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THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PLAY EVERYMAN

AND OTHER EARLY PLAYS

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

CLARENCE GRIFFIN CHILD

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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INTRODUCTION

I

In the introduction to his recent volumes upon the Elizabethan Drama,[1] Mr. Schelling outlines the field he covers as follows: —

"We could find no better date than 1600 as a point of departure from which to map out the physical dimensions, so to speak, of our subject. If we mark thirty-seven years backward, we have the date of the birth of Shakespeare, 1564; thirty-seven years forward, and we have the date of the death of Ben Jonson, 1637, Shakespeare's greatest contemporary in his own field. If we add five years, backward and forward, to these two lapses of thirty-seven years, we have the period from the accession of Queen Elizabeth, 1558, to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. Indeed, this symmetry of dates — for the statement of which we are indebted to that indefatigable if vexatious scholar, F. G. Fleay, — extends into other points. The career of Shakespeare stretched, roughly speaking, from 1589 to 1611, eleven years on either side of 'the meeting-point of the centuries'; and again, the first Elizabethan structure built expressly for dramatic presentations, and called the Theatre *par excellence*, was erected in 1576, twenty-four years before our point of departure; while the last theatre to be rebuilt, before the advancing tide of Puritanism swept all such landmarks as

[1] *Elizabethan Drama, 1586–1642*, by Felix E. Schelling. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908, vol. i, p. xxxv.

this before it, was the Fortune, in 1624, the same distance of time onward.

"Within these eighty-four years arose and flourished in the city of London, then of a population not exceeding 125,000 souls, over a score of active and enterprising theatrical companies, averaging some four or five performing contemporaneously, and occupying at different times some twenty theatres and inn yards fitted up for theatrical purposes. Among these actors were Edward Alleyn, who made his repute in the title rôles of *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Doctor Faustus*; Richard Burbage, the original Richard III, and perhaps the first to play Hamlet, Lear, and Othello; John Lowin, the creator of the rôles of Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Volpone*, and of Sir Epicure Mammon; and, of a lesser degree as an actor, though not as a manager, William Shakespeare. Within these eighty-four years wrote and starved, or occasionally acquired competence, a swarm of writers, producing some hundreds of plays, less than half of which are in all probability now extant. Amongst these authors were a score of brilliant playwrights, not one of whom but has added his treasures to that richest of our English inheritances, the literature of our tongue; and at least six of whom have written dramas, which, judged as dramas, are beyond the achievements of the greatest of their successors. Within these eighty-four years, in short, arose, developed, and declined the most universal and imaginative, the most spontaneous and heterogeneous literature in dramatic form which has yet come from the hand of man."

Compact as this valuable summary is of striking facts, the attention is arrested, even on a first read-

ing, by the statement that a city with a population of 125,000 gave support so loyal and liberal to the stage as to render such a drama possible. An absorbed interest on the part of every rank and class of society was, indeed, a necessary condition of its transcendent greatness. But one must not make the natural error of assuming this interest due to the sudden appearance, in some mysterious way, of men of extraordinary genius, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, with a score of others less marvellously gifted — an error found in its crudest form in the reply returned by undergraduates to the question why the Elizabethan period was so great, that "it was great because there were so many great men then." The Elizabethan period was great because of the profound change wrought by the Renaissance in the attitude of men towards life; because England, belated in undergoing its influence, came suddenly and directly into possession of the results of this change already attained in other countries, notably Italy; because a new field of opportunity was opened for men of ability without respect to social distinction; because England was growing in strength and stability as a national power; because the Tudors in general — Elizabeth notably — sincerely cared for, and by their interest and example fostered, literature; above all, because the new influences, intense in their quickening power, wrought in England upon a people which, in the classes that count most, the yeomanry and peasantry, had, for centuries back (however secondary in inspiration "polite literature" might be), cherished a deep and abiding love for poetry.

The drama was not the only result, it must be remembered, of this swift exaltation of the national

genius. But it was its highest expression, and for the following reasons. The play was already, and had long been, loved by the people, and had become an organic part of the national life and a medium for its poetic expression. The national genius, in fact, characteristically combined, with vigor of imagination and instinctive power of poetic expression, an intense interest in active and practical life; in diversity of circumstance as making or marring the fortunes of men; in the play of human nature in character as affected by or commanding circumstance. Moreover, foreign influences became available to aid and hasten the development of the popular drama to artistry in conception, content, and form; and, furthermore, the English genius, while eager enough to welcome and use these, was too stalwart, individual, and independent in its awakened strength to become subject to them in any servile way, and adapted or modified them as it pleased, its drama remaining as it had long been, national and individual, a drama characteristically English.

