

temporary fame as the author of coarse and ribald satires, directed against the abuses of his day, especially those which deformed the church. His latest work, a *Dialog concerning the Monarchie*, appeared in 1553.

In the article DRAMA it was described how the modern drama grew up under the shadow of the church, and an attempt was made to convey a clear notion of the mode in which the ancient miracle plays were performed. As the people grew richer and more numerous, and the arts of life were improved, and experience suggested ways of correcting blemishes and adding fresh splendour to the spectacle, these plays were exhibited with ever increasing pomp. Yet, at the same time, the lay spirit getting hold of them more and more, and the religious laxity of the Renaissance attacking the clergy, we find those which date from the 15th century not only grotesque, but gross to the last degree. Their composition in many parts betrays a scandalous accommodation or condescension to the brutality or pruriency of the hearers. Take for instance, the scene called "The Bridal of Mary and Joseph" in the *Coventry Mysteries*. To interest masses of ignorant people it may have been necessary to be simple, broad, and outspoken; but it could not have been necessary to introduce a heap of filthy jokes, not found in their original, gathering round the mystery of the Incarnation, for the sake of raising a horse-laugh, and covering the cheeks of the country girls with blushes. It must be remembered that the entire system of language and allusions in these plays is contemporary. Mary's kinsman, Abizachar, is a mediæval bishop, with his court, his sumpnours, and his apparitors; the whole thing is racy of the soil, and redolent of the national humour; you are no more transported into Palestine than a travestie of "Medea" transports you into Greece. The moral effects upon juvenile spectators of so much loose talk, conveyed to them as it was with a sanction (for a religious aim was always professed, and indeed as a rule sincerely entertained in these exhibitions), cannot have been of an improving nature.

Miracle Plays.

Besides the great serial plays, such as *The Chester—The Coventry*—and the *Townley Mysteries*, in the successive scenes of which all the principal truths and doctrines of religion, beginning with the creation, and ending with "Doomsday," were represented, a demand arose for special plays, treating of the life, or the miracles, or the martyrdom of some favourite saint. Such were *The Conversion of St Paul*, *St Mary Magdalen*, and *St Anne*, which may be seen in a MS. in the Bodleian library. These were sometimes performed in the churches, on the festival of the saint celebrated in them, sometimes in the halls of royal palaces or colleges, sometimes again within the precincts of monasteries. Gradually something more refined, more in the fashion, than any miracle play, was called for at courts and colleges. Then arose the moral plays, in which the allegorical treatment and metaphysical refinements which were of the taste of the age were applied to dramatic entertainments. Saints and angels were discarded; and virtues, vices, and abstract notions of various kinds took their place as the *dramatis personæ*. The devil of the miracle plays, who had more and more become a grotesque and comic character, at least in many of them, appeared as the "vice" or "iniquity" of the moral plays, and introduced into them also a corresponding comic element; this "vice," as is well known, was gradually transformed into the clown of the modern stage. Skelton wrote two moral plays, one called *The Nigramansir*, which was performed before Henry VII. and his court at Woodstock, the other *Magnificence*. A more ambitious effort was the *Satyre of Thrie Estaits*, by Lindsay; this enormous moral play was acted before the Scottish court in 1535,

