, who advises Everyman to go with him to the dwelling of Confession. Everyman now subjects himself to the scourge of penance and puts on the robe of contrition. Good Deeds meanwhile has gained so much strength as to be able to rise and join Everyman and Knowledge. Discretion, Strength, Five Wits, and Beauty are summoned, and all journey on together until they approach the grave. Beauty refuses to enter; she leaves, and in turn is followed by her companions. Knowledge remains outside the grave, and only Good Deeds accompanies Everyman to the hereafter. In the sureness with which it holds itself to the main theme, in its characterization, and in its effort to humanize the abstractions of the old Morality, *Everyman* is incomparable.

9. Interludes.—"The advance implied in the Morality consisted not so much in any increase in the vitality of the characters or in the interest of the plot (in both of which, indeed, there was usually a falling off), as in the fact that in it the drama had freed itself from the bondage of having to choose its subject-matter from one set of sources—the Bible, the Apocrypha, and the Lives of the Saints."[2] Thus arose the Interlude, the next great form that the drama assumed. The exact meaning of the term has given rise to much discussion. It would seem to indicate a short play thrust in between other things, such as the courses of a feast; but, whether this is true or not, the Interlude was certainly intended as a brief comedy, rather a farce, designed primarily for entertainment; and, placing emphasis on current social types, such as a Pardoner or a Peddler, it became characterized by realistic and satirical elements. "The line between the morality and the interlude, as between the later interlude and regular comedy, is artificial at best. But it is clear that the vital principle of the morality was its interest in life and conduct as affecting the actions of man. The vital principle of the interlude was also its interest in life; but the ulterior end and purpose, guidance to moral action, had been lost and the artistic sense set free. The interlude deals with comedy; it loves what is near and familiar, and its methods are realistic."[3]

Typical of the new form was *Hick Scorner* (or *Hyckescorner*) (*c.* 1525), a play in which an old man, Pity, is belabored and finally placed in irons by three rascals, Freewill, Imagination, and Hick Scorner, the first two of whom

[2] Neilson, Introduction to *Julius Caesar,* 14.

[3] Schelling: *Elizabethan Drama,* I, 78.

had already engaged in a noisy fight. Toward the close of the play a rather violent wrench forces Freewill and Imagination to accord with the common and conventional conversion to a better life. Such a play as this has little plot; its strength rests rather upon the portrayal of such a character as Imagination, a sharp and witty villain who informs us that he can look in a man's face and pick his purse and that even if his hands were smitten off he could steal with his teeth. Hick Scorner also has a distinguishing mark; in a rather boastful passage he speaks at length of his wide travels and his experiences in different countries. More and more in such a play was plot sacrificed to the demand of the moment. The Interlude was in fact much like the modern "sketch;" largely transitional in form, it was capable of development or adaptation in any direction. In its later course the line between it and the typical Morality was not always clear; and farcical, didactic, and controversial elements were frequently joined. Representative of some of these different or mixed tendencies were *The Interlude of the Nature of the Four Elements* (*ante* 1536) and *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (*c.* 1570), primarily reminiscent of the schoolroom, and *Like Will to Like* (*c.* 1568), in which there are many elements of low comedy and buffoonery but little more emphasis on plot than *Hick Scorner* possessed.

10. John Heywood.—Foremost of the writers of Interludes and the prime representative of the form was John Heywood (1497?-1577?). With this writer we are for the first time confronted by a dramatist of whose life there is documentary evidence and whose work may be considered as a whole and in relation to his time. He seems to have been interested first of all in music. At an early age he

entered the royal service, probably as a chorister, and in the years of his young manhood he is more than once mentioned as a "singer" and a "player of the virginals."[4] About 1540 he was still working in such capacities as these, though at a lower salary than formerly. In March, 1537, he was paid 40s. for playing before Princess Mary an interlude with his "children" (probably choir boys from St. Paul's Cathedral).

While Heywood lived on well into the reign of Elizabeth his dramatic work was done primarily in the reign of Henry VIII. It was his distinctive achievement that he "dispensed with allegorical machinery and didactic aim, and gave a realistic representation of contemporary citizen types." Undoubtedly his work are *The Play of the Wether* (1533), *A Play of Love* (1534), *The Play called the Foure P. P.* (*c.* 1535), and *A Dialogue concerning Witty and Witless.* More important than all save the second of these works, and generally attributed to him, are *A Mery Play betwene the Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate, and Neybour Pratte* (1533) and *A Mery Play betwene John the Husbande, Johan Tyb his Wife, and Syr John the Preest* (1533-4). In *The Four P's* we meet first a Palmer who recounts his journeys (recall Hick Scorner). While he is still speaking the Pardoner enters to inform him that after he has traveled as far as he can he will still come home no wiser than he was when he went forth. The two discuss at length the relative merits of pilgrimages and pardons, and the veracity of palmers and pardoners. To them enters the Poticary, and last of all comes the Peddler, light of heart and with a well-filled pack (*cf.* Autolycus in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*). A debate now takes

[4] See Boas: "Early Comedy," *C. H. E. L.*, V, 101.

place as to who can tell the biggest lie, and the Palmer wins at last by his declaration that in all his wanderings he has never seen a woman out of patience. On such a slender thread did Heywood work; and he could make a play with only four characters. The important thing to be observed about his work is that in it we have the drama "escaping from its alliance with religion into the region of pure comedy. Here is no well planned moral, no sententious mouthpiece of abstract excellence, no ruin of sinners and crownings of saints . . . nor is there any buffoonery."[5] The playwright was simply an artist, working with no theory to advance, but only with the aim of setting before his audience life as he saw it, with a touch of satire, but satire all the more pleasant because no one was wounded by the jest.

11. **The Vice.**—One of the most important contributions to the drama developed by the early plays, and especially by the morality, was the Vice. One scholar has said that "this personage was probably descended from the merry devil Tutivillus, who was taken over from the mysteries into the moralities."[6] It is to be noted, however, that a spirit of mischief was attributed to all smaller demons; and in this connection we might remark a spirit of mockery that frequently characterized the old drama and that was exemplified in such a thing as the so-called Feast of Fools. In Heywood's *Play of the Wether* the Vice takes the form of Mery-reporte, a self-assertive rogue with a very free tongue; and *Like Will to Like* opens with Nichol Newfangle playing a trick upon an auditor as soon as he comes upon the stage. The Vice was regularly full of fun, and he became important in the history of the drama

[5] Wynne, 85.

[6] Creizenach, *C. H. E. L.*, V, 63.

when he bequeathed some of his characteristics to the Fool of more highly developed comedy.

12. Conditions of Presentation.—For the proper presentation of a play certain conditions are of course necessary. First of all a group of people must be together. Such a group might be in a school, and it is astonishing to learn of just how high an order of merit was some of the work of schoolboys in the sixteenth century. The most important group of boys in England for the present purpose was to be found in the Chapel Royal. The origin of the Chapel is obscure; but "it entered the histrionic field early" and "it was, if we may trust the extant records, a pioneer in the production of some important kinds of plays."[7] In the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483) eight children were included in the organization of the school. Later the number was increased to twelve, but the Chapel still limited itself strictly to its primary purpose of the celebration of divine service. Under the Tudor sovereigns, however, if not earlier, notable additions were made to its functions. "Both the gentlemen and the children took part, frequently if not regularly, in the pageants, masques, and plays produced at Christmas and on other festal occasions." The activities of the gentlemen seem to have ceased soon after the amusements of the court took a more secular turn; but the career of the children continued longer. In the earlier years of the sixteenth century no other company of people exercised a more real leadership in the drama than that of these children of the Chapel Royal. In course of time other companies of boys also helped in the general advance, notably

[7] Manly: "The Children of the Royal Chapel and their Masters," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 314.

those of Paul's and of Windsor, and of the Westminster and Merchant Tailors' schools. Such companies were of course removed from the professional stage; and a group of adult performers could be held together only by some stable and reliable patronage. We have seen that as far back as the period of the miracle plays the responsibility for a production had to be assumed by a town, or at least divided by the town among different gilds. More and more it became the custom for a nobleman to keep a group of players under his special patronage. Interludes were generally given by professional entertainers who were in the service of persons of rank or who traveled from town to town, and in the circumstances of their presentation were to be found many of the conditions which gave rise to modern comedy and to the traveling company.

CHAPTER III

THE ELIZĀBETHAN AGE

13. **Spirit of the Age.**—The great outburst of the English Drama in the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603) is to be explained only by the larger forces at work in English literature and life. The reign of Henry VII had signalized an era of unparalleled discovery, and to a national imagination that roamed beyond the seas was now added all the culture of the Renaissance. Improvements took place in manners and customs; a more tolerant temper was manifest in religion; and a healthy spirit of the enjoyment of life was everywhere. Almost suddenly England's dawning greatness was seen and felt; Catholic and Protestant alike paid homage to the Queen; and the Armada sent to break the spirit of the country was shattered in 1588. In such different ways was cultivated the feeling of nationality. The common man sank himself in the general ideal—in the glory of the sovereign; there developed an interest in the heroes of the past; and the form of literature demanded was one that would respond to the bravado and daring of the day—one that emphasized action. Thus a quickened imagination, broadening culture, improved living conditions, and patriotic achievement all united to call into being the great flowering of the Elizabethan Drama.

14. **Elements Contributing to the Drama.**—So far as literature and the stage were concerned, three powerful

impulses were felt.[1] "The first of these, the humanistic or 'classical' impulse, is foreign and purely scholarly. The second, the 'romantic' impulse, is inherent in dramatic inspiration, but in our drama received a special form and direction from foreign sources. The third, the impulse towards realism, is inherent, and might at any time become dominant in particular works, or the works of particular men." "The humanistic, or classical, impulse took its rise in the classical plays of the universities and the schools, which included both plays written in Latin and English plays written on Latin models. Humanism—the study of the classic to apply its lessons to problems of the present, which formed so important a part of the complex movement called the Renaissance—affected the drama, as it affected all other types of literature. In the universities and the schools, plays were written on the model of the Roman playwrights, Plautus and Seneca, who were adopted as exemplars of comedy and tragedy respectively."[2] The second impulse, that of the spirit of romance, is not less important, as it gave freest play to the imagination. It was frequently innate in the dramatist, but derived special inspiration from Italian sources—from lyrics and pastorals and allegories as well as collections of tales. Above any details of texts or sources, however, was the great lesson of artistic independence that the spirit taught the Elizabethans. Greene and Marlowe among Shakespeare's earlier contemporaries, Beaumont and Fletcher among the later, and the great master him-

[1] They have frequently been dealt with, but in brief compass hardly ever better than in Prof. C. G. Child's Introduction previously cited.

[2] C. G. Child, Introduction, xxxix.

self, felt the impulse beckoning them on to high ideals and lofty achievement. Finally there was the realistic influence, which of course placed emphasis primarily on English tradition and which had been so well exemplified in the interludes of John Heywood. Such dominating tendencies as these that have been remarked can not always be clearly delimited; together, however, they were to rear the great edifice of the English Drama.

15. **First Regular Comedies.**—In view of the success of the interlude as a form of entertainment, it was but natural that comedy should develop faster than tragedy. Especially potent was the influence of Plautus. As early as 1527 the boys of St. Paul's School performed before Cardinal Wolsey a play by this dramatist; the students at Eton and Westminster also cultivated his works under the direction of their masters; and sometimes performances took place before the Queen. "The custom of giving plays at great public schools and universities was a very old one, though definite information is almost entirely lacking until the performance of the *Dido* of Rightwise between 1522 and 1532. We also know that in 1525 a play was presented by the students of Eton College. The practice continued uninterruptedly till the time of the Commonwealth and, together with disputations, formed the chief method of entertaining royalty at the universities. Elizabeth seems to have been particularly fond of these representations." [3]

One of the first English dramatic pieces which show unmistakably the influence of Latin comedy is the interlude, *Calisto and Meliboea,* published about 1530. *Thersites* and *Jack Juggler* also are indebted to the same source,

[3] Wallace: *The Birthe of Hercules,* 39.

though in the case of *Thersites* the contribution was more directly French. This play was written in 1537. It consists of a number of loosely connected scenes illustrative of the character of the hero, who is a ridiculous braggart. The farce of *Jack Juggler* in its prologue confesses itself an unambitious adaptation of the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, but there is very little similarity between it and the Latin play if the two are considered as wholes.

The step of writing a regular English comedy on classical lines was taken by Nicholas Udall. This dramatist, born in Hampshire in 1505, was educated at Winchester and at Corpus Christi College, Oxford; he was headmaster at Eton from 1534 to 1541, and at Westminster from 1553 or 1554 until his death in 1556. He was a practical teacher; he prepared for his pupils a handbook for the study of Latin; and he was complimented by the Queen for his diligence in presenting before her certain dialogues and interludes. He is primarily remembered for *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553?), a play based on the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. The story is that of the wooing by a lovesick and confident boaster, Ralph Roister Doister, of Dame Christian Custance, whose heart has already been given to Gawin Goodluck, a merchant whose business keeps him much away at sea. The complicating force in the play is Merrygreek, a parasite, who has many marks of the old Vice. More and more as the action advances this character proves Ralph Roister Doister to be a gull. Ralph first sends to Dame Custance an old nurse of hers with a letter, then one of his own servants with a ring and token; and finally he sends Merrygreek, who is to bring back an answer indicating the Dame's willingness to be "wedded on Sunday next." Merrygreek, by changing the punctua-

tion, misreads Ralph's letter to Dame Custance, and further complications arise when a servant, Sim Suresby, sent by Goodluck, misunderstands the relations between Ralph and the Dame and replies rather curtly when the latter speaks of sending a token to his master. An attempt to carry off the lady by force, suggested to Ralph by Merrygreek, results in the boaster's being completely routed by the Dame's maidservants with scuttles and brooms. Goodluck himself at length returns, however; there are explanations all around; and Ralph and Merrygreek join in the wedding festivities. There is much incidental comedy in the play. Among other things there is a mock dirge when Ralph protests that his heart is broken; and the maids of the Dame, with their gay spirits and love of song, add materially to the whole. The chief characters moreover are drawn with considerable care, and throughout there is evidence of knowledge of the bases of comic appeal. *Ralph Roister Doister* is thus not only interesting in itself but has unique importance in the history of the English drama.

At Christ's College, Cambridge, probably not long after 1550, was acted another comedy, rather a farce, which even more than *Ralph Roister Doister* dealt with the humors and foibles of lower English life. This was *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* "made by Mr. S. Mr of Art," which phrase has recently been interpreted as applying to William Stevenson, who at the time seems to have had much to do with the production of plays at Cambridge. "*Gammer Gurton's Needle* is of enduring interest as the earliest university play in English which has come down to us. At first sight it shows little trace of scholarly influences. The 'fourteener' in which it is mainly written is a rough

and tumble meter; and the dialogue, often coarse in strain, is, as a whole, in that southwestern dialect which became the conventional form of rustic speech on the Elizabethan stage. The plot turns on the complications produced in a small village society by the loss of the gammer's needle, and the characters are typically English, including Diccon, who combines the rôles of a Vice and a vagrant Tom of Bedlam. But, on closer examination, the effect of classical models is seen. The comedy is divided into acts and scenes, and the plot has a real organic unity. The parts played by the different personages in the village community, from 'Master Bailey' and the curate downward, are neatly discriminated. The triumph of pastoral convention had not yet blurred for English humanists the outlines of genuine English country life."[4]

An important development in another direction was that of plays with a didactic or satirical tendency. Some of these were neo-classical rather than strictly classical in tone, and more than one used in some way the theme of the Prodigal Son. In *Nice Wanton* (*c.* 1560) is portrayed the downward career of two spoiled children and the remorse of their mother. Thomas Ingeland's *The Disobedient Child*, printed in 1560, but probably written some years before, and largely adapted from an earlier original in Latin, shows some connection with the Continent, where the fashion of presenting biblical stories in classical form had become popular. It "is one of the earliest English plays undoubtedly modeled after the Christian drama of the German humanists. . . . There is no division into acts and scenes, but the play shows a real advance in structural art,—a juster conception of plot as a progres-

[4] F. S. Boas: "University Plays," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 334.

sively developing unity."[5] To the same general class (with influence from the Italian, or it may be from the Dutch humanists with whom he was possibly in contact) belongs George Gascoigne's *The Glass of Government* (1575). In this play the prodigal and the virtuous son appear in double guise. Two fathers are introduced, each with two sons, the elder in each case being very bad and the younger very good. All four are given in charge of a schoolmaster, who at great length instructs them in their duties. The older boys spend their time with coarse associates and rebel against their teacher, while the younger ones are diligent at their tasks. The younger ones grow to distinction and renown, while the older ones are finally saved from the consequences of their misdeeds only on the plea of their old schoolmaster. This play is of course mechanical in its moral scheme: at the same time its style and structure are interesting, and the prose used throughout makes the dialogue realistic. In other directions Gascoigne was less artificial. His *Supposes* (1566), adapted from Ariosto, further emphasizes prose as a comic medium, has the importance of presenting in English for the first time a characteristic Italian comedy of intrigue, and in theme has much affinity with *The Taming of the Shrew,* for which play by Shakespeare it was really the ultimate English source.

Interesting as representing the fusion of classical and native elements was *Damon and Pithias,* by Richard Edwards, a "tragical comedy" presented before the Queen in 1564. The plot is drawn from the annals of Syracuse, and the loyalty of the two friends to each other is well portrayed. The Syracusan court is really the Elizabethan,

[5] Wallace, 51.

and some of the characters, notably Grim the collier, are distinctly English. "Though lacking in metrical charm or verbal felicity, *Damon and Pithias* has merits which go some way towards accounting for the acclaim with which, as contemporary allusions show, it was received; and the play possesses an importance of its own in the development of romantic drama from a combination of forces and materials new and old."[6]

16. First Regular Tragedies.—The beginnings of regular tragedy in English show on every hand interesting connections with the older dramatic forms of morality and interlude, and with the chronicle play, which last is so important as to demand further and special consideration. Stronger perhaps than any other influence was that of Seneca. Two plays might be remarked as representative of the transition from the earlier forms to regular tragedy.

One of these was the "lamentable tragedy of *Cambises*" (not later than 1569), telling the story of Cambises, King of Persia "from the beginning of his kingdom unto his death; his one good deed of execution; after that, many wicked deeds and tyrannous murders committed by and through him, and last of all, his odious death by God's justice appointed." The author of this production was Thomas Preston, fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and afterwards master of Trinity Hall. Cambises sets out upon his conquests, returns and executes his deputy Sisamnes, shoots the young son of the counselor Praxaspes; murders his own brother Smirdis; marries, against her own wish and the law of the Church, his cousin, only to execute her when she reproaches him for his crimes; and finally dies accidentally pierced by his own sword. Most

[6] F. S. Boas: "Early English Comedy," in *C. H. E. L.*, V, 133-34.

of these horrors take place on the stage, and crime follows crime in mechanical or melodramatic fashion, so much so that Shakespeare in *1 Henry IV* (II, 4) refers to "King Cambyses' vein" as something proverbial for rant. At the same time there is occasionally heard the voice of genuine feeling, as in the farewell of Praxaspes to his little son, and the play as a whole has the merit of clear construction. There are many signs of the survival of the old morality; the Vice Ambidexter is ingeniously woven into the play (he predicts the death of Cambises), and such figures as Huf and Ruf furnish the low comedy. Another play of the transition was the "tragical comedy" of *Appius and Virginia,* by one R. B. (1563), on a theme which was attractive to English dramatists from the days of the beginning of tragedy down to those of James Sheridan Knowles in the nineteenth century. In this we find portrayed the domestic happiness of Virginius and his wife and daughter, all of which is marred by the passion of Appius. There are numerous allegorical personages in the play, but they have little important part in the action. Haphazard the Vice makes mischief, and there are other such characters as Doctrine, Memory, Reward, and Fame, who inscribe the "honor of Virginia's name." "The Epilogue prays 'God save the Queen,' but makes no reference to what later Elizabethan poets would have joyed to find an occasion of celebrating, her renown for the virtue which is the subject of the play." [7] *Appius and Virginia* has the merit of simplicity of theme, but it exhibits little genuine tragic emotion, and places most exaggerated emphasis on rant and alliteration, as in the line, "O curst and cruel cankered churl, O carl unnatural."

[7] Ward: *English Dramatic Literature,* I, 205.

Generally contemporary with both of these productions was *Gorboduc* (1562), commonly known as the first English tragedy. This play was first acted before Queen Elizabeth, and its authors were Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, Norton seeming to be in the main responsible for the first three acts and Sackville (afterwards Lord Buckhurst and the Earl of Dorset) for the others. The Argument furnishes the theme for the play: "Gorboduc, King of Brittaine, diuided his realme in his lifetime to his sonnes, Ferrex and Porrex; the sonnes fell to discention; the yonger killed the elder; the mother, that more dearely loued the elder, for revenge killed the younger; the people moved with the crueltie of the fact, rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother; the nobilitie assembled and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince, whereby the succession of the crowne became uncertain, they fell to ciuill warre, in which both they and many of their issues were slaine, and the land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted." *Gorboduc* was built primarily upon the model of Senecan tragedy, and yet it exhibits some very distinct differences from classical originals. In fact, because of what it does and what it does not do, the play might serve as the occasion of long discussion as to the theories of dramatic construction. Although the plot has with classic models the affinity just remarked, its immediate source was an English legend, in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The play held to the idea of division into five acts, and of a chorus (in this case of "four ancient and sage men of Britain"); and, while it placed no emphasis on the unities, its deeds of violence are reported by messengers or witnesses rather than definitely set forth in

action. Characterization is not especially strong, and speeches are long and argumentative. "Everywhere hurried action and unreasoning instinct give place to deliberation and debate. Between this play and its predecessors no change can be more sweeping or more abrupt. In an instant, as it were, we pass from the unpolished *Cambyses,* savage and reeking with blood, to the equally violent events of *Gorboduc,* cold beneath a formal restraint. Had this severe discipline of the emotion been accepted as forever binding upon the tragic stage Elizabethan drama would have been forgotten. Conscious that the banishment of action from the stage, while natural enough in Greece, must meet with an overwhelming resistance from the popular custom in England, the authors invented a compromise. Before each act they provided a symbolical Dumb Show which, by its external position, infringed no classical law, yet satisfied the demand of an English audience for real and melodramatic spectacles." [8] They also excluded comic matter, and thus in one way or another they cultivated a dignity that would otherwise have been lost.

After *Gorboduc* one of the most noteworthy productions belonging to the early history of English tragedy was *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), mainly by Thomas Hughes, an entertainment by "the Gentlemen of Gray's Inn" presented before the Queen "the twenty-eighth day of February in the thirtieth year of her Majesty's most happy reign." Hughes also went back to the sources of early English legend, to Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory; and the play deals with the love of Mordred, the incestuous son of Arthur, for the Queen Guenevora, with the battle between father and son on Arthur's return from

[8] Wynne: *The Growth of English Drama,* 103.

France, and the final engagement in Cornwall, with the death of Mordred and the wounding and suggested departure of Arthur. Blank verse is used, as in *Gorboduc,* but the style is sententious and argumentative, and again, in accordance with the Greek tradition, action is rigidly excluded from the play. Interesting for its literary connections, however, is the Ghost, in this case that of Gorlois, the first husband of Arthur's mother, Igerna—Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, who had so foully been slain by Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father.

17. **Chronicle Plays.**—In one way or another in this developing period of the drama there was exhibited an eagerness on the part of Englishmen to hear about their country's past, and such interest was greatly stimulated by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Thus arose the Chronicle Play. The ultimate origins of this might carry us back to the period of the old miracle plays and the ballads, and in later years there were close connections with moralities. Interest attaches to *Kynge Johan,* by Bishop Bale, produced about 1538. This play is a defiance of the Pope and of the system which he represents; it at one time likens King John to a Moses leading his people through the wilderness, and in the figure of Imperial Majesty recalls the age of controversy in which it was produced by strongly suggesting the person of Henry VIII. Sedition, who is the sole comic character, and the one who does most to further the action of the drama, is simply the old Vice come again; the play as a whole is quite lacking in the historical spirit; and in general its tone and method are such as to place it with the moralities rather than with the strict Chronicle Plays. More important is *Gorboduc,* "the earliest of a long list of English dramas which laid

under contribution those legendary and pseudo-historical materials of the early chronicles of Britain which emanated from the fertile brain of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The relation of the earliest English tragedy to the English Chronicle Play is sufficiently defined in the recognition of this fact."[9] In the earlier years of Elizabeth moreover great impetus to production was furnished by the work of the professional historians, who responded abundantly to the eager demand for books dealing with England's story. Of surpassing importance was the work of Raphael Holinshed, whose *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland,* produced in 1577, became the great storehouse of material for the historical plays of Shakespeare as well as those of his contemporaries.[10] In 1579 also, at Cambridge, appeared a play exactly in the field of the Chronicle in *Richardus Tertius Tragedia* of Thomas Legge, Master of Caius College and Vice-Chancellor of the University. This production, which was in Latin, was greatly praised, and not unnaturally it had influence on such university men as Marlowe and Peele. It is "the earliest recorded drama dealing with a subject derived from the actual history of England." By 1590 had very probably appeared *The Famous Victories of Henry V, The Troublesome Reign of King John,* and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his Three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, Cordella,* to all of which Shakespeare was indebted. By this time, however, not only Shakespeare himself, but Marlowe, Peele, and others, were using the Chronicle as a

[9] Schelling: *The English Chronicle Play,* 20.

[10] A slight influence, however, as upon Shakespeare's Richard II, came from Froissart. See Smith: *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play.*

regular dramatic medium and the great period of its popularity had begun.

18. **First Theatres.**—At this point it is well to see under just what conditions plays were actually produced in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The Elizabethan theatre found its home first of all in the yards of the inns of London. These inns were most frequently built in the form of a quadrangle surrounding an open court. When a play was to be performed a platform that was to serve as a stage was built out into the yard, and in the galleries or balconies round about the spectators of the better class would sit. Near the platform would stand those who were admitted for the cheapest fee and who would correspond most nearly to those who occupy the "bleachers" at a modern baseball game or the top gallery in a present-day theatre. These people became an important element in the development of the Elizabethan drama. Most of the coarse jokes were directed at them, and when we remember this we see all the more the point of Hamlet's reference to the "groundlings," "who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise." Naturally there was no covering to the yard; so that if a shower came up the spectators who were standing near the platform might be sprinkled, while those in the galleries would be protected. The dandies or gallants of the period would sometimes occupy special seats on the sides of the platform or stage proper, where they would "drink tobacco" and sometimes rather noisily express their opinion of the actors or the performance. The rear of the platform was commonly just below a gallery, which of course might serve all the more easily as a balcony or upper window. The innyard determined the general style

of the Elizabethan theatre. Receiving from the bear-baiting ring, however, a suggestion for better acoustic quality, the buildings that were first specially constructed for plays were circular rather than rectangular in shape; but throughout the period of the Elizabethan drama they remained open to the sky. "In 1575 London had no theatres; that is, no buildings especially designed for the acting of plays. By 1600 there were at least six, among which were some so large and beautiful as to arouse the unqualified admiration of travelers from the continent."[11] "The opposition to playing in the city led to the erection, in 1576, of the first Elizabethan playhouse, the Theater. It was built by James Burbage, formerly a joiner by trade, and a member of the Earl of Leicester's company," just outside the city on the north in Finsbury fields, "an open holiday ground where archery, fencing, sword-play and other sports were practised, and where the trained bands drilled."[12] Not far away, and very probably in 1577, was erected a second playhouse, the Curtain, so called from Curtain close, "a meadow once in the possession of the priory on which, later, was built a house called Curtain house." Next in order was the Rose, constructed by Philip Henslowe, a well-known theatrical manager, on the Surrey side of the Thames, possibly as early as 1587, but certainly not later than 1592. In 1596, working over a collection of rooms (including "seven great upper rooms") in the old precinct of the "Blackfriars preachers," or Dominican monks, James Burbage opened an indoor or

[11] W. H. Durham, in MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare*, 35.

[12] Harold Child: "The Elizabethan Theatre," in *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 282.

"private" playhouse, spending on it a larger sum than had hitherto been spent on any playhouse in London. The term "private" does not seem to imply that the public was excluded; but "in making up his mind to establish a playhouse, in defiance of the law, within the city walls, Burbage must have counted for support less on the people than on the nobility."[13] In November, 1596, the people in the vicinity petitioned against the establishment of a playhouse in their midst, but ineffectually, and, in spite of other troubles, the Blackfriars continued to be one of the best-known homes of the English drama down to 1642. The suitability of the Surrey side of the Thames, commonly called the Bankside, as a place for the location of playhouses is especially attested by the removal thither of the Theater in the winter of 1598-99. The Burbage heirs, seemingly unwilling to pay an increased rental when their old lease expired, tore down the building, and erected it again on the Bankside, this time calling it the Globe, which was in the next few years to become the most famous of all the London theatres. Other playhouses of the period were the Swan, the Whitefriars, and Newington Butts; and in 1600 Henslowe erected the Fortune. "The situation of the Fortune outside Cripplegate, although a considerable distance west of the Curtain, was, roughly, that of the earlier theatres, the northern suburbs of the city."[14]

19. Stage and Setting.—We have already observed that the stage in one of these theatres was primarily a plat-

[13] H. Child, *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 289.

[14] Durham in MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare*, 38. In general see also Neilson and Thorndike: *The Facts about Shakespeare*, Chapter VI. Note also that there were really two Blackfriars theatres, distinguished as Burbage or Farrant. See Thorndike: *Shakespeare's Theater*, 62-63.

form built out into the yard. At the Fortune this platform was forty-three feet wide (though in connection with such a figure it is well to remember that some seats were provided on the stage). Projecting from the level of the top gallery and extending for a few feet over the stage, was a structure called the "hut," from the bottom of which a roof, or "shadow," extended further over the stage. Together hut and shadow made up what are commonly known as the "heavens." Behind the platform or the front stage was the rear stage, "an alcove in front of which curtains could be drawn." In both front and rear stages were traps out of which ghosts or apparitions could rise and into which such properties as the caldron in *Macbeth* could sink. From the "heavens," actors representing gods or spirits—as Jupiter *Cymbeline* or Ariel in *The Tempest* —could be lowered by means of a mechanical contrivance. Costumes were elaborate, but little effort was made for historical accuracy; and scenery was by no means as pretentious as it is to-day. Scenery in fact was primarily intended simply to be suggestive and to be assisted by the play of the imagination; one or two trees, for instance, were supposed to indicate a forest. "The capital difference between the pre-rebellion public stage and the modern stage lies in the fact that the former was a platform stage, while the latter is a picture stage. . . . The eye was appealed to less forcibly than the ear. The drama was rhetorical, and the actor more of a rhetorician than he is to-day, since the audience looked to his enunciation of the poet's words for much of the pleasure that the picture stage supplies through the eye. . . . Authors, being free from the modern playwright's necessity to lead up to a 'situation,' a stage picture, on which the curtain may

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fall sharply at the close of each act, made the play, rather than each division of it, the artistic whole."[15] These differences from more recent tendencies are important.

20. Theatrical Companies.—In connection with the Interlude we have already seen how companies of players began to be maintained by great nobles even before the close of the fifteenth century. When these companies were not employed by their patrons they were permitted to travel about the country to give performances. The fact that some other bands of strolling players also went about from place to place led to a law in 1572 to the effect that all such companies would have to be under the protection of some legally recognized patron. Very frequently the oversight of the patron was merely nominal, extending not beyond the securing of a license. Obviously, as patronage might change, a single company might be known by different names from time to time. Thus "the Earl of Leicester's Men became Lord Strange's in 1588. In 1592 Lord Strange became Earl of Derby, and the players changed their title accordingly. In 1594 the Earl of Derby died, and his company of actors became Lord Hunsdon's or the Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1596 the earl died, and his son, the second Lord Hunsdon, became their patron; he also became Chamberlain in 1597. After the accession of James in 1603, this same company was honored with the title of King's Players. William Shakespeare was certainly a member of this company in 1594, and one of its foremost men in 1598. Richard Burbage, greatest actor of his time, was Shakespeare's colleague and first interpreted his great tragic characters. William Kemp, the best comedian of his day, was a member of this

[15] H. Child: *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 295.

same company." [16] After this company one of the best known was that of the Admiral's Men, managed by Henslowe and having its home after 1600 in the Fortune Theatre. Among its actors was Edward Alleyn, generally ranked next to Burbage among the performers of the time. Very popular also were the companies of boys of the Chapel Royal and of St. Paul's. On the professional stage female parts were regularly taken by boys throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean period of the drama; women were not known on the stage until the reign of Charles I, and they found no real place there before the age of the Restoration. The boys in the two companies specially remarked, however, were usually well trained; one company at least had the advantage of royal patronage; and in general these young players became serious rivals of the performers on most of the commercial stages. "The performances of the Children of the Chapel Royal at the Blackfriars between 1596 and 1608 were the most fashionable in London. The children's companies were finally suppressed about 1609." [17] "The success of the companies of choir boys in both early and later times was, doubtless, due, in no small degree, to the songs scattered through their plays and the instrumental music before the play began and between the acts. Other companies, of course, had incidental songs, but, apparently, not so many of them, and instrumental music seems not to have been given in the public theatres." [18] These children moreover "were pioneers in more than one interesting movement,

[16] Simonds: *A Student's History of English Literature,* 121-22.

[17] Durham in *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* 49.

[18] Manly: "The Children of the Chapel Royal and their Masters," *C. H. E. L.,* VI, 329.

they produced the plays of some of the foremost dramatists of their time, they were prominent in the curious, not to say ludicrous, 'war of the theatres,'[19] and they were finally put down because of the vigorous political satire spoken through their mouths."

[19] See § 38.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLIER CONTEMPORARIES

21. Prominent Dramatists.—In the decade between 1570 and 1580 there grew up at Oxford and Cambridge a remarkable group of men who made a most distinct contribution to the developing form of the drama and in one way or another became forerunners of the great master soon to appear. They were as definite in their ideas about life and art as they were in their actual achievement. "A pride in university training which amounted to arrogance, and a curious belief, not unknown even to-day, that only the university-bred man can possibly have the equipment and the sources of information fitting him to be a proper exponent of new, and, at the same time, of really valuable, ideas and literary methods—these were sentiments shared by all the members of the group of 'university wits.'"[1] The men to whom this term—this sometimes rather misleading term—is applied were primarily John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Nash. "University bred one and all, these five men were proud of their breeding. However severe from time to time might be their censures of their intellectual mother, they were always ready to take arms against the unwarranted assumption, as it seemed to them, of certain dramatists who lacked this university training and

[1] Baker: "The Plays of the University Wits," *C. H. E. L.*, V, 136 and 159.

to confuse them by the sallies of their wit." Lodge and Nash made no such contribution as the others, and are in fact more important in the history of the novel than of the drama, though Lodge's story *Rosalynde* has vital connection with Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Kyd and Marlowe, who are also treated in the present chapter, while early contemporaries of Shakespeare, are generally somewhat detached from the men just remarked, though their own connections were close. Kyd, while he received some foundation in things cultural, was not primarily a university man; but it is rather by temper than by training that Marlowe is to be distinguished from his contemporaries. A certain "high seriousness" characterized both men, and in the case of Marlowe this took the form of a soaring passion that was not the less effective because it was arrogant, ambitious, and bold.[2]

22. John Lyly.—John Lyly (1554?-1606) holds a unique place in the history of the English drama. Eminently a man of scholarly and cultured associations, he was also the possessor of much good sense and humor. After receiving the A. B. degree at Oxford in 1573, the A. M. in 1575, and also the A. M. at Cambridge in 1579, he went to London, where he was under the protection of Lord Burleigh, afterwards the Earl of Oxford. He married a lady of considerable standing, sat in four parliaments, and at times managed the children of St. Paul's and of the Chapel at Blackfriars; but he aspired in vain

[2] For texts of plays of men considered in the present chapter see Manly's *Specimens*, Vol. II, Neilson's *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatics*, or individual volumes in Mermaid Series. In addition to critical articles by Baker and G. Gregory Smith in *C. H. E. L.*, Vol. V, note especially Baker: *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, Chapter I.

to the office of Master of the Revels. He is best known for his prose work, *Euphues,* which appeared in two parts, *Euphues and his Anatomie of Wit* (1579) and *Euphues and his England* (1580-81). This work gave to the language a new word, *euphuism,* to designate a style marked by alliteration, antithesis, similes, conceits, puns, mythological allusions, and a general show of wit; and in it Lyly, himself a courtier, gave a model not only for the writing but also for the conversation of the lords and ladies at the court of Elizabeth. To his credit are eight plays, all comedies: *Campaspe* (1580 [3]), *Sapho and Phao* (1581), *Endimion* (1585), *Gallathea* (1584), *Midas* (1589), *Mother Bombie* (1590), *The Woman in the Moone* (1591), and *Love's Metamorphosis* (1589). These plays were generally first played before the Queen by "the children of Paul's;" they are mainly in prose; and being panegyrics on the virtue and glory of the Queen, they are more or less allegorical. They also have a political touch and were primarily addressed to a limited and sophisticated audience.