The purpose of this volume is to help illustrate the first of these points — the long development of the drama that lies behind the great achievements of the Elizabethans, the native genius inherent in it, the important part it played in the nation's imaginative life. To this end it presents certain selected plays to exemplify the several typical stages of development. These plays are translated because, simple matter as it may be to gather the general sense from the original Middle English, the constant recurrence of obsolete words and phrases prevents many persons from gaining a really complete and fully enjoyable understanding of the dialogue. The volume is primarily intended for

reading in the limited time available in outline courses in English literature, and as a convenient introduction to the subject for the student and general reader.[1] Those who wish to pursue the subject in greater detail may read the *Medieval Stage* of Mr. E. K. Chambers, which includes, and, to an impressive degree, enlarges upon its predecessors in the field, and follow it with Mr. Schelling's masterly exposition of the development of the Elizabethan drama, as a result of the varying balance of native conditions and external influences, from its far origins in this medieval drama.

II

THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS PLAY

There is no connection between the classic stage and the medieval drama. The medieval drama represents a new beginning. When the dramatic performances, public and private, of the later Roman Empire fell justly under the ban of the Church and disappeared, the place of the actor was taken by the wandering minstrel, acrobat, juggler, and exhibitor of trained animals, whose entertainments in hall, "bower," and street formed a chief source of amusement in medieval life apart from athletic games and the chase. Among the minstrels, the dramatic instinct led to impersonations similar in character to those of the elocutionist of our own day, in

[1] Those who wish a wider range of plays may refer to Schelling's *Elizabethan Drama* (vol. ii, 442). For the general development, see the plays included in Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama* and Gayley's *Representative English Comedies*. Also see Gayley's *Plays of Our Forefathers*.

which monologue and dialogue were rendered dramatically, though by one person, and sometimes even, it would seem, with use of characteristic costume. Certain religious poems, indeed, designed to be read for instruction (the *Cursor Mundi* and the fragment *Judas* may serve for examples), show plainly that they were intended to be delivered dramatically.[1]

Also, but in a much more important way, the dramatic instinct found expression in dramatic dances, games, and folk-plays. These had existed from the earliest times, some of the dances and games going back to remote pagan festivities. In these dances and games, certain prescribed figures and movements were executed, typifying plainly, in many cases, myths long forgotten, such as the death of winter and the reawakening of spring. The sword dance, common throughout England in various forms, in which the dancers carried swords and slashed at each other, evidently originated as a mimic representation of war. Familiar examples are the May-day games, and the Morris dancers with their characters drawn in part from the story of Robin Hood. A more developed form of drama, with spoken dialogue and a semblance of plot, is found in the folk-plays, or mummings. We may feel certain that from the earliest times, though no record remains of them, plays were naturally improvised, or even planned for special occasions, just as children to-day, who know nothing of the theatre, improvise in their play what are essentially little dramas. Of the later folk-plays we have examples numerous enough. Two are given in this volume, the

[1] One early work, the *Harrowing of Hell*, though in dramatic form, was, it is now generally believed, intended only to be read or "delivered."

Robin Hood Plays, and the mumming of St. George, or *St. George Play*, the latter in a version recorded, in a much degenerated form, in 1853. For such folk-dances and folk-plays have remained to our own time in parts of England. Kenneth Grahame, in his charming *Golden Age*, refers to the mummers (ed. 1899, p. 117): "Twelfth-night had come and gone, and life next morning seemed a trifle flat and purposeless. But yester-eve and the mummers were here! They had come striding into the old kitchen, powdering the red brick floor with snow from their barbaric bedizenments; and stamping, and crossing, and declaiming, till all was whirl and riot and shout. Harold was frankly afraid: unabashed, he buried himself in the cook's ample bosom. Edward feigned a manly superiority to illusion, and greeted these awful apparitions familiarly, as Dick and Harry and Joe. As for me, I was too big to run, too rapt to resist the magic and surprise. Whence came these outlanders, breaking in on us with song and ordered masque and a terrible clashing of wooden swords? And after these, what strange visitants might we not look for any quiet nights, when the chestnuts popped in the ashes, and the old ghost stories drew the awe-stricken circle close? . . . This morning, house-bound by the relentless, indefatigable snow, I was feeling the reaction. Edward, on the contrary, being violently stage-struck on this his first introduction to the real Drama, was striding up and down the floor, proclaiming 'Here be I, King Gearge the Third,' in a strong Berkshire accent."