and occupied nine hours in the representation. The dulness and tediousness of plays of this kind, owing to the want of human interest, prevented them from holding their ground against the more natural form of the drama, which the imitation of the ancients soon introduced; yet Mr Collier, in his *History of Dramatic Poetry*, has shown that moral plays continued to be written down to the very end of the reign of Elizabeth. Translations and imitations of the plays of Plautus and Terence paved the way for the reign of a purer taste. Sixteen years after it had witnessed *The Nigramansir*, the English court was refreshed by "a goodie comedie of Plautus," probably through the instrumentality of Sir Thomas More, who was then in high favour with Henry. The interludes of John Heywood, court-jester to the same king, were another step in advance. The personified qualities are here dropped, and persons take their place; these persons, however, are not yet individuals, but representatives of classes, "a pedlar," "a palmer," &c. The earliest proper comedy that has yet been discovered is the *Ralph Roister Doister* of Nicholas Udall, the head master of Eton College. In this play, written to be performed by his scholars, Udall imitates so far as he can the style and manner of Terence. It is divided into acts and scenes, and is written in hobbling alexandrine rhyming lines, which, as containing twelve syllables, *i.e.*, six feet, he obviously thought were the nearest English reproduction of the iambic trimeter. He did not see that the movement of our heroic blank verse, in spite of its being shorter by two syllables, represents more faithfully than any other English metre the movement of the iambic trimeter; while such rough alexandrines as his only recall the Saturnian verse of Æneid. The recognition of the fact that for the English drama the proper metre is the blank verse of ten syllables was due to the finer perceptions of Sackville, who, with Norton, produced the tragedy of *Ferrex and Porrex*, or *Gorbodue*, in 1561; this, the earliest regular tragedy that has been discovered, was played before Queen Elizabeth in the hall of the Inner Temple. For some years the drama continued to be beholden to the hospitality of the court, or some legal society, or educational institution. (Gray's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, St Paul's school, &c.), for the local habitation where it might display its illusions. But as the popular delight in such exhibitions increased at this time faster than the Puritanic aversion to them (although this also was gaining ground, as we shall see), it was inevitable that the stage should cease to be movable and migratory, and establish itself in a permanent home. The first public theatre was opened at Blackfriars in 1575; the histrionic art became a recognized profession; many other theatres sprang up before the end of the century; Italian plays were adapted, Latin plays translated, episodes of English history dramatized; and, on the whole, a kind of dramatic atmosphere was generated in the English metropolis, highly favourable to the career of a great artist, should such a one appear.

More's philosophical fiction of *Utopia*, imitated from Plato's *Atlantis*, appeared in Latin in 1516; it is the picture of an ideal commonwealth. The *Governour*, by Sir Thomas Elyot, was also intended to be a political treatise; but under the despotism of Henry the subject was too dangerous, and the author confines himself almost entirely to questions connected with education. The earliest good English prose, in Mr Hallam's opinion, is found in Sir Thomas More's *History of Henry V.*, which appeared in 1513. But the curious treatise by Sir John Fortescue, written more than thirty years before, the *Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy*, is really very good English, and contains few words that are not now in use; if it were divested of its barbarous

orthography, this would be at once manifest. Our prose style was much improved by the various works of Roger Ascham, who taught Latin to Elizabeth, and held learned conversations with Lady Jane Grey.

The religious convulsions by which the country was shaken to its centre during this period are of little direct interest to the historian of literature; for the lines of literary development which the activity of preceding ages had marked out were not seriously deflected, nor did the theological controversy produce on either side works which, like Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* or Bossuet's *Variations*, may claim, on account of perfection of style or power of treatment, a permanent place in literature. The Reformers of Henry the VIII.'s reign were the heirs and continuators of "Lollardy," but joined to it, from the armoury of Luther and Calvin, new views on predestination, the futility of works, justification by faith alone, and the final assurance of the elect, which had indeed a practical bearing of the most important kind, but were not set forth by our native writers in particularly forcible terms or attractive forms. William Tyndale, who carried on a long and acrimonious controversy with Sir Thomas More, is perhaps the most important writer on that side. Cranmer's writings show much learning, considerable grasp of intellect, and a certain beaht of style; they are deficient, however, in sincerity and manliness. The homely wit and rough satirical power of Latimer are well illustrated in many of his sermons. He, and most of the English Reformers, exemplify in a marked way the Teutonic affinity of which we have more than once spoken; the desire to be sturdily independent, coupled with a sense of teeming latent energy,—of a potentiality of great achievement on this side and on that,—indicate in them at once the strength and the blemish of the Teutonic genius. After the accession of Elizabeth, the leading men among the clergy, refusing to take the oath of supremacy, were for the most part driven into exile, and for many years waged war, in heavy treatise or light pamphlet, against the new settlement of religion. The names of Sander, Harpsfield, Harding, Stapleton, and many others occur in this connexion. But as they wrote for the most part in Latin, for the sake of Continental readers, their efforts produced little effect, and are now scarcely remembered. Jewel, the Protestant bishop of Salisbury, who had been in exile at Strasburg under Mary, and contracted a close friendship with Peter Martyr, wrote an *Apology* (1562) in reply to these disputants, from whom the work drew forth loud charges of inaccuracy and unfairness of quotation. The *Apology* was in Latin, but the *Defence of the Apology*, written in answer to Harding, was in English. The laborious exercise of thought on these topics, and the warfare with pen and tongue which was the result, could not fail to increase the elasticity and enlarge the adaptivity of the language, and so far tended to improve it as an organ of literature.

