

MERMAID SERIES

## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

EDITED BY HAVELOCK ELLIS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

J. A. SYMONDS

What things have we seen

Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,



LONDON
T.FISHER UNWIN

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE



"What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life."

Master Francis Beaumont to Ben Jonson.

-----

"Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?"

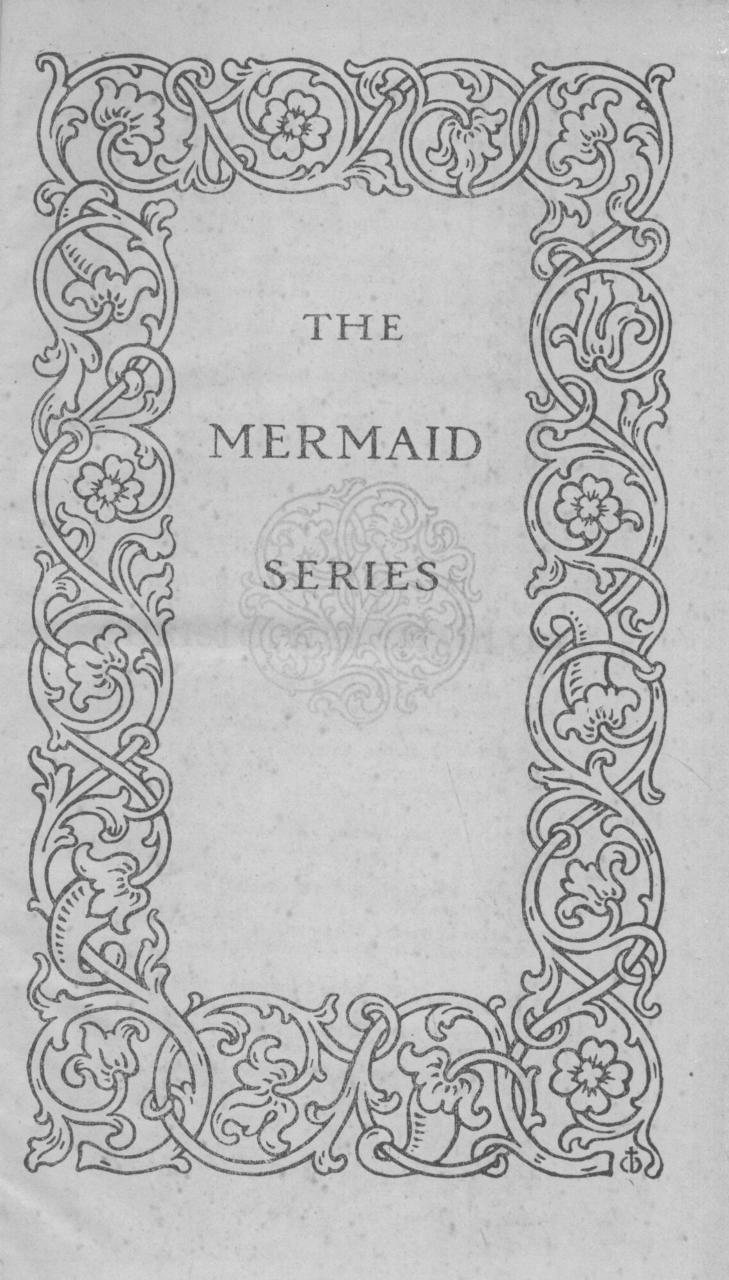
Keats



T.FISHER UNWIN

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



## THE MERMAID SERIES.

Literal Reproductions of the Old Text, with etched Frontispieces.

- The Best Plays of Christopher Marlowe. Edited, with Critical Memoir and Notes by HAVELOCK ELLIS; and containing a General Introduction to the Series by JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Otway. Introduction and Notes by the Hon. RODEN NOEL.
- The Complete Plays of William Congreve. Edited by ALEX. C. EWALD.
- The Best Plays of John Ford. Edited by HAVELOCK ELLIS.
- The Best Plays of Philip Massinger. With Critical and Biographical Essay and Notes by ARTHUR SYMONS. 2 vols
- The Best Plays of Thomas Heywood. Edited by A. W. VERITY. With Introduction by J. A. SYMONDS.
- The Complete Plays of William Wycherley. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by W. C. WARD.
- Nero and Other Plays. Edited by H. P. HORNE, ARTHUR SYMONS, A. W. VERITY, and H. ELLIS.
- The Best Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. Introduction and Notes by J. St. LOE STRACHEY. 2 vols
- The Best Plays of Webster and Tourneur. With an Introduction and Notes by JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Middleton. With an Introduction by ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. 2 vols.
- The Best Plays of James Shirley. With Introduction by EDMUND GOSSE.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Dekker. Notes by ERNEST RHYS.
- The Best Plays of Ben Jonson. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by BRINSLEY NICHOLSON and C. H. HERFORD. 3 vols.
- The Complete Plays of Richard Steele. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by G. A. AITKEN.
- The Best Plays of George Chapman. Edited by WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, Instructor of English Literature at Yale College.
- The Select Plays of Sir John Yanbrugh. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by A. E. H. SWAIN.
- The Best Plays of John Dryden. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by George Saintsbury. 2 vols.
- The Best Plays of Thomas Shadwell. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