The folk-play, as developed from and as fostering a native dramatic instinct, is of the greatest possible importance, but it also had a direct and most important

influence in shaping the formal drama, as we shall see later in the proper place. To the development of the formal drama we now pass.

III

THE LITURGICAL PLAY

If we may take a wide-spread natural impulse towards dramatic expression for granted, how did it take shape in a formal drama with possibilities of a continuous and orderly development?

The answer is that the drama in its organic historical development originated in the Church, which, 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. The liturgy indeed was in many parts essentially dramatic in conception, the Mass itself, for example. A specific dramatic development began, however, in the elaboration of the liturgy, during the ninth century, by the use of so-called "tropes," or texts appropriate for special days, adapted for choral rendering in the musical portions of the Mass. 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, are of special importance as starting points of dramatic expansion.

None is of greater importance than the *Quem Quæritis* of Easter Day. This trope was based upon the account in the Gospel of the question, "Whom seek ye?" addressed to the Marys, as they went to

anoint the body of Christ, by the angel who sat beside the sepulchre, and his announcement to them of the resurrection. 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. Usage no doubt differed in various places, but the famous passage in the *Concordia Regularis*, translated in this volume, makes it clear that the change had taken place in England before the end of the tenth century ; it had taken place probably in France and Germany at an even earlier date. The passage referred to describes the ritual in detail as prescribed for use at Winchester in the tenth century ; in this case the trope, which had become a brief, but none the less complete, liturgical drama, formed part of the Third Nocturne during Matins on Easter morning.

In the course of time, with great diversity of development in different places, the original *Quem Quæritis* was enlarged by the addition of dialogue and of dramatic action, in particular by transferring to it liturgical plays belonging to other times in the Easter season, producing a play with several separate scenes. The original *Quem Quæritis* included a scene between the angel and the Marys at the sepulchre followed by a responsive chant between the Marys and the choir (compare the version of the play used at Winchester, translated in this volume). In one of the fullest versions which developed from the original form, the manuscript of which is at Tours, Pilate sets a watch

before the sepulchre, an angel sends lightning and the soldiers fall as if dead, the Marys appear and sing *planctus* or songs of lamentation, there is a scene with a spice-merchant from whom they buy spices to anoint the Saviour's body (the spice-merchant was developed into an important humorous element in later forms of the play in Germany), more *planctus* follow, then comes the *Quem Quæritis* proper, after which follows the announcement of the resurrection to Pilate, the apparition of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalen and the announcement of the resurrection by the Marys to the disciples, the appearance of Christ to the disciples and to Thomas, then a trope (which it is needless to consider here) termed the *Victimæ Paschali*, and at the end the *Te Deum*.

The properties used were at the first very simple. For the sepulchre a symbolic representation made by heaping together the service-books on the altar, or a recessed tomb, if there happened to be one in the chancel, at first sufficed. Later, a special sepulchre, more or less realistic, was often constructed; such sepulchres not uncommonly formed permanent features in medieval churches. A swathed crucifix, representing the dead Christ, was deposited with suitable ceremonies in the sepulchre, and at the proper moment was removed, the cloths which swathed it being left for use in the play. It will be noted that the Winchester ritual prescribes that the cleric who represents the angel shall carry a palm. Such simple symbolism was all that was necessary, but presumably in course of time special costumes and other realistic details were added.

The Christmas liturgical play, representing the visit of the Shepherds to the infant Christ, had a