VI. *The Old Civilization in conflict with Puritanism, 1579-1660.*—Regarding the position of the Roman see in the Christian church as a "separable accident," the acceptance or rejection of which made no essential difference, the literary men of the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, while rejecting, chiefly on political grounds, the authority of that see, had no quarrel in other respects with the religion which had come down to them from their forefathers, nor with the forms of civilization and efforts towards a higher culture which that religion had encouraged. Both in Spenser and Shakespeare we notice a decided repugnance towards Rome, and a disposition to deny her claim to obedience (compare the description of Duessa in the *Fæerie Queene*, and the denunciation of papal power put

by Shakespeare in the mouth of King John); but with this exception they belong to the old school; they might have been Englishmen of fifty years before, instead of twenty of thirty years after, the Reformation. This has been pointed out in detail by Mr Thornbury and others in the case of Shakespeare; they have shown how alien the notions of Puritanism were to his heart and mind, except in the one point of opposition to Rome. Spenser's description of the house of Coelia, and his invective against the Blatant Beast, not to refer to many other passages, show that the same thing held good of him. But it is not our object to dwell on this; the point to which we would call attention is, that the poets and dramatists of this period, as well as a large body of the clergy, gave heartily to the civilization and culture which they had inherited from the past. To this form of civilization the Puritan or ultra-reforming party, which began to show its strength under the lax rule of Archbishop Grindal, was radically opposed. The culture which had gathered treasures from every side, and welcomed all that was good and beautiful in paganism, was tainted and abominable in their eyes. To them it seemed that a Christian society should be exclusively formed and built up on models furnished by the Old and New Testaments. To come to the particular tendencies of Puritanism with which we have now to do,—it looked with sour displeasure on the English poetry and drama of the day, and, according as it possessed power, suppressed them. What meant these loose and profane sonneteers by writing about their mistresses in language that was little short of idolatrous, and celebrating Bacchus, Venus, and Apollo in terms which could hardly be acquitted of blasphemy? Why, if they must rhyme, could they not compose comfortable hymns of Zion, and if they must have music, sing the Psalms of David? Expression was given to these sentiments in a pamphlet breathing a spirit of comparative moderation,—the *School of Abuse* of Stephen Gosson (1579). Sir Philip Sidney in his able reply, the *Defence of Poesy*, vindicated the legitimacy of the taste for literature and art which Englishmen had inherited from their forefathers. Again, innumerable allusions in the works of the dramatists of this and the next reign, including Shakespeare, prove the animosity which subsisted between them and the Puritans, whom they rightly regarded as the implacable enemies of their art. On the outbreak of civil war the Puritans, gaining the upper hand in London, immediately shut up the theatres. It is not, therefore, without reason that we have characterized the epoch which we are considering as that of the "conflict between Puritanism and the old civilization."

Poetry, which does not, like the drama in its more developed stages, require any local establishment in order to produce its effects, pursued its flight in defiance of Puritan censure. It was not, however, unaffected by it. The disapproval of him and his works, entertained by a large section among the most virtuous of his countrymen, irritated the poet by its exaggeration, and often made him out of recklessness import an additional degree of licence into his language. Yet morality was in the end the gainer. For in spite of narrowness, and exaggeration, and occasional hypocrisy, there was real earnestness and virtuous intention in the great body of the Puritans; and to these qualities society eventually did homage by refusing to tolerate, in poetry at least, what was openly and scandalously immoral. In spite of one or two who leap over the line, poetry in the 18th century, and still more in the 19th, has not permitted her votaries to write as they please, but has prescribed to them measure and seemliness. This may indeed be attributed to the increasing refinement of European life; but that refinement itself, so far as it is moral, is to a large extent the work of the Puritan spirit.