Campaspe is generally considered the best and clearest of Lyly's dramas. The prologue professes to mix mirth with counsel and discipline with delight. Campaspe is a Theban captive who in the first scene is brought into the presence of Alexander, King of Macedon, and certain of his soldiers. Alexander falls in love with her, frees her, and commissions Apelles to paint her portrait. While the painter is performing his task he himself falls in love with Campaspe, and his affection is returned. At length Alexander learns of the love between Apelles and Campaspe,

[3] Dates are of first appearance, in some cases only approximate, and generally with indebtedness to Schelling.

gives up the maiden to the painter, and sets out for Persia with Hephestion, a general and his friend. Diogenes and his servant Manes furnish the comic matter of the play, as when, in the fourth act, Populus comes to see Diogenes fly. Lyly does not succeed very well in connecting his main plot and his comic matter; but the main plot is coherent and natural, and the love motive is sympathetically handled. The lyrics are of excellent quality, and the drama as a whole is quite worthy to be the first original prose play in the language.

If *Campaspe* is Lyly's clearest play, *Endimion* certainly holds the strongest allegory. Tellus, the earthly love of the hero, has been abandoned by her lover for Cynthia, the goddess of the moon. She persuades the witch Dipsas to charm Endimion into a deep sleep, and he slumbers for forty years. Cynthia banishes Tellus to the guard of Corsites and sends into all parts of the world for a remedy for Endimion. His friend Eumenides at length finds out from an oracle in Thessaly that a kiss from Cynthia will bring him back to life. The goddess hears this in the presence of her ladies, visits Endimion, finds him grown old, and kisses him. His youth is restored and he devotes his life to the contemplation of Cynthia's glory and perfection. The subplots are joined to the main plot in romantic fashion; Dipsas, for instance, is loved by Sir Thopas, and thus furnishes a parody on the love of Cynthia and Endimion. Various interpretations of the allegory of the play have been given, but about all that editors are generally agreed on is that Cynthia is Elizabeth and Endimion Leicester.

Lyly's service to the stage was considerable. "In his attitude toward love—his gallant trifling; his idealization

of women, which, with him, goes even to the point of making them mere wraiths; above all, in the curious effect produced by his figures as rather in love with being in love than moved by real human passion—he is Italianate and of the renascence."[4] He was artificial, and his works show no great tragic emotion; yet he discovered the possibilities of repartee and the occasional lyric, he promoted the union of the masque and the regular drama, and, aided by euphuism in the choice of vocabulary and form, he definitely established prose as the medium of high as well as low comedy in English. He is in every sense worthy of the high place he holds among the predecessors of Shakespeare.

23. **George Peele.**—Not a very great deal is known about the life of Peele (1558?-1597?). He attended Christ's Hospital as a free scholar, and in March, 1571, he entered what is now Pembroke College, Oxford; but from 1574 to 1579 he was at Christ's Church, where he received the A. B. degree in 1577 and the A. M. in 1579. In 1583 he was already married and had obtained some land in his wife's right. His life in London, generally sordid, was given to making a living in any way he could by his talents. In his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) Francis Meres spoke of him as dead.

In the list of Peele's plays, masques, and pageants, five dramas stand out with prominence. These are *The Arraignment of Paris* (1581), *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First* (1590), *The Battle of Alcazar* (1591), *The Old Wives' Tale* (1590), and *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe* (1589). The flattery of Elizabeth in the first of these plays was deliberate; its

[4] Baker, *C. H. E. L.*, V, 139.

unity and its poetry are admirable; and its production was a veritable triumph. The theme is the classical one of the throwing by the Goddess of Discord of the apple with the motto *Detur Pulcherrimae* into the presence of Juno, Pallas, and Venus. In the end no one of the goddesses receives the apple, all agreeing that the nymph Zabeta alone is worthy of it. The different acts of this play stand out with perfect distinctness in their bearing on the main plot. The first shows Pan, Faunus, and Silvanus assembled to give welcome to Juno and her companions, and bringing Flora on the scene, gives the necessary atmosphere; the second is concerned with the throwing of the apple and the offers made to Paris by Juno, Pallas, and Venus; the third brings on the scene Mercury, who has been sent with the Cyclops of Vulcan to summon Paris to appear at the council of the gods; the fourth shows the council and gives the oration of Paris; and the fifth contains Diana's glowing description of Eliza, to whom the three goddesses yield their claim. In the course of the play Peele makes use of rhyme, blank verse, and the septenary. The oration of Paris is perhaps his best example of blank verse.

David and Bethsabe has the distinction of being the only play on a scriptural theme by an Elizabethan dramatist that has been preserved and is by many critics regarded as Peele's masterpiece. It has not the unity of *The Arraignment of Paris,* however, and more and more reveals itself as a sort of biblical chronicle play. The various incidents in the life of David or of his children are all here, but frequently they seem like so many separate episodes rather than parts of a dramatic whole, especially as the play reaches over a great number of years.

Peele, however, was not altogether without dramatic motive. The consequences of David's sin are seen throughout the play, and Amnon's crime is but a reflection of it. The blank verse moreover shows a distinct improvement on the poet's earlier work.

Peele has interesting connections with the general trend of English poetry. His *Old Wives' Tale* suggested to Milton the plot of Comus, and Colin and Hobbinol in *The Arraignment of Paris* have been thought to refer to Spenser and Gabriel Harvey. To the development of the drama he did not contribute as much as Lyly or Greene or Marlowe; but his humor is admirable, and the care that he gave to diction and meter did much for the general refinement of versification. "Before Marlowe placed his stamp upon blank verse Peele was writing it with great sweetness and a charming musical quality."[5]

24. Robert Greene.—Greene (1558?-1592) was born in Norwich. He matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1575, received his A. B. there in 1578, and his A. M. at Clare Hall in 1583, and, after an interval that seems to have been spent mainly in Italy and Spain, he also received the A. M. degree at Oxford in 1588. In his later years he was proud of the fact that he represented both universities. In 1585 he married a gentleman's daughter and settled in Norwich, but he forsook his wife after she had borne him a son and he had spent her dowry. He was a man of jealous disposition; his "Address to the Gentlemen Readers" prefixed to the pamphlet entitled *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith* contains a rather satirical reference to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* and in *A Groatsworth of Wit* he spoke of Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" that

[5] Neilson.

beautified himself with the feathers of others and as "in his own conceit the only Shakescene in a country." He died in poverty at the home of a shoemaker who took him in.

Greene was distinctively a man of letters, a sensitive and ambitious author, and his writing generally exhibits eminent refinement and good taste. His work draws much on Italian sources, and some of his pamphlets are what we should now call novelettes. *Pandosto* became the source of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale.* In the field of the drama Greene is generally credited with six plays, though others have been ascribed to him. These are *Alphonsus, King of Arragon* (1589), *Orlando Furioso* (1592), *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589), *James the Fourth* (1590), *George a-Greene* (1588?), and (in collaboration with Lodge) *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1589). In *Alphonsus* he seems to have had some idea of rivaling Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* which had appeared in 1587; *Orlando Furioso* is of course founded on Ariosto's poem and anticipates Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in the posting of messages on trees; and *A Looking Glass for London and England,* in the story of Rasni, King of Nineveh, furnishes "a specimen of a peculiar Elizabethan variation on the manner of the old religious drama." [6] Much more important, however, are the other two plays.

The Scottish Hystorie of James the Fourth, Slaine at Flodden, although it sounds like one, is not really an historical play. Suggested by a story in the *Hecatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio, it is rather romantic in tone. James marries Dorothea, an English princess, only to find that he has perjured himself, as he is really in love with Ida,

[6] Ward.

daughter of the Countess of Arran. Ateukin, a parasite of James, tries to get Ida to play the part of a mistress to the king, but fails utterly. The noblemen of the realm inform Queen Dorothea of the king's love for Ida, but she does not believe them. Only when Jaques, a Frenchman who has been bribed by Ateukin, attempts to kill her does she change her opinion. Rescued by an old knight, she assumes the disguise of a squire, and remains for a considerable time in concealment, attended only by the dwarf Nano. Ida now marries Eustace, an English gentleman, and Ateukin, conscience-smitten, warns the king of the consequences of his deeds. The English sovereign meanwhile makes war on James because of the sufferings of Dorothea, and the Scottish king is deserted by his subjects. The queen, however, reappears on the scene and restores good feeling. This play is noteworthy for its good diction, its rapidity of action, its use of comic matter, and the excellent characterization of Dorothea.

In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* there are two main themes. The first is that of the magic of Friar Bacon, foremost of Englishmen in his art, who confounds the German Vandermast. The second is that of the romance of Margaret, "the fair maid of Fressingfield," beloved of Prince Edward, who sends Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, to woo her, only to have her fall in love with Lacy (all this being of course simply a variation of the Miles Standish idea which was also common in the age of Elizabeth, appearing among other places in *Twelfth Night*). The scene at Harlston Fair is one of Greene's best for the freshness of country life. Comic interest is furnished by Bacon's servant Miles, who is carried off by the devil with the understanding that he is to have a lusty fire, a pot of good

ale, and a "pair" of cards. Lacy, before coming finally to take Margaret to be one of the ladies attending Princess Elinor, in order to test her love and patience sends her word to the effect that he is to be married to some one else. This, as Ward points out, is simply a reappearance of the Griselda motive. The play as a whole, however, well illustrates Greene's ability to weave together scattered threads of story, and his appreciation of the elements of condensation and suspense.

By his plays as well as by his pamphlets Greene becomes more closely connected with Shakespeare than any of his contemporaries. Especially did he anticipate the master dramatist in introducing genuine comedy into serious plays, in portraying the character of women, in his use of the fairy element, in the delineation of idyllic scenes, and in suggesting the national spirit. Hardly too much emphasis can be placed on his handling of the story element. While other writers were making their contribution in form and sometimes even in spirit, Greene first fully appreciated the practical possibilities of a complicated and swiftly moving narrative.

25. **Thomas Kyd.**—Thomas Kyd (1558?-1594), the son of a London scrivener, Frances Kyd, in his earlier years attended the Merchant Taylors' School, but does not seem to have attended the universities. He evidently was a man of gloomy temperament, and a habit of anonymity that seemed to characterize him has raised many baffling questions with reference to his work. He made one or two translations from the French, quite certainly wrote *The Tragedie of Solimon and Perseda*, and, according to the convictions of the individual investigator, was also responsible for the *First Part of Jeronimo* and

the so-called lost *Hamlet*. His place in the history of the drama, however, depends upon one remarkable production, *The Spanish Tragedy*, which first took the stage about 1586 and which went through several editions in print.

Whatever may be said with reference to the authorship of the *First Part of Jeronimo*, the story connection between this and *The Spanish Tragedy* is very close. The greater play opens with the Ghost of Andrea, recently a courtier at the Spanish court, who had incurred the enmity of Lorenzo, son of Don Ciprian, Duke of Castile (with whose sister, Bel-imperia, he was in love), by being appointed over Lorenzo ambassador to Portugal, and who had finally been killed on the field of battle by Balthazar, son of the Viceroy of Portugal, whom he had offended by his defiant attitude. At the first meeting of Andrea and Balthazar, Andrea had been saved by Horatio, son of Hieronimo, knight-marshal of Spain. After Andrea had finally been slain by other Portuguese soldiers, Horatio came up again, and, finding Balthazar exulting over the corpse, himself engaged the Viceroy's son, forcing him to the ground, only to be robbed of the full glory of the achievement by Lorenzo, who rushed on the scene and received Balthazar's sword. Here *The Spanish Tragedy* definitely takes up the story. Balthazar is brought to Spain, and when the question of his capture comes up in court, the king awards to Horatio the ransom, but gives to his nephew Lorenzo Balthazar's weapons and his horse, and the honor of guarding the prince. With the goodwill of Lorenzo, Balthazar falls in love with Bel-imperia; but this young woman, now that Andrea is dead, has given her heart to Horatio. One night, while Horatio and Bel-imperia are together in a bower, Lorenzo and Balthazar, assisted by two attendants,

suddenly come upon them, hang the marshal's son, and place Bel-imperia in close confinement. Hieronimo, alarmed by the outcry, comes out to the garden, closely followed by his wife Isabella. The rest of the play is concerned primarily with his revenge, and in its violence and sensationalism one sees perhaps as nowhere else the qualities of the blood-and-thunder type of tragedy that became so exceedingly popular with the Elizabethans. Hieronimo first learns just who the murderers were from a message from Bel-imperia written in blood, is driven to madness, at length presents before the court a play in the course of which he kills Lorenzo, and finally bites out his own tongue, stabs the Duke of Castile, and kills himself. This play, so strongly representative of the "tragedy of blood," was greatly influenced by Seneca; and through such things as the motive of revenge (in this case that of a father for the death of a son rather than *vice versa*), the ghost, the madness of Hieronimo, the play within a play, and the general slaughter, its affinity with *Hamlet* becomes rapidly apparent. More and more in fact Shakespeare's masterpiece appears simply as the highest example of a popular form of play that frequently contained many powerful instances of tragic emotion but that also cultivated many melodramatic and sensational elements.

26. Christopher Marlowe. — Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was the son of John Marlowe, a shoemaker of Canterbury. He was educated at the King's School in his town and at what is now Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he received the A. B. degree in 1584 and the A. M. in 1587. Very little is definitely known about his career after he left the university. He was on familiar terms with his fellow-dramatists, Kyd, Nash,

Greene, and Chapman; was probably also acquainted with Shakespeare and Raleigh; and, while his atheistic opinions have doubtless been exaggerated, he did say enough to shock the sober religious conscience of the time. Engaging in a tavern brawl in Deptford, he was killed, and thus died before he reached the age of thirty. By his general achievement, however, and especially by the superb poetry that flashes out in many of his passages, Marlowe has generally been awarded the position of the foremost of the early contemporaries of Shakespeare.

Marlowe has a name in the general literature of the Elizabethan period primarily by his poem, *Hero and Leander,* and the list of his dramatic works would also include *The Massacre of Paris* and *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage.* Both of these plays seem to have been written in collaboration, however, and neither is in typical vein or really represents him. Marlowe is really remembered for five interesting productions: *Tamburlaine the Great* (in two parts) (1587), *The Tragicall History of Dr. Faustus* (1588), *The Jew of Malta* (1598), and *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second* (1592). In general his plays are eloquent, though frequently bombastic; and his common type is the embodiment of insatiable desire. He invites comparison with such a later poet as Byron, in whom the lyric rather than the dramatic genius was dominant; like Byron also he was not strong in the portrayal of women, and his men are generally the reflection of his own powerful personality.

Tamburlaine was essentially the work of Marlowe's youth. As such it is his most extravagant but at the same time his most characteristic production. Each of the dramatist's plays represents some one overmastering passion,

and in this case a great conqueror seeks world-power. In the first play he subdues in succession Persia, Turkey, and Damascus; in the second he gives way to unspeakable grief for his "divine Zenocrate." It was these closely related productions that began Marlowe's reputation for the "mighty line" for which he has become known. Cosroe, brother of the Persian king, intends to "ride in triumph through Persepolis;" and Tamburlaine justifies his ambition in lines that cling to the memory:

> The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown
> . . . .
> Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.

While rhetoric and poetry are thus frequently admirable, the extravagance of the play can be excused only as satisfying the demand of the day. Tamburlaine mounts up to his throne with Bajazeth, the conquered Turkish emperor, as his footstool; and in the second play he appears in a chariot drawn by the kings whom he has captured. The drama is entirely without moral significance and depended for its success solely upon such characteristics as have been remarked.

Dr. Faustus is a one-part play based on an old legend and is rather a succession of scenes than a finished drama. The hero by no means rises to the grandeur of Goethe's conception; he is rather a mere sorcerer and sensualist who sells his soul for the vain price of twenty-four years of enjoyment and cringes when the forfeit is demanded. The comic scenes hardly strengthen the play and indeed were probably not written by Marlowe, who in general exhibits no humor; and many of the devices of the old moralities—Good Angel, Bad Angel, Old Man (that is, Sage Counsel), and the Seven Deadly Sins—are thrust almost

mechanically into the whole. In spite of all this, more than one passage is in Marlowe's typical vein, and in at least two places the verse rises to the plane of high poetry. One of these is the address to Helen, "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships?" and the other is the famous soliloquy of Faustus in the last scene.

The Jew of Malta through its chief character Barabas of course invites comparison with Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice;* but while both of these characters were the product of an age that hated the Jews, Shakespeare's holds his strength while Marlowe's degenerates. No play moreover better illustrates than this Marlowe's difficulty in sustaining energy at a given dramatic pitch, or his tendency toward melodramatic and sensational devices. Barabas first appears in a superb scene counting his money and musing upon his successful ventures; at the close of the play, however, not only has he awakened no sympathetic understanding of the Jew, but he has raised more than one question of dramatic justice. All the same *The Jew of Malta* has its merits and its distinctive interest, and is one of the Elizabethan dramas that one could least afford not to read.

Edward II has been highly praised in some quarters and not only excels Marlowe's other productions in technique, but was so well done as to give a new significance to the current chronicle play. It has been much compared with Shakespeare's *Richard II,* which appeared about the same time. With all of its excellence in characterization and workmanship, however, *Edward II* does not possess the interest of some of Marlowe's earlier efforts; and, as crude as *Tamburlaine* and *Dr. Faustus* are in many places, most people instinctively turn to these characteris-

tic efforts rather than to the detail of the career of one of England's weakest kings. Says Hazlitt: "Edward II is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect. The management of the plot is feeble and desultory; little interest is excited in the various turns of fate; the characters are too worthless, have too little energy, and their punishment is, in general, too well deserved to excite our commiseration; so that this play will bear, on the whole, but a distant comparison with Shakespeare's *Richard II* in conduct, power, or effect. But the death of Edward II, in Marlowe's tragedy, is certainly superior to that of Shakespeare's king; and in heart-breaking distress, and a sense of human weakness, claiming pity for utter helplessness and conscious misery, is not surpassed by any writer whatever." [7]

The value of Marlowe's contribution to the drama is incontestable. He definitely stamped blank verse as the medium of the English drama and showed how great might be the assistance to a play of soaring rhetoric and striking poetry. Generally weak in characterization and frequently so in construction, he still opened as no one else had done the great founts of the imagination, and thus he challenged his great contemporary to even greater effort and still loftier achievement.

[7] Lecture II in "Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth."

CHAPTER V

SHAKESPEARE

27. Life.—William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire on or about April 23, 1564, the authority for this statement being the record of his baptism under date April 26, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, passed through various municipal offices, and his mother, Mary Arden before her marriage, was the daughter of a substantial farmer of Wilmcote, near Stratford. There are no records of the childhood and schooldays of the dramatist, though it is supposed that for some time he attended the grammar school at his home, learning the rudiments of such a subject as Latin. He possessed remarkable acquisitive power, however, and even if he had little regular schooling he was able to take in and use to the best advantage all the facts of language, science, or art that were to be gleaned from reading, conversation, or observation. On November 28, 1582, two farmers of Shottery, near Stratford, signed a guarantee bond "to free the bishop of responsibility in case of the subsequent discovery of any impediment rendering invalid the prospective marriage of William Shakespeare to Anne Hathaway." Anne Hathaway was eight years older than her husband; her marriage doubtless took place very soon after the date of the bond; and her first child, Susanna, was born May 26, 1583. Two other children, the twins Hamnet and Judith, were baptized February 2, 1585.

These were all the children of Shakespeare, and the son Hamnet, for whom he had hoped so much, died when he was only eleven years old. About 1586, influenced somewhat possibly by the pressure upon him after a traditional deer-stealing episode, but doubtless more by the opportunities offered by the capital to a young man who was already the father of three children, Shakespeare went to London and soon became a part of the theatrical life of the day. By 1592 (as we know from the reference of Greene already cited) he was a rapidly rising playwright. He received to some extent the benefits of patronage, and he was an actor and a stockholder in the theatres of London as well as a playwright. By 1597 he seems so far to have improved his worldly station as to be able to relieve his father from pressing financial obligations and also to purchase New Place, the largest house in Stratford, though he did not return to take up his regular residence in the town for the next fourteen or fifteen years. For some years previous to 1604, when he was producing many of his greatest plays, Shakespeare seems to have lived at the home of a wigmaker and hairdresser, Christopher Mountjoy, in Cripplegate ward, just about a five-minute walk from St. Paul's. He was on pleasant terms with his literary associates, especially with such a man as Ben Jonson, but was also a man of unusual business ability, his income from all sources in his later years being computed at what would now be $25,000. About 1612 Shakespeare seems to have ceased the writing of plays and to have retired to Stratford. He died April 23, 1616, and was buried in the chancel of the Stratford church.[1]

[1] The great authority on the biography of Shakespeare is Sidney Lee: *Life of William Shakespeare;* but for first study MacCracken,

28. **Indebtedness to Predecessors.**—It is a mistake to think of Shakespeare as a great and unheralded phenomenon who happened to be born in the reign of Elizabeth. His plays constantly reveal him as eminently of his age—representative of his age and at the same time universal in his appeal. We have seen that he was indebted to Lyly, to Greene, to Kyd, and to Marlowe for the distinctive contributions to the drama that he might utilize or not at his pleasure; he was indeed the heir of all who had preceded him in this particular form. An age of patriotism, alertness, and "curiosity" moreover had placed at his disposal all the treasures of the Renaissance. Hardly a scholar in the technical sense, he nevertheless read widely and discursively, and at the same time to good advantage. Of Latin he possessed at least an elementary knowledge; but Greek, Italian, Spanish, and French works he did not have to read in the original, as he could almost always find what he wanted in an English translation. His plays in numerous instances show him to have been familiar with the school books, Lilly's Latin Grammar and Aesop's Fables and with such a Latin author as Ovid as well. For his Roman tragedies he depended on Sir Thomas North's translation through the French of Plutarch's *Lives;* for Italian stories from Boccaccio, Ariosto, Bandello, and Cinthio he availed himself of such works as Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and Arthur Brooke's poem, *Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet;* he was acquainted with early English folklore and legend; and

Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* and Neilson and Thorndike: *The Facts about Shakespeare* are quite sufficient. These are two excellent handbooks, admirably complementing each other, as the method of approach is somewhat different.

with the Bible, the greater works in English literature, and the plays that were being presented in his own time he was perfectly familiar. The whole matter of the sources of Shakespeare's plays is a study in itself; but at least enough has been said to show that in some measure at least the dramatist was the product of his age. He was in fact so well poised and possessed such an adequate sense of humor and human values that he even ventured upon mild satire of the conditions under which his own plays were produced (as in the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

29. Periods of Dramatic Work.—Shakespeare's dramatic activity is commonly divided into four periods. These, with the plays produced, are as follows:

(1) 1590-1594. Comedies: *Love's Labour's Lost, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona;* Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and probably the first draft of *Romeo and Juliet* (the play being revised 1597); Histories: *Henry VI* (three parts), *Richard III, King John, Richard II.*

(2) 1595-1600. Comedies: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night;* Histories: *Henry IV* (two parts), *Henry V.*

(3) 1601-1609. Comedies: *Troilus and Cressida, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure;* Tragedies: *Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus.*

(4) 1610-1612. Comedies: *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest.*

This enumeration of course takes no account of the so-

called Shakespeare Apocrypha. *Pericles,* in the composition of which Shakespeare probably had some part after the second act, might be placed at the end of the third period; and *Henry VIII,* in which he seems to have collaborated with John Fletcher, might be placed in the fourth period.

30. **Plays of First Period.**—The first period of Shakespeare's dramatic development was essentially one of apprenticeship and imitation. The young artist was improving himself in versification and studying the efforts of his contemporaries to the end that he might be more skilful in his own technique. Lyly, Greene, Kyd, and Marlowe were all powerful in their influence; and while the period placed most emphasis on comedy it also made a strong beginning in tragedy and history.

Thoroughly typical is *Love's Labour's Lost* (1591). This play makes unusual use of rhyme, a mark of the dramatist's earlier years, and is dominated throughout by the euphuistic style. The rather artificial plot of a king and three of his lords who forswear the company of ladies for three years in order to devote themselves to study and who are interrupted by a princess and her ladies who come on an embassy, serves only as the basis of unlimited wit and repartee. Among the lords Biron, a prototype of Jaques in *As You Like It,* is outstanding; while Armado, his foil, is a forerunner of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night.* A Spanish braggart slightly reminiscent of Ralph Roister Doister, he has also an experience like that of Malvolio when entanglement in a device of letters leads to his ultimate discomfiture.

The Comedy of Errors (1591) depends for its merit primarily upon its rapid action and its use of mistaken

identity. The plot was taken primarily from the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, with some suggestions from the *Amphitruo;* and the play, dealing with the story of two twin sons and their servants, the famous Dromios, while it makes much use of word-play and doggerel, is in some ways so excellent as to lead some scholars to doubt that it should be placed among the dramatist's earliest efforts. "Three things are especially noteworthy in Shakespeare's adaptation: the far greater complication in story than in the Latin originals; the skill with which the story is adapted to the tastes of the immediate public; and the ingenuity combined with sureness with which Shakespeare handles his many threads of plot." [2]

The Two Gentlemen of Verona (1592) is in every way one of the most interesting of Shakespeare's plays for the student of dramatic workmanship. In no other are the mistakes of the young artist more apparent; in no other is his meritorious striving more manifest. The play deals in highly artificial fashion with the love affairs of four characters—Valentine, Proteus, Silvia, and Julia—and contains several situations or incidents that within a few years became conventional on the Elizabethan stage. Some of these Shakespeare himself later used to better advantage, such as the turning of a plot on the device of a ladder of cords or the giving up of a betrothal ring, a discussion of different suitors by two ladies, a young woman's following the object of her love disguised as a page, and this same young woman's being sent as a messenger to the newer love of her lord. The production shows a lack of dramatic proportion, the first two acts moving with unusual slowness, and the characterization,

[2] Baker: *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, 135.

strong at times, is rather uneven. On the other hand, the excessive euphuism sometimes gives way to superb and genuine poetry; Launce is an impressive experiment in low comedy; and the highly romantic and lyric note that is frequently struck gives good promise of greater things to come.

The three plays of *Henry VI* are concerned with the historical events of the close of the Hundred Years' War and of the Wars of the Roses. The first play deals primarily with Joan of Arc and Talbot, the English commander; the second with the murder of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, by Suffolk, the subequent overthrow of Suffolk himself, the insurrection led by Jack Cade, and the battle of St. Alban's; and the third with the further course of the Wars of the Roses, from the death of Richard of York to the elevation as king of his son, Edward IV. These plays, based naturally on Holinshed and written to some extent at least in collaboration, have offered to scholars one of the most baffling problems in the history of literature. It seems safe to say, however, that with the first one, which gives a strange and coarse portrayal of Joan of Arc, Shakespeare had very little to do; that he probably wrote a considerable part of the second, in which the characteristics of his genius are frequently manifest; and that he had much to do with the third, which reveals throughout the hand of a painstaking workman.

Titus Andronicus (1592) is a "tragedy of blood," written for a public that had recently been thrilled by *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Jew of Malta* and that desired more entertainment of the same sort, or plays even more sensational and revengeful. Doubt has more than once been cast on Shakespeare's authorship of this production,

but it seems quite certainly his and nothing more than an early and hasty performance in the "blood-and-thunder" type of tragedy which later received such superb culmination in *Hamlet*. The spring of the action is the struggle between Titus Andronicus, the Roman conqueror of the Goths, and Tamora, the captive queen, the villain being Aaron, a Moor, the lover of Tamora. There is killing right and left; and Lavinia, the daughter of Titus, at one time appears with her hands cut off and her tongue cut out. The first act has some elements of strength and we come more than once upon the Shakespearean accent, as in the eulogy of Titus at the tomb of the Andronici: "In peace and honor rest you here, my sons!" As the play progresses, however, it becomes more and more melodramatic in its seeking for violent and sensational effects.

Richard III (1593), based upon Holinshed, is possibly also indebted to the earlier and anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third,* and to the influence of Marlowe. The play is unusually interesting as representing Shakespeare's study of the bases of appeal to an Elizabethan audience. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who killed his two nephews and committed other crimes to gain his crown, was an excellent combination of hero and villain; and the play in its highly rhetorical quality (as in Richard's soliloquy, "Now is the winter of our discontent," Clarence's dream, the orations of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and of Richard to their troops, and Richard's call, "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!") was a strong forerunner of *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*. Early poetic and euphuistic effects are to be seen in the word-play in the dialogues of Richard with Anne and Elizabeth, while the ghosts of those whom Richard

had killed and who rise to haunt him precede something similar but even more finely done in *Julius Caesar*. The firm handling of the difficult fourth act moreover shows increasing mastery of technique. *Richard III* is eminently a work of a young artist, but on every page it bears the mark of Shakespeare, and it is only by reason of merit that after more than three hundred years it still remains one of the dramatist's most popular productions.

King John (1593) is especially interesting as affording ground for a study of the drama as an aristocratic form of literature different from such a democratic form as the novel. The play owed much to *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England* (§ 17), and nowhere mentions Magna Carta, the great monument of the reign to freedom and democracy. The Elizabethan age with its emphasis on nationality glorified the hero, and either a good or a bad man might succeed on the stage if he was strong in quality. Shakespeare accordingly found excellent subjects in such men as Henry V and Richard III, but in John he had a weak subject and one with which under the circumstances he could not possibly succeed so well. Constance, the mother of Arthur, and the patriotic Faulconbridge are strong characterizations, however; and the dialogue at the beginning of Act IV, in which Arthur pleads to Hubert de Burgh, is one of the most pathetic and powerful in the national literature.

Richard II (1594), while not quite so rhetorical as *Richard III* and hence not so unusually popular, is frequently more delicately poetic and especially shows advance in the subtle art of characterization. This is best seen in the interpretation of Richard himself. His "love of the spectacular and his enjoyment of his own emotions

even of misery and despair, along with his tendency to substitute fluent and poetical utterance for action, are all the conception of the dramatist."[3] Characteristic also is the portrayal of his vanity at the time of his abdication, when he calls for a mirror in order that he might read the marks of sorrow on his face, only to dash this upon the ground in a fit of rage. Toward the end of the play, Richard rises in dignity; and the scenes of his farewell to his queen and his death are in the vein of genuine tragedy. The two uncles of Richard and his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, are also strongly portrayed; and the speech of John of Gaunt on the glory of England is typical of the dramatist's appeal to the patriotism of the people of his time.

Word-play, conceits, and a highly lyrical character combine to give *Romeo and Juliet* an early date among Shakespeare's plays. It has been customary to give 1592 as the date of a first version, and 1597 as that of a revision. In general the euphuism and the rhyme indicate early work, while the dramatic technique and the development of character denote more mature workmanship. The story was drawn ultimately from the Italian; but Shakespeare's immediate source was the poem of *Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke (1562). The dramatist, while finding almost every detail of his action in the materials at hand, nevertheless again and again placed upon the story his mastertouch. The great power in characterization that has now come to him is best seen in his portrayal of the unfolding of the womanhood of Juliet under the influence of her great love; but the poetic Mercutio and the comic figure of the nurse are also eminently Shakespearean. The com-

[3] Neilson.

pression of time, the emphasis on unity, and the swiftness of the movement of the play are all noteworthy, and the first act is one of the most remarkable examples of dramatic exposition in all literature. The characterization of Tybalt in this act, in view of his later combat with Romeo, and the fact that Mercutio, who helps to lighten the earlier scenes, hastens the fall of the tragedy in the banishment of Romeo, are only two of many examples of Shakespeare's ripening artistry. The very essence of the play moreover is poetry. Sometimes this takes the form of a mere figure of speech, but at other times it is the outburst of tremendous passion. The romantic sentiment, the skilful workmanship, the brilliant poetry, and the strong development of character in the course of the play, have all combined deservedly to make *Romeo and Juliet* one of the most appealing dramas ever given to the world.

31. **Plays of Second Period.**—In the plays of his second period Shakespeare shows that he has become full master of his art, and with the urbanity and poise of one who has learned to look at life and see it whole he devotes himself mainly to comedy. All traces of apprenticeship and imitation disappear from his work. "If his portrayal of Shylock shows the influence of Marlowe's Jew of Malta, it is in no sense derivative, and it is the last appearance in Shakespeare's work of characterization clearly dependent upon the plays of his predecessors. However much Shakespeare's choice of themes may have been determined by the public taste or by the work of his fellows, in the creation of character he is henceforth his own master. Having acquired this mastery, he uses it to depict life in its most joyous aspect. For the time being he dwells little upon men's failure and sorrows. He does not ignore life's

darker side,—he loved life too well for that, but he uses it merely as a background for pictures of youth and happiness and success." [4]

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1595), called by Professor Barrett Wendell "Shakespeare's first declaration of artistic consciousness," holds together three plots: (1) that of the complicated loves of two men and two women, (2) that of the quarrel and reconciliation of the king and queen of fairies, and (3) that of the subplay of Bottom and his amiable companions. The problem offered the dramatist was to bring together the court of Athens, the fairies of the woods, and the common artisans of the town. To solve it he puts the play into the remote past, and everything becomes possible when the fairies sport by moonlight in the woods. To them it is given to reconcile the conflicting elements in the play; yet, as they must possess an interest of their own, the dramatist introduces the complication between Oberon and Titania, making both in love with an Indian boy. The device of a play within a play is used to great advantage, and it has commonly been supposed that in the strange shifts to which Quince is reduced Shakespeare was satirizing the poor scenery of the stage of his time. Over all, however, is the fine sympathy of the master, given in the words of Theseus: "The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

The Merchant of Venice (1595) is distinguished by its wealth of characterization and its unusual care in plotting. Shylock and Portia are outstanding characters, but Shylock, it seems, was long regarded as a comic figure, and

[4] Durham in MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* 153.

certainly until the close of the eighteenth century he was presented on the stage in a red beard. Other characters, however, especially Lorenzo, Gratiano, Morocco, Arragon, Jessica, and Launcelot, are also powerfully drawn and the effect is never that of detachment but of several strong figures working together to produce an harmonious whole. This quality of unity is further exemplified in the skilful weaving together of three entirely unrelated threads of plot, those of the bond, the caskets, and the ring. Portia, around whom the last two are woven from the first, in the fourth act dominates also the story of the bond. Over all is the veil of lofty poetry; and whether the situation is that of Shylock detailing the indignities he has suffered, or Launcelot voicing his latest jest, or Lorenzo and Jessica strolling in the moonlight, the effect is still the same, that of a superb example of insight into nature and of high dramatic craftsmanship.

The Taming of the Shrew (1596) seems to have been built on an earlier play of unknown authorship, *The Taming of a Shrew,* and ultimately to have received some suggestions from Gascoigne's *Supposes.* The main story is that of a wilful and ungovernable young woman who is subdued by a husband who assumes a temper even more wilful and ungovernable than hers. The situations are frequently those of farce, but the strongest scenes are strikingly realistic in their effect. It is by no means certain that Shakespeare wrote the whole of the play, and even those parts that were his were hardly of such quality as to test his greatest powers. The induction dealing with the drunken tinker, Christopher Sly, was taken from an earlier play on the theme, but was so improved by Shakespeare as to be of distinct charm and excellence.

The source of the two parts of *Henry IV* (1597) was naturally Holinshed, though Shakespeare seems to have received some suggestions from a play of the period, *The Famous Victories of Henry V.* The first part deals with the revolt of the Percies, in which Hotspur is the brilliant figure until he is killed by Prince Henry. The second, largely episodic in character, leads to the death of Henry IV and the final elevation of the Prince as king. The supreme creation of the plays is Falstaff, one of the greatest comic figures in all literature. "He is an incarnation of joy for whom moral laws do not exist."[5] He has the strange faculty of making vices appear as foibles. We smile alike at his conception of honor and his questioning of his recruits, and when at last he is cast aside by his old companion, now the new king, we can not help sympathizing with him as with a friend.

The sources of *Henry V* (1598) were the same as those for the two parts of *Henry IV.* There is original work in the play, however, as in the English lesson that Henry gives the French princess and the development of the character of Pistol. If the doubtful *Henry VIII* be not considered, *Henry V* is Shakespeare's last effort in the field of the chronicle, and in his valedictory to the form he gave his final portrayal of the ideal English King. The drama relies for its great merit upon its rhetoric and declamation, seen to best advantage in the speeches of the strong central figure. It is not without its finer poetry, however, as in the description of the sailing:

> Behold the threaden sails,
> Borne with the invisible and creeping wind,

[5] Durham.

> Draw the huge bottoms through the furrow'd sea,
> Breasting the lofty surge.[6]

The Merry Wives of Windsor (1598) is the only play in which Shakespeare deals primarily with people of the middle class and the only comedy whose setting is altogether in England. There is a tradition, well supported by internal evidence, that he wrote the play in little more than a fortnight at the request of Queen Elizabeth, who, delighted by the Falstaff of the historical plays, desired to see this character in the toils of love. The main plot accordingly deals with the adventures of Falstaff with Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, while the subplot is concerned with the love affairs of Anne Page. Falstaff is by no means the same figure as in *Henry IV*. He indeed resembles the other Falstaff in size, cupidity, and contempt for the vulgar; but he differs from him in that he is never master of the situation in which he is placed. Other characters also remain clearly in the mind. Ford is something more than the conventional jealous husband, and Slender has proved to be a part of more than ordinary stage capabilities. *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* if compared with the great comedies that followed it, at once impresses us as belonging to an entirely different order of work. If taken for what it is, however, a rollicking, good-natured play bordering on farce, it appears as a highly successful achievement.