similar history. Just as the Easter play centred about the sepulchre, the Christmas play centred about the *præsepe* or manger, in which the Christ was laid, which was at first depicted symbolically and later realistically, much as it often is now in Catholic churches with Joseph and Mary, and the ox and the ass. Moreover, a trope, modeled directly upon the Easter *Quem Quæritis*, beginning *Quem quæritis in præsepe?* — originally used in the Introit of the third or great Mass, and afterwards transferred to Matins, — seems to have been its starting point. This play, the *Officium Pastorum*, or *Pastores*, and a play taken probably from Holy Innocents' Day, the *Rachel*, the subject of which was the lamentation of Rachel for her children, were in some cases taken up into an Epiphany Play, called the *Tres Reges*, *Magi*, *Herodes*, or *Stella*, representing the visit of the Magi to the Saviour, which centred about a star hung from the nave and lighted by candles. Thus, in more or less elaborate forms in various places, a Christmas cycle developed. One Christmas play, of special importance, the *Prophetæ*, calls for mention. This did not take its rise in a trope, but in a sermon, the *Sermo contra Iudæos, Paganos, et Arianos, de Symbolo*, ascribed erroneously to St. Augustine, which was commonly used as a *lectio*, or lesson, in the Christmas season. The passage in this sermon converted into a play was one in which the homilist calls first upon the Jews to bear witness to Christ, citing for this purpose the prophets, and then calls upon the Gentiles to bear similar witness, citing Virgil (*Eclogues*, iv, 7), Nebuchadnezzar, and the Erythræan Sibyl. This passage was changed into a dialogue with the several prophets speaking in person, clad in appro

priate dress and with appropriate symbols. This play of the *Prophetæ* remained as an important part of the great cycles of religious plays to be spoken of later.

We need not touch on the Ascension trope, also modeled on the *Quem Quæritis*. The Christmas, Easter, and Ascension plays were the models for a large number of liturgical plays, and plays of similar general character, which were acted in the church at appropriate seasons, and which became in course of time more and more elaborate and more freely dramatic in character. One of them, a German version of the *Antichrist*, apparently for Advent, was a most elaborate spectacle, requiring a large number of actors, a special stage with representations of a temple of God and seven thrones, and abundant space for marching and countermarching. In this play, it is interesting to note, allegorical figures appear of the Synagogue, Holy Church, Pity, and Justice — a most striking anticipapation of the later morality. The addition of new scenes to plays, the addition of new plays for special days, the transfer of plays from lesser feast-days to the great feast-days of their season, went on, but the material extant does not permit the progress of these changes to be traced in detail. Two changes are, however, of such fundamental importance as to demand treatment in a separate section.

IV

THE MIRACLE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

In course of time — when, it is not possible to say — the presentation of liturgical plays thus elaborated

was transferred from within the church to the churchyard, the street or market-place, or to convenient spots in the fields. The cause of this change was not, as often supposed, so much the fact that the plays began to include non-religious elements of a character indecorous for presentation within the church. The real reason was the necessity for more room both for the representation and for the audience.

Furthermore, the control of their presentation passed over to the municipal authorities, into the hands of lay fraternities, or, generally and characteristically, into the hands of the town gilds, that is, the associations of men pursuing the same crafts, such as the butchers, tanners, tailors, weavers, and the like. As the plays became elaborated, the increased number of actors and cost of production made it difficult for the plays to be given with the help only of the lower clergy and scholars from the church schools, and without some division of the labor and cost. When we are first able to find somewhat complete information concerning the religious play, we find it carefully organized by the civic authorities, the different plays or scenes being assigned to the various gilds, each gild being responsible for the proper production of its play and for its share of the general expense.

Important results directly followed. The language of the country took the place of Latin in the dialogues, either in part, or, in most cases, wholly. The acting became more dramatic, scenes that permitted it were made more realistic, and scenes were invented that were not in the Bible story. Certain of the characters took on a new dramatic life and interest quite separate from their part in the Bible story. Herod and Pilate, at first

given swelling speeches to indicate their importance, became typical braggarts. Herod, notably, became the type of a bullying tyrant; Shakespeare's phrase "out-Herod Herod" will be remembered. Noah's wife became a shrew and scold; she refuses to go into the ark, a picture of obstinacy, till the rain drives her in. The life of Mary Magdalen before her conversion is used to present pictures of profligate luxury. The racial and local character of the people acting the plays became impressed upon them. In brief, the miracle plays, originally in a general way alike in all countries or parts of a country, owing to their transfer without the church and out of ecclesiastical control, became secularized, nationalized, and localized, and their dramatic quality intensified.

A result of very great importance, due to their being played out of doors, was the tendency, owing to the inclemency of the winter and spring weather, to shift their production from their proper season to a time when they could be performed and seen with greater enjoyment. A favorite day was Whitsuntide, but much more frequently the chosen day was the high feast of Corpus Christi, finally instituted after an intermission of its earlier observance in 1311, which was celebrated the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. 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. The performance of the plays became associated with the procession, and originally formed part of it. The plays