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Without further preface let us turn to the consideration of that amazing phenomenon, the literature of the Elizabethan age. Many circumstances, many slowly elaborated changes, had prepared the way. The cautious peace-policy of Elizabeth, her wise love of economy, and her care to surround herself with able counsellors, produced their natural fruits in a state of general prosperity never experienced before. Every adventurous and inquiring mind was stimulated by the reports continually arriving of the discovery of "islands far away," of riches and beauty which the earth had hitherto veiled from her children revealed to wondering eyes in America and the East, of inventions which enlarged the power, and discoveries which widened the knowledge, of man. Again, the greatly augmented use of the language as a literary instrument, consequent upon the religious dissensions now temporarily silenced, had, as already explained, made it a much fitter organ for thought than it had been in the reign of Henry VIII. Lastly, the powerful influences now pressing in from abroad must be duly weighed. The genius of Ariosto had clothed mediæval romance in a splendid garb, which, for the first time since the 13th century, made the subject attractive to cultivated minds. Tasso's epic, with its sustained grace and sweetness, had shown how the shades and half-shades of sentiment in which refined spirits delight can be expressed by corresponding nuances of language. Certain eminent writers in France, especially Du Bellay and Ronsard, had consecrated considerable powers and incessant activity to the work of reforming the language and literature of their own country through the concentrated study and fearless imitation of ancient models. Considering all these various elements, we shall be better able to understand how, given a gorgeous imagination like that of Spenser, and a mind of universal range like that of Shakespeare, these writers were able to place that enormous difference between themselves and their predecessors which separates the *Faerie Queene* from the *Pastime of Pleasure*, and the comedies of Shakespeare from those of Still and Udall.

Without stopping to criticise, and reserving the drama for separate consideration, we must endeavour by a brief description to convey some notion of the poetical exuberance of the Elizabethan era. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a colossal fragment of a still more colossal design, relates ostensibly the romantic adventures of brave knights and fair ladies; but every incident has an allegorical meaning, and the propagation of the several moral virtues is the professed object of the entire work. The well-known stanza which he invented, consisting of nine lines, the last an alexandrine, with three rhymes, is so skilfully constructed and so well adapted to our language, that it has been frequently employed since, with marked success, by eminent poets. Burns used it for the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and Byron for *Childe Harold*. The rhymes in it are better arranged than in the standard metre of Italy, the *ottava rima*, because the distribution is such as to bind the whole structure better together, and to avoid that palpable break between the first six lines and the concluding couplet which is noticeable in the stanza of Tasso and Ariosto. Again, the extra syllables in the ninth line seem exactly to counterbalance the risk of *monotony* which the additional line would otherwise entail. The sonnets of Shakespeare, if we accept the acute interpretation of Mr Simpson, indicate the influence of some aristocratic friend of the poet, who, having travelled much in Italy and formed the acquaintance of members of the learned "academies" for which Italian cities were then famous, had learned from them those Platonizing speculations about love and its kinds—the vulgar, the civil, the chivalrous, and the ideal love—which are partially repro-

duced in the sonnets. Among Shakespeare's other poems the chief were *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece*, pieces remarkable for their luscious melody and ornate elegance. The classical and mythological themes attest at once the receptivity of the intellect of Shakespeare, a country-bred youth who had studied at neither university, and the strength of the Renaissance movement, from which no mind, even the most powerful, could then hold itself aloof. Of the same class is Marlowe's beautiful poem of *Hero and Leander*, translated from the Greek of the pseudo-Museus. George Chapman produced, about 1601, a complete translation of the *Iliad* in long fourteen syllable lines. It was the first time that this feat had been accomplished in any modern language; and the fact well typifies the intensity of force with which the English intellect was now working in every direction. Robert Southwell, the Jesuit, put to death by the Government in 1596, left behind him a few religious poems of great beauty. He is by some considered the first of the metaphysical school of poets; but the credit (or discredit) of that leadership rather belongs to Donne. Marston, Hall, and Gascoigne (the author of the *Steel Glass*) may be regarded as the founders of English satire. Sir Philip Sidney, the ornament of Elizabeth's court, wrote sonnets and songs, which, though imitated from Italian and Spanish models, were freighted by his powerful mind with a burden of thought and passion not to be found in the originals. The attempts of Daniel and Drayton in the epic style (*Wars of the Roses*, *Barons' Wars*), were failures; but wherever we meet with many ventures, it cannot be but that some will fail. Of such poems as Warner's *Albion's England*, or Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, or Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Husbandry*, it is unnecessary to speak.