In *Much Ado about Nothing* (1599) Shakespeare has used for his main plot a situation that comes very close to the tragic. "Don Pedro," the Prince of Arragon, we

[6] Compare with this the song in Browning's *Paracelsus,* "Over the sea our galleys went," and "O set the sails," in Stephen Phillips's *Ulysses.*

are informed, "hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio." Don Juan, however, the villainous half-brother of the Prince, has made this same Claudio believe that Hero, his intended bride, is unfaithful, so much so that he is led to reject her at the very steps of the altar. It is typical of Shakespeare's art that he does not permit this painful situation unduly to possess the scene. The leading woman of the play is not Hero, but her cousin, the great wit Beatrice. This lady is most famous for her combats with Benedick, a young lord of Padua, the two being simply a high development of the Rosalind and Biron of *Love's Labour's Lost.* Beatrice shows her true quality, however, by her firm faith in Hero; she at length appeals to Benedick for assistance, and when the mystery is cleared their love is sealed. Humor of another sort is afforded by Dogberry, the constable whose lot it is to untie tangles in the lives of those far higher than himself in worldly station. When all is over one remembers not so much the credulity of Claudio as the fine humor and the still finer humanity of Beatrice and Dogberry.

As You Like It (1599) was based upon Lodge's prose tale, *Rosalynde,* which in turn was indebted to the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Gamelyn,* though there is no evidence that Shakespeare made use of the ultimate source. Rejecting Lodge's euphuism, the dramatist retained most of the pastoral characteristics of the prose story, such as the lovesick shepherd, the hanging or carving of verses on trees, and the figure of Hymen. Omitting much that was not essentially refined, he added such characters as Jaques, Amiens, and Touchstone, and introduced higher motives for the action of the drama. There is a careful weaving

together of serious and comic elements in the play, a fine touch of satire is evident throughout, and the idyllic character of the whole never fails to arrest attention. Rosalind is one of Shakespeare's most charming women, Jaques is "a sentimentalist, but not a bad-hearted egoist," and Touchstone is the wittiest of all the dramatist's fools. On the other hand, the play suffers from insufficient change of scenery, a fault more apparent to us of course than to the Elizabethans; and the last act, with four pairs of lovers rapidly falling in love, while it has the excuse of a masque of Hymen, can hardly fail to appear a little mechanical to a modern spectator. In its breadth of view and its insight into nature, however, *As You Like It* remains one of Shakespeare's ripest productions.

Twelfth Night (1600) might well claim to be the finest of all Shakespeare's comedies. The plot was drawn from a variety of sources and few situations in the play are essentially new. Again and again one comes upon the shreds and patches of old garments, but he finds that they have all been so skilfully woven together as to make the most beautiful of costumes. Never were the high comedy of romance and the low comedy of ordinary English life more perfectly blended, two distinct groups of characters meeting with the lady Olivia. The sentimentalism of the Duke, the delicate humor and the grace of Viola, the boisterousness of Sir Toby, the sheer joy in life of Maria, the brainlessness of Sir Andrew, the lyricism of Feste, and the fine satire on the Puritans in the self-importance of Malvolio, all work together in harmonious accord. Under all, however, is a note of tenderness and seriousness, a sign of the coming tragedies. *Twelfth Night* was a superb *tour de force*. On it Shakespeare lavished all his

resources as a dramatic artist and by sheer force of craftsmanship he produced a masterpiece. In the realm of romantic comedy he could produce more but he could hardly go higher. What remained for him now was "fate, free will, and foreknowledge absolute."

32. Plays of Third Period.—In the third period of his dramatic activity Shakespeare rose to his greatest heights as a literary artist, and in his search for the deeper motives that govern human life he naturally emphasized tragedy. Before we consider the representative productions of this period, however, it is well to remark three so-called comedies, *Troilus and Cressida, All's Well that Ends Well,* and *Measure for Measure,* that do not in every case by a year or two precede *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet,* but that in one way or another are characterized by a peculiarly gloomy, serious, and even bitter cast of thought, and that together form an easy transition from the greatest comedies to the greatest tragedies. When one looks into the nature of these three plays, however, it is easy to see why they are among the least popular of the dramatist's productions. Each one is in its own way a study in disillusion.

Troilus and Cressida (1601), in small part at least (and especially as regards the fifth act), has been thought to be by another hand than Shakespeare's. The great dramatist himself, however, was undoubtedly mainly responsible for the work. The play deals with the famous story of Troilus and Cressida, to which Shakespeare had already made passing reference in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night,* and which Chaucer had used in his masterly character study, *Troilus and Criseyde.* It is well to keep in mind Shakespeare's two previous references. In the first (*M. of V.,* V, 1) he referred to the lovers

at the height of their romance; in the second (*T. N., III,* 1) he makes mention of Cressida's being a beggar, such a state being the reward of her unfaithfulness.[7] In the present play Troilus learns of Cressida's later conduct and unsuccessfully attempts to take revenge on Diomedes. The love story is surpassed in interest, however, by the portrayal of conditions in the Greek and Trojan camps at the siege of Troy. Especially graphic is the sketch of the sulking of Achilles. This on one hand gives occasion for the sage advice of Ulysses (note "Time hath, by lord, a wallet at his back") and on the other for the railing of Thersites, a character taken from Homer whose possibilities as developed by Shakespeare have generally been only dimly realized. Achilles finally slays Hector, however, and Troilus resolves to avenge his brother's death.

The source of *All's Well that Ends Well* (1602) was a story in the *Decameron* that came to Shakespeare by way of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure.* The story is a strange one of a noble-minded young woman who falls in love with a man hardly worthy of her, who is insulted by this man, who places herself in a dangerous and compromising situation in order to win his loyalty, and who at length wins him, having satisfied even the hard conditions that he placed on her. The dramatist has so ennobled the character of the heroine, Helena, as to make her one of the truest and most famous women in his plays. The scene in which she confesses her love to the sympathetic old Countess of Rousillon, the mother of Bertram, is singularly tender and beautiful.

Measure for Measure (1603) has much connection in theme with *All's Well that Ends Well,* but the idealism of

[7] Note Robert Henryson's poem, *The Testament of Cresseid.*

Isabella also betokens connection with *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet,* both of which plays were in the mind of the artist about the same time. Shakespeare borrowed the main story from George Whetstone, author of a play, *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), who in turn borrowed from Cinthio's *Hecatommithi. Measure for Measure* is a vivid satire on the evils of society. A young man, Claudio, is guilty under the law of a grave social crime. Angelo, the magistrate, places before Isabella, the sister of Claudio, the dilemma of saving her brother's life by giving herself to him or saving her honor and permitting her brother to be led to execution. Claudio would save his life at the expense of his sister's honor, so that in a sordid world Isabella is forced to find her way to the light alone. Having clearly presented his problem, Shakespeare ends the play with Isabella's losing neither her brother nor her honor; but the atmosphere is gloomy throughout. Singularly enough, however, *Measure for Measure* is relieved by many touches of the highest poetry.

Julius Caesar (1599?) was once termed by a great scholar[8] "Shakespeare's best play of the second class." What is meant is obvious, that in this production the strong points are the surface merits of brilliant rhetoric and declamation, qualities quite different from the high poetry and the more searching characterization of the great plays immediately following. Marcus Brutus, the central figure of the drama, is a forerunner of Hamlet as a study of the scholarly and idealistic temperament face to face with the realities of the world; and throughout the play runs the irony of fate. Brutus is drawn into a conspiracy by his friend Cassius, a practical man of affairs, and by the

[8] F. J. Child.

sheer force of his dignity and unquestioned honor dominates everything within reach. In rapid succession he makes three mistakes: he refuses to bind the conspirators by an oath (and somebody divulges the plan); he rejects the power of oratory as represented in Cicero (which same power as used by Antony later overcomes him), and he refuses to kill Antony along with Caesar (Antony later becoming the concrete instrument in his overthrow). The dramatist was especially skilful in handling the fourth act, always a difficult one for an Elizabethan playwright. When after Antony's oration the action seemed to be hastening to its conclusion too rapidly, he introduced the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, and the ghost scene. The first of these episodes has been considered extraneous and the second mere dramaturgy; but a practical dramatist was working for theatrical effectiveness, and there can be no doubt as to the success of his achievement. Again and again lines taken almost bodily from North's *Plutarch,* touched by the magic of the master, leap into being; and after three hundred years of changing taste *Julius Caesar* still remains one of Shakespeare's most popular plays.

Hamlet (1602, second version 1604) is a supreme achievement in dramaturgy, but with such insight into nature did the artist work that at the same time that he satisfied the popular taste of his day he also produced a world masterpiece. The play is eminently a "tragedy of blood" and accordingly has affinity with such productions as *Titus Andronicus* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy.* With the latter play in fact its connections are especially close, Kyd's tragedy dealing with the revenge of a father for the death of a son, and Shakespeare's reversing this

theme. In such things as this motive of revenge, and the use of the ghost, the dumb-show, the play within a play, and madness as a dramatic motive, Shakespeare was simply employing old material; but there is nothing trite about his finished product. By its magnificent phrase and rich poetry, its deep insight into human passion, and its deliberate interplay of character (as in the placing of the old pedant Polonius by the side of Hamlet), the play continues to attract and baffle. By reason also of the unnumbered linguistic, artistic, and ethical problems which it has awakened, *Hamlet* has gathered unto itself a vast literature of its own. The finished production is at once the admiration and the despair of students of the drama the world over.

Othello (1604) is Shakespeare's supreme achievement in dramatic technique. For the story he was ultimately indebted to the seventh novel of the third decade of Cinthio's *Hecatommithi,* of which a French translation was made in 1583-4; but he greatly improved on the original, especially as regards characterization, taste, and workmanship.[9] The play is a domestic tragedy, singularly modern in tone, and has the advantage of holding attention on one definite group of characters. The first act in masterly fashion strikes the keynote of an emotional drama; the second, emphasizing the fact that we are concerned not with public but domestic affairs, shows Iago not only disgracing Cassio but beginning to use him in his larger design against Othello and Desdemona; the third act shows Shakespeare's greatest villain working with all the re-

[9] For a brief statement of his improvement see Neilson: *Shakespeare's Complete Works,* 934, Hudson's Introduction to the play, Parrott's Introduction, etc.

sources at his command and succeeding in his purpose; the fourth act, already remarked as the most difficult for an Elizabethan playwright, shows no slackening of interest but makes the air more and more heavy with impending tragedy; and the fifth, by its swift and terrible close, especially shows the artist's improvement on his sources. All of this is done in Shakespeare's dignified and poetic manner, and with a tenseness of emotion and a sense of dramatic fitness never surpassed. For sheer skill in arrangement, in the use of the element of suspense, and in the play of character upon character, *Othello* remains incomparable.

King Lear (1605) is indebted perhaps to several sources, but prominence attaches to the play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his Three Daughters,* and to the ultimate source, Geoffrey of Monmouth. The drama is the tragedy of old age, all the more effective because Lear is unreasonable with the peevishness of years. Deceived as he is by his older daughters, Goneril and Regan, it is only after days of suffering and a terrible night of storm that he finds out the true quality of Cordelia, his youngest daughter, who loved him too much to humor his whims and deceive him. Reflecting the tragedy of Lear is the skilfully interwoven underplot of the nobleman Gloucester, who for a time seemed to favor his disloyal son Edmund and to disown the more filial Edgar. *King Lear* is characterized throughout by an atmosphere of lofty poetry, represented especially by the words between Cordelia and Lear at the beginning of Act V, Scene 3. "There is a strangely lyric element about this great tragedy, an element of heart-broken emotion hovering on the edge of passionate song. It is like a great chorus in which the victims of

treachery and ingratitude blend their denouncing cries. The tremulous voice of Lear rises terrible above all the others; and to his helpless curses the plaintive satire of the fool answers like a mocking echo in halls of former enjoyment. Thunder and lightning are the fearful accompaniment of the song; and like faint antiphonal responses from the underplot come the voices of the wronged Edgar and the outraged Gloucester." [10]

Macbeth (1606) is commonly given a place with *Hamlet, Othello,* and *King Lear* as one of Shakespeare's greatest productions. It is much the shortest of the tragedies, however, shorter in fact than any other play by Shakespeare except *The Comedy of Errors,* containing hardly two thousand lines. *Hamlet,* the longest of the plays, contains nearly four thousand lines, and hence can not be performed in one evening under modern conditions without excision. *Macbeth* most readily invites comparison with two other well-known plays of the third group, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608) and *Coriolanus* (1609). If one were disposed to strain matters a little, he might consider each one of Shakespeare's great tragedies as a representation of some one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Certainly *King Lear* is concerned with Anger. Similarly *Macbeth* stands for Envy ("vaulting ambition"), *Antony and Cleopatra* for Lechery, and *Coriolanus* for Pride. Each one of these three plays has a hero who has some weakness of character that proves his undoing, and each one is a study in subjectivity. While Lady Macbeth to some extent influences her husband and Cleopatra her lover, Macbeth and Antony and Coriolanus are the architects of their own

[10] Pierce in MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* 186.

fate, and all three say plainly, "The wages of sin is death." These men are alike also in that they are short-sighted. Antony's leaving of the sea of valor to follow the sails of Cleopatra is characteristic of his action throughout the play; Coriolanus seems not to realize that "dastard nobles" and people who are "curs" and "minnows" may still have some courage in their bosoms; and Macbeth is notorious for taking a chance on "the life to come." In spite of Enobarbus and Menenius moreover, these men are different from Brutus and Hamlet and alike in this, that no one of them has a friend close enough and strong enough to keep him from going astray. Instead, each one offends some other strong man; and Macduff, Octavius, and Aufidius become in turn avenging forces. The type seems to have been in Shakespeare's mind for some three or four years, the tragedy in each instance consisting not so much in the number of people killed as in the downfall of a noble man.

33. Plays of Fourth Period.—We have already observed that there were changing fashions in the Elizabethan drama. Sometimes Shakespeare helped to make these fashions; more frequently he followed the dictates of popular taste. A case in point is his work in the field of "blood-and-thunder" tragedy. About 1598, largely through the work of Ben Jonson, there developed an emphasis on realistic comedy. To this fashion Shakespeare did not immediately respond except perhaps as it finds some reflection in the satire or realism of *Troilus and Cressida* or *Measure for Measure;* but he did turn away from pure comedy and chronicle plays to devote himself more seriously to tragedy, as we have seen. About 1607, however, with two other contemporaries, Beaumont and Fletcher,

there began an emphasis on romantic tragicomedy that influenced him most profoundly. Representative plays by these two dramatists were *Philaster, A King and No King,* and *The Maid's Tragedy.* "The realistic comedies of Jonson and Middleton, which, along with the great tragedies of Shakespeare, crowd the stage history of the preceding ten years, had offered nothing similar to these romances which joined tragic and idyllic material in scenes of brilliant theatrical effectiveness, abounding in transitions from suspense to surprise, and culminating in telling dénouements. . . . In its intriguing courts, or in nearby forests where the idyls are placed, love of one kind or another is the ruling and vehement passion, riding high-handed over tottering thrones, rebellious subjects, usurping tyrants, and checked, if checked at all, only by the unexampled force of honor. . . . Characterization tends to become typical, and motives tend to be based on fixed conventions. . . . *Cymbeline* in its plot bears some close resemblances to *Philaster,* and it seems likely that Shakespeare was adopting the methods and materials of the new romance. . . . After Beaumont's retirement in 1611 or 1612 it seems probable that Fletcher and Shakespeare collaborated on *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*" [11] Important also in this general connection is the new form of the masque, especially cultivated by Jonson in co-operation with the architect Inigo Jones. This was an elaborate amateur theatrical entertainment, the fundamental element of which seems to have been dancing in disguise, and which through dance and costume and music more and more emphasized symbolism.

In this last period three plays stand out above others

[11] Neilson and Thorndike: *The Facts about Shakespeare,* 109-10.

more doubtful: *Cymbeline* (1610), *The Winter's Tale* (1611), and *The Tempest* (1611). For the first of these dramas Shakespeare received some suggestion from Holinshed; for the second he went to Greene's *Pandosto;* and for the third, receiving an idea from one source or another, he relied mainly upon himself. In what ways now do these plays reflect the new tendencies? First of all, characterization ceases to be of prime importance. Leontes, for instance, is jealous; but he is by no means as strong a conception as Othello. Moreover the characters tend to become types. Ariel, Caliban, Cloten, and Prospero are indubitably allegorical, while Posthumus, Iachimo, Hermione, Alonzo, and Miranda at least have conventional tendencies. In *The Tempest* moreover the dramatist emphasizes the supernatural element, and into the fourth act of this play he thrusts a masque, using something also very close to a masque in the dance of shepherds in *The Winter's Tale*. Nor in yielding to new impulses does he hesitate to leave some of his old practices; and in both *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* he shifts interest in the middle of the play, in *Cymbeline* from Imogen and Posthumus to Belarius and the Princess, and in *The Winter's Tale* from Leontes to Perdita. In all such ways as these he exhibits a new freedom and fancy. That such work is not the result of any real loss of technical ability is shown by the last scene in *Cymbeline*, in which there are "crowded some two dozen situations any one of which would probably have been strong enough to carry a whole act."[12] In *The Winter's Tale* moreover Shakespeare does not mind introducing such an improbability as the statue of Hermione, and in *The Tempest* he idealizes everything into poetry. Gen-

[12] Wendell: *William Shakespeare*, 358.

erally then in his last period the great dramatist forsakes the tragic for the romantic, the probable for the improbable, and the real for the ideal; and such even now is the sheer force of his ability that he makes the fanciful essentially true. Then, when all is finished, like his own Prospero the magician breaks his wand and bids farewell to his art:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

34. **Shakespeare's Advance in his Art.**—Shakespeare's plays afford an interesting field for the study of a dramatist's advance in his work. The artist not only gained with practice greater skill in the difficult matter of technique, but more and more he seemed to gain mastery of all the resources of expression. In his earlier plays one observes a labored effect in his meter—a tendency toward monotonousness in the ending of lines with heavy syllables. Such a later play as *The Tempest,* however, is marked by ease and variety in versification. Shakespeare also made advance in taste. In the years when he was largely under the influence of Lyly or Marlowe or other models he sometimes went far afield for conceits, or cultivated extravagance or bombast; he even appealed sometimes to the "groundlings" of his day. By the time he wrote *Antony*

and Cleopatra, however, he had learned that he could be even gorgeous in his poetic effects without being needlessly excessive. In characterization also he shows remarkable advance. In such an early play as *Love's Labour's Lost* "he has not led us into the inner selves of his men and women at all, has not seemed to realize that they possess inner selves. At the conclusion we know precisely as much of them as we should if we had met them at a formal reception, and no more."[13] We know Hamlet, Othello, and Lady Macbeth, however, just as well as we know Elizabethan men and women that actually lived. Edmund in *King Lear* recalls *Richard III;* but whereas in Richard the dramatist satisfied the taste of the day by portraying a brilliant rhetorical figure, in Edmund he gives a more complex study of villainy and passion. Especially is his large humanity represented by his humor, whether in Falstaff or Touchstone, Dogberry or Beatrice. Finally, in pure technique he became the artist incomparable. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* he wasted time; in *Othello* every word is in place. The whole phenomenon of his development is as interesting as it is unique.

35. **The Tradition of Shakespeare.**—"To him that hath shall be given," and it was but natural that in the course of literary history such a well-known playwright as Shakespeare should have been credited with many things that he never wrote. The question is complicated by the very common practice of collaboration on the part of Elizabethan dramatists. We have from time to time remarked certain plays (*Titus Andronicus,* 1, 2, and 3 *Henry VI, Timon of*

[13] Pierce in MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham: *An Introduction to Shakespeare,* 91.

Athens, Pericles, and *Henry VIII*) which are generally classed with Shakespeare's works, but which awaken grave questions as to collaborative effort, some students even insisting that with such a work as 1 *Henry VI* he had nothing at all to do. The so-called Shakespeare Apocrypha accordingly starts one on an interesting but baffling trail, and one that raises all sorts of questions. "Almost every class of play is here represented, and one class—that of domestic tragedy—finds in *Arden of Feversham* and in *A Yorkshire Tragedy,* two of its most illustrious examples. The Senecan tragedy of vengeance is represented by *Locrine;* the history or chronicle play by *Edward III, The First Part of the Contention, The True Tragedie, The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England, Sir Thomas More,* and *Cromwell,* and, less precisely, by *The Birth of Merlin* and *Faire Em.* The romantic comedy of the period is illustrated by *Mucedorus, The Merry Devill* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* while *The London Prodigall* and *The Puritane* are types of that realistic bourgeois comedy which . . . won a firm hold upon the affections of the play-going community."[14] *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* which makes the strongest claim of all of these plays, was based on the story of Palamon and Arcite in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and published in 1634 as the work of "the memorable worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakespeare, Gent."

Of the plays undoubtedly Shakespeare's there are no manuscripts that have come down to us. In general while a writer of the day bestowed care on the form of a poem that was to be given to the public, he seems to have felt

[14] Moorman: "Plays of Uncertain Authorship Attributed to Shakespeare," *C. H. E. L.*, V, 266.

that he had no further interest in a play that he sold to a theatrical company. One or two exceptions occur, however; and we can see both the purpose of the author and the ridicule he awakened when in 1616 Ben Jonson issued a folio edition of his "Works." Before 1623 seventeen of Shakespeare's plays appeared in single quarto editions. In this year, however, two of old colleagues and friends, John Heminge and Henry Condell, with considerable pains brought out what is now known as the first folio edition of the dramatist's work. For the twenty plays that it printed for the first time the First Folio must of course be the chief authority; for the remaining seventeen it must sometimes share authority with the quartos. A second folio, a reprint of the first, appeared in 1632; a third, of 1663, was reprinted in 1664 with the addition of *Pericles* and six even more doubtful plays; and the fourth folio appeared in 1685. In 1709 Nicholas Rowe set a high standard for later editors by an edition in which he modernized spelling, corrected grammar, added in many cases lists of characters, and made many emendations. In 1725 Alexander Pope brought out his much discussed edition. He had excellent materials on which to work, but he lacked the sympathy with his subject necessary in an editor and he made many mistakes. His errors were exposed in Lewis Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), which study was devoted mainly to *Hamlet*. Pope replied by placing Theobald in the *Dunciad* and succeeding in obscuring his reputation until comparatively recent years, when modern scholarship has given him the recognition he deserves. Since the days of Pope and Theobald editions have appeared with increasing frequency, and it would now take pages merely to enumerate

these.[15] Special importance attaches, however, to the monumental Variorum Edition, which began to be issued in 1871 by H. H. Furness, which is still carried forward by his son, and which attempts to digest all the criticism on a particular play. The best single volume of recent years is the Cambridge edition edited by William Allan Neilson. The Neilson text is the result of independent study and is used as the basis of the separate little volumes in the "Tudor Shakespeare."

The question of Shakespeare's reputation and of criticism based upon him of course opens a wide field—one so vast in fact that only slight reference can be made to it here. The high points in the study are the Restoration attitude that sought to refine Shakespeare's works, the rationalistic and didactic point of view represented by such a critic as Rymer, the attitude of the French classicist Voltaire, the interest that developed so rapidly in Germany near the close of the eighteenth century, the rather idolatrous admiration at the height of romanticism in England, and more recent studies of the dramatist's mind and art. An interesting field of course is that of actual presentation on the stage in England, in America, and on the continent of Europe; while hardly less fascinating to the earnest student is the influence in music and painting. Societies are still formed for the study of the dramatist's works, his plays have a high place in colleges and high schools in the United States, and even more in the future than in the past he seems destined to be a force linking the culture of America with that of England and the world.

36. Shakespeare's Greatness.—Shakespeare was the

[15] See *C. H. E. L.*, V, 472-84.

central figure of the Elizabethan drama, contemporary with both Lyly and Fletcher. He is not to be regarded as some great abnormal or isolated genius, but as eminently a man of his age. He came upon the scene at a time when national feeling ran high and when all England was uplifted by a spirit of hope. One common custom of the period was for a man to use stories and plots wherever he could find them, so that one of the first impressions that one gains from a study of Shakespeare's sources is that of something very like plagiarism. We can best measure his success, however, when we place his achievement by the side of that of others who had at hand the same materials that he had. He then appears more and more as the unequaled artist in technique and characterization. No one else had such insight into human motive; no one else has created characters so lifelike. Finally, he is the poet incomparable not only of England but of all ages and the world. He has his own distinctive note, and he is master of all the sources of his instrument; yet he is not eccentric. He is with us in "the dark backward and abysm of time," or as "the unfolding star calls up the shepherd;" he "knows all qualities with a learned spirit, of human dealings." With him we live and love and dream and hope. He beckons us to all things beautiful—and to God.

CHAPTER VI

SHAKESPEARE'S LATER CONTEMPORARIES AND THE DECLINE OF THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

37. **General Characteristics of the Period.**—The present chapter is concerned primarily with the story of the English Drama, exclusive of Shakespeare, from about the year 1596 to the closing of the theatres in 1642. The earlier of these dates is given because it marks the beginning of actual production on the part of Shakespeare's later contemporaries; and in connection with the great dramatist's later work we have already remarked the influences that were brought to bear upon him in his later years, in a very slight measure perhaps from the realistic comedy of Jonson, and in a much larger degree from the more romantic work of Beaumont and Fletcher. The tradition of tragedy, so well held aloft by Kyd and Shakespeare, was preserved in the work of Webster, with which playwright indeed the drama of revenge and horror reached its culmination. Other men of the period have their distinctive merits: Dekker, for instance, is possessed of a wholesome geniality of temper that has generally endeared him to lovers of literature; Massinger's plays are of unusual technical excellence; and Shirley has distinct poetic quality. In the earlier years of the century also, in amateur or court circles, the pastoral play or the masque flourished. More and more, however, the stand-

ard drama of the period exhibited marks of decadence. Themes became sensational or melodramatic; incest was more than once a dominating motive. A great form of art was being worn thin, and unfortunately there was all too much ground on which the sober Puritan temper could base its opposition and because of which the playhouses were at last officially closed.

38. **Ben Jonson.**—The facts about the life of Jonson (1573-1637) that have come down to us, while not a great many, are still more numerous than those of most of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Born in Westminster he attended the Westminster school. It is not known that he was ever resident at either university; yet he was given his A. M. by each one, and by dint of his own effort he ultimately became the leading man of letters of his time. In his earlier years, finding his stepfather's trade of bricklaying intolerable, he escaped to Flanders, where the English were fighting against the Spaniards. Here he challenged and slew one of the enemy in single combat. In 1598 he fought what he called a duel with a fellow-actor, Gabriel Spencer, and killed him; and he escaped the gallows only by benefit of clergy. He went into the Catholic faith but later returned to the Church of England. Jonson quarreled with various ones of his contemporaries, but not with Shakespeare, whom he uniformly held in high regard. The most prolonged of his controversies was in the so-called war of the theatres,[1] which called forth

[1] Note Small: *The Stage-Quarrel between Ben Jonson and the So-called Poetasters*, and the studies of Penniman, in which the matter is carried still further. Some idea of the complex nature of the discussion may be gained from the following quotation from Small (199-200):

"Probably Munday cast some reflections on Jonson in 1598; cer-

his satirical play, *Poetaster* (1601), to which Dekker replied with his *Satiromastix*. For his part in *Eastward Ho!*, which contained a passage reflecting on the Scots, he was imprisoned for a while in 1605. By this time, however, his literary position was assured. He became poet laureate and enjoyed the patronage of James I. He brought out a folio edition of his works in 1616. His later years were far from being uniformly happy or prosperous; but in 1628 he succeeded Middleton as chronologer to the city of London, and Charles I is on record as having once sent him £100 in a season of illness. "His egoism made everything that he wrote partly a portrait of himself. Almost every contemporary reference to him has added something personal and characteristic. We hear of his quarrels, his drinking-bouts, his maladies and his theories of literary art. . . . Huge of body, bibulous

tainly Jonson twice attacked him in the latter part of that year, once in *Every Man in his Humour* and once in the first scene of *The Case is Altered*, apparently added to the play about January or February, 1598-99. Marston, then a close friend of Jonson, satirized Munday and tried to compliment Jonson in *Histriomastix*, acted in its revised form in August, 1599. Jonson took the intended compliment as an insult; nevertheless the quarrel between the two friends did not break out publicly until Jonson ridiculed Marston's vocabulary in *Every Man out of his Humour*, February or March, 1599-1600. Then followed rapidly several personally satirical plays—Marston's *Jack Drum*, 1600, Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, February or March, 1600-1, Marston's *What You Will*, March or April, 1601, and Jonson's *Poetaster*, about June, 1901. In *Cynthia's Revels* and the *Poetaster*, Jonson in his satire had coupled Dekkar with Marston; Dekker then responded with *Satiromastix*, about August, 1601. Jonson wrote the *Apologetical Dialogue*, refusing to continue the contest. Either shortly after, or, more probably, shortly before that time, Shakespeare wrote *Troilus and Cressida*, laughing at the whole quarrel, but holding Jonson up to ridicule most exasperatingly. . . . In the latter part of 1603, Marston and Jonson were fast friends."

and brawling, he yet loved Latin as heartily as canary, and could write the tenderest epitaph as well as the grossest epigram. Laborious and pertinacious, he rode his hobbies hard, confusing his scholarship with pedantry and his verse with theory; but few have ever served learning and poetry with so whole-hearted a devotion." [2]

Jonson's work falls naturally under four heads: (1) Dramas, (2) Masques and other entertainments, (3) Poems, and (4) Miscellaneous prose. It is because of his work in the first class that he is most famous; but that in any other would have given him a respectable place in English literature. Of the dramas two are ambitious tragedies; the others are comedies, frequently satirical. The masque in Jonson consisted of dialogue, singing, and dancing. It was based on mythology and used a simple plot. In some respects it was similar to the comic opera of the present day. As the decoration of the masque was lavish, this form of entertainment was cultivated mainly by the nobility in private theatricals and on special occasions. Of the collections of poems, *Epigrams* and *The Forest* are most noteworthy. Jonson achieved distinct success with his lyrics, many of which are more tender and delicate than one would expect from a man of his temperament. He had an artistic sense of form, and his verse is chaste and controlled rather than florid and spontaneous. Of his prose *Timber*, one of the monuments of the period in criticism, easily takes first place. Poetry, says this work, is the highest form of art both in dignity and ethical importance. Tragedy should teach and delight; comedy should imitate justice, show moral life, purify language, and stir up affection. The unities need not be slavishly

[2] Ashley H. Thorndike: "Ben Jonson," in *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 1.

adhered to, but some stress should be placed on those of action and time. It will thus be seen that Jonson was a classicist in choice of subjects, methods of work, and in his opinions. It is hardly too much to say that he began in English literature the classical movement which later culminated in the school of Pope.

It was in his first acknowledged play, *Every Man in his Humour* (1597), that Jonson made to the English drama his most distinctive contribution, the comedy of *humours.* He defined a humour as a peculiar affectation or distinguishing attribute of an individual. He did not intend to put upon the stage any such improbability as that a child might grow up in the course of the play, and he definitely laid down his program in the prologue, professing to show

> Deeds and language, such as men do use:
> And persons, such as comedy would choose,
> When she would show an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

In this play the plot is but slight; the characterization, however, is better than that in most of Jonson's plays. Here are types such as were common at the time: the jealous husband (Kitely), the poetic young man (Matthew), the gull (Stephen), and the braggart soldier (Bobadill). Everybody follows his own oddity and reaps the reward of his humour. Kitely reminds one of Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and the part of Kno'well is interesting as having been played by Shakespeare.

Sejanus (1603, alt. 1605) was one of Jonson's two tragedies, *Catiline* being the other. The subject is the well-known story of the fall of the minister of Tiberius. The play shows Jonson's fidelity to historical truth, and

it also shows his occasional tendency to use a great multiplicity of characters. The hero hardly appeals to one, as we have little sympathy with a man who is hopelessly bad. There are some strong scenes in the play, however. That in Act II in which Livia and her physician Eudemus discuss cosmetics and a murder in the same breath, and that in Act V in which the terror-stricken Sejanus overturns the statue and altar of the priest, are deservedly famous. The versification is good, rising at times to great beauty.

Volpone (1606) is a satirical comedy on the moral depravity of the age. An avaricious Venetian nobleman, in order to receive gifts from his acquaintances, gives it out that he is at the point of death, and would-be heirs rush to present plate or money or a diamond to him, all being represented as birds of prey. The "fox" (Volpone) is finally betrayed by his servant and accomplice Moscha. The play shows how in the greed for gold the husband will give up his wife to infamy, the father disinherit his son, and even the gray-haired man become the slave of avarice. The production is characterized by grim humor and there is no goodness of heart in any prominent character.

More pleasing than *Volpone* because less bitter is *The Alchemist* (1610). Lovewit, a gentleman, on account of the plague, leaves his city house in the hands of his servant Jeremie and goes to a retreat. Jeremie lets the house to the alchemist Subtle, who brings along with him his accomplice, Dol Common. Then the humble servant becomes the vaunting Captain Face and works with Subtle and Dol, not without quarrels, to dupe "not one or two gulls but a whole flock of them." Here comes Dapper, who wants

a "familiar" to help him at gambling and who is made to believe that he is nephew to the Queen of Fairies (Dol later appearing to him as his aunt). Abel Drugger is building a new shop and wants to know how to arrange his door and shelves. Most important of all is Sir Epicure Mammon, a really magnificent picture of greed and sensuality, who pours out a torrent of images and words and knowledge. Then there is Tribulation, a pastor at Amsterdam, who wants money for the enrichment of his church and who sends his deacon Ananias to deal with the alchemist before he comes himself. Finally comes Dame Pliant, who is also duped. Jeremie in the meantime, while Captain Face in the street, is in the house Lungs, Subtle's assistant. Lovewit returns at last to hear from the neighbors of unusual events at his house; but Jeremie comes to an understanding with him inasmuch as his endeavors have gained for his master a wife. *The Alchemist* has been greatly praised. Coleridge remarked enthusiastically that it was one of "the three most perfect plots ever planned." When all possible detraction is made for the superlative, the play still remains as that production which later criticism has ranked highest among Jonson's dramas.

Bartholomew Fair (1614) is in prose and is a pure farce, showing the humors of a London crowd on a clear day. A Puritan preacher rebukes the wickedness of the fair and then enjoys the good things there. Among the prominent characters are Littlewit, the proctor, who has a pretty wife; Cokes, the foolish squire; Edgeworth, the cutpurse; Joan Trash, the gingerbread woman; and Ursula, the pig-woman. One after another they all pass by, and as we see the procession that Jonson has given us

more and more we wonder if this great master of satire and cynicism has ever drawn for us a truly noble man or a truly virtuous woman.

From what has been said, Jonson's outstanding qualities as a dramatist have perhaps been suggested. "His wide and penetrating observation of manners, whether of city or of court, and his ingenious and systematic construction of plots are obvious merits. But the great excellence of both his tragedies and his comedies is their delineation of character. . . . What most discourages the reader of Jonson is the absence of charm. Jonson was certainly not incapable of depicting noble passions or of writing winsome verse; but in his plays resolutely refused to attempt either. He did not write of passions, but of follies—not of fairyland, but of London; he often deliberately preferred prose to poetry, and he always restrained poetry to his subject."[3] As a great realist, however, he exercised an influence that has continued down to the present day. In the novel as well as in the drama this has been felt, and Fielding and Dickens especially owe much to his suggestion.

The final influence of Jonson on his age, however, "was an influence of restraint; and never were there wilder steeds than those that drew the gorgeous, glittering car of Elizabethan romantic drama. It was Jonson that reclaimed the drama from amateurishness and insisted on its serious function as an art existing for more than idle diversion. It was Jonson that set a standard of literary excellence, not recognized before his time; and assumed in so doing an attitude of independence towards the public. Jonson developed the masque and devised a species of

[3] Ashley H. Thorndike: "Ben Jonson," in *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 29-30.

Roman tragedy conceived historically and freed alike from the restrictions of Senecan models and the improbabilities of romantic treatment. Most important of all, Jonson added the comedy of manners or humours, as he called it, to the forms of the English drama. It was this satirically heightened picture of contemporary life handled with a restraint and finish ultimately traceable to classical example that survived on the stage after the Restoration in the comedies of D'Avenant, Dryden, Etherege, and Vanbrugh. In a word, Jonson gave to the later drama one of its two permanent types."[4]

39. **George Chapman.** — George Chapman (1559?-1634) was born near Hitchin in Hertfordshire and possibly studied at both Oxford and Cambridge. From passages in his plays he is thought to have traveled on the continent and especially to have served on an expedition to the Netherlands; but many years of his life are a blank. He was mentioned by Meres in 1598 as a writer of distinction in both tragedy and comedy. In 1605 he was imprisoned along with Jonson because of the passage in *Eastward Ho!* referring to the Scots. He was distinguished among the contemporaries of Shakespeare, however, not only for his plays but also for his poems and translations. He is perhaps best known for his vigorous English version of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* in fourteen and ten syllable lines respectively. In 1604 he was appointed "sewer (i. e. cupbearer) in ordinary" to Prince Henry, eldest son of James I. It was under the patronage of this prince that the translation of the *Iliad* was completed in 1611 and that of the *Odyssey* begun, a

[4] Schelling: Introduction to *Eastward Hoe* and *The Alchemist,* xxxi.

folio volume entitled *The Whole Works of Homer* appearing in 1616. One recalls in this connection the highly appreciative sonnet by Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

Bussy D'Ambois (1598?) and *All Fools* (1599) were among the first and most successful of Chapman's comedies. The first of these, based upon the life of a Frenchman of the sixteenth century, readily exhibits the qualities of appeal to an Elizabethan audience. It contains much braggadocio and intrigue, portraying the sudden elevation of Bussy from the condition of a poor man to that of a courtier making love to the Duchess of Guise, and his ultimate downfall through the schemes of the man who first brought him to court. "Throughout the drama men and women are playing for great stakes. No one is ever at rest. Action and passion are both at fever heat. We move in an atmosphere of duels and state intrigues by day, of assignations and murders by night. Even the subordinate persons in the drama, the stewards and waiting-women, partake of the restless spirit of their superiors. Thus Chapman aimed throughout at energy of expression at all costs."[5] The plotting of the play is on the whole better than the characterization. *All Fools* similarly places emphasis primarily on plotting. The play is a satire on the life of Elizabethan London, and is really an example of the new comedy of humours, popularized by Jonson.