Other Volumes in Preparation.





I

691





rough, while preparation was made for the emergence of the secular Drama as a specific form

on the drama of elizabeth and james considered as the main product of the renaissance in england.

o much has been written about the origins of the Drama in England, that it will suffice to touch but briefly on this topic.

The English, like other European nations, composed and acted Miracle Plays upon the

events of sacred history and the main doctrines of the Church. Embracing the whole dramadof humanity, from the whole dramadof humanity, from the Creation of the World to the Last Judgment, these Miracles, of which we possess several well-preserved specimens, might rather be regarded as immense epics scenically presented to an audience, than as plays with a plot and action. Yet certain episodes in the lengthy cycle, such for example as the Entrance of Noah into the Ark, the Sacrifice of Isaac, Nativity of the Ark, the Sacrifice of Isaac, Nativity of the Church. The Sacrifice of Isaac, Nativity of the Church.

in Adultery, and the Repentance of Magdalen, detached themselves from the main scheme, and became the subjects of free dramatic handling.

In this way the English people were familiarized at an early period with tragedy and comedy in the rough, while preparation was made for the emergence of the secular Drama as a specific form Before this happened, however, a second stage had to be accomplished. Between the Miracle Play and the Drama intervened the Morality and the Interlude. The former was a peculiar species of representation, in which abstract conceptions and the personages of allegory were introduced in action under the forms of men and women. The tone of such pieces remained purely didactic, and their machinery was clumsy; yet their authors found it impossible to deal dramatically with Youth and Pleasure, Sin, Grace, and Repentance, the Devil and Death, without developing dialogue, marking character, and painting the incidents of real life. Thus the Morality led to the Interlude, which completed the disengagement of the drama from religious aims, and brought various types of human nature on the stage. The most remarkable specimen of this kind now extant may be mentioned. It is the elder Heywood's Three P's, in which a Pardoner, a Pedlar, and a Palmer, three characteristic figures among contemporary vagrants and impostors, are vividly delineated. From the Interlude to Farce and Comedy there was but a

short step to take; and in England the earliest plays, properly so-called, were of a humorous description. At the same time, tragedy began to form itself out of serious pieces detached in detail from the Miracle Plays. Godly Queen Esther, King Darius, The Conversion of St. Paul, and so forth, smoothed the way for secular dramas upon subjects chosen from history and legend.

The process of dramatic evolution which I have briefly sketched, had reached this point before the new learning of the Italian Renaissance penetrated English society. The people were accustomed to scenic representations, and had traced the outlines of what was afterwards to become the Romantic or Shakespearian drama. At this point the attention of cultivated people was directed to the Latin and Italian theatre. Essayists like Sir Philip Sidney, poetslike Lord Buckhurst and Thomas Norton, tried by their precepts and their practice to introduce the classical style of dramatic composition into England. They severely criticized the rhymed plays in which the populace delighted, the involved tales roughly versified for declamation by actors in the yards of inns, and the incongruous blending of rude farce with pathetic or passionate incident. It seemed for a time as though these "courtly makers" might divert the English Drama from its spontaneously chosen path into the precise and formal channels of pedantic imitation. The aristocracy and learned coteries delighted in tragedies

X

like Gorboduc, or The Misfortunes of Arthur, which followed the model of Seneca, and competed with famous Italian masterpieces. But neither the nobility nor the universities were destined to control the theatre in England. That had already become a possession of the people; and the people remained true to the traditions of their native though uncultivated type of art. What men like Sidney, Sackville, Norton and Hughes, effected, was in the main a certain heightening of the sense of dramatic dignity. They forced playwrights to regard principles of composition, propriety of diction, and harmony of parts, to some extent at least, in the construction of both tragedies and comedies. Furthermore, they indicated blank verse, or the unrhymed decasyllable iambic, as the proper metre Italian theatre. Essayists like Sir Lagare adt rol