The class of poets to whom Johnson attached the name "metaphysical," while Milton calls them "fantastics," includes Donne their founder, Cowley, Crashaw, Cleveland, and several others. In date they belong rather to the reigns of James I. and Charles I. than to that of Elizabeth. They are distinguished by their fondness for "conceits," or intellectual *tours de force*, the general aim of which was to gain credit for ingenuity, and a deep insight into the nature of things, by tracing resemblances or analogies between objects apparently remote and diverse. This poetry of conceit, which nearly corresponded to the *estilo culto* of Spain, is usually said to have been invented by the Neapolitan poet Marini, author of the *Sospetto di Erote*, and by him propagated in France, whence it came to England. It was merely another development of that tendency to the mystical in thought and the far-fetched in language, characteristic of the Gothic ages, which we have seen more fully exemplified in the countless allegories and moral plays of previous periods. In Donne the style is insufferable; "conceits" are strewn about his pages like puns about the conversation of a punster, and they are not half so amusing. Cowley, on the other hand, was a true poet; the daring flights of his fancy, the tenderness of his feelings, and the grace and profoundness of his musings, still rescue much that he wrote from oblivion. Composing, in imitation of Pindar (though he did not really understand the Pindaric metres), irregular passages of song which he called "Pindariques," he gave the first example of a class of poems which comprises performances so memorable as the *Alexander's Feast* of Dryden and the *Bard* of Gray. Crashaw, the translator of the *Sospetto di Erote*, is in the highest degree a worshipper of the far-fetched. He is the author of the celebrated line, describing the miracle of Cana in Galilee,—

Lympha pudica Deum vidit, et erubuit.
The conscious water saw her God, and blushed.

Edmund Waller, though his earliest writings betray an

finity to the fantastic school, mixed too much in the world, and had too much good taste and good sense, to go very far with them. He is the English song-writer *par excellence*; his is the only name which we can think of, when Burns is cited for Scotland and Béranger for France. His manner was so good and his style so clear that Dryden calls him the "father of English numbers," and declares that but for him "none of us could write." Pope allows to Waller *smoothness*, but ascribes much more to the influence of Dryden himself:

"Waller was smooth, but Dryden taught to join
The varying verse, the full resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine."

In the last section we noticed the rise of true comedy and tragedy, and gave the date of the building of the first regular theatre at the Blackfriars. Returning to the subject, we propose to examine the commencements of the Elizabethan drama in somewhat more detail, treating (1) of the actors, (2) of the plays which they performed, (3) of the stages which they had at their disposal, including under this head their resources of scenery and stage effect.

1. From an early period of the reign we find frequent mention of companies of players travelling from town to town, and performing in the town-halls, under the sanction of, and with remuneration from, the respective corporations, such of the plays which they had brought as might seem suitable to the audience expected. It is noteworthy that every such company announced itself as "the servants" of my lord this, or the earl of that, and indeed were really such; had they given themselves out for an independent body of players, the stern laws against vagabondage then prevailing would have made them at once amenable to the sharp jurisdiction of the local magistrates. Thus we read of the servants of the Lord Strange, those of the earls of Leicester, Warwick, Derby, &c. These noblemen enrolled the bands of players among their retainers, and probably maintained and gave them wages for a part of the year, but allowed them at other times, under the patronage of their high names and with licences under their hands, to make a living by entertaining the public. It was the servants of the earl of Leicester who in 1574 obtained from the queen a writ under the privy seal, authorizing them to perform "comedies, tragedies, interludes, stage-plays, and such other like as they have already used and studied, or hereafter shall use and study, as well in the city of London as throughout the realm of England." But when the players prepared to avail themselves of their privilege, a conflict of authorities became apparent. The mayor and corporation of London asserted their right of control over all dramatic performances within the limits of the city, and issued orders providing, amongst other things, that the players whom they might license should contribute half their receipts to charitable purposes. Probably a portion of the corporation was, even at this early period, actuated by Puritan sentiments. The poor players, who under such regulations would have soon found their occupation gone, or at any rate unremunerative, turned their eye to the vacant space between St Paul's and the river, where stood the ruins of the great convent and church of the Black Friars (Dominicans). On this site, which was outside the jurisdiction of the city, they established the first theatre by converting to their purpose some of the dilapidated buildings. Years passed; the number of the players increased; and in 1589, as we learn from a curious memorial which they addressed in that year to the privy council, they were sixteen in number, "all of them sharers in the Blackfriars play-house." The twelfth name subscribed to this list was that of William Shakespeare; the ninth that of the dramatist George Peele. These facts show that "separation of powers," which in the drama as in politics,