The Gentleman Usher (1601-2) and *Monsieur D'Olive* (1605) are two other noteworthy productions. *The Gentleman Usher* is Bassiolo, chief servant in the house of Lord Lasso, father of Margaret, heroine of the play. His

[5] Boas: Introduction to *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, xxvi.

business is to act as a go-between in the love affair of Margaret and Vincentio, son of the Duke Alphonso, who is himself paying court to Margaret. All of this is conventional enough; but there is nothing conventional about the actual working out of the plot. *Monsieur D'Olive* is in every way one of the best examples of Chapman's work. Above the story of Vandome, who must work to bring his old mistress out of seclusion and to win his brother-in-law to a healthier love than that for his embalmed first wife, stands the triumphant figure of Monsieur D'Olive, an upstart and a braggart, but also a wit whose good humor is imperturbable. As Bassiolo is thought to have received some suggestion from Malvolio, so D'Olive's questioning of his followers (III, 1) reminds one of Falstaff.

"The general impression left by a repeated and consecutive reading of Chapman's comedies is one of lively and vigorous comic force. This is due in the main to the abundance of action that characterizes his plays. It is quite in keeping with this abundance of action that Chapman's humor should be one of incident and situation rather than of character and dialogue. Nor, it must be confessed, is he any great master of characterization. Perhaps his most noticeable defect, however, is his want of constructive ability. On the whole more nearly allied to Jonson than to any other Elizabethan poet, not only by the circumstances of his life but by his scholarly acquirements and the general temper of his mind, he quite lacks Jonson's architectonic genius. With one or two exceptions his plays are ill-planned and badly proportioned. [On the other hand] in certain plays, *Sir Giles Goosecap, Monsieur D'Olive,* and especially *The Gentleman Usher,*

Chapman was the first to strike into that field of romantic comedy which is now so peculiarly associated with the name of Fletcher." [6]

40. John Marston.—John Marston (1575?-1634) was the son of John Marston, a lecturer of the Middle Temple, and the daughter of an Italian physician. He was probably born and certainly received his early education in Coventry. He was graduated at Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1593. He began his literary career as a satirist in 1598; the next year he turned to the drama; but in 1607 he gave up his literary career to become a clergyman. From 1616 to 1631 he held the living of Christ Church, Hampshire.

Marston's satires of 1598 were "as strident as youth, cleverness, and inexperience could make them." [7] His first plays, *Antonio and Mellida*, and *Antonio's Revenge,* were of such turgid quality as to bring down upon him the ridicule of Jonson; yet it is important to note that these plays had a distinct part in the revival of the "blood-and-thunder" type of drama of which *Hamlet* remains as the highest example. For most of the period of his literary activity, however, Marston seems to have engaged in controversy. Much of his effort was directed against Jonson; yet in a season of reconciliation he collaborated with this great dramatist in the writing of *Eastward Ho!* and dedicated to him his best play, *The Malcontent* (1600). The malcontent is a banished duke who returns disguised to his former court and under the form of a mad humor speaks bitter truths. Other plays also contain strong

[6] Parrott: Introduction to *All Fooles* and *The Gentleman Usher,* xlvi.

[7] Schelling: *English Drama,* 128.

situations. However, "the texture of Marston's genius was singularly unequal, and he constantly promises more than he performs. In comedy only can it be truly said that he achieved success; yet in his more ambitious and less successful work there resides an arresting quality. When we are about to condemn unreservedly, he flashes into unexpected splendor; when we lay down the book, his characters refuse to be altogether dismissed into the *limbo* of forgotten things." [8]

41. Thomas Dekker.—Thomas Dekker (1570?-1640?) with his literary work has left a tradition of singular charm. Of his life comparatively little is known. There is a notice in Henslowe's diary to the effect that he was at one time loaned forty shillings so that he might get out of jail, and he was in prison for debt from 1613 to 1616. He first appears in literary history in 1597, and for several years thereafter he seems frequently to have worked in collaboration with other playwrights. He was engaged in the stage quarrels of the time, taking sides with Marston against Jonson, and, as has been observed, writing his *Satiromastix* (1602) in reply to the *Poetaster,* exhibiting, however, no real malevolence. He worked very fast at times. "In the two years 1598 and 1599 Dekker wrote six plays single-handed and collaborated in at least eighteen." [9] In 1631 he said that he had been a priest in Apollo's temple many years and that his voice had decayed with age. He disappears from view after 1637.

The best of the plays undoubtedly Dekker's are *The*

[8] W. Macneile Dixon: "Chapman, Marston, Dekker," in *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 56-57.

[9] Bates: Introduction to Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and *The Fair Maid of the West,* xiv.

Shoemaker's Holiday (1597-9), *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus* (1596), and *The Honest Whore* (1604), to which last a second part was afterwards added. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is realistic in method and shows the life of the working class of London without the satire or the sordidness of Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair.* The story deals with the rise in fortune of Simon Eyre, an exuberantly jolly shoemaker with singular pride in his craft and his burgher dignity; and the main plot has to do with the love of young Lacy and the mayor's daughter. The virtue of the work is not in its plot but in its characters and the wholesome though boisterous fun. *Old Fortunatus* is Dekker's version of the story of the purse that never runs dry. Old Fortunatus robs the Grand Turk of his wonderful hat and dies miserably in the second act. His son, Andelocio, however, fails to profit by his experience and also comes to grief. The play has little regard for probability and not much for dramatic unity. Its merit lies in individual passages of poetry; the blank verse, though careless, is often brilliant. *The Honest Whore,* in the first part of which especially Dekker was assisted by Middleton, uses in its two parts the same characters and the same moral lesson. It tells the story of Bellafront, "who has fallen but who is regenerated by a sincere love and is aided in her determination to lead an honest life by her own father, who has repudiated her in her evil days but now in disguise befriends her." [10]

"Dekker is in no sense decadent, being the antithesis of Jonson in almost every way. Jonson was learned, classic and a theorizer, heavy and dignified; Dekker romantic, spontaneous, with no theories, a man of the streets who

[10] Schelling: *English Drama,* 113.

knew London well by night and who wrote when he was hungry whatever the publisher demanded."[11] His works exhibit "a certain careless geniality and wholesome sweetness of temper which make him, though not the most admirable, perhaps the most lovable of all our old playwrights."[12]

42. Beaumont and Fletcher.—The collaboration of Beaumont and Fletcher is the most famous in the history of dramatic literature. Both of these men were of the gentility and their plays reflect the temper that was more and more to dominate court life under the Stuarts. Fletcher, the elder of the two, was a clever and very fast worker, while Beaumont, so far as we can judge, was of decidedly more than average poetic and dramatic power. The two men together, however, left a mass of work the question of whose authorship has within recent years been a constant challenge to investigators.

Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) was the son of a Leicestershire jurge of common pleas. In 1597 he entered what is now Pembroke College, Oxford, but his father dying he left without a degree. In 1600 he became a member of the Inner Temple, but he soon abandoned law for poetry. His connection with Fletcher began about 1605, and in the same year, moved by the art of *Volpone,* he wrote some complimentary verses to his "dear friend Master Ben Jonson." About 1613 he was married. When he died he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

John Fletcher (1579-1625) was born at Rye, in Sussex, the son of Richard Fletcher, minister of Rye and later Bishop of London. He entered what is now Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1591; but after this date

[11] Neilson.

[12] Wendell.

not a great deal is known with definiteness about his life. After Beaumont's withdrawal from the literary partnership he worked in collaboration with Massinger, Jonson, and Shakespeare. He died of the plague, and he seems to have left a pleasant reputation for modesty, simple self-respect, and courtesy in his dealings with others.

Not less than fifty-two plays are commonly credited to Beaumont and Fletcher, aside from such a work as *Henry VIII,* in which Fletcher probably had some hand but which is regularly assigned to Shakespeare. "It is probable that, of the fifty-two plays which have commonly passed under the joint names, at least one belongs to Beaumont alone, and in some eight or nine others he co-operated with Fletcher, taking, usually, the leading part in the combination; that Fletcher was the sole author of about fifteen plays, and that there are some two-and-twenty, formerly attributed to the pair conjointly, in which we find Fletcher's work combined with that of other authors than Beaumont, besides five or six in which, apparently, neither Fletcher nor Beaumont had any appreciable share."[13] As for the plays which quite certainly belong either singly or jointly to the two men, criticism has concerned itself most largely with the matter of style. Those works known to be Fletcher's constantly exhibit loose metrical structure and weak line-endings. Such a play accordingly as *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* of markedly different quality, is regularly assigned to Beaumont. The younger dramatist also seems mainly to have been responsible for the plotting and construction of *Philaster, The Maid's Tragedy,* and *A King and No*

[13] G. C. Macaulay: "Beaumont and Fletcher," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 130-31.

King, three plays, it will be observed, most representative of the best that the men jointly left to the judgment of time.

In connection with the work of these two collaborators one hears a great deal not only of tragedies and comedies but also tragicomedies. This term Fletcher has himself defined in the preface to *The Faithful Shepherdess:* "A tragicomedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no comedy, which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life be questioned." Here, obviously, is something that points two ways, and in this very definition we may find the key to what is not only the chief ethical but also the chief artistic fault of the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, and one that gives their work a distinct place in the decadence of the drama. *A King and No King* (1611), for instance, is primarily concerned with the incestuous love of Arbaces, King of Iberea, for young Panthea, whom he believes to be his sister. All through the play this passion is the dominating motive, and more and more we see the hero deliberately moving forward to debasement. Toward the end, however, comes a sudden "twist." Arbaces learns that Panthea is not his sister and that his love for her may after all be lawful. One can not help concluding that something is wrong both logically and artistically. A bad situation is allowed to dominate four acts and then at the end a crumb is thrown to the moralist, when the conclusion is radically at variance with all that has gone before.

Aside from such a thing as this, however, the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher will be found to contain much

fine and beautiful fancy. *Philaster* (1609) is concerned with the love of Philaster, heir to the throne of Sicily, for the Princess Arethusa, and with his jealousy of his page Bellario, who turns out to be the beautiful young lady Euphrasia, a sort of literary descendant of Julia and Viola in Shakespeare. The minor characters, such as the faithful Dion and the witty Galatea, are well drawn, and the play as a whole is in the highest romantic vein of the two dramatists. *The Maid's Tragedy* (1610) is also an unusual production. The most noteworthy character is Evadne, a woman who in her low ambition will give herself up to a king she does not love and because of this connection ruin the life of the man who marries her. The conception is a daring one, and yet again we are led to question the ultimate truth of the characterization. *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608), credited to Fletcher alone, is a pastoral drama that contains some excellent passages, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607-8) is a keen satire on the poor plays of the period. *Bonduca* (1616) is founded upon ancient British history and presents a rather free combination of the stories of Boadicea and Caractacus.

Of these two collaborators "Fletcher was probably more a playwright, more a realist—at least from the standpoint of style,—more a wit; Beaumont was somewhat more interested in humanity, in poetry, and in humor. Fletcher showed a genius capable of anticipating or shaping the trend of English comedy in the later development of the serious drama." [14] Neither man, however, had the insight into nature which in such great measure distinguishes

[14] Alden: Introduction to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *A King and No King*, xlvi.

the work of Shakespeare. With Beaumont and Fletcher life seems ordered by the dictates of fancy rather than by the inevitable laws that govern the world. In spite of all faults, however, their work has an abiding fascination. It represents a decline from the moral and poetic and artistic height of Shakespeare; but it still belongs to the same great age, before the drama had fully fallen into decay.

43. Thomas Heywood.—Close to Dekker in the field of the drama of everyday life was Thomas Heywood (1572?-1641). Heywood was born in Lincolnshire and for some time at least was a resident student at Cambridge. In the foreword to the reader prefixed to *The English Traveller* he assures us that he had either written or had a hand in as many as two hundred and twenty plays. Of these somewhat more than thirty-five have been preserved. Heywood had little thought in his activity beyond the immediate demands of the stage, and it was in the drama of domestic life and mild adventure that he was most successful.

One can hardly fail to be impressed by the clearness of Heywood's main plots. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603) the theme is the old one of the husband who discovers the guilty love of his wife and some other man. In this case the husband is Frankford and the lover Wendoll. In the indecision of Frankford, as this is evident over a game of cards in which his wife and Wendoll are also participants, and in his return at night from a pretended journey to find himself betrayed, there is something faintly reminiscent of both *Hamlet* and *Othello*. The special point of interest in Heywood's play is that in a situation which according to conventional Elizabethan

methods demanded bloodshed, he adapted a solution more subtle and psychological. Frankford sends Wendoll away to his remorse, and to his wife (Anne) he denies the presence of himself and their children, sending her to a manor of his seven miles away. The result of all this is seen in the broken-hearted penitence of Anne in the last act. The main situation here Heywood attempted to handle in at least two other plays, *Edward IV* and *The English Traveller;* but in neither case did he exhibit the strength of sentiment or the directness of appeal evident in his masterpiece. In *The Fair Maid of the West* (1603, or earlier) the theme is again a simple one, that of the constancy of the affection of Besse Bridges, the fair maid, "a girl worth gold," for her lover Spencer. Closely connected with this matter of clearness, however, is a characteristic which most surely gives Heywood a place in the disintegration of the drama. This is the almost complete separation that he makes between his main plots and his subplots. Even in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* there is little real connection between the matter of Sir Charles Mountford and that of Frankford. Another of Heywood's weak points is the general lack of poetic distinction in his work. In no other man so far studied has there been such sameness of tone. His indefatigable energy, however, "enabled him to hold his own in dramatic species so diverse as the chronicle history, the romantic drama, and the comedy of manners. In addition, he achieved at least one masterpiece in domestic drama—a species in which his sincerity and directness, together with a pathetic power springing from a manly, candid, and generous nature, found their most congenial expression; while several other of his plays may,

at least in part, be regarded as having contributed to this artistic growth." [15]

44. John Webster.—Of the facts of the life of Webster we know practically nothing. His literary activity naturally falls into three periods: [16] the first, that of collaboration and apprenticeship (1602-7), in which he worked chiefly with Dekker but also with Middleton, Heywood, and others; the second, that of the two great tragedies (1610-14); and the third, "that of the tragicomedies and, probably, of *Appius and Virginia,* beginning about 1620, the probable date of *The Devil's Law-case,* and ending at a time unknown." We are naturally chiefly concerned with the second of these periods, the one that gave us *The White Devil* (otherwise known as *Vittoria Corombona*) (1611) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1617).

Both of these two powerful productions were acted before 1612. In the first "we have the story of the infatuation of the Duke of Brachiano for the beautiful Vittoria Corombona, his murder of her husband and his own wife at the instigation of Vittoria, their subsequent trial, flight and marriage, with the vengeance of the brother of the late Duchess on the guilty pair. The radiant beauty of Vittoria pervades the play and, conscious though we are at all times of her abandonment to passion and her calculating cunning when brought to her defense, we too feel the fascination that perverted her judges and the spectators at her trial." In *The Duchess of Malfi* we have the guilty love of the Duchess for her steward Antonio, and the vengeance of her brothers, Ferdinand, Duke of

[15] Ward: "Thomas Heywood," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 119.

[16] Vaughan: "Tourneur and Webster," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 190-91.

Calabria, and the Cardinal, with the assistance of their creature Bosola. The strength of the play rests most largely on the dignity with which the Duchess meets the horrors with which she is visited. Act IV, in which the Duchess is presented with the hand of the dead Antonio and subjected to the shrieking of madmen and the sight of executioners with coffin, cords, a bell, etc., has been criticized as extravagant; and it is a fact that Webster has suffered from the excessive praise of his admirers. When all discount is made, however, there seems ample warrant for the opinion of so many that on the basis of his two great tragedies he takes a place "second only to the master poet himself." His tragedy has little real pathos or humanitarianism; at the same time it exhibits tremendous power in its gloom and despair, and the occasional flashes that it throws into the souls of people are startling.[17]

Commonly remarked in connection with Webster is Cyril Tourneur, who is remembered especially for two plays, *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Atheist's Tragedy.* The titles speak for themselves. Tourneur has occasional flashes of poetry, but although he dealt in sensational matter he exhibited no special strength in either plotting or characterization. While his qualities suggest Webster, he never really rises to the power of this distinguished contemporary.

45. Thomas Middleton.—Thomas Middleton (1570?-1627) was born in London and evidently received a good early education, though we know nothing definite about

[17] See Rupert Brooke: *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama;* also article in *Sewanee Review* (January, 1919), Lockett: "Marston, Webster, and the Decline of the Elizabthan Drama."

his training before he entered Gray's Inn, probably in 1593. He was evidently well acquainted with lawyers, as his works abound with references to the legal profession; and he married the daughter of one of the clerks in chancery. He was much employed in the writing of masques and pageants, and in 1620 he became chronologer to the city of London, which position he held until his death. The most noteworthy event of his later years was his being summoned before the privy council in 1624, when it is possible that he was consigned to prison for a while because of his satirical play, *A Game at Chess.* This remarkable production grew out of the fruitless attempt to unite the royal houses of England and Spain, and appearing as it did at a time when the cause of Spain had become very unpopular, it was highly successful. The White and Black Kings are the sovereigns of England and Spain; the White Knight is Prince Charles, and the Black Knight is Gondomar, the intriguing Spanish ambassador. The play was ultimately suppressed on the protest of the Spanish representative.

When we turn from this interesting *tour de force* to Middleton's typical plays we meet many baffling questions. Not the least of these grows out of his collaboration with Dekker and other dramatists, but especially with William Rowley. This younger playwright is supposed to have been born about 1585 and to have died at some time after 1637. He was an actor in various companies, wrote several pamphlets, and, aside from work done in connection with others, seems wholly to have been responsible for the play *All's Lost by Lust* (1609). The best work of both Middleton and Rowley was that which developed from their co-operation, Rowley, so far as we can judge, proving

to be a serviceable collaborator and one with a good eye to theatrical situation.

Middleton's own work is frequently powerful, and his versification and characterization almost always exhibit something of the ease of the professional. Succeeding Chapman and Jonson in the comedy of manners, however, he catered constantly to a low public taste. The dates of his plays are uncertain. The most powerful one, *The Changeling* (1632?), was evidently written late in his life, as its main plot was based on a story in John Reynolds's *Triumph of God's Revenge against Murther* (pr. 1621). Beatrice, in order to marry the nobleman Alsemero, employs De Flores, servant of her father, to murder Alonzo de Piracquo, a suitor, only to find at last that De Flores demands not gold but her honor as the reward of his deed. Especially striking is the great dialogue at the end of Act III, and it is to Middleton's credit that his villain has invited comparison with Richard III and Iago. Much of the strength of the conception, however, was due to Rowley, who wrote both the beginning and the end of the play. Antonio, the changeling, who gives the title to the play, figures almost wholly in the subplot.

In *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1606) the spendthrift Witgood, in order to get the better of his uncle, the usurer Lucre, induces a courtesan to play the part of a rich widow, whom he deceives Lucre into thinking he is about to marry. Hoard, however, another usurer, hearing of the proposal, desires the prize for himself. All of this develops as Witgood would have it; Hoard relieves him by getting the rich widow while he himself is freed from his obligations. This play is typical of Middleton's

ability, and also of his ethics and his tendency to use stereotyped names. In *Women Beware Women* (1612) the center of interest is Livia, who by her cunning aids in the seduction of another woman, Bianca, and then turns to the abandoned husband for her own gratification. *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1612-13), in spite of some power to amuse, is one long medley of libertines, courtesans, and gossips. Middleton was a remarkable dramatic poet; but in subject and tone he is thoroughly decadent.

46. **Philip Massinger.**—Philip Massinger (1583-1640) was born at Salisbury, the son of Arthur Massinger, who was in the service of the Earls of Pembroke. He entered St. Alban Hall, Oxford, in 1602, but for some reason left in 1606 without taking his degree. Entering upon his career as a London playwright, he seems more than once to have had financial difficulties. He worked at times with other dramatists, especially with Fletcher, and the impression that he has left is that of a dignified and conscientious worker. In spite of the warning that he might have received from Middleton, he more than once introduced into his plays references to contemporary persons and politics.

The City Madam (1619) exhibits in its portrayal of contemporary life a union of the light movement and the realism of Middleton with the underlying seriousness of Jonson. The City Madam is Lady Frugal, who with her daughters is cured of her follies and ridiculous pretensions. *The Duke of Milan* (1620) is built partly upon the story of Herod and Mariamne, but its main theme is that of Iago and Othello. The language more than once reminds one of *Othello,* as when the Duke demands of the jealous Mariana "some proof" of his wife's guilt with

her husband. *The Maid of Honour* (1622) contains the remarkable character Camiola, who is in love with Bertoldo, the natural brother of the king, and who, when this man is captured in a rash enterprise which he has undertaken and his ransom fixed at an enormous price, sends to him the money by her unhappy lover, Adorni. *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625) received much suggestion from Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One.* While not necessarily the strongest, it has proved to be Massinger's most popular play, for the reason that it contains in Sir Giles Overreach a character that has been a great favorite with actors on the English stage. This avaricious extortioner not only has bonds on all the resources of his nephew, Frank Wellborn, but hopes by the marriage of his daughter Margaret to Lord Lovell and of Wellborn to Lady Allworth to win also the money of these great people. His plans are frustrated by the marriage of Lovell to Lady Allworth and by Margaret's elopement with her young lover Allworth, page to Lovell. Quite noticeable in the play is the Dickens method of characterization with excessive emphasis on some one quality, an example being Greedy. *The Roman Actor* (1626) tells the story of the passion which an actor by his performance in a play inspires in Domitia, the wife of Domitianus Caesar, and of the revenge which Domitianus takes upon him. It is a compliment to Massinger's technique that the device of a play within a play is here used without at any time impressing one as tedious or crude. In *The Great Duke of Florence* (1627) an idyllic charm surrounds the love of Giovanni and Lidia, and the whole work exhibits more tenderness and refinement than is usually shown by the dramatist. *Believe as You List* (1630) is

concerned with the misfortunes and sad state of Antiochus, King of Lower Asia, and is characterized by much that is dignified and strong. *The Guardian* (1633) is a fit representative of the decadent drama. The plot is unusually complicated; Durazzo, who has the title part, is despicably gross; and the whole tone of the play is on Massinger's lowest level.

This dramatist is noted for what has been called his mechanical morality—for his people without souls—though it may be contended that this was to some extent at least a protest against current decadence. In his plays there are few flashes of poetry. He substituted sensationalism for natural vigor and his themes are frequently improbable. When he attempts to draw ideal characters he fails to convince, and the qualities of his people seem to be external rather than a real part of them. One of the most exasperating of his faults is his deliberate moralizing. More and more as one studies his work he becomes convinced that he was, as Symons says, but "the late twilight of the long and splendid day of which Marlowe was the dawn."

In connection with Massinger as well as anywhere, however, it might be worth while briefly to note the changes that had taken place in the English drama since the days of Lyly and Marlowe. The drama was essentially a product of the Renaissance and lost its power with the decline of the forces that brought it into existence. As in any great movement in literature or life, symptoms of decay had begun to appear even while the form was at its height. Before 1600 several forms had died. First passed the miracle plays; with John Heywood went the interlude; and by 1600 the morality and the chronicle

play had also run their course. Then in turn there was emphasis on classical drama, the comedy of humors, the comedy of manners, romantic tragedy, and the domestic play. By 1620, then, or the time when Massinger began to write for the stage, every noteworthy tendency of the drama of the age had run its course. All that the men who came after this date could do was to work over old materials and adapt to their own purpose situations in the work of their predecessors. Accordingly they threw emphasis on workmanship, their characters became typical and stereotyped, and their plots more and more sensational. It is true that the moral tone that developed was such as largely to justify the opposition of the Puritans. It is also true, however, that the terms "decadence" and "disintegration" may easily be overworked. The spirit of the drama did not die under the Puritans—it only slept; and when plays again took the stage in the period of the Restoration, Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher were among the leading influences.

47. **John Ford.**—John Ford (1586-1640?) was a native of Islington in Devonshire. A man of his name was entered at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1601; but if this was the future dramatist his stay was short, for he became a member of the Middle Temple in November, 1602. Of Ford's further career we know only from the dedications prefixed to his plays and verses, and he disappears from view after 1639. "He seems to have been a man of a somewhat melancholy temperament, independent in his attitude toward the public taste, and capable of espousing unpopular causes."[18]

"Ford's dramas show a tendency to deal with illicit

[18] Neilson: *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists,* 874.

and even incestuous love in a peculiar mood, the dramatist frequently creating strong sympathy for the tempted and the sinner, and leaving the question of guilt open. This, along with his fondness for the theatrical and the sensational, has led to his being frequently chosen as an example of the decadence of the drama. The charge is not to be denied; but in spite of these defects, he shows a power of insight into suffering and perplexity, and writes at times poetry of such beauty and tenderness, that he remains a figure of much intrinsic interest as well as historical importance." [19]

The chronology of Ford's plays is a much disputed question. In general, however, those here remarked appeared within the limits 1627-1633. After various non-dramatic work and effort in collaboration, the playwright passed to the composition of *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628), his first independent drama. The theme is the simple one of the melancholy and longing of Prince Palador of Cyprus for the lost Eroclea. The love-madness of Palador, however, doubtless received suggestion from Hamlet; the page Parthenophil is merely a weaker version of Viola; and the play as a whole by no means rises above mediocrity. Very different, however, are the next three plays, Ford's powerful and characteristic but decadent tragedies. In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1627) Annabella, daughter of Florio, is sought in marriage by the Roman Grimaldi, the nobleman Soranzo, and the fool Bergetto; but she leaves all three to bestow her love in secret upon her brother Giovanni. Her sin is revealed when she finally marries Soranzo. United with this main plot is the minor one of Richardetto, a physician whose

[19] Neilson, *ibid.*

wife has been betrayed by Soranzo. A characteristic scene is that in which Giovanni, having cut out Annabella's heart, presents it on a rapier to the guests at Soranzo's banquet. Most critics agree that *The Broken Heart* (1629) is Ford's strongest play. There are in fact four broken hearts in the drama, those of Orgilus, Penthea, Ithocles, and Calantha, for when Ithocles, brother of Penthea, has wrecked the love of Orgilus and his sister, Orgilus proceeds to take revenge by making that between Ithocles and Calantha impossible. There are some strong scenes in the play; especially tense is that of the revels (V, 2) in which Calantha hears successively of the death of Penthea, Ithocles, and her father the king without emotion. In *Love's Sacrifice* (1630) the central figure is Bianca, Duchess of Pavia, who at first repulses Fernando, the friend of her husband who makes love to her, but who later in her overmastering passion for him defies fate itself and without ever losing her self-possession dies by the sword of Caraffa, her weak and impulsive husband. The play is a compound of genius and coarseness and faulty construction that is almost without a parallel. Of somewhat different quality is *Perkin Warbeck* (1633), which seems to be a belated chronicle but which is really more of a problem play. Ford's versification and his poetic effects are of a very high order; and his lines frequently impress one by their musical quality. He was not firm in construction, however, and for cold-blooded villainy and absolute lack of restraint he is not equaled by any one that we have so far met in the history of the English Drama.

48. James Shirley.—James Shirley (1596-1666) was born in London and received his early education at the

Merchant Taylors' School. He afterwards went to St. John's College, Oxford, but transferred to Catherine Hall, Cambridge, where he took his degrees. Having taken orders about 1619, he obtained a living at St. Albans in Hertfordshire, but becoming converted to the Church of Rome resigned this, and in 1623 became master of a grammar school. His first play was licensed in 1625 and probably very soon after this date he went to London as a professional dramatist. He received some noteworthy commissions, especially for the composition of masques, and was generally under the patronage of the court. He engaged in the Civil War on the royalist side, but after the battle of Marston Moor went back to London and to his old profession of teaching. After the Restoration some of his plays were revived, but he wrote no more. He and his second wife died of shock in connection with the great London fire.

Shirley wrote altogether nearly forty plays, and because of the care that he took with his work these are unusually well preserved. In fact, by the time he wrote, because of the published work of Jonson, Shakespeare, and others, it was beginning to be understood that a dramatist might expect to be read as well as see his plays on the stage. Shirley had an excellent sense of humor and most of his plays are comedies, though two of his tragedies represent his strongest work. Because of his associations, in his comedies he emphasized society in the narrower sense. *Hyde Park* (1632) is a realistic play of the manners of the time, most noteworthy for the atmosphere of the horse-racing of the day that it reproduces. Venture's song in praise of the famous horses of the time comes back to us now with something of the pathos of Villon's ballads.

Even more popular was *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), the theme of which is the attempt of Sir Thomas, the husband of Lady Bornwell, to cure his wife of her follies by pretending to adopt her own course of living. The play, however, is marred by an indecent tone, and even more objectionable was *The Gamester.* In better taste was the great masque, *The Triumph of Peace,* brought out in 1634 before the King and Queen at an expense, we are told, of £21,000. Passing to the tragedies we find in *The Traitor* (1631) one of Shirley's most powerful productions. The play sets forth in strong fashion some of the passions and evil ambitions that afflicted Florence at the time of the Renaissance, and the first and fourth acts are especially good in technique. In spite of all this, however, there is abundant ground for the statement that the drama is simply "another example of the legerdemain of a clever playwright in converting old and trite material into new effects." [20] The Duke's kissing of the corpse of his victim (Act V) is only one of several decadent features. The story of *The Cardinal* (1641) is as follows: "The Cardinal has induced the king to sanction the marriage of a beautiful young widow, the Duchess Rosaura, to the Cardinal's nephew, the proud and fiery Columbo. Rosaura's heart, however, belongs to the Count d'Alvarez; and Columbo having been sent off in command of a military expedition, she entreats him by letter to release her from her engagement. He feigns assent, though at heart stung to fury by her breach of promise; and on returning victorious from the wars kills his innocent rival and casts his corpse before Rosaura's feet. Under the influence of the Cardinal, the king forgives Columbo for this bloody

[20] Schelling: *English Drama,* 211.

deed, and Rosaura resolves on private vengeance, for which a captain called Hernando, who is smarting under an insult offered him by Columbo, presents himself as a willing agent. In the fifth act the plot, and with it the character of the Cardinal, take a new turn. Columbo having been killed by Hernando, the Cardinal resolves on a double crime—vengeance for his nephew's death is to follow the dishonor of the Duchess whom he believes to be its authoress. Rosaura had feigned madness in order to conceal her own intentions of revenge; but the Cardinal pursues his hideous design, which is only frustrated by Hernando's sword. The king appears on the scene; and the Cardinal, believing himself on the point of death from his wounds, pretends to have poisoned the Duchess, and feigning repentance offers an antidote of which he drinks part. But the antidote itself proves to be poison; and as his wounds were not really mortal he has thus killed himself as well as his victim."[21] "In the intensity of its interest, the vitality of its characters, the splendor of its poetry and the impressive fusion of the great tragic motives of ambition, love, and revenge, [*The Cardinal*] brings to a fitting close the tremendous file of English tragedy."[22]

49. The Puritan Attack on the Stage.—It was not so much in the work of the dramatists that have been mentioned as in that of lesser men of the period, such as Cartwright, Mayne, and Glapthorne, that the real decadence of the drama was to be seen. Long before the day of these men, however, the Puritan opposition to the stage had been gathering force.[23] A full consideration

[21] Ward: *English Dramatic Literature*, III, 98-99.

[22] Neilson: "Ford and Shirley," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, 226.

[23] See Wilson: "The Puritan Attack upon the Stage," *C. H. E. L.*, VI, to whom the section is much indebted.

of this important subject would take us into a long discussion of the ultimate relation of art and ethics, and historically perhaps even to the relation of Christianity to the whole institution of the Roman stage. Even in the fourteenth century opposition to the stage was not unknown; it is in fact hardly too much to say that English dramatic criticism began with a sermon, for in a volume of homilies written near the end of this century has been found an interesting Sermon against Miracle-Plays,[24] which took the position that miracle plays "reverse" Christ in making into a play "that that he took into most earnest," and that since they were of "the lust of the flesh and mirth of the body" no one could effectually hear them and the voice of Christ at once. "The frequent religious changes in the middle years of the sixteenth century made it dangerous for the government to allow the theatre to be used for partisan purposes, and, accordingly, one regulation after another was passed to prevent the handling of matters of religion or state upon the stage, culminating in the proclamation of May 16, 1559, whereby Elizabeth provided for the strict licensing of the drama." [25] To the Puritan point of view the stage of Shakespeare was both immoral and unholy. Moreover it sometimes encroached upon the province of the pulpit. "The actor's practice, derived from mediaeval tradition, of performing on Sundays and holy days did not tend to soften the exasperation of the godly, who listened with

[24] Full text is given in W. C. Hazlitt's *The English Drama and Stage.*

[25] For detailed study of the office of Master of the Revels and the censorship of the period, see Gildersleeve: *Government Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama.* For study of the Puritan point of view, see Thompson: *The Puritans and the Stage.*

indignant horror to the sound of the player's trumpet passing the open door of the church and mingling defiantly with the peal of the bells." Finally, the actor was bound by the very necessities of his craft to infringe upon the divine law (Deuteronomy, xxii, 5) which forbade one sex to wear the costume of the other; and the point was a particularly telling one in an age when it was customary for boys to act female parts. For a long time the opposition had been a smoldering fire, but about 1576 it flamed forth with violence. It made itself felt through preachers, pamphlets, and through the civic authorities. Although the Queen and her courtiers became powerful champions, to the civic and commercial mind the player was a superfluous person, a very "caterpillar of the commonwealth." Public calamities were interpreted as the judgment of God against those who permitted stage-plays; accordingly when the plague raged in 1572 actors were expelled from the city, and when on the second Sunday in January, 1583, a scaffold at a bear-baiting just outside the city collapsed, the Puritan argument against all vain amusements was used with tremendous effect. "The erection of the Theater and the Curtain in 1576 and 1577 acted at once upon the already highly charged atmosphere and called down a veritable hail of sermons and tracts." In 1583, however, appeared a book that was destined to surpass everything that had preceded it as a contribution to the discussion. This was *The Anatomie of Abuses*, by Philip Stubbes, foremost of Puritan social reformers.[26] In the section devoted to "Stage-Playes and Enterludes"

[26] Note that this book and Harrison's *Description of England* are the chief contemporary sources of information upon the social and economic conditions in the period of Shakespeare.

Stubbes emphasized the infernal origin of plays, backed up his words with citations to Scripture, and asserted with earnestness that to visit the theatre was "to worship devils and betray Christ Jesus." His book was exceedingly popular, passing through four editions in three years. The controversy raged, once with a prolonged duel between two Oxford scholars, until in 1612 Thomas Heywood undertook to defend his profession with *An Apology for Actors.* He was answered by one J. G. (John Greene?); but in 1625, the year of Charles I's accession, an anonymous Puritan opened a new and ominous line of attack with *A Short Treatise against Stage-Playes.* This author, evidently thinking that any appeal to the Crown was hopeless, and that the city had given up the task in despair, addressed himself to Parliament, and in a brief and businesslike manner enumerated the chief arguments against the drama. The twenty-eight pages of this tract contain in essence the whole of William Prynne's formidable *Histriomastix* (1632-3). One of the most interesting things about this later work, which really exhausted its subject, is its form, there being a strange division into acts and scenes with an occasional chorus.[27] In 1629 a company of French actresses, at the invitation of Queen Henrietta Maria, had attempted to give a performance at Blackfriars, but had been hooted and hissed from the stage. Prynne referred to this incident with glee, and in the table of contents at the end of his book he inserted some remarks which were considered highly offensive and personally insulting to the Queen. He was "summoned before the High-Commission Court and Star-Chamber, which condemned his book to be burnt, and the author to

[27] For a full analysis of the work, see Ward, III, 240-45.

be expelled from the Bar and his Inn, to be deprived of his Oxford degree, to stand in the pillory, to lose both his ears, to pay a fine of £5,000 to the king and to be perpetually imprisoned." [28] More and more, however, with the approach of civil war the Puritan cause gained force until on September 2, 1642, there went forth the edict for the total suppression of stage-plays. This was not wholly effective at first and had to be followed up by other and more stringent acts; nor, as has been suggested, was the spirit of the drama really killed. For eighteen years, however, the theatre as an institution was officially closed, and the love of Viola and the humor of Falstaff became a tradition and a name.

[28] Ward, III, 243-44.