Meanwhile our drama continued to advance upon the romantic as opposed to the classical type of art; and since the phrase romantic is one of great importance, I must pause to explain in what sense I use it. Three personages in one of the earlier comedies preserved to us are introduced discussing the English theatre. One of these observes that though plays are represented every day in London, they are "neither right comedies nor right tragedies," but "representations of histories without any decorum." The phrase, although contemptuous, was accurate; for the Romantic Drama observed no rules and cared for no scholastic

precedents. It only aimed at presenting a tale or history in scenes; and the most accurate definition of the plays which it produced is that they were stories told in dialogue by actors on the stage. Nothing that had the shape and interest of a story came amiss to the romantic playwright; and his manner did not greatly differ in the treatment of pure farce, pathetic episode, or chronicle of past events. Thus there sprang up several species of dramatic composition in England, marked by a common artistic handling. These may be briefly enumerated as chronicle plays on English history, biographical plays on the lives of English worthies, tragedies borrowed from Roman history and Italian novels, tragedies based on domestic crimes of recent occurrence, comedies imitated from Latin and modern European literature, broad realistic farces, fanciful pieces partaking of the nature of the Masque or Ballet, pastorals of the Arcadian type, and classical mythologies. The one point, as I have already remarked, which the playwright kept steadily in view, was to sustain the interest of his audience, and to excite their curiosity by a succession of entertaining incidents. He did not mind mixing tragedy with comedy or kings with peasants, and set at naught the so-called unities of classical tradition. His paramount object was to feel and make his audience feel the reality of life exceedingly, and to evoke living men and women from the miscellaneous mass of fables which lay

open to him in classical, medieval, and modern literature. Some spirited lines of the younger Heywood may here be quoted, as aptly describing the vast tracts over which the dramatists in their first ardour ranged in search of subjects:—

came amiss to the romantic playwright; and his "To give content to this most curious age, on bib monnem The gods themselves we have brought down to the stage,
And figured them in planets; made even Hell Deliver up the Furies, by no spell, and To strave (Saving the Muse's rapture); further, we Have trafficked by their help; no history We have left unrifled, our pens have been dipped nomino As well in opening each hid manuscript, as between the As tracts more vulgar, whether read or sung In our domestic or more foreign tongue; sig Ispidgs rooid Of fairy elves, nymphs of the sea and land, and asibsocial The lawns and groves, no number can be scanned Which we have not given feet to, nay, 'tis known I cloven That when our chronicles have barren grown Of story, we have all invention stretched, Dived low as to the centre, and then reached and mobom fanciful pieces partakin, svode above, mislatrag social ludional (Nor 'scaped things intermediate) for your love; These have been acted often, all have passed

A group of cultivated men, chiefly members of the Universities, began soon after 1580 to give something like the form of high art to our romantic drama. These were Richard Edwards, George Whetstone, John Lyly, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Nash. It is not my business to characterize their works in detail, since they will probably be made the subjects of special treatment in this series. Their chief

OVER Censure, of which some live, and some are cast. It Issians of

importance, however, may be indicated. This consists in their having contributed to the formation of Marlowe's dramatic style. It was he who irrevocably decided the destinies of the romantic drama; and the whole subsequent evolution of that species, including Shakespeare's work, can be regarded as the expansion, rectification and artistic ennoblement of the type fixed by Marlowe's epoch-making tragedies. In very little more than fifty years from the publication of Tamburlaine, our drama had run its course of unparalleled energy and splendour. Expanding like a many-petalled flower of marvellous complexity and varied colours, it developed to the utmost every form of which the romantic species is capable, and left to Europe a mass of work invariably vivid, though extremely unequal, over which of course the genius of Shakespeare rules supreme. He stands alone, and has no second; but without the multifarious excellences of Jonson, Webster, Heywood, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford Massinger, and a score whom it would be tedious to enumerate, the student would have to regard Shakespeare as an inexplicable prodigy, instead of as the central sun of a luminous sidereal system.

In the short space of this prefatory essay, I cannot attempt to sketch the history of the drama, or to criticize the various schools of style which were formed in the course of its passage from maturity to decadence. It must be enough for me to indicate in what way the genius of the English nation

expressed itself through this form of art at the epoch when the Reformation had been accomplished, the attacks of Spain repulsed, and the new learning of the Renaissance assimilated.