is the fruit of an advanced experience, did not then exist. The offices of lessee, stage-manager, actor, and play-writer were all combined in these early players. They owned the theatre in which they acted, furnished their own stage, chose their own plays, and, to a greater or less extent, wrote them. After having received the royal licence in 1574, this company ceased to bear the name of the earl of Leicester, but described themselves as "Her Majesty's poor players." The trace of this early connection with the court still remains in the appellation "Theatre Royal," assumed by several of the older London theatres.

2. With regard to the nature of the dramatic performances, these included, besides those specified in the licence to the Blackfriars Company, moral plays and histories. Under the general description of moral play we may include those that were written with a controversial purpose, either for or against the Reformation, such as the plays by Bishop Bale, *Lusty Juventus*, *Every Man*, &c. Quite a number of such pieces were put on the stage by the Catholics after the accession of Elizabeth, with the view of turning the new state services into ridicule; these drew down a special prohibition from the Government. Many dramas, called sometimes tragedies, sometimes histories, were on classical subjects, such as *Catiline's Conspiracies* (by Stephen Gosson, who afterwards wrote vehemently against the stage), *Cupid and Psyche*, *Ptolemy*, and plays on the lives of Pompey and Caesar. The audience being limited, the companies of players numerous, and the expense of scenery and dresses trifling, novelty in the pieces represented became the predominant source of attraction; hence the extraordinary variety of plays produced at this early period. Scriptural subjects were popular; thus among the earliest printed plays are Nash's *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, and Peele's *David and Bethsabe*. "Histories" dealt often with personages and events of the ancient world. But they also presented in dramatic forms passages from the story of England, many of which, by tradition and continual discussion, still lived in the memory, and vividly stirred the feelings of the people; and it was natural that dramas of this class, as they came to be planned with more art and composed with greater power, should transcend in interest the dramas with classical plots, and appropriate the name of "histories" to themselves. One of the earliest of these, *The Famous Victories of Henry V.*, was acted about 1580; Shakespeare founded on it one of his historical plays. The history of *Edward II.* by Marlowe, Greene's *James IV.*, and Peele's *Edward I.* all date somewhere about 1590; the older play of *King John* appeared in 1591; and the original plays which, refashioned or retouched by the hand of Shakespeare, come before us as the three parts of *Henry VI.*, seem to have been produced between 1590 and 1595.

Before the time when Shakespeare began to write for the stage, it may be said that several respectable or even remarkable tragedies had appeared, that some good and flowing historical dramas had been written, and that a great variety of interludes, approaching in character to our farces, and not deficient in wit and drollery, had been produced. To prove the above assertion as to tragedy, it would be enough to adduce Marlowe's powerful plays, *Dr Faustus* and *Tamburlaine the Great*,—the first strong to move the tragic passions, the second dazzling and astonishing us by its soaring rants and gorgeous rhetoric. The clever interludes of John Heywood would alone sustain what we have stated as to pieces of that description. In comedy, on the other hand, very little had been achieved. Of those that were in prose, like Gascoigne's *Supposes* and Nash's *Pierce Penniless*, the rough uncouth language was unrelieved by any wit that could pass muster in a later age. No comedies in verse superior to those of Greene can per-