CHAPTER VII

DRYDEN AND HIS AGE

50. The Era of the Restoration. Heroic Drama.— When at the accession of Charles II the English theatre was formally opened again it witnessed a new age and experienced new impulses. Unfortunately, and in spite of much noble effort, its dominant tone and tendencies were such as to incur as never before the censure of the moralist. The characteristics of the period and its differences from that of Elizabeth and James I, have been thus ably summed up by one of the ablest students of the epoch:[1] "In the mechanism of stage presentation the Restoration theatre is distinct from its Elizabethan predecessor. . . . It is enough to recognize that the general adoption of movable scenery and the regular employment of women as actors are noteworthy departures from the habitual usages of the Elizabethan stage. . . . Elizabethan drama is spontaneous and original, Restoration drama artificial and imitative. Elizabethan comedy at its height is creative; Restoration comedy at its best is imitative of the fashions and foibles of the *beau monde*. The one notably interprets character, the other chiefly produces characteristics. . . . Again, the Elizabethans were impatient of artificial restraints. Shakespeare violated the dramatic unities; Dryden advocated them even if his practice did not always

[1] Nettleton: *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, 3-9.

square with his precept. . . . No less marked is the contrast between Elizabethan and Restoration drama in breadth of scope. The former is national, the latter local. Shakespeare sounds the whole gamut of life; but the comic dramatists of the Restoration repeat the notes of fashion, frivolity, and vice. Comedy in Dryden's age represents primarily only the life of the court. Hero and heroine know the world, but the world is London. Shakespeare portrays all the passions; Restoration comedy constantly reverts to the single passion of unlawful love." Naturally in Dryden's day Shakespeare was rewritten to suit an age which found Elizabethan genius rude and unrefined. "Beyond the Restoration horizon lay the forest of Arden and the seacoast of Bohemia. . . . But perhaps the most significant contrast between Elizabethan and Restoration drama is in moral tone. Restoration comedy differs fundamentally from Elizabethan in deliberately enlisting the sympathy of the audience in favor of the wrong-doer. The earlier drama, with all its sins, inclines to award dramatic justice, however belated, to the virtuous. Restoration comedy, disdaining fifth-act compromise, often lets vice rampant in the earlier acts remain vice triumphant. It laughs not merely indulgently at vice, but harshly at the semblance of virtue. Cavalier contempt went so far as to regard the show of virtue as proof of hypocrisy. Cynicism replaced religion. Piety was considered bourgeois." It is easy to exaggerate such elements and characteristics as affecting the general population of London; but as affecting the theatre there can be no doubt. "As the number of playhouses was, for a time, limited to two, the people who attended the theatre could not have comprised any large part of the comfortably situated London popula-

tion. The King and his court generally formed a considerable portion of one audience. Then, there would be a number of that parasitic host that always follows in the wake of royalty. These elements account, in large measure, for the dissolute and indescribably low moral tone of Restoration drama as a whole."[2]

For a long time it was customary to attribute not only such characteristics as have been remarked but also the whole basis of Restoration drama to French influence. More recent scholarship, however, has shown that this influence has been considerably exaggerated, and that the drama of the period followed the main stream of English tradition—from Shakespeare and Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher. Of special importance was the realism of Jonson. Nevertheless it is true that the French did a great deal to affect the nature of English drama and dramatic theory. With prime emphasis on the classical, Corneille influenced tragedy, and Molière, frequently greatly coarsened, influenced comedy, while the prose fiction of France is also to be considered. The French code of rules, with its adherence to the three unities, tended more and more to cultivate the mechanical, and the new comedy of manners especially owed much to the Continent. While it is true then that in any case the Restoration would have produced a comedy not very different from that which appeared, the development was assisted by the comedy of manners of Molière; and the reason why this foreign type, not in its technical features, but in its animating spirit, was ultimately more influential than Jonson's comedy of humors or Fletcher's court comedy, is that it was "more congenial to a society that was less interested in satirical

[2] Wright: *The Political Play of the Restoration,* 174.

portraiture or romantic exaggeration than it was in its own mundane existence."[3]

Different forces affecting the stage worked together to produce a new kind of play, the Heroic Drama. As sentiment became more and more detached and impersonal, it also became chivalric and artificial; and it was affected by the romances of La Calprenède and Madeleine de Scudery. It is to be noted, however, that there was heroic romance on the stage even before the Restoration, and the ultimate origins seem to be found in the sometimes exaggerated romanticism of Fletcher. "Love is the main theme of all heroic plays, and the sole theme of many. All major and most minor characters are lovers. The hero is always a warrior, but the martial element is made so unimportant that nought but the lover remains."[4] Along with love went honor, and as friendship is a form of honor, the heroic play was sometimes concerned with the conflict between love and friendship. "A second form concerns four people,—a male and a female villain, and a hero and his mistress. The male villain loves the mistress and the female villain the hero; so their alliance is founded on selfish interest. In the end both villains are killed by opportune interference from the outside. . . . A third manifestation of the same idea is where the female villain becomes infatuated with the hero, who is of course already a lover. She offers him the choice of reciprocating her passion or death. She meets her fate, likewise, through external influence that also saves him from the embarrassment of a decision; or she may be so successful as to bring about the death of his love, and possibly that of him-

[3] Miles: *The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy*, 220-21.

[4] Chase: *The English Heroic Play*, 65.

self, before her own."[5] The heroic drama proper employed few characters, admitted no comic element, and excluded all classes of society except the nobility. It cultivated rhyme, which Dryden defended as "as natural and more effectual than blank verse" and as "the only way of writing in verse" that Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher had left to him and his contemporaries. For a while the form was very popular, especially in Dryden's earlier years of work; but its extravagances at length invited ridicule and burlesque and led to its passing from the stage.[6]

51. William D'Avenant.—It is not to be supposed, however, that the spirit of the drama wholly died in 1642 and suddenly came to life again in 1660. In the earlier years of the interval at least professional performances of plays were sometimes attempted, and regularly puppet-shows and short comic pieces known as drolls were given without interruption. The theatre as an institution, however, was formally closed. It was really through printed works rather than those presented on the stage that the great Elizabethan tradition was passed on, various plays of Shirley and minor dramatists seeing publication under the Commonwealth. The real link between the old and the new was Sir William D'Avenant (1606-1668).[7] This

[5] *Ibid.*, 35.

[6] Note C. G. Child: "The Rise of the Heroic Play" (*Modern Language Notes*, June, 1904, 166-73); and J. W. Tupper: "The Relation of the Heroic Play to the Romances of Beaumont and Fletcher" (*Publications of Modern Language Association of America*, 1905, Vol. XX, 584-621).

[7] Along with him may be remarked Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683), who wrote several tragicomedies and who also was a link between Elizabethan and Restoration drama.

author, a representative Cavalier, had succeeded Jonson as poet laureate, and his activities under the Commonwealth had brought upon him imprisonment and even the fear of death. In 1649 appeared in print *Love and Honour,* "his first noteworthy step towards the heroic play," [8] and in 1656 was produced *The Siege of Rhodes,* usually regarded as the first English opera and sometimes as the first heroic play. Its lines contained from two to five poetic feet, and with its varied rhyme it was intended partly for song and partly for recitative. Obviously it owed much to the masque, and with its emphasis on scenery it was destined to mark an epoch in the history of the drama, while Dryden and others who cultivated the heroic drama acknowledged their indebtedness to it. In other works D'Avenant cultivated the new form of "dramatic opera," and his later pieces include various adaptations from Shakespeare.

52. John Dryden.—Dryden (1631-1700) was eminently representative of his age as dramatist, satirist, and critic. A man of epic mold, had he written less, and not so much for his own generation, he might have produced a final masterpiece, though, as it is, in the field of English political satire in verse he has no rival. Connected by marriage with an aristocratic family, he wrote rapidly and he wrote much, in the desire to make his pen yield him as large a return as possible. With no strong predilection or talent for the drama, by sheer force of ability he became, on the basis of the twenty-eight plays that he wrote or adapted, the foremost playwright of his day. His work for the stage falls into three periods. "In the first

[8] J. W. Tupper: Introduction to *Love and Honour* and *The Siege of Rhodes,* xii.

period, from 1663 to 1670, after some dramatic experiments, Dryden found in the heroic play a congenial type of drama, and in 1670 won his greatest popular triumph with *The Conquest of Granada.* In the second period, from 1672 to 1678, [he] saw his favorite productions assailed with bitter ridicule in *The Rehearsal,* and his own supremacy in them shaken by the success of Elkanah Settle. an adversary whom he could not but despise. In the third period [he] was no longer primarily a dramatist; though he produced some plays, such as *The Spanish Friar* and *Don Sebastian,* equal in literary merit to those of his earlier life, he made no progress either in style or dramatic theory. In 1693, on the failure of *Love Triumphant,* he abandoned the stage in disgust."[9] These periods call for consideration in somewhat greater detail.

In his first play, *The Wild Gallant* (1663), Dryden "attempted to combine a complicated 'Spanish plot' with scenes from Jonson's comedy of humours, and wit combats suggested by Fletcher." He was thus a follower of English tradition, and he wrote in prose. *The Rival Ladies* (1664) was also a comedy with an involved Spanish plot, but in verse and filled with a romantic spirit. *The Indian Queen* (1664), on which the dramatist assisted his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard (1626-1698), was influenced to some extent by Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery (1621-1679), to whom in the dedication of *The Rival Ladies* Dryden gave the credit of an earlier adoption of the new method of "writing scenes in verse," and who in 1664 produced *The History of Henry the Fifth* and in 1665 *Mustapha, the Son of Solyman the Magnificent.*

[9] Noyes: *Selected Dramas of John Dryden* (Introduction, xix), to which source much of the following discussion of Dryden is indebted.

Encouraged by the success of his collaboration with Howard, Dryden now wrote alone *The Indian Emperor* (1665). This play definitely established his position. It cultivated the heroic couplet, used the love and honor conflict, and placed such heroic figures as Montezuma and Cortez amid scenes of stirring incident. In 1665 came the plague, and the London theatres were closed until late in 1666. Retired for a while in the country, however, Dryden wrote his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie,* though this did not appear in print until 1668. Then appeared five plays or adaptations, among them being *Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr* (1668), the story of St. Catherine, a princess who is forced to argue for her Christian faith and who is pursued by the tyrant Maximin. In 1670 appeared *The Conquest of Granada* (in two parts and ten acts), a brilliant success and the best example of the heroic drama by the foremost exponent of the form. Almanzor, the hero, is led through a complicated maze of "incredible love and impossible valor;" yet such is the genuine vigor of the action that the production is saved from becoming a mere medley of bombast and noise. *The Conquest of Granada* was so unusually successful as to lead Dryden into something of the extravagance of his own hero, for in the epilogue to the second part of the work he grew egotistic over the progress he had made in dramatic art beyond Jonson and other Elizabethans. At any rate the first period of his dramatic activity had closed triumphantly.

The second period of Dryden's writing for the stage was featured by some of his best work, but also by doubt and confusion. For some years George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, assisted by Martin Clifford and Thomas Sprat, seems to have been at work on a burlesque on the

heroic drama first popularized by D'Avenant. The famous play, *The Rehearsal,* enriched by a long accumulation of parody and ridicule of contemporary dramatists, was finally produced in 1671, and Dryden as Bayes received the post of poet laureate made vacant by the death of D'Avenant in the meantime. While he thus became the chief target of the jest, he had too much good sense and too clear an appreciation of clever work to attempt a reply. Instead, the next year, 1672, influenced largely by the French comedy of manners, with *Marriage-à-la-Mode* he made an excursion into the realms of high comedy. About this time, however, his career was marred by a coarse quarrel with Elkanah Settle (1648-1724), a young dramatist who in 1666 had impressed the public with a ranting tragedy, *Cambyses,* and whose *The Empress of Morocco*[10] received a sumptuous court production in 1673. In 1675 appeared *Aureng-Zebe,* his last rhymed tragedy. For this Racine was the model. The plot is simple, the characters plausible, the dialogue easily understood, and the general tone more restrained than was customary in the heroic drama. Dryden in fact was changing his methods of work; "accepting more fully than before the rules of the French drama, he attempted to combine with them a drawing of character modeled on that of the Elizabethan dramatists."[11] In *All for Love* (1678) he deliberately turned to blank verse, took a Shakespearean theme, that of *Antony and Cleopatra,* and while he was

[10] "*The Empress of Morocco* has no literary pretensions; it is important in literary history for having so moved the wrath of Dryden, and in the history of the drama for having been issued with plates which contribute greatly to our knowledge of the internal arrangements of the Restoration Theater."—Garnett, 118.

[11] Noyes, xliii.

perfectly free in his handling of the story and wrote a really great play, he frankly imitated the master dramatist in style and in the study of character. Compared with *Antony and Cleopatra,* however, this, Dryden's best loved play, shows classical restraint. Each act is composed in a single scene, the time of action falls within a single day, and the place of action changes but once. Like the heroic plays moreover, the drama is "narrative rather than dramatic in its structure. The action, despite its confinement within a single day, is, as Aristotle would call it, 'episodic;' like that of *The Conquest of Granada,* it deals with successive adventures in the life of one man, not with one central crisis. . . . Despite its faults [however], *All for Love* is the happiest result of the French influence on English tragedy. However conventional the emotion expressed in it may be, this tragedy remains alive to-day by virtue of its vigorous, dignified, and truly poetic style, and of sustained interest of the action." [12]

The line between Dryden's second and third periods as a dramatist is not to be indicated with absolute definiteness, though *All for Love* is commonly regarded as marking the passing of rhymed drama. In 1678 he collaborated with Nathaniel Lee on a classical tragedy, *Oedipus,* and the next year he remodeled *Troilus and Cressida* on classical lines. To this latter production he prefixed his *Preface on the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy.* He cited with approval Thomas Rymer's *The Tragedies of the Last Age, Consider'd and Examin'd by the Practice of the Ancients, and by the Common Sense of all Ages* (1678), and de-

[12] Noyes, xlix. For further discussion of the play, including especially a list of passages imitated from Shakespeare, see Strunk's Introduction to *All for Love* and *The Spanish Fryar,* xliii-xlv.

nounced tragicomedy. As usual he was not very consistent, for it was not long before he himself wrote another tragicomedy, *The Spanish Friar, or The Double Discovery* (1681), in which he exhibits more than his usual comic force. About this time his work was very varied. He was writing operas as well as plays, was busy with his great political satires, and since 1670 he had been historiographer royal and poet laureate. When in his later years, after the accession of William of Orange, reverses came to him and he again turned to the stage, he worked only with the hope of immediate financial return. *Don Sebastian* (1690) has sometimes been overpraised as a masterpiece, though the production shows general vigor and has at least one strong and animated scene (IV, 3). *Love Triumphant* (1693), a tragicomedy, failed to exhibit harmony of tone and was not a success.

Taine, the eminent historian of English literature, has defined Dryden as a great transitional figure whose dramatic work was after all chiefly of value in giving vigor and point to his style for his great satires. "He strayed on the boundaries of two dramas, and suited neither the half-barbarous men of art nor the well-polished men of the court." The English race, "diverging from its own age, and fettered at the outset by foreign imitation, formed its classical literature but slowly; it will only attain it after transforming its religious and political condition: the age will be that of English reason. Dryden inaugurates it by his other works, and the writers who appear in the reign of Queen Anne will give it its completion, its authority, and its splendor." All this is true; yet even in the narrower limits of the drama Dryden has to his credit distinct achievement. "Of tragedy [he] may be re-

garded as the greatest writer during the Restoration period. Though still an imitator he was here working in a field far more congenial to his own talents [than comedy], and by the genuine merits of his production he exercised a strong influence on the future of tragedy in England. He first developed, to such perfection as it was capable of attaining, a new species of drama, the melodramatic heroic play. He later succeeded in uniting the French technique with the English dramatic tradition, and thus gave powerful aid in starting English tragedy in the direction that it was destined to follow for almost a century after his death, though it never again attained the height to which he raised it in his *All for Love*. To his achievements in both these types of tragedy he gave distinction by his supreme command of English verse. Always buoyant, varied, melodious, and vigorous, Dryden's style progresses from bombast in his earlier work to sustained dignity in his later. Those who do not know *The Conquest of Granada* and *All for Love* can not fully understand the spell that Dryden's name cast over the century that followed him." [13]

53. Etherege, Wycherley, and Others.—While the heroic drama was killing its victims and winning its conquests on the stage, the characteristic expression of the drama of the reign of Charles II was more and more proving to be in comedy. The comedy of humours and that of manners had indeed been known by the Elizabethans; but now developed a new species of "society comedy," largely influenced by the French but also finding some origin in Shirley. It was artificial, and, as it developed, it became increasingly corrupt in tone. At the same time, it has

[13] Noyes, lv.

the interest of reflecting an important period in the life of the English people, at least of the English court. Lest at any time the picture seem to be too darkly drawn, let us keep in mind that this was also the age that first read *Paradise Lost* and *Pilgrim's Progress* and that was nourished on *The Whole Duty of Man.* The Puritan element was no longer ascendant; but it was still present to give solidity and poise to the national character.

The real founder of the new school of "society comedy" was Sir George Etherege (1634-1691), a man of fashion who was "knighted for marrying a fortune," and who for some years served as envoy to Ratisbon until he was deprived of his post by William III. His representative play is *The Man of Mode* (1676), containing the character Sir Fopling Flutter. Etherege was deficient in plot and superficial in method; at the same time his work has much graceful dialogue, and to him must be given the credit for beginning that style of writing which was soon to be so highly developed by Congreve and which was later carried to perfection by Sheridan.

Of stronger quality was William Wycherley (1640-1715), the son of a Shropshire gentleman of good estate. Wycherley's father, disliking the schools under the Commonwealth, sent the youth to France, where he became a Roman Catholic. On his return, however, the young man recanted, was entered at the Temple, and for some years was a part of the gay life of the town. This was the period of his comedies, *Love in a Wood* (1671), *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1671), *The Country Wife* (1673), and *The Plain Dealer* (1674). There can be no doubt about the fact that Wycherley exhibited power far beyond that of most comic dramatists of the Restoration.

At the same time "in his hands comedy is grasped with brutal but undeniable force, and dragged relentlessly through the mire of animalism."[14] In his methods he debased and corrupted Molière. *The Country Wife* details the life of a woman who comes from the country to the fashionable world of London, without sympathy either for the degraded wife or the dishonored husband. Horner, the villain who brazenly pursues his illicit amours, is really made the hero of the play. *The Country Wife* is not without its vein of satire, and even more on the basis of *The Plain Dealer* might a case be made out for Wycherley as a moralist castigating the vices of his age. From this point of view, however, he was hardly regarded in his own day, and all the more he made himself liable for the stern rebuke he was so soon to receive.

Of similar tone, but with indebtedness more to Jonson than Molière, was Thomas Shadwell (1642?-1692), a Whig who succeeded Dryden as poet laureate and who for even a number of years before had been a chief object of Dryden's satire. His representative comedy is *Epsom Wells* (1672), a lively picture of the life of the day in which one finds not one but two deceived husbands. A score of other productions for the stage bear witness to Shadwell's industry and include also some adaptation from Shakespeare.

Other dramatists of the period generally reflected the prevailing tone, though of course with differences. Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours* (1663) was an adaptation from a Spanish play. Edward Ravencroft did much working over of Molière and the Elizabethans and wrote *London Cuckolds* (1682). John Crowne attempted

[14] Nettleton, 77.

tragedy and the heroic drama as well as comedy, but is best remembered for his creation of the chief character in *Sir Courtly Nice, or It cannot Be* (1685). Sir Charles Sedley, of the circle of the King, is strongest in *Bellamira, or The Mistress* (1687), founded on the *Eunuchus* of Terence and giving a coarsely realistic picture of the pleasure of the day. Mrs. Aphra Behn has to her credit the humanitarian story *Oroonoko*. In her writing for the stage, however, she plundered right and left and catered to the coarsest taste of the time, being represented by *The Amorous Prince* (1671) and *The City Heiress* (1682).

54. **Nathaniel Lee.**—We turn now to tragedy. Very different from the writers just mentioned, but contemporary with them and with Dryden in his second period, was Nathaniel Lee (1653-1692). The son of a clergyman, Lee attended Cambridge, where he was graduated B. A. in 1668, and later went to London, where he became an actor. He was a good reader, but he did not achieve success on the stage; and his later years were sad, as he was afflicted with insanity and is said to have died in the snow while on his way home from a tavern. His occasional collaboration with Dryden has been remarked; but his works also include *Nero, Emperour of Rome* (1675), *Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow* (1676), *Gloriana, or The Court of Augustus Caesar* (1676), *The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great* (1677), *Mithridates* (1678), *Theodosius, or The Force of Love* (1680), *Caesar Borgia* (1680), *Lucius Junius Brutus, Father of his Country* (1681), *The Princess of Cleve* (1681), *Constantine the Great* (1684), and *The Massacre of Paris* (1690, but written some years before). These titles give some idea, but only a very faint idea, of Lee's preference for

semi-historical and grandiloquent themes and settings. In his own day and to another generation he was known primarily for his rant. In *The Rival Queens* the main theme is the jealousy between Roxana, Alexander's first wife, and his second wife, Statira. *Mithridates,* in its introduction of the ghosts of the sons of Mithridates, suggests the Elizabethans; and *Caesar Borgia* strangles the heroine on the stage. With all of his extravagance, however—his glare and gewgaw and noise—Lee very frequently exhibits the mark of a genuine poet. He knew not the springs of simple emotion; but he could often thrill his audience even if he could not touch its heart, and there was sufficient vitality in some of his plays to keep them on the stage until the middle of the next century. Betterton appeared in his work to advantage, and years afterwards Charles Kemble and Kean revived *The Rival Queens* with success.

Along with Lee may be mentioned John Banks, a writer whose work was more or less melodramatic and who constantly suggests the influence of Lee. *The Rival Kings* (1677) owes much to *The Rival Queens,* and a representative later production, *Cyrus the Great, or The Tragedy of Love* (1696), is full of rant and sensationalism. With other such plays, however, as *The Unhappy Favorite* (1682), dealing with the Earl of Essex, and *The Albion Queens* (1704), dealing with Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, Banks entered the field of English history and won a popular success.

55. **Thomas Otway.**—Thomas Otway (1652-1685) was of more truly tragic quality than Lee and after Dryden the foremost figure in the drama of the age. There are in fact those who insist that his strongest tragedies are not

surpassed by anything in their period. It is hardly too much to say that Otway was an Elizabethan born out of his time. Partly educated at Winchester and at Christ Church, Oxford, he appeared on the stage without success; early sought the notice of Rochester, with whom he soon quarreled; made some translations and adaptations from the French, and plundered Shakespeare. For some years he nourished a hopeless passion for Mrs. Barry, the celebrated actress of the day, who seems to have inspired his best work; and at one time he was rescued from want by the Duchess of Portsmouth. In his earlier years he cultivated rhymed tragedy, and with *Don Carlos* (1676), based on a French romance, won considerable popular favor. Otway's reputation, however, rests upon his two strong tragedies, *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserved* (1682). *The Orphan* is a domestic play. Two brothers, Castalio and Polydore, are in love with Monimia, their father's ward. Castalio secretly contracts himself to her in marriage; but Polydore, overhearing their plans for meeting and ignorant of the tie that binds them, contrives to supplant his brother. Castalio is repulsed and spends the night in curses upon womankind. When the full truth bursts upon all the next day, Polydore provokes a quarrel in which he deliberately permits himself to be stabbed by his brother, Castalio commits suicide, and Monimia takes poison. This plot demands considerable credulity; nevertheless in its simple emotion and the cumulative effect of its tragedy *The Orphan* must remain a noteworthy production. Perhaps even more powerful, at least in its fourth act, is *Venice Preserved*. An underplot, which might have been dispensed with, caricatures Shaftesbury under the name of Antonio. The main plot, however, advances rapidly and

with unfaltering interest. "Pierre, a sort of Brutus with the high Roman courage, leads Jaffier to join the conspiracy against Venice. Belvidera, Jaffier's wife, persuades her husband to save her father and the senate by revealing the plot. The action unfolds in masterly scenes, where Pierre confronts his friend with his falseness, and where Jaffier, conquered by his wife, melts into love, and yields to her desire to save her father and the state. On the scaffold, Jaffier is to pay the penalty of his vacillation, but stabs both himself and Pierre. The apparition of the ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre and Belvidera's madness and death strongly suggest the Elizabethans."[15] Both *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* show Otway's emphasis on a single strong theme and his command of the resources of pity. In an artificial age he appealed to simple human emotion, and while he had not a broad conception of character or a strong sense of comedy, he succeeded by using effectively the gifts that he had.

[15] Nettleton, 102.

CHAPTER VIII

LATE RESTORATION DRAMA AND THE RISE OF DEMOCRATIC TENDENCIES

56. Elements of the Transition.—Important in the history of the English Drama was the decade 1690-1700. Charles II was dead, James II in exile, and a Whig king, William of Orange, had recently come to the throne. The significance to the drama of these simple historical events can hardly be overestimated. Some taste for heroic plays or society comedy might still prevail; but already way was being made for a drama more democratic and with more emphasis on common emotion. Dryden was still living; but he bade farewell to the stage in 1693, and by this year also such popular playwrights as Otway and Lee had passed from the scene. Restoration comedy had not yet run its course, and in fact was still to receive its finest expression in Congreve; but the plays of this brilliant dramatist were all written within the decade. By 1700, whatever the reason, he too had ceased to write, and the day of society comedy was over. The age of Queen Anne boasted of its classic theory and style; but Addison's only drama was a *tour de force,* and Steele was, consciously or not, one of the foremost exponents of sentimentalism and—whiggism. Important as ever was the religious question, and one heard much at the time of "occasional conformity." The Tories were yet to make one last stand and close the War of the Spanish Succes-

sion; but their day had passed and for half a century the Whigs were to rule the country.

The change was by no means an unmixed good. As for the drama, it needed reform undoubtedly; but unfortunately this reform was to be wrought only at the expense of a long probation in which sentimentality was substituted for sentiment, and the would-be pious for the genuinely good. The drama is in its very essence an aristocratic form of literature. It emphasizes not the commonplaces but the crises of life. It is concerned not with the mere details of living but with the grand passions that are the very mainspring of action. It exalts, it idealizes, it glorifies, and its very world is effective and appealing because it is unreal. Not unnaturally it is concerned with heroes and heroines, kings and queens, and it was at its height in England's greatest era of nationality. Any other emphasis, even that of the moralist, in a large way makes for decay.

The high priest of the moral reform was Jeremy Collier, who in 1698 published his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.* In his successive chapters Collier treated such topics as the immodesty of the stage, its profaneness, its abuse or misrepresentation of the clergy, and the fact that chief characters in plays were made vicious. He made references to heathen philosophers, orators, and historians that, to say the least, did not always bear directly upon the point at issue; but with abundant opportunity for illustration he pointed out characters and passages in Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh that it was difficult to defend on any account. Collier's attack was by no means consistently logical, nor did he have a clear conception of the relation of ethics and

aesthetics. With all his shortcomings, however, he was essentially sound, and if his expression was not perfect he at least had the conscience of the age behind him. Several representatives of the stage undertook to reply to him, and Congreve was only one of those who were baffled in the encounter.

Collier was in a large way effective, though the importance of his publication has within recent years received much discount. As great a man as Dryden substantially admitted more than once the soundness of his main contentions, and the government officially took sides with him. "The censorship of the Master of the Revels began to be exercised more strictly; actors were prosecuted for the use of profane language, and the playhouses were once more presented as nuisances by the grand-jury; the admission of women wearing masks into any of the theatres was prohibited; and Convocation occupied itself with the condition of the stage as a matter of moment to be pressed upon the consideration of the Crown. The comic poets, who had always been more or less aware of their sins, now began with uneasy hilarity to allude in their prologues to the reformation which had come over the spirit of the town."[1] Not all at once, however, was the license of previous decades abolished. Mrs. Centlivre (1667?-1723) was outstanding among those who continued to cater to vulgarity. For more than a score of years this writer employed a certain talent for play-writing in serving to the public the comedy that it relished; and in such a character as Don Felix in *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) she afterwards furnished Garrick with one of his most successful rôles. Even Mrs. Centlivre, however,

[1] Ward, III, 514-15.

for a while at least showed some inclination to conclude her plays so as to make them seem not to run too violently counter to Collier; and in her latest work she too was in the number of those who showed the influence of the rising tide of sentimentalism.

This writer, however, was mainly a survivor from the past. A much more important figure in the transition was Thomas Southerne (1660-1746). This dramatist had no great genius, but he was not without some genuine pathos, and he had a long, pleasant, and prosperous career. In comedy he was fairly successful, and even more so in the dramatization of popular fiction. *The Loyal Brother, or The Persian Prince* (1682) was a blank verse tragedy with some prose interspersed; and *The Fatal Marriage, or Innocent Adultery* (1694) and *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* (1696), both based on the work of Mrs. Behn, were two of Southerne's very popular adaptations. In his later work he exhibited more and more the elements of appeal that characterized the work of Otway.

57. **William Congreve.**—William Congreve (1670-1729), famous in his own day and since for his wit and elegance, was born in Leeds. His father was an army officer stationed in Ireland, and he himself was educated at Kilkenny and at Trinity College, Dublin. Going to London ostensibly as a law student, he found ready admission into the best circles, and an unusually attractive personality soon won for him numerous friends in literature and politics. With his five plays that were given to the public, the first in 1693 and the last in 1700, he distanced all rivals in polite comedy. He was overwhelmed with eulogy, and the foremost actors of the day were happy to appear in his productions. He was roughly

handled by Collier, however; and whether for this reason or because his last play did not awaken the usual enthusiasm, or because he preferred to give his time to the life of quality rather than to setting this forth on the stage, he wrote no plays after the turn of the century. In his later years he became blind, but in addition to the returns which he received from his literary work, life was made easy for him by sinecures; Pope dedicated his translation of Homer to him; and he was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.[2]

In January, 1693, appeared at Drury Lane *The Old Bachelor,* which Dryden termed the best first play he had ever seen. "From Betterton downwards, all the first actors and actresses of the day were engaged in it; and Anne Bracegirdle, the beautiful, the lovable, the discreet, played Congreve's first heroine, as she was to play all the rest."[3] The characters are for the most part conventional, but interest attaches to Captain Bluffe, a cowardly blusterer somewhat after the pattern of Ralph Roister Doister. *The Double-Dealer* (November, 1693) was far more elegant and polished, but by no means as immediately successful as *The Old Bachelor.* The plot was rather too complicated. Lady Touchwood is in love with Mellefont, to whom Cynthia, daughter of Sir Paul Plyant, is promised. Maskwell, however, the Double-Dealer, who deceives by telling the truth, knows her secret and determines to use it for the undoing of Mellefont and for his own conquest of Cynthia. He is the typical villain of melodrama

[2] See Thackeray's brilliant characterization in his chapter in *English Humourists.*

[3] Archer: Introduction to *William Congreve* in Masterpieces of the English Drama series, 2-3.

and leads the other characters through a maze of intrigue. Less involved and better knit is *Love for Love* (1695), the story of a witty young spendthrift, Valentine, who is fortunate in his love with the rich young lady, Angelica, and who has an especially clever servant Jeremy. While Congreve was writing this play "the affairs of the Theatre Royal, then the only playhouse in London, fell into sad disorder, which ended in a split between the patentee managers and their leading actors, headed by Betterton. The seceding players obtained a special license from William III, and constructed a new theatre within the walls of a tennis-court in Lincoln's Inn Fields."[4] At Easter the enterprise was inaugurated with the production of *Love for Love,* with Betterton as Valentine and Mrs. Bracegirdle as Angelica. The play scored an unexampled success and made Congreve easily the foremost dramatist of the day. In 1697 appeared his sole tragedy, *The Mourning Bride.* This was an experiment in the later Elizabethan drama, and in the love of Osmyn, a noble prisoner, and Almeria, princess of Granada, has many of the marks of the heroic play. The workmanship is characterized by much artifice and the atmosphere by much gloom. Interestingly enough, however, the drama was very popular and highly regarded in its day. Congreve's last and in some ways his most brilliant comedy, *The Way of the World* (1700), contains the striking creation Millimant. This is the dramatist's most characteristic production. Interest centers not so much on the story or action as on the dialogue. The general effect of the play when presented, however, was that of clever and sophisticated people talking rapidly in a parlor before some

[4] Archer, Introduction, 4.

other people who lived in another and a lower world. Congreve's very brilliancy had overshot itself.

It is easy now to discount this dramatist who was so popular in his own day. He has not effectiveness of plot, it is true, nor have his strongest creations the broad humanity that the greatest comedy requires. He must be judged, however, not by his shortcomings but by his merits; and these were genuine and positive. To his wit he added grace and precision in diction, and there is considerable truth in Hazlitt's eulogy: "His style is inimitable, nay perfect. It is the highest model of comic dialogue. Every sentence is replete with sense and satire, conveyed in the most polished and pointed terms. Every page presents a shower of brilliant conceits, is a tissue of epigrams in prose, is a new triumph of wit, a new conquest over dullness. . . . There is a peculiar flavor in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer."[5]

58. John Vanbrugh.—Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), after some early training in France and an adventurous experience in the army, became famous as the architect of "Blenheim" and other mansions; and, having filled the offices of comptroller of the royal works and surveyor of the works at Greenwich Hospital, he was knighted by George I. His work in architecture was not above criticism; he seems to have been rather too fond of massive effects, and Swift was one of those who satirized him. One might trace some connection, however, between his work in this field and that as a dramatist, for he excelled in construction. In gaiety, lightness of touch, and ease of

[5] Lecture IV, "On Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar," in *The English Comic Writers.*

dialogue he was also distinguished, though the moral tone of his work differed little from that of some of his contemporaries. He hardly ever surpassed his first effort as a comic dramatist, *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger* (1696). This play was written as a sequel to Cibber's *Love's Last Shift, or The Fool in Fashion,* and contains the charming character Lord Foppington. *The Provoked Wife* (1697) is not without merit, but is hardly as amusing as *The Relapse.* It is sternly realistic, and contains the gross but strong character, Sir John Brute. *The Confederacy* (1705) has a plot that turns upon the possession of a necklace, and is marked by its author's usual vivacity, Dick Amlet and his mother and Flippanta, the lady's-maid, being interesting characters. Unfortunately in this play, however, the vices of the court have become those of the common people and are more revolting than ever. Vanbrugh also made some adaptations from the French and Spanish, and left unfinished a comedy, *A Journey to London,* which Cibber completed as *The Provoked Husband.*

59. **George Farquhar.**—George Farquhar (1678-1707) was born in Londonderry and had some early experience on the Dublin stage; but he gave up this calling after he had accidentally wounded a fellow-actor, and he served for a while in the army. His first play, *Love and a Bottle,* appeared when he was but twenty and even then showed something of his ability in plotting and characterization and his understanding of the bases of popular appeal. *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) was intended as a sketch of country manners in Shropshire and of the humours incident to the recruiting system; and with such characters as Captain Plume and Sergeant Kite it enlarged the bounds of comedy. Farquhar's masterpiece, however, is

The Beaux' Stratagem (1707), which has an ingenious but not too improbable plot, and which, hovering as it does on the borderland of comedy and farce, is a forerunner of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. The scene is partly that of an inn with a rascally landlord Bonniface, and partly the home of Lady Bountiful, "an old, civil, country gentlewoman, that cures all her neighbors of all distempers, and is foolishly fond of her son, Sullen." The chief character is Archer, who is "very arch," and who pretends to be the valet of his friend, Aimwell, the Beau, but who is really interested in carrying on his own adventures. Farquhar has not Vanbrugh's vivacity and lightness of touch, and he still ostensibly writes the comedy of manners; at the same time he has some genuine originality, and his early death was undoubtedly a loss to the drama. With the outdoor atmosphere and the honest fun of *The Beaux' Stratagem* he was pointing the way to a saner and more wholesome English comedy. "He emerges from the ranks of the Orange and Augustan comedians as the prophet of a new order. For while he introduced no comic principle hitherto unknown, he blended the essentials of character, plot, and situation in juster proportions than any previous writer of realistic comedy, lifting their interest to an equality with that of the dialogue, to which they had been subordinated in the wit-ridden comedy of manners. The result was a form of comedy unsurpassed for naturalness and fidelity to life: the form adopted and perfected by Sheridan and Goldsmith.[6]

60. Colley Cibber.—Colley Cibber (1671-1757), the son of a well-known sculptor, lived a long and prosperous

[6] Strauss: Introduction to *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, xiii.

life, possessed of imperturbable good humor and ability to meet and to handle without too much seriousness the accidents of fortune. At the age of eighteen he went upon the stage, and in later years he received as much as £50 a night, the highest sum yet paid to an English actor. His first play, *Love's Last Shift* (1696), incurred the censure of Collier and also the criticism of Congreve, who said that there were in it "a great many things that were like wit, that in reality were not wit;" but it kept possession of the stage for forty years. *The Careless Husband* (1704) was similarly successful, though some of its characters are mere puppets. "However, Cibber, being a man of the theatre, cared as little for human character as for literature. It was for him to fill the pit and boxes, and he filled them for two generations. In the making of plays he was an expert, and he cared not whose work it was that he adapted. He improved Shakespeare with as light a heart as he improved Mrs. Centlivre."[7] His alteration of *Richard III* in fact gave to the stage a famous acting version, that for more than half a century was the accepted text. With his usual appreciation of the changes in public taste, he gave aid to the rising tide of sentimentalism, and in later years he rendered service to the stage by pleading the cause of legitimate drama against mere pantomime and spectacle. In 1730 he was appointed poet laureate, in which capacity he failed, for he had not the fire of a genuine poet. When, however, in a new edition of the *Dunciad* he was elevated by Pope to the chief place recently held by Theobald, although he replied he did not become bitter and was still really impervious to attack. His most

[7] Whibley: "The Restoration Drama, II," in *C. H. E. L.*, VIII, 200-1.

valuable work in the opinion of modern scholarship is *Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (1740), one of the most important records of the theatre ever written. It gives such comment upon the comedy of manners and the actors of the age of Queen Anne as is to be found nowhere else. Altogether Cibber was an important figure in his day, and in general he worked for the improvement of the drama.