England, alone of European nations, received the influences of both Renaissance and Reformation simultaneously. These two great movements of the modern intellect, which closed the Middle Ages, and opened a new period of mental culture for the Western nations, have to be regarded as distinct because their issues were different, and they were severally accomplished by Latin and Teutonic races. Yet both Renaissance and Reformation had a common starting-point in humanism; both needed the revival of learning for their motive force; both effected a liberation of the spirit from authority, superstition and decadent ideals. In the one case this liberation of the modern spirit expressed itself through new conceptions of social culture, new theories of the state, new systems of education, new arts, new sciences, and new philosophies. It was the emancipation of the reason; and we call it Renaissance. In the other case it assumed a more religious and political aspect, issuing in the revival of pure Christianity, revolt against the Papacy as a dominant force, and assertion of national independence. It was the emancipation of the conscience; and we call it Reformation. No sooner had these two movements been defined, than they entered on a phase of mutual hostility; not indeed because they were essentially antagonistic, or because they could not show a common origin, but because they expressed the tendencies of broadly differing races, and had in view divergent ideals. The Italians, to whom we owe the Renaissance, were careless about ecclesiastical reform, and sceptical as to the restoration of Christianity from its primitive sources. The Germans, who started the Reformation, were so preoccupied with things of deeper moment, that they sacrificed the culture of the Renaissance. Then Reformation generated Counter-Reformation. The Catholic reaction, led by Rome and championed by Spain, set in Europe was involved in a series of religious wars, which impeded the tranquil evolution of the intellect on either line. So much had to be prefaced in order to explain the tongue, and supplied th.bnalgna for noitisod latinam

Some time before the Catholic Powers assumed their attitude of panic-stricken and belligerent reaction, Henry VIII. committed the nation to Protestantism; and at the same time the new learning began to penetrate society. The English people cast off obedience to Rome in doctrine, and assumed Italian humanism, simultaneously. The Reformation had been adopted by the consent of King, Lords and Commons; and this change in the state-religion, though it was not confirmed without reaction, agitation, and bloodshed, cost the nation comparatively little disturbance. The new learning,

derived from the revival of antiquity, had already permeated Italian and French literature. Classical erudition had been adapted to the needs of modern thought; the chief Greek and Latin authors had been translated into modern languages; the masterpieces of antiquity were interpreted and made intelligible. English scholars, trained upon the new method by private tutors or in the now regenerated public schools, began at once to translate the poets and historians of antiquity and of Italy into the vernacular. French books were widely read; the best authors of Spain were assimilated; and Germany supplied her legendary stores and grotesque satires to the growing culture of our race. Meanwhile the authorized version of the Bible, which had recently been given to the public, proved the dignity and flexibility of the mothertongue, and supplied the laity at once with the original sources of sacred erudition. Before the date of Marlowe these vast collections had been made, and we were in possession of all the materials for building up a mighty edifice of literary art. Little at this period had been accomplished in pure poetry. It is true that Wyat, Surrey and Sidney had acclimatized the sonnet; that blank verse had been introduced; and that Spenser was just giving his noble epic to the world. But the people in its youthful vigour under Tudor Sovereigns, conscious of a great deliverance from Rome, and of a bracing struggle with reactionary powers in Europe, needed some wider, some more comprehensive sphere for the display of its native genius; and this it found in the romantic drama, to which, notwithstanding the efforts of students and polite persons, it adhered with the pertinacity of instinct. This drama, its own original creation, stood to the English nation in the place of all the other arts. It became for us the embodiment of that Renaissance which had given sculpture, painting, architecture and a gorgeous undergrowth of highly-coloured poetry to the Italians. England, sharing the impulse communicated to thought by southern Renaissance and northern Reformation, needed no æsthetical outlet but the drama, and had to expend her forces upon no distracting struggles of religion.

Just as the Romantic Drama was a home-product of the English people, so the method of presenting plays in London, and the material conditions of the stage, were eminently homely. It had been customary during the Middle Ages to exhibit Miracles upon wooden platforms or moveable waggons, which were set up in the market-places of towns, or on the turfed enclosures of abbatial buildings. Moralities and Interludes were shown publicly during civic entertainments, or privately at the request of companies assembled in some noble dwelling; a portion of the hall being devoted for the nonce to wandering actors. The interesting history-play of Sir Thomas More gives a lively picture of the way in

6