61. **Richard Steele.**—"If the plays of Colley Cibber mark the transition toward healthier moral standards, the new movement in eighteenth century drama is fairly inaugurated in the work of Richard Steele (1672-1729). To the conscious moral aim of Cibber, Steele added literary art and genius. . . . [He] was, in a sense, the founder of sentimental comedy. Yet it must not be thought that the field of which he took possession had lain hitherto wholly undiscovered. Perhaps the real origin of sentimental comedy should be sought not simply in the moralized comedy of Cibber but in the somewhat sentimentalized tragedy of Otway and Southerne. The rising tide of sentiment invaded the entire drama."[8] It overflowed into other forms of expression; Richardson and Sterne, for instance, cultivated it in the novel. It was one of the most interesting phenomena in the literature of the century.

Steele himself, spurred by Collier's *Short View,* proceeded to write four plays with a definite moral purpose: *The Funeral* (1701) acted with success at Drury Lane; *The Lying Lover* (1703), an excessively pious production; *The Tender Husband* (1705), perhaps the author's best work in pure comedy; and then, after a period of essay-writing for the *Tatler,* the *Spectator,* and the *Guardian,*

[8] Nettleton, 154-55.

The Conscious Lovers (1722). This last play is "remarkable because it resumes in brief all Steele's best ideas on life and character. We have the sketch of servants whose natural freshness is being gradually tainted by the corrupt and contagious air of lackeydom; we have satire on marriages of convenience, duelling, and the chicanery of the law; a glance at the opposition between the hereditary gentry and the rising commercial class; while, in Bevil junior, Steele portrays his ideal of a gentleman, chivalrous and honorable to women, considerate to men, respectful to his father and self-controlled amid the riotous pleasures of the capital."[9] No plays were more important than these of Steele in the transition from the Restoration comedy of manners to the drama of the middle of the eighteenth century; yet, "if Steele led the way to moral reform, he also led the way to dramatic decay. The appeal of Steele's sentimental comedy to the emotion of pity became with inferior playwrights a false emotional motive;"[10] and, as has been suggested, "the moral reform of English drama was won at the expense of almost half a century during which Comedy bowed her head in the presence of Sentimentality."

62. Joseph Addison.—The distinguished essayist of the *Spectator* (1672-1719), a staunch classicist, was essentially a critic of manners and literature, and not primarily a creative dramatist; nevertheless he produced at least one play that calls for mention in a review of the drama of the period. At Drury Lane, April 14, 1713, appeared *Cato,* a play built on the theme of the last stand of a patriot against the usurpation of Caesar. The year was that

[9] Routh: "Steele and Addison," in *C. H. E. L.*, IX, 71-72.

[10] Nettleton, 165.

of the Peace of Utrecht, and the time one of great political excitement. Both Whigs and Tories made capital of the drama, and it was acted in London five times a week for a month to crowded houses. "It pictures the last of the Roman republicans, a statuesque outline magnanimous and unmoved, surrounded by a treachery which is baffled by the loyalty of his sons and Juba, accepting death rather than dishonor, and, in his last moments, taking thought for those around him. The plot is twofold. Side by side with the study in public virtue and high politics, a drama of the tender passion occupies the stage. When Cato's son Marcius dies gallantly fighting against the traitor Syphax, his brother wins the hand of Lucia, for which they had both been honorable rivals, and Juba, the once rejected suitor of Marcia, Cato's daughter, romantically rescues her from the clutches of Sempronius in disguise and finds that she has loved him all the time."[11] *Cato* is marked by stately rhetoric and cold dignity, and the characters are not lifelike; nevertheless, as the play united the "grandiose projection of characters" that the public admired in Milton with the "sentimental chivalry of a French romance," it was a success. To modern taste, however, the style is too declamatory and the plot full of improbabilities; so that the work remains a solitary production without much influence on the later drama.

Along with Addison might be remarked two other men who represented the influence of French tragedy upon English, and especially the influence of Racine—Edmund Smith and Ambrose Philips. Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolytus* was adapted from *Phèdre* and Philips's *The Distrest Mother* from *Andromaque*. For the first of these

[11] Routh: "Steele and Addison," in *C. H. E. L.*, IX, 71.

plays Addison wrote the prologue, and for the second the epilogue. *The Distrest Mother* was exceptionally popular for a number of years.

63. Nicholas Rowe.—A final and important figure in the transition was Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), who carried over into tragedy something of Steele's sentimentalism in comedy, and who, while largely influenced by classic theory and method, is outstanding among the dramatists of the period for his interest in Elizabethan subjects. In 1709 he published his famous six-volume edition of Shakespeare, the first really critical edition of the dramatist, and from 1715 until his death he served as poet laureate. He was an accomplished scholar, a translator of merit, and a man of engaging personality who enjoyed great esteem for his talents.

The Fair Penitent (1703), an adaptation from *The Fatal Dowry* of Massinger and Field, was one of the most successful tragedies of the century. Of this production Dr. Johnson said, "There is scarcely any work of any poet so interesting by the fable and so delightful in the language." The play is now primarily interesting, however, as an eighteenth century version of Elizabethan dramatic methods. The story is that of the downfall of the wife of Young Charalois (Rowe's Altamont) by her love for Young Novall (Rowe's Lothario). This story, which Massinger so tells as to gain respect and sympathy for the husband, in the hand of Rowe shifts interest to the villain. Young Novall, "a contemptible dandy, who triumphs rather by his cunning than by his personal charm or power of fascination,"[12] becomes in Lothario a lover "whose seductive charm is exploited with every lavish

[12] Hart: Introduction to *The Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore*, xiii.

device of rhetoric." The heroine, Calista, in Rowe's play indeed satisfies poetic justice by her death, but this she seems to meet without any real inner sense of regeneration. *The Fair Penitent* turns its plot, that of a tragedy, very largely on the discovery of a letter and really completes its action at the end of the fourth act. In spite of any technical shortcomings, however, the play was not without its effective scenes and undoubtedly held the secret of appeal to an audience. *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714), professedly "written in imitation of Shakespeare's style," deals with the sad story of the generous-hearted woman who unhappily became the love of Edward IV. The characters in the play are to some extent drawn from *Richard III,* but there the resemblance to Shakespeare ends. Jane Shore, however, is more deeply penitent than Calista; and in general Rowe's plays were much favored by great performers, and held their own on the stage well into the nineteenth century. *Tamerlane* (1702), originally intended as a compliment to William III, with a caricature of Louis XIV as Bajazet, was regularly performed in London on November 5, the day of William's anniversary and the Gunpowder Plot, until 1815.

CHAPTER IX

THE ERA OF SENTIMENTALISM[1]

64. The New Age. Drama vs. Novel.—The second quarter of the eighteenth century was marked by many conflicting forces, in the drama as in other forms of literature and life. In her political life never was England more complacent—more inert—than under the first two Georges and Walpole. The period of Classicism was ascendant, but passing; that of Romanticism had not yet reached its height; and realism and deism were in the air. For the moment in England perhaps no one fully perceived the drift of contending forces. Form and rule were being cast aside, it is true; but something very like artistic chaos had come. The effect of complacency and liberalism on the drama was inevitable. "As the democratic ideas of the Reformation more and more prevailed in English life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the drama came under their influence; and before Richard-

[1] In the general period covered by the present chapter the work of two American scholars is outstanding. Professor Nettleton, of Yale, the pioneer who has done most to give outline to the period, contributed "The Drama and the Stage" to Volume X of the *Cambridge History of English Literature.* This discussion he afterwards revised and enlarged in his book, *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, to which reference has already been made. In 1915 appeared *The Drama of Sensibility*, by Dr. Ernest Bernbaum, of Harvard and the University of Illinois, which book has the importance of studying an important phenomenon through the entire course of its development.

son wrote it had become thoroughly bourgeois."[2] For the drama to become bourgeois, however, was fatal; and not unnaturally it gave way before long to a form of literature less intense and better adapted to the life of the common man—the novel.

One thing in its uncertainty the age could still do, however; it could criticize. It could criticize and theorize. Shakespeare and Molière, Marlowe and Racine, Sophocles and Dryden were all before it; and it could decide for itself which was the best model to follow. Withal there was beginning some genuine study of the Elizabethans. Rowe's editing of Shakespeare and Dennis' criticism set good standards for those who came afterwards; and Dodsley's *Collection of Old Plays* appeared in 1744. Sometimes controversy became lively. In 1725, for instance, appeared Pope's edition of Shakespeare. The next year Lewis Theobald issued a pamphlet with the title *Shakespeare Restored, or a Specimen of the many Errors committed as well as unamended by Mr. Pope in his late edition of this Poet.* Theobald, however, whose own edition of Shakespeare did not appear until 1733, was in the habit of contributing notes on Shakespeare to a weekly paper called *Mist's Journal.* This Pope termed "crucifying Shakespeare once a week," and he made Theobald the original hero of the *Dunciad.* Thus the feud went on, with variations.

The eminent critic of the age, however, was another Frenchman, a man of singular importance to the English stage. In 1726 Voltaire began in England a residence of almost three years. One of the first glimpses we catch

[2] Cross: *The Development of the English Novel* (Macmillan, New York, 1909), 59.

of him is in connection with Congreve. The famous dramatist, who was resting on his laurels, bore honors lightly and on the basis of a gentleman rather than as a "representative of literature" received his guest. Voltaire, to whom literature was a serious business, was baffled and remarked in substance that if Congreve had been simply a gentleman he would never have bothered to look him up. This was the man who brought to England a new emphasis on classical dramatic theory and practice, and yet whose own work shows numerous adaptations from the master Shakespeare. Voltaire's whole attitude toward Shakespeare is in fact a baffling problem. There can be no doubt that he did more than any other writer of the century to make the works of the English dramatist familiar on the Continent. On the other hand, he developed toward Shakespeare in his later years a relentless antagonism. Sometimes this has been ascribed to personal motives. Much of it, however, is doubtless to be ascribed to the seventeenth century classicism which he upheld and the influence of which he felt that Shakespeare did most to undermine. He was engaged in a losing fight, but he fought to the very end.

Two well-known English literary men were also in greater or less degree under the influence of French classical tragedy, though neither was primarily a dramatist. Edward Young (1648-1765), the poet of *Night Thoughts,* wrote three tragedies. *Busiris* (1719) was in blank verse and successful; *The Revenge* (1721) was on the French model and also succeeded for a while; and *The Brothers* (1728?) was withdrawn in rehearsal because of the author's taking holy orders. James Thomson (1700-1748), the poet of *The Seasons,* in *Sophonisba* (1730) used a theme

handled fifty years previously by Lee. In this play the characters declaim but hardly act; moreover a certain labored effect in the phrasing readily loaned itself to parody, as in the line, "O Sophonisba, Sophonisba, O!" *Agamemnon* (1738) was greeted with applause by a splendid audience; *Edward and Eleanora* was rejected by the censor as praising the Prince of Wales at the expense of the court; and *Tancred and Sigismunda* (1745) was afterwards used by Garrick with considerable success. *The Masque of Alfred* (1740) contained the ode "Rule, Britannia!" *Coriolanus* (1749) was an attempt, hardly successful, to adapt Shakespeare in conformity with the dramatic unities. Thomson did some fair work in the drama; but his plays show a great tendency toward rant and labored expression, and in general he represents no new tendency.

65. Pantomime: John Rich.—In the uncertain age under discussion regular drama had to encounter various rivals for popular favor. One of these was pantomime. This was a form of entertainment not altogether unknown on the English stage. Ever since *Gorboduc* and *Hamlet* there had been some representation of action in dumb-shows. Mrs. Aphra Behn moreover had introduced a Harlequin into one of her productions, and for John Weaver, a contemporary of Rich, a case might be made out as the man who introduced the form in the new era. To John Rich (1628?-1761), however, the real credit of the pantomime belongs. He carried the form to such popularity that the rival theatres of Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields were able to advance prices on pantomime nights. At the latter playhouse Rich in 1723 competed successfully with Drury Lane in a performance on the subject of Dr. Faustus. This was one of the kinds of

entertainment which Cibber regarded as an encroachment on the drama and against which he protested; but pantomime continued to hold public favor.

66. Ballad-Opera: John Gay.—To his successes Rich was destined to add yet another rival to the regular drama. At Lincoln's Inn in 1728 he produced John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and thus brought before the public a new species of entertainment with emphasis on songs, burlesque of Italian opera, and an undercurrent of political satire (in this case specially directed against Walpole). The idea of the new piece was originally suggested to Gay by Swift. Ballad-opera at once became immensely popular; but Cibber still held aloof. "If the judgment of the crowd were infallible," he said, "I am afraid we shall be reduced to allow that *The Beggar's Opera* was the best-written play that ever our English theatre had to boast of." In spite of its great success with the public, however, the production was officially regarded as "an insolent performance" containing "the most venomous allegorical libel" against the Government that had appeared in years. From this point of view of political satire it is important not only on its own account but as anticipating Fielding.

67. Domestic Tragedy: George Lillo.—The democratic tendencies of the day and something of the influence of ballad-opera, find further expression in the work of George Lillo (1693-1739), who is primarily remembered, however, as a representative of sentimentalism and domestic tragedy. The son of a London jeweller, Lillo was well fitted to become the dramatist of domestic life. His first venture, *Silvia, or The Country Burial* (1730), was called a ballad-opera, which in this case signifies not much more than that it was interspersed with songs. The perform-

ance at Drury Lane, however, of *The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell* (1731), commonly known as *George Barnwell,* was an important event in English dramatic history. Domestic tragedy was not unknown on the English stage from the time of Thomas Heywood down to that of Rowe. With Lillo, however, it took on a new importance and came closer to the public than ever before. The story is that of a merchant's clerk who, led astray by a courtesan, Millwood, embezzles money, murders his uncle, and is at last executed for his crime. Throughout his trials he is supported and comforted by Thorowgood, his employer, Trueman, a fellow-clerk, and Maria, Thorowgood's daughter. Lillo stated that his play was drawn from a "famed old song," referring to "The Ballad of George Barnwell."[3] "In the ballad, neither Maria nor Trueman is mentioned, and Thorowgood appears only as a nameless master for whom Barnwell has no affection. Lillo's Thorowgood is characterized in detail: he has a high sense of the dignity of the merchant class, a fatherly interest in young men, and a pitying and forgiving heart in the hour of Barnwell's distress. . . . The most important difference between the play and the ballad is that between their respective heroes. The Barnwell of the ballad is not placed in a flattering light. It is he himself who thinks of murdering his uncle; and, after enjoying the latter's hospitality, he commits the deed with deliberation, and enjoys its fruits without remorse. He brings about the capture of Millwood by his testimony, and subsequently perpetrates

[3] See *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, edited by F. J. Child, Boston, 1859 (VIII, 213). The ballad is also easily accessible in Ward's edition of *The London Merchant* and *Fatal Curiosity*, 121-35.

another murder."[4] In the play there is considerable change from all this. With a certain sense of chivalry Barnwell protects Millwood; after he has resolved never to see her again he is won back only through an appeal to his sympathy for her supposed troubles; and his committing of the murder is not much more than an accident. "Throughout the last two acts his penitence is extreme; and his final endeavor is to save the soul of the woman who has so vilely betrayed him."

"We may safely conclude that the audiences which crowded to the early performances of *The London Merchant* troubled themselves little about either the artistic defects or the artistic merits of the play. What they welcomed in Lillo's tragedy was, in the first instance, the courage with which, resuming the native freedom of the English drama, he had chosen his theme from a sphere of experience immediately familiar to them; and, secondly, the plainness of the moral which he enforced, and the direct way in which he enforced it."[5]

In *The Christian Hero* (1735) Lillo wrote tragedy of a more conventional type. He used blank verse and dealt not with a London apprentice but a "patriot king," shifting the scene from London to Albania. In *Fatal Curiosity* (1736), however, while still using blank verse, he reverted to domestic tragedy.

"In the history of English drama, Lillo holds a position wholly disproportionate to his actual dramatic achievement. Like D'Avenant, his importance is chiefly that of a pioneer. [He] set in motion powerful forces that pointed toward natural tragedy. He deliberately put aside the dignity of rank and title and the ceremony of

[4] Bernbaum, 153. [5] Ward: Introduction, xxxii.

verse. He animated domestic drama, and paved the way for prose melodrama and tragedy. . . . To [his] influence on the subjects of English tragedy must be added his no less marked influence upon its language. He deliberately adopted prose as the vehicle of expression for domestic tragedy. He accepts, indeed, the convention of rime-tags at the end of every act and at the conclusion of some scenes during the act; but his main intent is to give domestic drama the vocabulary and phrase that suit his theme." [6]

In connection with Lillo may be mentioned Edward Moore (1712-1757), who also knew the London trading class, having served as apprentice to a mercer. His comedy, *The Foundling* (1748), indebted for some suggestion to Steele's *The Conscious Lovers,* was fairly successful. His representative production, however, was *The Gamester* (1753), an attack on the evils of gambling. In this work Moore labored under some restraint, and generally he showed the career of the gambler "by effect rather than by cause;" thus he sacrificed considerable dramatic possibility when he kept any actual gaming off the stage. The play, however, in spite of all shortcomings, was a distinct success and furnished Garrick with a leading rôle. Especially effective from the sentimental standpoint was the scene in the last act between Beverley and his wife.

68. Burlesque: Henry Fielding.—Henry Fielding (1707-1754), the distinguished journalist and novelist, walks amid the sentimental comedy and the domestic tragedy of his day with a cool head, a slight smile of cynicism, and a general air of detachment. He has

[6] Nettleton, *C. H. E. L.*, X, 85-88.

breadth and keenness and delicate irony. The one thing he lacks is the thing that Jonson lacked, and that any satirist is in danger of lacking—charm. He has a keen sense of the right, and a good heart, but no poetry. "The first decade of [his] literary career was given over to the production of twenty-six comic plays of various sorts and conditions—regular comedies, adaptations from Molière, farces, satirical pieces, and burlesque." [7] In the history of the drama he is remembered primarily for his burlesques, of which the outstanding example is *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (first form, 1730). In this production he makes ridiculous the tragedy Ghost, parodies lines from various plays, commits half a dozen murders in as many lines, and also echoes the noise of the Shakespearean wars that have already begun.[8] Somewhat more constructively Fielding labored to give genuine comedy and farce a place on the stage.

Historically, in legislation affecting the stage, Fielding has further importance. In 1736, as manager of the Haymarket, he produced *Pasquin*, "a dramatic satire on the times," in which the bribery and other political methods of Walpole were rather boldly suggested. The next year, however, he went still further with *The Historical Register for 1736*, referring again to Walpole, satirizing Colley and Theophilus Cibber, and indulging in much social pasquinade as well. A movement for the restriction of the license of the theatres had for some time been under way,

[7] Hillhouse: "The Tragedy of Tragedies," 1.

[8] For an interesting analysis of the play and comparison with *The Rehearsal* and *The Critic*, see the introduction to it in F. Tupper and J. W. Tupper's *Representative English Dramas*.

and Walpole had begun to regard Fielding as a most dangerous enemy. Accordingly "the Licensing Act of 1737 limited the metropolitan theatres to two, and brought plays, prologues and epilogues under direct legal authority. . . . With the passage of this act and the appointment of a licenser under his jurisdiction, in 1738, the Lord Chamberlain was formally invested with the censorship of the Stage."[9] There was considerable popular indignation and some rioting; nevertheless henceforth the stage acknowledged the authority of the censor, and the dramatic career of Fielding was ended. He now turned to the composition of his novels, and English literature was richer by the exchange.

69. Adaptation: David Garrick.—David Garrick (1717-1779), as the greatest actor of the middle of the century, belongs rather to the history of the English stage than to that of the drama. Nevertheless, even if he had never made his adaptations from other dramatists, he would still deserve mention on his own account. In 1767, with George Colman, he wrote *The Clandestine Marriage,* and among the other plays, sketches, and farces attributed to him are *The Lying Valet,* in two acts, *Lethe,* "a dramatic satire," *Lilliput,* "a dramatic entertainment," *The Enchanter, or Love and Magic,* "a musical drama," *The Farmer's Return from London,* "an interlude," *The Irish Widow,* in two acts, *Bon Ton, or High Life above Stairs,* in two acts, etc. The adaptations are from numerous sources; altogether Garrick produced more than a score of the plays of Shakespeare alone. One meets such titles as *Romeo and Juliet,* "with alterations, and an additional scene;" *The Fairies,* "taken from *A Midsummer Night's*

[9] Nettleton, 222.

Dream;" Catherine and Petruchio, "a comedy in three acts;" *The Country Girl,* "altered from Wycherley;" *Alfred: a Masque,* "with some few alterations, and with some new music," etc. Modern scholarship, with its great emphasis on faithfulness to text, sometimes deplores the liberties taken with Shakespeare by Cibber and Garrick. These were men, however, who held aloft the ideal of the drama in their day, and preserved a great tradition. The atmosphere of the scholar's cloister is very different from that of the eighteenth century theatre with the sweep of Garrick or Peg Woffington. In a large way adaptation was to be attributed to the change that had come over the art of the actor. James Quin (1693-1756), the last tragedian of the old school, recognized this when he said of Garrick that "if the young fellow was right," he and the rest of the players had been all wrong; and far more significant than might have been realized at the time was Rich's dismissal of Charles Macklin from Lincoln's Inn Fields. In the new day the actor's own personality was capitalized, and the mere text of a play was often a very secondary consideration. Macklin was the first who thus brought his personality into his interpretations, and Garrick was the foremost exponent of the school.

Two other names, of persons who enjoyed quite a vogue in their own day, are at least worthy of mention in connection with the Garrick era. William Whitehead (1715-1785), poet laureate in his later years, with *The Roman Father* (1750), a classical tragedy, won a success comparable with that of Philips's *The Distrest Mother.* Isaac Bickerstaff (1735?-1812?) was popular as a playwright, but is best remembered as a librettist, his representative production being *The Padlock* (1768), a musical

entertainment that received more than fifty performances at Drury Lane.

70. Romanticism: John Home.—In the general poverty of original drama in the middle of the century John Home (1722-1808), of Scotland, stands out with unusual distinctness. A keen student of classical literature, and a minister at East Lothian, Home wrote altogether six plays, and by the great success of his *Douglas* he so awakened the opposition of his kirk that he was forced to anticipate dismissal by withdrawal. On its completion in 1754 he offered to Garrick his first tragedy, *Agis,* but met a refusal. The next year he made a horseback journey to London to offer *Douglas* to the same manager, but met a similar response. In his own Scotland, however, Home fared better, and *Douglas* was produced at the Canongate Theatre in Edinburgh December 14, 1756. The success of the play surpassed all expectations, and Home received from his countrymen the most extravagant compliments. Hume, the philosopher and historian, said that he possessed "the true theatric genius of Shakespeare and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one and the licentiousness of the other." The following March, Rich, ever on the alert, produced the play at Covent Garden; and its London success was so great that Garrick now accepted *Agis* and himself played the leading part. This play, however, impressed the public as cold and dull and Home's other productions fared little better. He received various honors and lived for some years into the next century; but he had to be content with his one great success.

The story of *Douglas*[10] is as follows: Lady Randolph,

[10] See Gipson: *John Home,* for this and other relevant discussion.

years before the time of the play, had entered into a secret marriage with Douglas, whose family and hers were bitter enemies. Soon after the marriage Douglas went to war and was killed. Lady Randolph, fearing her father's anger, sent her child away when it was born and did not hear again of her son or of the servant who took him away, though she never ceased to grieve for her husband and the boy. In the play Lord Randolph enters bringing a youth who has saved him from a band of outlaws. To this youth, a shepherd in whom Lady Randolph feels the deepest interest, Lord Randolph promises his protection. Glenalvon, the villain of the play, however, is in love with Lady Randolph and has resolved to destroy her husband at the first opportunity. After Lord Randolph and the youth, Young Norval, have left for the camp, an old shepherd is brought to Lady Randolph. By the jewels found upon him she learns that Young Norval is her son, that he had been rescued by Old Norval in a storm and brought up as a shepherd. Lady Randolph now makes arrangements for a secret interview with her son. One is held and another arranged for. Glenalvon, hearing of the plan, leads Lord Randolph to the secret meeting-place, and he and the youth fight. Glenalvon, coming up in the rear, stabs Young Norval, who, however, kills him before he himself dies. Lady Randolph, distracted at all that has happened, leaps off a cliff; and Lord Randolph, having learned how he was deceived, in his remorse leaves for the wars, from which he hopes never to return.

This play has been much discounted within recent years, and even in its own day Johnson said that there were not ten good lines in it. The reasons for its success with its generation, however, are evident. The drama was essen-

tially romantic and has many sympathetic and natural touches. *Douglas* really sounded a note that was to be heard more or less frequently for a hundred years. If such a speech as

> My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills,
> My father feeds his flocks,

now seems heckneyed, the part of Lady Randolph in the hands of Peg Woffington, or, later, of Mrs. Siddons, was triumphant; and when all possible discount is made, *Douglas* still remains the strongest original English drama that appeared between *George Barnwell* (1731) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773).

71. Pure Comedy: Foote and Colman.—Meanwhile something of the spirit of pure comedy and the tradition of Fielding was preserved and carried forward in the work of Samuel Foote and George Colman, so-called the elder, to distinguish him from his son of the same name who was a dramatist nearer the close of the century.

Samuel Foote (1720-1777), comedian and mimic, was famous in his day for his impersonations. In his earlier years on the stage, in Dublin, he introduced various caricatures into the part of Bayes in *The Rehearsal.* Later there seemed to be no limit to the freedom with which he mimicked on the stage prominent figures of the day, though seldom did he really offend by his work. "Did he not think of exhibiting you, sir?" asked Boswell of Johnson. "Sir," replied the sage, "fear restrained him, for he knew I would have broken his bones." Foote's original productions were most frequently short clever farces, sometimes satirical in quality. *The Englishman at Paris* (1753) and *The Englishman Returned from*

Paris (1756) dealt with the French character so as to appeal to the English. *The Minor* (1760) satirized Whitefield and the Methodists, while *The Maid of Bath* (1771) handled rather freely the early life of Elizabeth Linley, the popular singer of the day who became the wife of Sheridan. Foote's work may easily be overrated. It depended for its strength mainly upon personal caricature and the gossip of the hour.

Of somewhat different quality was George Colman (1732-1794), who enjoyed the benefit of education at Westminster and at Christ Church, Oxford. *The Jealous Wife* (1761), one of the most popular comedies of the day, was mainly a dramatization of *Tom Jones,* several of the prominent characters being changed only in name. *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766) has already been remarked as the result of collaboration with Garrick. A quarrel arose between the two men over the refusal of Garrick to assume the rôle of Lord Oglesby in this play, and affairs were not improved when Colman became manager of Covent Garden. Later, however, there was a reconciliation. "A member of the Literary Club, a successful dramatist and manager, a translator of the comedies of Terence, an editor of the dramatic works of Beaumont and Fletcher, a writer of prologues and epilogues, among them the epilogue to *The School for Scandal,* George Colman the elder was a notable figure in the theatrical and literary world of the last half of the eighteenth century." [11]

72. **Sentimentalism: Kelly and Cumberland.**—In the midst of pantomime and ballad-opera, burlesque and romanticism, however, sentimentalism moved steadily onward in its course and rose to its height. The origins of

[11] Nettleton, 262-63.

this phenomenon are far to seek, and something of its story depends upon a misinterpretation of Plautus and Terence.[12] For the present purpose, however, Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696) is a convenient starting-point. This is the story of "a woman of strict virtue," Amanda, who, deserted by her husband, Loveless, later reclaims him by placing herself in a compromising position. Steele's *The Lying Lover* (1703) and Cibber's *The Careless Husband* (1704) had similar sentimental tendencies, and after these plays the type was fairly well established. Comparatively little original work was done in the drama between 1710 and 1728,[13] when Cibber's *The Provoked Husband* appeared. In 1731 was produced *George Barnwell;* but between 1732 and 1750 the drama of sensibility languished, while Akenside and Collins in poetry and Richardson in the novel carried the influence over into other forms of literature. Then came revival with Moore's *The Gamester* (1753) and other work down to Kelly and Cumberland.

Hugh Kelly (1739-1777) lives primarily by reason of one strong and popular comedy, *False Delicacy,* presented at Covent Garden January 23, 1768. The leading characters in this play are unusually refined and are placed in a delicate situation. "Lady Betty [Lambton] has a dependent friend, Miss Marchmont. Lord Winworth requests Lady Betty to convey to Miss Marchmont his offer of marriage, and to urge its acceptance. The offer distresses both the young women; for Lady Betty is herself in love with Winworth, though she has formerly rejected him; and Miss Marchmont loves another man, but feels that her obligations to Lady Betty are so great as to make it im-

[12] See Bernbaum, Chapter II.

[13] Bernbaum, 225.

possible to disregard her apparent wishes. Lord Winworth presently realizes that it is still Lady Betty whom he loves, but he feels that a withdrawal of his proposal to Miss Marchmont would be dishonorable. Thus the motives of these characters are of the highest." [13] This play has been variously interpreted. One critic says, "The very title of Kelly's comedy is, in fact, evidence that sentimental delicacy may be carried to false extremes. Yet with every allowance of non-sentimental elements in Kelly's work, it remains indisputable that the primary appeal of the dramatist is to sentimental emotion. The chief personages voice their sentiments and emit their moral platitudes in sober earnest and with a reformer's zeal. Their speeches are without the irony with which Sheridan turned sentimental rant to hypocritical cant in the mouth of Joseph Surface. . . . With *False Delicacy* the stage has become a school of morality." [14] Another says, however: "Such was the success of *False Delicacy,* and such the superficiality of contemporary criticism, that the play came to be regarded as one which carried sentimentalism to an extreme, and was by enemies of sentimental comedy declared to be destitute of humor: when, as a a matter of fact, it is a peculiar variation of the type, and sometimes satirizes the very tendency it is supposed to support." [15]

Richard Cumberland (1732-1811) was largely influenced by Kelly, but coming even as late as he did seems to have regarded himself as the real creator of sentimental drama. A native of Cambridge, the nephew of Dr. Richard Bentley, Cumberland enjoyed the benefit of training at Westminster and Trinity College. He wrote more than

[13] Bernbaum, 225. [14] Nettleton, 271. [15] Bernbaum, 226.

fifty dramatic pieces. *The Brothers* (1769), one of the earlier plays, was an unquestioned success. Cumberland's real reputation, however, is based on *The West Indian* (1771). Conscious that this play would be regarded as his masterpiece, he "recorded in his *Memoirs* the place and the circumstances of its composition with a particularity and seriousness resembling Gibbon's on an incomparably worthier occasion."[16] He might be excused for being proud of his achievement. The four characters that are at the center of the action are young Belcour, the West Indian, Lady Rusport, and Charles and Louisa Dudley, children of a retired captain. Belcour was believed by his grandfather to be a foundling. He has prospects of an inheritance and goes to London to Stockwell, the merchant. Lady Rusport has rejected Charles Dudley because of his poverty. In reality, however, her fortune belongs to Dudley, and she bribes her lawyer to destroy the will proving this. Louisa Dudley is the intended victim of a design of Belcour's. The landlady who aids this design is baffled, however, and the hero at length honorably wins Louisa. Major O'Flaherty moreover, an Irish officer, makes known the secret of the will, so that Dudley and Miss Rusport are also united; and there is the further disclosure of the fact that Stockwell is in reality Belcour's father. The questionable ethics in this plot needs no comment; by an ingenious rearrangement of old themes, however, Cumberland produced a play that became very popular. He deliberately made a West Indian and an Irishman his heroes; Belcour receives many suggestions from Tom Jones, and Major O'Flaherty is a prototype of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. As in

[16] Bernbaum, 237.

the admirable person of the Major, Cumberland tried to overcome a national prejudice against the Irish, so in Colin Macleod in *The Fashionable Lover* (1772) he tried to do away with any lingering feeling against the Scotch.

73. **Summary of the Period.**—It is evident that in the period we have been considering the legitimate drama was subjected to many opposing forces. Such forms of entertainment as pantomime and ballad-opera naturally raised some question with the orthodox, while the embarrassing Licensing Act largely accounts for the comparative dearth of new plays and the numerous adaptations from old ones by such a manager as Garrick. To this must be added the consideration of the popularity of the novel, the new form of literature that so rapidly developed in an age emphasizing common sentiment. The legitimate drama moreover was itself not altogether certain of its channel. The romantic impulses showed the possibility of development in a direction largely new. For the most part, however, the form struggled under the weight of sentimentalism, an influence that reached its height within the period. Already the forces of revolt against it were gathering. The burlesque of Fielding was only the prelude to the encounter. The tearful and pathetic Muse had had her day and was soon to be driven from the scene by the more genuine comedy of Goldsmith and Sheridan.

CHAPTER X

GOLDSMITH AND SHERIDAN

74. Reaction from Sentimentalism.—For some years now sentimentalism had been regnant as an influence in the English Drama, and Richardson and Sterne had carried the impulse into the novel. The forces of reaction were gathering, however, and were soon to make themselves felt with no uncertain sound. We have already seen how such a man as Fielding burlesqued the tearful productions of his day; and even when he passed to the composition of his novels the great realist did not cease his attack. He, however, was mainly destructive. It remained for Oliver Goldsmith constructively to show the way to a healthier and saner comedy.

For some years those who favored the sentimental drama had dignified this by the word "genteel." Anything that dealt with common people, however rich might be its dramatic possibilities, was stigmatized as "low." Goldsmith first took up the cudgels of the attack in 1759, in the preface to *The Present State of Polite Learning.* Said he: "By the power of one single monosyllable our critics have almost got the victory over humour amongst us. Does the poet paint the absurdities of the vulgar; then he is *low;* does he exaggerate the features of folly, to render it more thoroughly ridiculous, he is then very *low.* In short, they have proscribed the comic or satirical muse from

every walk but high life, which, though abounding in fools as well as the humblest station, is by no means so fruitful in absurdity. Among well-bred fools we may despise much, but have little to laugh at; nature seems to present us with a universal blank of silk, ribbands, smiles, and whispers; absurdity is the poet's game, and good breeding is the nice concealment of absurdities." [1] More relentlessly did he return to the attack in 1772 after the rather cool reception given to his first play and before his second had as yet appeared before the public. In December of this year he contributed to the *Westminster Magazine, An Essay on the Theatre; or A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy,* in which he spoke in part as follows: "Comedy is defined by Aristotle to be a picture of the frailties of the lower part of mankind, to distinguish it from tragedy, which is an exhibition of the misfortunes of the great. When comedy, therefore, ascends to produce the characters of princes or generals upon the stage, it is out of its walks, since low life and middle life are entirely its object. The principal question, therefore, is, whether, in describing low or middle life, an exhibition of its follies be not preferable to a detail of its calamities? Or, in other words, which deserves the preference,—the weeping sentimental comedy so much in fashion at present, or the laughing, and even low comedy, which seems to have been last exhibited by Vanbrugh and Cibber? If we apply to authorities, all the great masters in the dramatic art have but one opinion. . . . Yet notwithstanding this weight of authority, and the universal practice of former ages, a new species of dramatic composition has been intro-

[1] See Dobson: Introduction to *The Good Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer,* xiii.

duced, under the name of sentimental comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our interest in the piece. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his foible. In these plays almost all the characters are good, and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their *tin* money on the stage; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at touching our passions without the power of being truly pathetic. In this manner we are likely to lose one great source of entertainment on the stage; for while the comic poet is invading the province of the tragic muse, he leaves her lovely sister quite neglected. Of this, however, he is no way solicitous, as he measures his fame by his profits. . . . But there is one argument in favour of sentimental comedy, which will keep it on the stage, in spite of all that can be said against it. It is, of all others, the most easily written. Those abilities that can hammer out a novel are quite sufficient for the production of a sentimental comedy. It is only sufficient to raise the characters a little; to deck out the hero with a riband, or give the heroine a title; then to put an insipid dialogue, without character or humour, into their mouths, give them mighty good hearts, very fine clothes, furnish a new set of scenes, make a pathetic scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation through the whole, and there is

doubt but all the ladies will cry, and all the gentlemen applaud."[2]

75. **Oliver Goldsmith.**—Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) has left to literature a legacy of singular charm. "Even his failings leaned to virtue's side;" and however much hackwork of his earlier years he might later have preferred to forget, however much his foibles excited the amusement or the sympathy of his friends, when he passed to the composition of his serious efforts he worked with a clear conception of the requirements of art and wrote with unfailing good taste. *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* show as do few other poems the narrow line between sentiment and sentimentality, while *The Vicar of Wakefield* is so clearly constructed that it can easily be made into a five-act play. His first drama, *The Good-Natured Man,* was offered to Colman at Covent Garden in 1767; but even though apparently accepted it had an exceedingly hard time in actually getting before the public.[3] Something of the manager's indifference communicated itself to the players, and Garrick, who as manager at Drury Lane had recently become reconciled with Colman, and who had on hand a new play, *False Delicacy,* for which he wished success, arrived at an understanding with Colman by which Goldsmith's play should not be produced until Kelly's had enjoyed a preliminary run. The result was that *False Delicacy* was produced January 23, 1768, and *The Good-Natured Man* not until six nights afterwards. As Colman feared would be the case with an audience attuned to sentimentality, special objection was raised to the bailiff scene in Act III, though the parts

[2] Quoted from Dobson's edition, 126-30.

[3] See Dobson's Introduction, x-xxi.

of Croaker and Lofty did not fail to impress the discerning. Goldsmith "was bitterly disappointed. Yet although his play ran but for nine nights, three of these brought him profits which reached to £400, to which the sale of the book, with the restored bailiff scene, added some £100 more. Compared with the success of *False Delicacy,* however, these returns were inconsiderable."

Five years passed before Goldsmith brought forth his second play. He was doubtless discouraged by the difficulties of actually getting a drama upon the stage; moreover he realized that sentimental comedy, while it might be despised, was a rival that could not be disregarded, for in the meantime Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771) had appeared. *She Stoops to Conquer,* though still unnamed, was evidently finished by the end of 1771. The manuscript was in Colman's hands early in the next year; but again ensued a long season of harassing waiting. At length Goldsmith wrote to Colman a moving appeal, to which the manager replied "by returning the manuscript, reiterating his intention to bring out the piece, but freely decorating the 'copy' with vexatious remarks and criticism." Deeply mortified, Goldsmith, with no great hope, sent it on as it was to Garrick. Johnson, however, with his usual kindness, now intervened, had the manuscript hastily withdrawn from Garrick's hands, and himself went to see Colman, with the result that the play was at last produced March 15, 1773. Colman still was not enthusiastic, however; one after another of the actors had given up their parts; and further embarrassment had been caused by the author's uncertainty about the title. *The Belle's Stratagem* (a title afterwards used by Mrs. Cowley) and *The Old House, A New Inn* were among the suggestions,

while still a third one was *The Mistakes of a Night.* Finally recalling a line from Dryden, "But kneels to conquer, and yet stoops to rise," Goldsmith decided on *She Stoops to Conquer,* with *The Mistakes of a Night* as a subtitle. With such handicaps it was only by dint of sheer merit that the play succeeded on its opening night and thus began its triumphant progress through English theatrical history.

She Stoops to Conquer is one of the landmarks of English comedy. The play was primarily based upon an episode in the author's life, his mistaking of a private house for an inn while still a youth in his native Ireland. The tying of Mr. Hardcastle's wig to a chair was taken from a trick that had been played on Goldsmith himself while he was writing the play. The weak points in the comedy, which on one hand has similarities with Farquhar's play and on the other with Mrs. Cowley's, the critics were not long in finding. The play abounds in farcial elements, in improbabilities and inconsistencies; Tony Lumpkin, for instance, who is so illiterate as not to be able to read more than his own name in script, is clever enough to have composed the excellent song of "The Three Pigeons." [4] All shortcomings, however, recede before the abounding good humor and high spirits of the play. Mr. Hardcastle's old-fashioned courtesy, Diggory's unconscious humor, and Tony Lumpkin's little designs were all warm-hearted and genuine, and even in the eighteenth century could relieve the commonplace qualities of other characters that were more conventional.

76. Richard Brinsley Sheridan.—The attack that Gold-

[4] The remark is to be credited originally to Dobson, Introduction, xxviii.

smith had begun upon sentimentalism was carried still further by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), who differed, however, from his contemporary in his emphasis on high comedy. Goldsmith recalled Farquhar; Sheridan was the heir of Congreve. He was the son of brilliant parents, his father being an actor and a fashionable teacher of oratory, while his mother, beautiful and charming in manner, was accomplished with her pen and herself wrote a play, *The Discovery.* Under highly romantic circumstances he married the attractive singer and belle of the day, Elizabeth Linley, the daughter of a fashionable teacher of music; and now face to face with the problem of supporting a wife he turned to the business of playwriting. "Like Goldsmith, he reverted to classical comedy and chose, as the basis of his plot, the marriage conflict between parent and child which had come down from Terence through Italian and French theatres. A father and an aunt arrange a suitable marriage for their respective son and niece, while the young people have already chosen for themselves. Out of this hackneyed situation he extracted the equally hackneyed humors of mistaken identity and of domestic discord, but with a dramatic sense which borders on genius." [5] *The Rivals* appeared at Covent Garden January 17, 1775. The play did not succeed at first; it was not well performed and was altogether too long. Revision, however, greatly improved it and then it met with the success it deserved.[6] The rivals are of course

[5] Routh: "The Georgian Drama," *C. H. E. L.*, XI, 294.

[6] It is an open question, however, if for acting purposes it was not capable of still further revision; see, for instance, account of Joseph Jefferson's version in Nettleton: *Major Dramas of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 323-25.

one and the same person, the gallant young lover who has introduced himself to the heroine as Ensign Beverly instead of the heir of Sir Anthony Absolute that he really is. Complication arises when the young man's father appears on the scene bent on having him married at once in his own person. Lydia Languish, who has sentimentally looked forward to an elopement and to the loss of her fortune with delight, is naturally disappointed when she finds that she is still to be well-to-do and conventional. Sir Anthony, with his fits of temper, Mrs. Malaprop, with her distinctive vocabulary, and Bob Acres with his swagger might have had prototypes but were nevertheless irresistibly effective in their own persons. A society that prided itself on its grace and sophistication, and that smiled at those who fell short of its ideals, enjoyed the play and gave it full approval.

Sheridan naturally desired to follow up his first success as quickly as possible. On May 2 he sought to amuse the public with a short farce, *St. Patrick's Day*. Much more important than this, however, was *The Duenna,* a comic opera on the libretto of which Sheridan had lavished some of his best effort and for which his father-in-law had written the music. The work was produced in November, and was a tremendous success, being given no less than seventy-five performances in its first season and surpassing even the famous run of *The Beggar's Opera.* Sheridan, now at the age of twenty-four, was acclaimed as the foremost English writer of comedy of the day.

"Garrick, rendered uneasy by these successes at the rival house of Covent Garden, revenged himself effectually in 1775 by parting with his half-share of the patent at Drury Lane to a syndicate, at the head of which was

Sheridan." [7] The post of manager of London's most famous theatre that the young dramatist now assumed was one that he was to hold with varying success for most of the rest of his life. An early attempt, however, to remodel Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* under a new title practically failed. Something was needed and needed immediately to repair the loss of Garrick. Sheridan rose to the occasion with *The School for Scandal* (May 8, 1777), generally considered his masterpiece.

This play, like *The Rivals,* seems to have been the result of Sheridan's acquaintance with fashionable society at Bath. The careful construction of the play at once elicited favorable comment. Especially praised was the situation, in the fourth act, where Sir Peter discovers Lady Teazle in Joseph Surface's study. The test of time has fully confirmed the praise thus bestowed on the "screen scene." "It remains not merely the most notable scene in the English comedy of manners, but one of the masterpieces of English dramatic art. Only less noteworthy are the 'picture scene' in the house of Charles Surface, the scandal scenes, and the conversations between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. Though more dependent upon the wit of the dialogue, they brilliantly illustrate Sheridan's dramatic skill." [8]

Sheridan's next production was *The Critic* (October 30, 1779), a burlesque on the general order of *The Rehearsal* originally produced as an afterpiece. In this play with his usual success he not only satirized sentimentalism and such a contemporary character as the sensitive and jealous Cumberland ("Sir Fretful Plagiary"), but with a masterhand swept the entire range of dramatic absurdity.

[7] Seccombe, 216.

[8] Nettleton, 303.

"It is the triumph of sheer wit over the usual transitoriness of burlesque."

After these successes, when a brilliant career as a dramatist seemed all before him, Sheridan suddenly shifted his chief interest to politics, becoming within the next twenty years one of the most famous orators in Parliament. This participation in public life naturally led to more or less neglect of Drury Lane, which for a while was saved from disaster only by the work of a group of unusually able performers. In 1798 and 1799 Sheridan temporarily saved the situation by two adaptations from the German of Kotzebue, *The Strangers* and *Pizarro*. In 1791, however, the theatre had been condemned as unsafe and had to be reconstructed at great expense; in 1809 it was totally destroyed with heavy personal loss to the manager. When it was rebuilt new officials took charge and Sheridan was forced to retire. Other troubles had already come to him —domestic, financial, political. He passed away at sixty-five and was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey. Neither he nor Goldsmith founded a school. He himself was but the last and the most brilliant representative of the comedy of manners that had become so popular in the Restoration era, and that had had such a long tradition in English dramatic annals.

77. **Close of the Century.**—The latter part of the eighteenth century was hardly a period favorable to the composition of plays. For a longer time than ever before or since the drama sank beneath the dignity of literature. Much of the explanation of this is to be found in the larger forces at work in the life of the English people. The age was primarily democratic and industrial, and far removed from the nationalistic ideals of Elizabeth. Not

kings and queens, or heroes and heroines, but common men and women were chiefly of interest. Accordingly the country launched upon a great era of social and political reform. Howard worked for the improvement of prisons, Wilberforce and other abolitionists began their agitation, and the decade 1790-1800 witnessed the founding of numerous missionary and philanthropic societies. Some offset to these Whig tendencies might have been found in romanticism; but this impulse had not yet risen to its height, nor had the theories and ideas of liberty crystallized into drama.

In such an era of discussion and reform the drama no longer fulfilled the function it once performed. In the age of Elizabeth the playhouse monopolized the attention of the world of fashion. Now, however, it had to compete with the novel, the newspaper, the opera, and all the other media of enlightenment and entertainment. The drama itself moreover had now built up a tradition and a literature that kept many away from the theatre. The scholar, hardly attracted by the current offerings of the stage, turned to the perusal of the older dramatists in the study. In an age of increasing criticism, largely of Shakespeare, Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was easily most eminent. Years before (1749) he had offered to Garrick, and Garrick had accepted, a rather lifeless tragedy, *Irene,* a story of the temptation placed before a Greek maiden by the offer of a throne rejected by the loyal Aspasia. In spite of considerable effort, as a dramatist and poet Johnson did not quite succeed in winning the laurels he sought; he was to win a fame far more enduring, however, by the critical efforts that very often he thought ephemeral.

Within the theatre itself moreover developed forces that hardly promoted the composition of serious drama. From what has been said it is evident that the stage was maintained in the latter part of the century only by the more fashionable part of the population. The play became a society function; Garrick, Macklin, Foote, and Mrs. Siddons were discussed in the parlors of the "bluestockings;" and polite conversation considered the relative merits of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Nor was the situation improved by the sentimentalism that in varying forms was still cultivated, or by the "bullies" of the day who were tolerated and who frequently browbeat the actors. The chief force in making the drama less intellectual, however, was the emphasis placed on scenery and costume, the effect of which was not unlike that at the present day. "In the days of Quin, the characters appeared in a conventional dress, incongruous to us because unfamiliar, which raised the actors above the limitations of actual existence and made them denizens of the suggestive stage-world. But when Garrick played Macbeth in a scarlet and gold military uniform and dressed Hotspur in a laced frock and Ramillies wig, he was introducing realism, which destroyed the universality of the characters; so that, after two generations of the new tradition, neither Lamb nor Hazlitt could endure to see Shakespeare acted; and Goethe, at a time when the picture stage had firm hold of Germany, regarded Shakespeare more as a poet to be read in seclusion than as a dramatist to be appreciated in the theatre." [9]

Some names, however, of those who wrote plays within the period are deserving at least of passing mention and

[9] Routh, *C. H. E. L.*, XI, 314.

sometimes of further remark. Hannah More (1745-1833), most famous for her work in education and religion, as a dramatist was strongest in *Percy* (1777) and *The Fatal Falsehood* (1779). In the first of these plays she availed herself of the new taste for romanticism; in both, however, she discussed topics of interest in her day. Mrs. Hannah Cowley (1743-1809), a successful writer of comedy, began her work with a sentimental play, *The Runaway* (1776), but soon shifted to the comedy of humor and episode. "In *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780), Laetitia Hardy, to be sure of winning the affections of her betrothed, first disgusts him by pretending to be a hoyden and then, while disguised at a masquerade, conquers his heart by her real charms." Stronger perhaps than other playwrights of the period, however, was General John Burgoyne (1722-1792), who before going to America produced a classical comedy of the old school, *The Maid of the Oaks* (1774), and who on his return again proceeded to work in a field in which he had long been interested and wrote *The Heiress* (1786). This play "won a fortune and was preferred by some critics to *The School for Scandal*. . . . [It] has the unusual merit of combining the features of a comedy of manners with those of a comedy of pathos." Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), who was of the circle of Godwin and Paine, introduces something of his social theory in *The Road to Ruin* (1792) and *The Deserted Daughter* (1795). Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), who knew well the life of the theatre, was singularly successful in adapting her work to popular taste. *I'll Tell You What* (1784) was especially well constructed; *Such Things Are* (1787) deftly makes use of Howard's agitation for prison reform; *Wives as They Were* (1797),

"a study of a pleasure-loving girl in high society whose nobler qualities are gradually developed by the influence of her father in disguise," was afterwards elaborated into the strong novel, *A Simple Story;* and *Every one Has his Fault* (1793) is a domestic play of ill-sorted marriage. George Colman, the younger (1762-1836), has an interesting place in the history of the English drama. "Toward the end of the eighteenth century the rage for dumb show and musical additions invaded the regular drama. Even Kotzebue [10] had to be decked out with songs and choruses. . . . This species seems to have been mainly due to the ingenuity of George Colman. Those of his plays verging on tragedy, of which *The Battle of Hexham* (1789), *The Surrender of Calais* (1791), *The Mountaineers* (1793), and *The Iron Chest* (1796) are the chief, are lively medleys of tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce. . . . In his use of all the well-worn motives of serious drama and his constant imitation of Shakespearean and Elizabethan diction, Colman displays remarkable as well as the most cheerful effrontery. . . . He popularized, vulgarized, and musicalized the great traditions of English tragedy, and passed them along to the nineteenth century as the possession of the illegitimate drama." [11]

[10] See next section, 78.

[11] Thorndike: *Tragedy,* 333-34.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA: ROMANTICISM

78. Era of Romanticism.—Important as furnishing a background for the drama are the theatrical conditions that obtained in London in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. We have seen that in the last period the theatres were primarily frequented by a special group in society, though as time went on one heard more and more about "illegitimate" playhouses. The fact is that the theatres were still officially under the control of the court; and the Lord Chamberlain recognized only the two "patent" theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and the one in the Haymarket. When near the turn of the century the people in greater numbers began to attend the playhouses, these three theatres proved to be altogether inadequate for the demands of a city as large as London, though the first two were enlarged until they were really enormous in size. Accordingly, in defiance of the law, there arose various other theatres which were not supposed to encroach on the field of the legitimate drama, but with emphasis on music and dancing and other features to correspond rather to the modern "variety" or vaudeville houses. In spite of all the uncertainty as to their existence, however, these theatres with increasing assurance offered to their patrons the regular drama until in 1843 they were formally legalized.

With the entrance of the people at large into the theatres

there developed an emphasis on sensational incident which the impulse of romanticism, now at its height, was only too willing to satisfy. A new species of play, melodrama (from the French *mélodrame*), came into existence. "The peculiar novelties of the *mélodrame* were the supplementing of the dialogue by a large amount of dumb-show and the accompaniment of both dialogue and dumb-show by descriptive orchestral music; otherwise, with its songs, sensations, and mechanical devices, it resembled the preceding musical drama of Colman and others. . . . The term *melodrama* ceased after a time to denote the peculiar species brought from France in 1802, and came to be applied to all plays depending for effect on situation, sensation, or machinery, rather than characterization."[1] The origins of romanticism itself of course go back to the preceding century, and for the present purpose importance attaches especially to the "Gothic" romance of Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe. "Walpole himself wrote an unacted play, *The Mysterious Mother,* in 1768, which is not an unworthy companion of *The Castle of Otranto,* itself adapted for the stage and acted in 1781, as *The Count of Narbonne.* Other 'Gothic tragedies' are Robert Jephson's *Braganza,* 1775, which boasts itself, in the prologue, as 'warm from Shakespeare's school,' his *Julia,* 1787, a very popular play, the scene of which is Elizabethan England, and Cumberland's *Carmelite,* 1784; and all preceded the German romantic influence."[2] All other single influences, however, were secondary to that of the German Kotzebue, who about the years 1797-1801 had a vogue such as perhaps has never been equaled in the history of the English theatre. This dramatist attacked the

[1] Thorndike, 334-36. [2] Schelling: *English Drama,* 312.

English stage at its weak point, sentimentality, and more than a score of his productions were rapidly translated. Even Sheridan, as we have seen, yielded to the demand of the moment, and within twelve years *Pizarro* passed through twenty-nine editions. "The phenomenal fortune of Kotzebue in England has been attributed to several causes. In the first place he is a consummate master of stagecraft and often as witty as he is clever. Secondly, he appealed strongly to the prevailing love of the sentimental from which English drama seems never to have been able to shake itself free; and this appeal is given a wider social and political character which fell in thoroughly with the democratic and humanitarian temper of the moment."[3] For at least one season, that of 1797-98, *The Castle Spectre* of M. G. Lewis, with its emphasis on terror and mediaevalism, was a serious rival of the works of Kotzebue; but the underlying appeal was of course largely the same.

This was the period of Scott, whose poetry was for a number of years singularly successful in satisfying the taste of the public; and one has only to recall the great critics of the day to know that at the time there was much genuine appreciation of the best that was to be found in the national literature. Lamb issued his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808), Gifford brought out a new edition of Jonson in nine volumes (1816), Coleridge wrote *Biographia Literaria* (1817), and Hazlitt produced such works as *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). In a period of uncertainty in the creative drama moreover, some actors of the highest order of merit appeared. Easily foremost were Sarah Siddons (1755-

[3] Schelling, 313.

1831) and Edmund Kean (1787-1833); and the efforts of such performers as these in behalf of the poetic drama, as well as of William Macready (1793-1873) at a somewhat later period, can hardly be overestimated.

The word of three representative men, taken together, may best give an impression of enlightened opinion of the drama in the period. Said Jeffrey: "Of the old English dramatists, then, including under this name (besides Shakespeare) Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Jonson, Ford, Shirley, Webster, Dekker, Field, and Rowley, it may be said, in general, that they are more poetical, and more original in their diction, than the dramatists of any other age or country. Their scenes abound more in varied images, and gratuitous excursions of fancy. Their illustrations, and figures of speech, are more borrowed from rural life, and from the simple occupations or universal feelings of mankind. They are not confined to a certain range of dignified expressions, nor restricted to a particular assortment of imagery, beyond which it is not lawful to look for embellishments."[4] Hazlitt, however, with his usual frankness showed that intelligent appreciation on the part of the public had yet a long way to go. Said he: "It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old English literature; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition than the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful; our love cold; and knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote, but we are shy of looking into their works."[5] Something of a still more aristo-

[4] Review of Weber's "The Dramatic Works of Ford," *Edinburgh Review*, August, 1811.

[5] Lecture I in *Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth.*

cratic point of view, and one that had much to justify it, was expressed by Byron.[6] This brilliant poet, as a young satirist, showed no sympathy with the performances of Master Betty, "the infant Roscius," was repelled by the extravagances of romanticism, and in a noteworthy passage in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (ll. 560-607) plead for a truer national drama:

> Now to the Drama turn—Oh! motley sight!
> What precious scenes the wondering eyes invite!
> Puns, and a prince within a barrel pent,
> And Dibdin's nonsense yield complete content.
> Though now, thank Heaven! the Rosciomania's o'er,
> And full-grown actors are endured once more;
> Yet what avail their vain attempts to please,
> While British critics suffer scenes like these, . . .
> Who but must mourn, while these are all the rage,
> The degradation of our vaunted stage!
> Heavens! is all sense of shame and talent gone?
> Have we no living bard of merit?—None!
> Awake, George Colman! Cumberland, awake!
> Ring the alarum bell! let folly quake!
> Oh, Sheridan! if aught can move thy pen,
> Let Comedy assume her throne again;
> Abjure the mummery of the German schools;
> Leave new Pizarros to translating fools;
> Give, as thy last memorial to the age,
> One classic drama, and reform the stage.

79. "Closet Drama."—In spite then of the very genuine interest of such men as Lamb and Hazlitt in the standard English drama, it is quite evident that the art of playwriting was at rather a low ebb in the first quarter of the century. The licensing act of 1737 had not encouraged production; moreover under the influence not only of

[6] See in general Chew: *The Relation of Lord Byron to Drama of the Romantic Period.*

Jeremy Collier but also of the Wesleyan revival a very sober and responsible element of the nation had drawn away from the stage. Many of these very men, however, with something of the spirit of well-poised and cultured Puritans, greatly delighted in the reading of the old masters. Some writers moreover, in the desire to reach a more thoughtful public, deliberately wrote dramas with no thought of ever seeing them actually produced on the stage. Thus arose the "closet drama."

To this class of plays belongs most of the dramatic work of the great poets of the era, though occasionally of course a production witnessed actual performance. Scott wrote *The House of Aspen,* which was actually put in rehearsal, and *The Doom of Devorgoil,* which was intended as a melodrama; but no one of his other plays—*Halidon Hill, Macduff's Cross,* and *Auchindrane*—was intended for the stage. Also under the German influence (of Schiller rather than Kotzebue, however) Wordsworth wrote *The Borderers* and Coleridge *Osorio.* The first of these plays—the reflection of a mood of pessimism and the story of the subjection of the magnanimous Marmaduke to the villainous Oswald—was offered and refused at Covent Garden in 1798; though Coleridge's play, refused at Drury Lane in this same year, later saw production under the name of *Remorse* (1813), and was sufficiently successful to lead to a temporary revival of the poetic drama. Southey and Coleridge together wrote *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794), and in the same year Southey wrote *Wat Tyler,* though this did not appear until 1817. Influenced by his reading in the Elizabethans, Lamb wrote a tragedy, *John Woodvil,* which was offered to Charles Kemble in 1799 and published in 1802. Landor wrote *Count Julian*

(1812), and Keats in 1819 designed for Kean *Otho the Great,* a play to which he attached great hopes but which never saw performance. Shelley, inspired by Guido's portrait of Beatrice Cenci in the Colonna palace, and having in mind Eliza O'Neill, the great tragic actress at Covent Garden, wrote *The Cenci* (1820). The play has as its central theme Shelley's favorite one of resistance to tyranny, and in its conception of the heroine has marks of undoubted power; dealing with a current and well-known story of parricide, however, it was not unnaturally refused by the manager. Byron expressed his powerful personality in *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821), and if along with these dramatic poems we take *Sardanapalus*—the story of a dissolute but aspiring hero and his "better angel" Myrrha—we shall have the poet's characteristic productions. It was the irony of fate, however, that he should be most successful in the type of drama at which he sneered. *Werner* (1822), a play built on one of Harriet Lee's novels, was an experiment in the drama of horror; produced in 1830 it proved to be one of the most successful plays of the period. Two Venetian plays, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari,* were professedly modeled on Alfieri but were actually reminiscent of Otway. *Marino Faliero,* over Byron's protest, was presented for six nights in 1821 at Drury Lane, but failed, as the author predicted it would. *Manfred* remains the representative production of a poet who was subjective and lyric rather than dramatic in his genius.

The effort of these great poets in the field of the drama was but representative of the striving of the period. Perhaps the greatest example of diligence at the time was Joanna Baillie, who in 1798 began the publication of her

Plays of the Passions, her ultimate purpose being to illustrate each one of the dominant human passions by a tragedy and a comedy. She kept at her task until 1812 and produced altogether twenty-eight pieces. In a preface to her first group of plays she set forth her theory of the drama, intending to trace a single passion from its beginning to the final ruin, with recognition of the fact that passion arises from within, without the necessary aid of any external stimulus. "This absorption with a study of emotion *per se* led to a subordination of plot and all external incident, and—so she proposed—all poetic embellishment, to a searching study of isolated passion. Her first volume attracted attention, and Kemble and Mrs. Siddons played *De Montfort*, but without success."[7]

80. Late Georgian Dramatists.—In the *London Magazine* for April, 1820, Hazlitt proved "very satisfactorily and without fear of contradiction, that no modern author could write a tragedy."[8] The age, he thought, was "critical, didactic, paradoxical, romantic," but not dramatic. Hardly since Home's *Douglas,* he declared, had a good tragedy been written. Nevertheless, if there was no good new English tragedy, it was not because there was not sufficient effort to disprove what Hazlitt had said. A few of the more prominent authors of the period are mentioned herewith. In the general connection hardly too much emphasis can be placed upon the work of Macready, who again and again proved himself a great sponsor for the poetic drama. Among other things this distinguished

[7] Thorndike, 340.

[8] For the reference we are indebted to H. Child: "Nineteenth Century Drama," *C. H. E. L.*, XIII. To the same article the chapter is largely indebted for the discussion of Sheil, as well as some other things.

actor has to his credit the fact that he was the first to give recognition to the dramatic work of Knowles, Bulwer-Lytton, and Browning.

The work of Charles Wells and Thomas Lovell Beddoes at the beginning of the decade of the reign of George IV (1820-1830) belongs primarily to the field of the "closet drama." Wells is remembered for *Joseph and his Brethren* (1823), which passed practically unnoticed at the time of its first appearance, but which was greatly praised by Rossetti and Swinburne for its poetic beauty fifty years later, and revised. Beddoes, distinguished for his imagination and his wealth of imagery, was influenced by the Elizabethans, especially Marlowe and Webster, and also by the Germans and by Shelley and Keats. *The Bride's Tragedy,* published in 1822 when the author was still a student at Oxford, is a work of unusual fascination and power. *Death's Jest-Book* was printed long afterwards (1851) and again exhibited Beddoes's peculiar quality.

Richard Lalor Sheil (1791-1851), probably more famous for his work in the public life of the nation than as a dramatist, first produced *Adelaide, or The Emigrants,* a story of the French Revolution, which was played in Dublin in 1814 and for one night only in Covent Garden, being severely attacked by Hazlitt because of its French royalist leanings. A second tragedy, *The Apostate* (Covent Garden, 1817), was somewhat more successful, but also received Hazlitt's disapproval because of the too great violence and horror of its situations. *Bellamira, or The Fall of Tunis* (Covent Garden, 1818) is the author's best play, but again the success was primarily theatrical rather than truly dramatic. Somewhat more artistic—natu-

rally, one might say, as it was built on Shirley's *The Traitor*—was *Evadne, or The Statue* (1819). *Montoni* (1820) was extravagant in incident though it contained some good verse; and *The Huguenot* (written 1819, but produced two or three years later) exhibited some of Sheil's characteristic extravagances, and was a practical failure. A revision of John Banim's *Damon and Pythias,* however, was much more successful than any of his own plays.

Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824), an Irish clergyman, in 1816 and 1817 produced three tragedies—*Bertram, or The Castle of St. Aldobrond, Manuel,* and *Fredolfo* —all in the highest vein of "Gothicism" and the German drama of Kotzebue. Maturin had considerable sensitiveness to beauty and genuine poetic quality, and his *Bertram* was especially successful. Hazlitt, however, the mentor of the drama at the time, said of this play as of others, "There is no action; there is neither cause nor effect. . . . The passion described does not arise naturally out of the previous circumstances, nor lead necessarily to the consequences that follow;" and time has justified his opinion.

Somewhat surer in touch was Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), afterwards dean of St. Paul's and distinguished as scholar and historian, who sought inspiration in the Elizabethan tradition rather than in a more extravagant romanticism. His plays include *Fazio* (published 1815, produced 1818), whose superb acting qualities kept it on the stage for three decades, *The Fall of Jerusalem* (1820), *The Martyr of Antioch* (1822), *Belshazzar* (1822), noteworthy for its good lyrics, and *Anne Boleyn* (1826), unfortunately marred by an extreme desire to make out a case for Protestantism against Roman Catholi-

cism. Milman wrote with intelligence and good taste, and fully deserved the measure of success he received.

Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855), also well known as a novelist, had a great desire to excel in the field of the poetic drama, and after two or three earlier efforts produced at least one highly successful play *Rienzi* (1828). This contained a passage, Rienzi's address to the Romans, which became a famous selection for declamation throughout the century. An interesting sidelight on the English stage within the period is thrown by the career of the American, John Howard Payne, in some of whose work at least Kean performed.[9]

81. James Sheridan Knowles.—Stronger on the whole than the dramatists just mentioned was James Sheridan

[9] See Quinn: "The Early Drama, 1756-1860," in *Cambridge History of American Literature*, Vol. I. This is the most authoritative discussion of the subject that has yet appeared. Dr. Quinn, who is Dean of the College and Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, has further popularized the study of the drama in America by his collection of twenty-five plays for college use, *Representative American Plays* (The Century Co., New York, 1917). Of this and related works note review, "The American Drama: A Survey," by Archibald Henderson, *Sewanee Review*, April, 1918. Note also important three-volume collection for library service, Moses: *Representative Plays by American Dramatists* (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1918). In the early period importance attaches to the work of William Dunlap (1766-1839), who wrote or adapted not less than fifty plays and in 1833 published an authoritative two-volume *History of the American Theatre*. Edwin Forrest (1806-72), contemporary with Macready, greatly encouraged native American effort and touched the life of the English stage in more ways than one. The American drama of the last sixty years, including the work of such men as Bronson Howard, Denman Thompson, James A. Herne, David Belasco, Clyde Fitch, Augustus Thomas, Charles Klein, William Gillette, William Vaughn Moody, Percy Mackaye, and Edward Sheldon, is of course a study in itself.

Knowles (1784-1862), a descendant of Sheridan on his mother's side. This playwright in the main sought to purge the poetic drama of the extravagances of German romanticism, and in this he succeeded. He was not well paid for his work, however, and accordingly he not only tried several professions and occupations but also gave attention to tragedy, romantic comedy, domestic plays, melodrama, and any other kind of work that for the moment would seem to succeed. Prominent among his sixteen plays were the tragedies, *Virginius* (1820), *Caius Gracchus* (produced 1823, though written earlier), and *William Tell* (1825). The first two of these plays are famous for their declamation, and into them—probably under the influence of the era of social reform in which he lived—Knowles introduced a new consciousness of class distinction. In *William Tell* one can see still more the work of social revolution. In such plays as these Knowles did away with the high-sounding words of the old romanticism, used simpler diction, and in general let his situations arise out of his subject and characters. This he did at the same time that his imagination and versification were commonplace, and his work even frequently careless; and assisted by the acting of Helen Faucit and Macready, he almost restored the poetic drama to its old dignity. For the moment, however, his comedies were even more successful than his tragedies. Special popularity attached to a rather heavy play, *The Hunchback* (1832), but *The Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green, The Love Chase,* and *Old Maids* were also well received.

82. **Edward Bulwer-Lytton.**—In the very early years of the Victorian era Knowles was surpassed in popularity only by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), one of the

most remarkable figures in the political, social, and literary life of England in the nineteenth century. His versatility and industry were amazing. He tried many things and narrowly missed greatness in all of them. An aristocrat and a man of fashion, he made in Parliament a more than respectable showing; one who veered with the wind in fiction, he wrote in *The Last Days of Pompeii* one of the best historical novels in the national literature; an amateur and a dilettante in the drama, he yet wrote the most popular romantic play of the century. He was, however, unfortunately rooted in emotionalism and rhetoric; he seldom went below the surface of his art; and the air of ostentation and superiority that he assumed not only irritated his contemporaries but have also invited undue belittlement at the hands of later critics.

Aside from his two most famous productions the list of Bulwer-Lytton's plays includes the titles, *The Duchess de la Vallière* (1837), *Not so Bad as we Seem* (1851), *Money* (1840), *The Rightful Heir* (1868), *Walpole,* and the unfinished *Darnley.* His reputation rests, however, on *The Lady of Lyons* (1838) and *Richelieu, or The Conspiracy* (1839). The first of these two plays has been criticized again and again for its tawdry imagery, its false taste, and its sentimentality; but it was full of life and in Claude Melnotte and Pauline Deschappelles furnished Macready and Helen Faucit with excellent acting parts. Similarly *Richelieu,* while possessing little historical faithfulness, exhibited much clever artistry and has furnished to many great actors a medium for their art. Verily to Bulwer-Lytton must be accorded the tribute of actual success.

83. Robert Browning.—What Bulwer-Lytton lacked—

characterization, an earnest searching of human motive, and a perception of deeper dramatic values—was possessed by the great poet, Robert Browning (1812-1889), who in turn lacked the very things that made Bulwer-Lytton successful—intrigue, stagecraft, and the secret of immediate appeal to an audience. His first play, *Strafford,* written at the request of Macready, was produced at Covent Garden May 1, 1837, and won a fair measure of success. The powerful dramatic poem, *Pippa Passes* (published as No. I of *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1841), contains sufficient material not only for one but for four plays, and in the searching scene between Ottima and Sebald leaves no doubt of Browning's power when he is working clearly. *King Victor and King Charles* (No. II of *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1842) and *The Return of the Druses* (No. IV in series, 1843) were both considered by Macready unavailable for stage production; but *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (No. V in series, 1843) was written at the request of the actor-manager, with whom unfortunately it led to a misunderstanding. This remarkable production excels others of Browning's plays in the tenseness of its situations, its rapid action, and its brisk dialogue. The central theme—that of the problem before an older brother whose young sister has sinned is firmly kept in mind by the dramatist, who here along with his knowledge of human motive and play of passion shows a stagecraft beyond his wont. At the same time the play is built upon one or two highly questionable situations, so that fundamentally " it violates the tact both of the theatre and of life." [10] While it was given with some measure of success for a few nights, one critic considered it a " most

[10] Dickinson: *The Contemporary Drama of England,* 23-24.

faulty play" and another as a "puzzling and unpleasant business." Next followed *Colombe's Birthday* (No. VI in *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1844), which also gave rise to some misunderstandings, this time with Charles Kean, Macready's real successor on the stage, so that it did not see production until it was brought out by Phelps at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in Islington in 1853. This play is in many ways one of Browning's greatest achievements and has an especially strong hero, Valence; at the same time it was not a stage success. *A Soul's Tragedy* (forming with *Luria* No. VIII of *Bells and Pomegranates,* 1846) is simply a psychological study in two acts, and *Luria* seems to have been written with no thought at all of stage production. Thus one of the most truly dramatic poets that England ever had, witnessed only a slight measure of success in the acted drama, so that his real achievement has given rise to endless discussion and comment.

84. **Alfred Tennyson.**—Less dramatic than Browning, but by the irony of fate more successful, was the laureate, Tennyson (1809-1892), who with others of the period marks the passing of the romantic tradition. Tennyson was essentially a lyric poet; nevertheless he was intensely interested in English history, occasionally (as in "Rizpah") he exhibited dramatic force in his poems, and, aided by the art of Irving and Terry, at least one of his ambitious productions was a noteworthy success. Altogether he wrote seven plays. *Queen Mary* (printed 1875) was produced by Irving at the Lyceum Theatre in 1876. *Harold* (published 1876, dated 1877) did not appear on the stage. *Becket* (formally published 1884) was refused in 1879 by Irving, who in 1891, however, asked leave to produce the play and used it with great success. *The Falcon,* in

only one act, was produced by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at the St. James Theatre in December, 1879, and had a run of sixty-seven nights. *The Cup,* in two acts, was produced by Irving in January, 1881, and ran for a hundred and thirty nights. *The Promise of May,* in three acts, was produced at the Globe Theatre in November, 1882, and, while severely condemned by the critics, ran for five weeks. *The Foresters,* in four acts, was given at Daly's Theatre in New York in March, 1892, and with Ada Rehan as Maid Marian was an unqualified success.

In the trilogy of historical plays, as the poet notes in his Memoirs (II, 173), is portrayed the making of England. In *Harold* is set forth the "great conflict between Danes, Saxons, and Normans for supremacy, the awakening of the English people and clergy from the slumber into which they had for the most part fallen, and the forecast of the greatness of our composite race." In *Becket* is shown the age-long struggle between the Church and the Crown; in *Queen Mary* the downfall of Roman Catholicism in England and the dawning of a new age. All three plays awaken many technical questions. *Harold* in plan seems to be somewhat clearer than the others. The play opens brilliantly with a comet foretelling war, and in the first act lays down three main threads of story: (1) the strife between Harold and Tostig; (2) Harold's determination to go to Normandy in spite of Edward's advice not to do so; and (3) the plotting of Aldwyth, the designing widow of a Welsh king whom Harold has defeated. The fourth act employs the element of suspense in the victory at Stamford Bridge, but is otherwise unfortunate; there is frequent imitation of Shakespeare throughout the play; the characters are strangely self-conscious;

and the last act misses a strong opportunity for action when it has Stigand simply describe to Edith the events of the Battle of Hastings. *Queen Mary* uses a multitude of characters, and the first act presents at least four threads of action which are to be woven together. The overwhelming prominence of Wyatt's insurrection in the second act, however, and of the matter of Cranmer in the fourth, is not always clear in relation to the main theme; moreover the chief characters seem rather to be acted upon than to act. *Becket* attempted to combine two things which could not be brought into the same play without a violation of unity—Henry II's political life, in which Becket was prominent, and his romantic and domestic life, in which Rosamund de Clifford was the center of interest. In the opening game of chess, however, it has one of Tennyson's very strongest situations.

The minor plays were on the whole more successful than the trilogy, though by no means always above criticism. *The Falcon* used a well-known story from Boccaccio. While it was a stage success, the central incident of the cooking of a pet bird is too poignant to be permanently pleasing, and the story seems best adapted not for the drama but for the form that Longfellow has given it in *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. *The Cup* was based on a story from Plutarch. The unholy passion of the ex-tetrarch Synorix, and the faithfulness of the matron Camma to her husband Sinnatus, are both strongly set forth, and in various ways the dramatist here shows excellence in technique. *The Promise of May,* however, was unfortunate in theme. The opinions of the principal man are such as to arouse opposition in almost any English or American audience, and the plan to have this character ruin one sister and

five years afterwards pay court to another, is something of an imposition upon credulity. If we can overlook such things as these, however, we shall find much excellent workmanship. *The Foresters,* once more placing on the stage the tradition of Robin Hood, and aided by an astute manager and capable performers, fully deserved the success it achieved.

85. Other Mid-century Dramatists.—The middle of the century, however, was on the whole a very uncertain period in the history of the drama. Romanticism was passing, but between tragedy and melodrama, adaptation and farce, hardly any one could tell just whither things were drifting. The chaotic conditions were due most largely perhaps to the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 legalizing the "illegitimate" playhouses; the old theatres no longer had a monopoly and the newer ones that had come into existence hardly throve under the far-reaching power of the Lord Chamberlain's censorship. A rather crude form of domestic play seemed to suit the popular taste better than anything else, and in general any force to combine all classes in the development of a national drama was lacking.

To the field of the closet drama belong the poetic plays of Richard Hengist Horne (1803-1884). *Cosmo de Medici* (1837), a tragedy in five acts, has a plot that strangely reminds one of Otway. Two brothers fall into a fatal quarrel. The murderer attempts to conceal the deed which he hardly intended to commit, but is killed by his father, who himself afterwards dies theatrically. *The Death of Marlowe* (1837), *Gregory VII* (1840), and *Judas Iscariot* (1848) all have their marks of power.

With something of the quality of George Lillo, John

Westland Marston (1819-1890) attempted to bring tragedy to the plane of contemporary life. *The Patrician's Daughter* (1842) has a singularly clear plot and one that touched very vitally the English life of the day. An able man of affairs of humble rank is cultivated for political reasons by a family of aristocratic birth. In course of time he aspires to the hand of "the patrician's daughter," but his proposal is spurned by the family. Later, however, the family is forced to turn to him for assistance and is now willing that he should marry the young woman. He now in turn spurns the suggestion, and the shock kills the heroine, who had really loved him all the while. This play showed more than ordinary ability and was well received. Among Marston's other dramas, all generally meritorious, are *Strathmore* (1849), *Marie de Méranie* (1850), *A Life Ransom* (1857), and *Life for Life* (1869). He was hardly as good in comedy as in tragedy. *The Favorite of Fortune* (1866), which in the character of Mrs. Lorrington gave some opportunity for a comic actress, is his most successful attempt in this field.

Out of the comedy, melodrama, adaptation, and farce of the period, engaging the attention of such men as Isaac Pocock, Douglas William Jerrold, John Baldwin Buckthorne, Charles Reade, Tom Taylor, and Henry James Byron, somehow rises the name of Dion Boucicault (Dionysius Lardner Bourcicault, 1820-1890). This prolific author and adapter especially excelled in construction, and though he borrowed from many sources he generally wove his materials together in a swiftly moving plot, and he did more than any other man to fix the type of melodrama in his period. Early in his career he produced two of his best comedies, the famous *London Assurance*

(1841) and *Old Heads and Young Hearts* (1844). He it was who adapted *The Corsican Brothers* (1852) from the work of Dumas. He it was also who showed the possibilities of the Irish drama in *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrah-na-pogue* (1865), and *The Shaughraun* (1875). His work was light and for a day, but it has a very genuine importance in the history of the national drama.

86. Robertson, Gilbert, and the Transition.—Boucicault was largely a transitional figure. He was "at the turning-point between the purely theatrical drama of the first half of the century and the more naturalistic drama which was to put forth a bud while he was at the height of his career as a dramatist." [11] Quite as indicative of changing taste, though in a way somewhat different, was Thomas William Robertson (1829-1871). This dramatist, who came of a family thoroughly acquainted with the English theatre, served a long apprenticeship, making many adaptations, especially of French dramas and farces. To his more mature work he brought a realistic method of treatment that depended for its merit most largely on its simple revelation of life. While he came into notice in 1864 with *David Garrick*, it was with *Society* (1865), a play somewhat reminiscent of Thackeray, that success really came to him. With this drama he placed on the stage the new commercial class, the power of the press, and other themes of social interest, always in natural dialogue and with the utmost care for truth. Interestingly enough, this highly successful play passed from one hand to another until H. J. Byron recommended it to Marie Wilton (later Mrs. Bancroft), who had recently taken the Prince of Wales's Theatre in hand; and there is no better instance

[11] H. Child, *C. H. E. L.*, XIII, 296.

of fine faith in the history of the English stage than the confidence reposed in the struggling dramatist by the young manager, the enthusiasm with which his plays were acted, and his gratitude as expressed in his series of well-received comedies. Delicate in quality and with some touch of the patriotism evoked by the Crimean War, was *Ours* (1866). *Caste* (1867), however, is generally considered Robertson's artistic masterpiece. Here again, with some influence from Thackeray, the dramatist dealt in simple emotion. "The story of George D'Alroy's love for Esther, of his sudden departure for the war, of his reported death, and of his return to find his wife mourning his loss, and himself the father of a boy, strikes to the root of true pathos, and can never grow stale or unimpressive while human nature remains what it is."[12] Robertson at the height of his success supplied two or three theatres with plays at a time, and among his later titles were *Play* (1868), *School* (1869), *M. P.* (1870), and *War* (1871). He never surpassed *Society* and *Caste*, however, and his contribution to the drama remains a simple reliance upon nature that helped to free the form from romanticism. He deserves credit also for his emphasis on the care in production that helped to make the company of the Bancrofts famous in their time. He founded no school, though he might easily have done so had not the Continental influences which we are soon to consider cut across his path.

Before this new influence rose to its height, however, there appeared on the scene a dramatist of singularly original and brilliant quality, William S. Gilbert (1836-1911), most famous in his later years for his association in light opera with Sir Arthur Sullivan. After some early work

[12] Pemberton: Introduction to *Society* and *Caste*, xxxiii.

in burlesque, Gilbert passed to a period that included such plays in verse as *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871), *The Wicked World* (1873), and *Broken Hearts* (1875). "These plays and others of their kind are all founded upon a single idea, that of self-revelation by characters who are unaware of it, under the influence of some magic or some supernatural interference. The satire is shrewd, but not profound; the young author is apt to sneer, and he has by no means learned to make the best use of his curiously logical fancy. That he occasionally degrades high and beautiful themes is not surprising. . . . In *Pygmalion and Galatea,* and still more in *Gretchen* (1879), a perversion of part of the story of *Faust,* the vulgarity is cynical and bitter. And in Gilbert's prose plays the same spirit may be found in greater degree."[13] By this time, however, he had already shown his skill in the *Bab Ballads* (1869), and his extraordinary ability in the writing of graceful songs is the outstanding feature of the series of comic operas which began with *Trial by Jury* (1875), developed into a vogue with *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1878), and *The Mikado* (1885), and ended with *The Grand Duke* (1896). Gilbert was a man with a singular gift of light satire and with a serious undercurrent to his humor. In such a record as this he wears an air of detachment, like that of a sophisticated but urbane man of the world. Withal there was something very practical about him too, and he deserves much credit for his insistence on the rights of an author in a production.

Robertson exerted some little influence on one or two of his contemporaries, but Gilbert's singular genius de-

[13] H. Child, *C. H. E. L.*, XIII, 304.

fied imitators. Both men in the light of history somehow stand apart from other writers of their time. Neither began a tradition, but together they did away with the old drama and helped to make England ready for the new.

CHAPTER XII

LATER VICTORIAN AND CONTEMPORARY DRAMA: ANALYSIS AND THE SOCIAL IMPULSE

87. Continental Influences.—"There is a week that is the turn of the year; there was a year that was the turn of the century. About 1870 the force of the French Revolution faltered and fell: the year that was everywhere the death of Liberal ideas: the year when Paris fell: the year when Dickens died. . . . Liberalism (in Newman's sense) really did strike Christianity through headpiece and head; that is, it did daze and stun the ignorant and ill-prepared intellect of the English Christian. And Christianity did smite Liberalism through breastplate and through breast; that is, it did succeed, through arms and all sorts of awful accidents, in piercing more or less to the heart of the Utilitarian—and finding that he had none. Victorian Protestantism had not head enough for the business; Victorian Radicalism had not heart enough for the business. Down fell they dead together, exactly as Macaulay's Lay says and still stood all who saw them fall almost until the hour at which I write."

Thus brilliantly has the brilliant Chesterton[1] struck the keynote of the period to which we have come. It was not an age of idealism, but of pessimism, largely

[1] *The Victorian Age in Literature*, 213-15.

consequent upon the materialism of which one had heard for years. Romanticism was dead, but it had an afterglow in Pre-Raphaelitism, and a second afterglow in aestheticism; and when the exotic lilies could no longer conceal their frailty they crumbled—into ashes.

All went back to De Quincey, "the first and most powerful of the decadents;" and De Quincey has some affinity with Congreve. The principle also touched the paganism of Keats. The sensuousness of this great poet is reflected in Rossetti, his chivalry in Hunt, and his wood-carving in Morris. Of the great poets of the middle of the century, Browning alone opposed a solid front to the forces of decay. Tennyson wrote *In Memoriam* and in the wide field of criticism the influences at work developed the "Art for Art's sake" heresy, one of the most subtle and at the same time one of the most powerful forces ever exerted in imaginative literature. Three great prose writers—De Quincey, Poe, and Pater—inspired or represented this movement. De Quincey emphasized style, Poe beauty, and Pater a rather effete something called aestheticism. The first influenced the second, and the second the third. Poe's great divorce of art and morality was fatal, and it is the key to much of the pessimism and many of the wasted lives strewn like wrecks over the reign of Victoria. His influence was frankly acknowledged by Rossetti. Formerly romanticism, developing with the Wesleyan revival, had encouraged the love of nature and communion with God; but now science, looking at Poe's three faculties—intellect, feeling, will—appropriated the first; rationalism, substituted for religion, turned the will to its purpose; and art was told to shift for itself. It did—and with a vengeance.

This decadent principle—this supreme emphasis on style and lilies—was in 1870, however, largely a foreign importation. Certainly it was foreign in so far as it affected the drama. Gleaming in the lyrics of Musset or *Les Fleurs du Mal* of Baudelaire, it was carried into the drama in Musset's own *Lorenzaccio*. On the side of technique it developed into a school with the pattern-made plays of Scribe; in subject-matter it was largely stimulated by Dumas and Sardou. Swinburne was steeped in it, and something of it entered into his poetic dramas. In 1871 moreover, after decades in which foreigners were unwelcome, the company of the Comédie Française came to England and was received with enthusiasm. In 1879 it came again, and this time it included such performers as Favart, Delaunay, and Sarah Bernhardt. In the light of the great art and the finish of the French productions, Englishmen began to feel very provincial. Even Matthew Arnold wrote an article, "The French Play in London," pleading for a stronger national theatre.

This, however, is only half of the story. One can not fully estimate the English drama of the close of the century if he does not also take into account the social impulse. Here again the influence came from France, but perhaps in even larger measure from Norway. Something of it was to be seen in the work of Feuillet and Augier. Still more was it in Hugo. Sometimes it descended into melodrama. There was also about it, however, a serious element that could not lightly be waved aside. Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and Hugo's *Notre Dame* became the inspiration of a long line of plays, which with *Les Misérables* (1862) developed into a vogue. *The Streets of London, Lights o' London, London by Gaslight, Under the*

Gaslight, and *London Life* were only a few of many similar titles.

If Hugo, however, was the heart of social unrest, its soul was Henryk Ibsen (1828-1906). This great Norwegian dramatist was first introduced to England by an article by Mr. Edmund Gosse in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1873. Not long afterwards Mr. William Archer made himself the translator and general sponsor in England for the new voice; and within fifteen years the representative plays of the dramatist had in one way or another been set before the British public. Furious discussion arose. At the head of the opposition and generally representative of conservative elements was Clement Scott, probably the foremost dramatic critic of the day. There could be no question as to Ibsen's great ability in analysis and technique; and in the long run he contributed most vitally to the emancipation of the drama by his insistence upon frank discussion of the great social problems agitating the age. He felt that there could be no progress if there was not absolute honesty. Naturally he developed upon the stage many subjects that formerly had been proscribed. His fearless driving of bad premises to a logical conclusion tended toward pessimism, while his consideration of such subjects as marriage and heredity tended toward an absorption with sex problems from which we are not yet free.

These two great influences—a decadent principle that emphasized surface beauty and style, and a realism that easily descended into naturalism, in one way or another constantly affected the drama in the closing years of the century. Not infrequently they became interwoven. It is also worthy of note in passing that England again wit-

nessed an array of great performers. As at the beginning of the century, a period of uncertainty in the drama was partially atoned for by a great era in the history of the English stage. The Bancrofts, the Kendals,[2] and Irving and Terry gave a new care to their work and greatly increased the dignity of the actor's profession.[3]

88. Oscar Wilde.—The prime representative of aestheticism as it affected the drama was Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), a writer who was singularly gifted in understanding a passing mood of the day in which he lived and in responding to this with brilliant epigrams. His plays were as follows: *Vera, or The Nihilists* (1883), *The Duchess of Padua* (1891), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *Salomé* (1895), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). *Lady Windermere's Fan,* a study in the attitude of society toward a woman who has lost respectability, is perhaps most typical of the dramatist's skilful craftsmanship. Lord Windermere would have Lady Windermere invite Mrs. Erlynne to her birthday party. The suggestion is indignantly spurned. Later, however, Mrs. Erlynne, who is really Lady Windermere's mother, saves her daughter in an exceedingly compromising situation by taking the burden upon herself; and Lady Windermere never knows the real basis of the sacrifice. Actual performance of this play, as with others by the dramatist, almost invariably impresses one with his tense-

[2] Note that Mrs. Kendal was Madge Robertson, youngest sister of T. W. Robertson.

[3] For a brief clear statement of the precision and finish of the work of the Bancrofts and Kendals, and their encouragement of native effort, as distinguished from Irving's adherence to older traditions, see Dickinson, 49-67.

ness of situation; and there is in some ways even stronger work in *The Importance of Being Earnest,* "a trivial comedy for serious people." *Salomé,* a one-act play built on the story of the dancing before Herod, is in the style of the decadents. The work proved to possess tremendous theatrical appeal, however, and created something of a vogue. In Wilde's wit and artifice there is much of the spirit of Restoration comedy at its best, and while the period of his greatest popularity is now past, one is still forced to reckon with the art and intellect that could give life to so much that otherwise would be trivial and superficial.

89. Arthur Wing Pinero.—Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (1855—) has won the very high place that he holds among living English dramatists primarily by his excelling craftsmanship. Beginning his professional life as an actor, he soon turned to the composition of plays, and it was not long before his gifts were recognized. In 1877 his first play, *£200 a Year,* was produced, and since that time he has adapted or written for the stage not less than forty pieces. Among the early and very successful farces were *The Magistrate* (1885), *The Schoolmistress* (1886), and *Dandy Dick* (1887). *Sweet Lavender* (1888) by its tender sentiment made the author famous. Beginning with *The Profligate* (1889), however, Pinero entered the realm of social study and the problem play. In this drama a young man, Dunstan Renshaw, on the night before his wedding is brought face to face with the young woman he has wronged. The play was originally designed to end either with a tragedy or with the hero's being forgiven. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* attracted an extraordinary amount of attention and gave its author a place among

English playwrights that he has never since lost. The drama, which was unusually well constructed, showed some influence not only from Ibsen but also from such French writers as Scribe and Augier. Aubrey Tanqueray would marry Paula, a woman he loves and about whose past he knows. Can such a marriage, asks the play, be a success? Much is represented in the attitude of Tanqueray's own daughter Ellean; and in spite of the good will of a loyal friend, Cayley Drummle, the forces to be met are too strong for Aubrey and still more so for Paula. In even more decadent tone was *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895). Among Pinero's strong later dramas in different vein are *The Princess and the Butterfly* (1897), a play of fine fantasy and sentiment, *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899), one of strong characterization and keen wit, *The Thunderbolt* (1908), a searchingly realistic and satirical study of a group of provincial characters interested in the will of a deceased relative, and *Mid-Channel* (1909), largely a study in neurasthenia. Whatever may be this distinguished artist's final place in the history of the drama, there can be no question as to his mastery of technique or his high conception of his calling.

90. Henry Arthur Jones.—Along with Sir Arthur Pinero, Henry Arthur Jones (1851—) has worked within the last generation for a general broadening of the scope of the drama and for giving this a closer relation to life. While not surpassing Pinero in technique, by the books and essays he has written and the lectures he has delivered he has made himself outstanding in work for the general improvement of the English stage. In fact it is hardly too much to speak of him as a propagandist for the theatre. He has interested himself not only in such things as copy-

right, censorship, and national support for the theatre, but perhaps even more in the attitude of ordinary men and women toward the drama. In 1895 appeared *The Renascence of the English Drama;* in 1912 *Foundations of a National Theatre;* and more recently (1919) *Patriotism and Popular Education.* Jones's own plays, while including tragedy and melodrama, are most distinctive as carrying on the tradition of the fine satire and the high comedy of Congreve and Sheridan. He owes little to foreign influence. Beginning with several short plays, written largely in collaboration with others, in 1882 he achieved his first great success with the melodrama, *The Silver King,* which deserved attention by reason of its well-directed dialogue and its swift succession of startling situations. Encouraged and made more free by this success, with *Saints and Sinners* (1884) Jones struck the real key-note of his later work, giving a criticism of society which showed more than usual foreign influence upon his work. Outstanding in the long list of plays since this strong drama are *Judah* (1890), a characteristic production with figures good and bad, *The Masqueraders* (1894), a searching study of social types marked by unflinching realism, *The Liars* (1897), a comedy of manners with much clever construction and dialogue, *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900), the story of a sinning woman who in a new community endeavors to live down her past, and *The Hypocrites* (1906). To these must be added the tragic and baffling play, *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), a favorite of the author among his works but hardly a stage success. With such worthy productions has Henry Arthur Jones made his contribution to the dramatic renascence that he ever longed to see and of which he has been so large a part.

91. George Bernard Shaw.—Quite as representative as Pinero and Jones of the age in which he lives (though frequently representing that age on the negative side) is George Bernard Shaw (1856—), one of those remarkable individuals whose personalities somehow take precedence over their work, however brilliant or clever their work may be. At the age of twenty Shaw went from his native Dublin to London, and for fully twenty years thereafter labored as journalist, lecturer, novelist, playwright, and critic of art, music and the drama, before any real success came to him. Meanwhile he identified himself with various unpopular causes; he became a champion of Ibsen, and his general sympathy for socialism tempered much of his later work. Even as a member of the Fabian Society, however, there was something intensely practical—something common sense—about his attack on capitalism that distinguished him from the emotional revolutionist and that made the common crowd instinctively draw away from him. Afterwards in life, as in this case, he generally was not where people thought he was. Any attempt at the interpretation of George Bernard Shaw, however, is dangerous, and he would probably be the first to say it is all wrong. For him the theatre has been largely simply a means to an end, an instrument through which he might speak his message to the world. The world, however, was slow to hear him. His plays won no real success before they were formally published—as *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (two volumes, 1898) and *Plays for Puritans* (1900). The stage directions, the descriptions, and the personal touch given in this form attracted the public and eventually built up an audience. Said Shaw in closing the preface to the first of these publications: "A word as

to why I have labeled the three plays in this first volume Unpleasant. The reason is pretty obvious: their dramatic power is used to force the spectator to face unpleasant facts. No doubt all plays which deal sincerely with humanity must wound the monstrous conceit which it is the business of romance to flatter." The plays thus brought together and those that came afterwards were generally in keeping with the principle here laid down. *Widowers' Houses* (1892) arraigns a society that permits property owners to support their luxuries by the high rents imposed on poor people; *The Philanderer* (1892) is a satire directed against those who fear the full logic of Ibsen; *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1902, printed 1898) thrust before the public some of the causes of prostitution; *Arms and the Man* (1894) satirizes the extravagant and romantic admiration with which the soldier is invested; *Candida* (1897), probably the dramatist's strongest acting play, is largely concerned with social reform and questions of sex; *The Man of Destiny* (1897) makes an attack on hero-worship by belittling Napoleon; *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), a shrewd study of the good and bad in humanity, is essentially a criticism of melodrama; *Man and Superman* (1903), which really marks a new stage in the work of the dramatist—one of emphasis on mental states—is a pitiless dissection of love and home; *John Bull's Other Island* (1903) is a detached treatment of the author's native Ireland that adds to the viewpoint of a British citizen something of the Irishman's humor; *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906) through many episodes makes an attack on the professional man; *Fanny's First Play* (1911), one of the dramatist's most popular and characteristic productions, shows a play in progress and gives much oppor-

tunity for satire and wit; while *Androcles and the Lion* (1912) and *Pygmalion* (1913) are representative of later powerful and mature work. Shaw's dramas are uneven in quality; but it is evident that his very originality makes it difficult to pass over any of his plays lightly. He is not a great technical artist like Pinero, but he is an original and clever dramatist and, more than all else, an eminent critic of life.

92. James Matthew Barrie.—To pass from George Bernard Shaw to Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860—) is to go from realism to romance, from satire to delicate fancy. Barrie is distinguished as novelist as well as dramatist, and the tenderness and charm of his *Sentimental Tommy* and *The Little Minister* are also in *Peter Pan* and *What Every Woman Knows*. To his fine fantasy he has added a genuine spiritual quality, best seen in his emphasis on the child in literature; and he has also excelled in handling the mind of woman. Naturally with such emphasis he is somewhat apart from his contemporaries. For him the stage is not for problems; he has no propaganda. Accordingly, by those who are most "advanced" he has sometimes been called a reactionary. He is, however, rather an idealist searching for something more enduring than the latest whim of fashion; and in conception of character he is probably unsurpassed by any living dramatist. Withal he has been a most practical and facile worker, happily finding in America at least, in Miss Maude Adams, an artist fully capable of interpreting his productions. Probably most famous of his several very famous plays are *The Little Minister* (1897), *The Admirable Crichton* (1903), *Peter Pan* (1904), and *What Every Woman Knows* (1908). *The Admirable Crichton*

with humor and skill handles the situation of the family of a peer wrecked on a desert island, where the butler of the family proves himself the most resourceful person in the group. Thoroughly typical of the dramatist are the means to which he resorts in order to sustain interest. Crichton, for instance, left alone by his haughty superiors, depends on nightfall and hunger to bring them to his inviting camp-fire. After two years moreover, when Crichton has fallen in love with Lady Mary, the boom of the cannon of a passing ship indicates that they are about to be rescued, and at once all the questions of returning to the former class distinctions center in a moment of supreme tension. In *What Every Woman Knows* Barrie also gives beneath the surface a serious study. He will ever be most widely known and loved, however, for *Peter Pan,* a dramatization of the novel, *The Little White Bird.* Peter Pan, carefree and full of pranks, visits three little children while they are asleep and teaches them to fly away with him. He carries them to the fairy-world, to the pirate ship, and at last to his own home in the treetops. The play combines fancy, symbolism, and realism, but throughout the whole is also the tenderness that is the very essence of human life. *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916) and *Dear Brutus* (1917) are important in the dramatist's later work.

93. **John Galsworthy.**—Like Barrie in that he is successful both as dramatist and novelist, but more like Shaw in his emphasis on social problems, is John Galsworthy (1867—). This man is not only one of the finest intellects but also one of the most sincere of living English writers—simple, straightforward, and humanitarian. Essentially earnest, he never fails to impress his audience

by the worth of what he has to say, and even in his first play, *The Silver Box* (1906), he revealed his characteristic qualities. *Strife* (1909) sets forth the contest between capital and labor, the two outstanding figures being Anthony, the honest and misguided capitalist, and Roberts, the honest but equally misguided representative of labor. *Justice* (1910) is a plea for prison reform. Galsworthy's very good-intention in such plays as these, however, has somehow given them the air of sociological studies rather than of artistic productions, excellent though they may be. Some counteracting fancy was to be seen in *Joy* (1907), *The Pigeon* (1912), and *The Little Dream* (1912). *The Eldest Son* (1912), *The Fugitive* (1913), and *The Mob* (1914), however, return to the dramatist's characteristic vein of seriousness and realism. Even yet he solves none of the problems that he offers; he is still detached, with the smile of experience and the yearning for something better still pondering "the riddle of the world."

94. **Stephen Phillips.**—Stephen Phillips (1868-1915), unlike most dramatists of recent years, chose verse as his dramatic medium. In 1898, with the publication of his poems, including "Christ in Hades" and "The Woman with the Dead Soul," he became the most discussed poet in England, and on the publication of *Paolo and Francesca* (1900) criticism as well as the common voice indulged in superlatives. The day of the poetic drama seemed to have come again, and the new author was compared with the greatest figures in English literary history. *Herod* was presented on the stage in 1900, *Paolo and Francesca* in 1901, *Ulysses* and *The Sin of David* in 1902, and *Nero* in 1906. These plays, however, did not so much

impress the public in the theatre as in book form. There could be no denying the highly musical quality of much of the poetry of Phillips, or his lyrical imagination, or even a certain command of the mechanics of the stage. All these qualities taken together, however, did not make him an effective dramatist, and his failure to justify the promise of his earlier years furnished the greatest disappointment in recent dramatic history. One critic[4] summing up his work at the time of his death spoke ably as follows: "Though he had his moments of inspiration, he can scarcely be said to have established his right to be accounted a great dramatist. The fertile fancy, power, passion, or sheer literary beauty of his finest scenes exerted a charm that distracted attention from occasional flaws in workmanship, which in other circumstances might have been only too apparent. It would not be true to say that his plays, from *Paolo and Francesca* to *Armageddon,* are more akin to romantic melodrama, even of a high order, than to tragedy. They reach emotional heights which are tragic in the fullest and strictest meaning of that word. But, not infrequently, in construction and device, they adopt expedients which are purely melodramatic and theatrical. Of his meditated effects, the climaxes of preconceived situations, he had a secure grasp. He developed them with unfailing skill and brilliant literary and dramatic coloring. Where he failed was in the exposition of causes which should lead logically to results. He was not a great play-maker. He could not weave the pattern of a plot with the plausible ingenuity of Scribe, Sardou, Sheridan, Pinero, or Henry Arthur Jones. In great tragedy there must be the element of apparent inevitability. Even

[4] J. Rankin Towse in New York *Evening Post.*

in dealing with an ancient tale, with prescribed facts, this is a law from which the dramatist has no appeal. It was a law that Mr. Phillips either did not appreciate or disregarded."

95. **Granville Barker.**—As moral as Galsworthy but excelling him in artistry, as interested in life as Shaw but excelling him in art, is H. Granville Barker (1877—). This well-known dramatist came on the scene just at the time when England was being stirred by various independent movements for the betterment of the theatre and when there was a general clamor for more intellectual freedom. He began life as an actor and in course of time played with such artists as Ben Greet and Mrs. Campbell. From time to time also he produced plays for the Elizabethan Stage Society and in 1904 he assumed the management of the Court Theatre in London. Here he made a great reputation not only by his production of Shakespeare but also by that of the modern intellectual drama of Shaw, Barrie, Galsworthy, Hankin, and himself; and by his later work at other houses as well as at the Court he gave a new standard to the repertory theatre. Among the more interesting and typical of his own plays, which show much influence from Shaw, are *The Marrying of Anna Leete* (1902), *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905), and *The Madras House* (1910). The first of these three plays emphasizes the freedom that comes to woman with the newer knowledge of the world; the second is a comedy of business inviting comparison with Pinero's *The Thunderbolt;* and the third is a further study of woman in modern society.

96. **Irish National Theatre. Lady Gregory.**—One of the most interesting movements of the new century and one with the greatest measure of success, is that of the Irish

National Theatre. In 1899-1900 strong patriotic feeling and interest in the peasant life and folk-lore of their country impelled a group of playwrights and patrons to organize the Irish National Theatre Society. Prominent in the effort were Lady Augusta Gregory, William Butler Yeats, Edward Martyn, George Moore, and G. W. Russell ("A. E."). The object of the Irish National Theatre is twofold: to produce plays of finer literary quality than one witnessed in most theatres, and to set forth native Irish life and character, both peasant and heroic. The movement made strong patriotic appeal. Stories were gathered from the lips of living peasants, and anything affecting Irish tradition or folk-lore was treasured. While such strong and constructive elements entered into the new institution, in another way, especially as represented by Yeats, it has been but one more expression of the neo-romantic tendencies of which we have already heard so much.

Lady Gregory, already distinguished for her studies in Celtic mythology, from the very first has been one of the most important figures of the Irish National Theatre. She has lectured and written much, co-operating with innumerable organizations for the welfare of her country; and especially has she been distinguished in her capacity as manager of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Here she has shown anew the dramatic possibilities of peasant life and of the one-act play; she has built up a strong stock company with new traditions; and generally has succeeded in improving the taste of her public. Representative of her wholesome lighter comedy are *Spreading the News* (1904) and *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906), both included in the volume, *Seven Short Plays;* while *The Gaol Gate* (1906), *The Traveling Man* (1901), and *The Rising of*

the Moon (1907) represent her more serious temper. Lady Gregory is the perfect representative of the Irish National Theatre uninfluenced by continental tendencies.

97. William Butler Yeats.—William Butler Yeats (1865—), born in Dublin, in addition to training in his native city and in London, also studied the theatre in Paris in his earlier years. The fact is important in connection with his work, for to his exposition of the lore and legend of Ireland he has also brought some touch with the neo-romanticists. In his wandering with "the wind among the reeds" or by "shadowy waters" he is one of the music-makers or dreamers of dreams of whom O'Shaughnessy wrote; while in his mysticism, his symbolism, and the general quality of his imagination he invites comparison with Maeterlinck. In the midst of one of the greatest political problems of the age, he has held firmly to the creation of beauty. With a temperament so subjective he is naturally more lyrical than dramatic; but his plays are not only fanciful and romantic but characterized by much clever craftsmanship. Outstanding are *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and *The Countess Cathleen* (1899). The first of these plays, partly in prose and partly in verse, tells the story of a young bride who grows weary of her monotonous life and entreats the fairies to release her. The old parents tell her that she should listen first of all to the voice of duty, and the priest begs her not to leave her faithful young husband. The fairy wins, however, and, leaving a dead wife in the cottage, bears away the living bride to the mystic world. The *Countess Cathleen* sets forth the great efforts and the sacrifice of the Countess in behalf of the starving peasants, many of whom sell their souls for food to the demons dis-

guised as merchants. The play is full of supernaturalism and symbolism, and guardian angels save the soul of the Countess at the end. In similar vein, but of even more poetic than dramatic quality, are *Cathleen ni Hoolihan, The Shadowy Waters,* and *Deirdre,* all embodying the superstition, the fairy lore, and the lively imagination of Ireland.

98. John Millington Synge.—John Millington Synge (1871-1909) was one of the most promising of recent English or Irish writers. Especially was he highly endowed intellectually. He won with equal facility a prize in Hebrew or Irish at Trinity College, Dublin, or a scholarship at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. As a boy, we are told, "he knew the note and plumage of every bird, and when and where they were to be found." For years he wandered about the Continent gathering impressions here and there until his friend Yeats found him in France and induced him to return to Ireland and write for the new theatre. Back in Dublin he never mentioned politics, he read no newspapers, and very little current literature. With him, however, the dramatic exceeded the lyrical faculty. He wrote only six short plays, all between 1903 and 1907; but the very first of these showed that he had come at once into full possession of his powers. From the beginning his style was stripped of needless verbiage and vibrant with emotion. *Riders to the Sea,* a tragedy in one act, and one of the most powerful productions in recent dramatic literature, sets forth the impressive sorrow of old Maurya, whose husband and five sons have already been drowned, and who now sees her last son, Bartley, given to the sea. *The Playboy of the Western World,* a boisterous and fantastically humorous

play in three acts, is concerned with the real awakening of the Playboy, his performing of wonderful feats, and his ardent love-making to the maiden Pegeen. At the time of his death Synge was giving final form to *Deirdre of the Sorrows,* a three-act play employing a theme also used by Yeats and Russell, that of the beautiful princess who, after seven years of perfect union with her lover, when he was slain went forth to be with him in the hereafter. He was a true dramatist and his passing was an inestimable loss to the theatre not only of Ireland but of the world.

99. Other Recent Dramatists.—The great emphasis on the drama within the last generation has naturally brought on the scene numerous writers, some of whom are quite as worthy of detailed mention as those that have been considered. An early contemporary of Pinero and Jones was Sydney Grundy (1848-1914), an honest and clever craftsman who was borne hither and thither by the moral, decadent, and technical tendencies of his day and who somehow failed to live up to early expectations. After much adaptation from French dramatists he produced such plays as *A Fool's Paradise* (1889) and *Sowing the Wind* (1893). Another earnest worker who was also alive to new ideas and tendencies but who failed of final achievement was St. John Hankin (1860-1909), represented by *The Two Mr. Weatherbys* (1903), *The Cassilis Engagement* (1907), and *The Last of the De Mullins* (1908). John Oswald Francis (1882—) first awakened wide interest by his four-act play, *Change,* winner in the Welsh Drama Competition in 1912. Probably most representative of the younger writers of the Irish National Theatre is St. John G. Ervine (1883—), who shows unusual mastery of his craft and grasp of character, as in

Mixed Marriage (1911), *Jane Clegg* (1914), and *John Ferguson* (1915). John Masefield (1875—) entered the field of the drama with *The Tragedy of Nan* (1908), while another outstanding poet of the day, John Drinkwater (1882—), has recently achieved great success with *Abraham Lincoln* (1919). Lord Dunsany, Arnold Bennett, and W. Somerset Maugham also have high rank among living English dramatists.

100. Current Tendencies.—It is evident from what has been said that the decade 1880-1890 was one of experimentation in the history of the English drama and the decade 1890-1900 one of ferment. In the latter period the drama assumed new importance as a social force, and there was wide discussion of the mutual obligation of the theatre and the public. About the year 1894 controversy raged on the question of Ibsen and his influence, which by many conservative and strong elements was considered unhealthy, while playwrights and patrons of the theatre were quite determined that the drama should be free. In the same year in which this discussion was uppermost there developed a new vogue of spectacle and melodrama, closely associated with the dramatization of popular fiction, which ran directly counter to the more intellectual elements of reform. Representative productions were *Trilby, The Prisoner of Zenda, The Sign of the Cross,* and the American *Ben-Hur,* which for more than a decade excelled all other productions in the attracting of great audiences. Closely related to these romantic tendencies in the earlier years of the century was a new emphasis on the old morality, represented by *Everyman,* and on plays based on stories from the Bible.

Meanwhile organization went forward. We have al-

ready remarked the Irish National Theatre. In 1891 John T. Grein organized the Independent Theatre, which ran for seven years and after an interval was succeeded by the Stage Society, incorporated in 1904. Since 1895 the Elizabethan Stage Society has also conducted its activities, with emphasis on the representation of the best in both English and continental tradition. To such sturdy efforts as these, men like Shaw, Galsworthy, Barker, and Gordon Craig have in one way or another given of their talents. There also developed a new interest in the reading of plays in printed form and an insistence on high standards of criticism. All such efforts and tendencies were assisted by intercourse with America, where there was a veritable renaissance. Throughout the country societies for the study of the drama were formed, educational institutions began to give courses in the composition of plays, and such organizations as the Portmanteau Theatre and the Washington Square Players in New York and the Henry Jewett Players in Boston insisted on high standards in a day when the stage had become almost hopelessly commercialized.

Just on the eve of the Great War the drama seemed uncertain as to its course. The year 1912, for instance, showed tendencies both romantic and realistic, as in Edward Knoblock's *Kismet,* a gorgeous play of the Orient, and, on the other hand, *Milestones,* written by Bennett in collaboration with Knoblock; and the next year there was rather frank discussion on the stage of some unpleasant social topics. With 1914 came at once the depression caused by the war, and the beginning of the great development of photo-plays. Against such opposition the legitimate drama struggled with only a slight measure of suc-

cess; and within the next five years the foremost playwrights of the day, with the notable exception of Barrie, in their absorption by the questions of the hour, almost ceased to write, or at least to produce. So-called war plays were hurriedly thrust before a public that soon tired of them in the desire for relief from the strain; and brilliant musical comedies, in London and still more in New York, by the time of the armistice were demanding fabulous prices for admission. Such tendencies, however, could not undo all of the constructive work of the last three decades. An intelligent and a growing audience was seeking more than ever the best that the theatre had to offer, in the small towns and villages as well as in the great centers of culture; and now that the war is over, and now that it has been shown that even the moving-picture can not wholly displace the spoken drama, we may indeed hope for a new inspiration in the art cultivated by Kean, and in the heritage and culture of Shakespeare.

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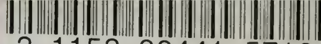

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