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THE ELIZABETHAN AGE OF LITERATURE.

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Foreword.

When one attempts to portray a particular age his efforts will be, to some extent at least, marked by his predjudices. To gain, however, an adequate view of the Elizabethan age it is necessary to approach it in a spirit of sympathy, in order that justice may be done to the leading lights of the period. In this thesis, an effort has been made to judge each writer impartially and with this end in view the quotations given, reveal the personal characteristics of their creators.

The Elizabethan Age of Literature.

It is impossible to mark the exact limits of this period of literature. The age is not bounded by the birth of Elizabeth, but preceeded her reign and extended for some time after her death.

The reign of Henry the Seventh and Eight has been called a period of "seed time." Certain forces were at work which were to make themselves felt in after years. Caesar's escape from death at the hands of Marius seemed unimportant at the time, but it changed the destiny of the Roman Empire. The death of Mussolini during the world war would not have created a ripple of interest, but his death would have erased ten years of stirring Italian development. The new factors, which arose in the reign of these two kings, diverted the stream of English life into new channels, wholly different from the old, even as an earthquake suddenly causes a river to change the direction of its course and find new passages to the sea. In the realm of literature, a marked influence can be detected arising because of the occurence of these events.

The Rennaisance played a very important part in the intellectual development of Europe. Here, it is not necessary to study the history of this development any more than to give a bare statement of the facts. Classic antiq-

uity, by reason of its very classicism, must needs appeal to the English mind. Steeped in the seriousness of mediaevalism the English mind would naturally grasp at the classic ideal which the Rennaissance attempted to portray. Under the influence of its spell a great change was wrought in art and literature and architecture and this same influence was no less felt in the realm of letters. Classic poets and classic poesy were the models which the English men of letters attempted to copy.

The effect of the renaissance on the style and form of poetry was, no doubt, beneficial but the same cannot be said of the subject matter. The weakness and corruptness of society, the charm of seductive beauty and the appeal of the passions which are found in the writings of the old Greek and Latin dramatists found their way into English literature. The idea that to be human to be corrupt became an obsession with some who did not really understand the Greek and Roman classics.

The discovery of America had filled Europe with a desire to visit new lands, to extend their knowledge of Geography, to add new continents to their respective nations. The vast Atlantic ocean which, hitherto, had been a boundary now took on the appearance of a huge gateway to new wonders. Beyond it lay new adventures, fresh hope, perhaps

boundless wealth. Printing had thrown open the world of literature to all. The comparative ease in securing copies of great works of literature made the works of the writers better known, it enabled any one man to influence, for good or evil, a great, an unseen audience. Since a larger percentage of the people read and studied, the language became more uniform; uncertainties existing in the use of English words gradually disappeared. It had required the entire period from the Norman Conquest to Henry the Seventh, to formulate an English speech. French previously was the language of polite society and literature. Caxton remarks, "Common English that is spoken in one Sluie varieth from another so much, that in my days it happened that certain merchants were in a ship at Thames, for to have sailed over the sea to Zealand and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland and went on shore to refresh them. One of them, names Sheffield, a mercer, came into the house and asked for meat and especially for eggs. And the good wife answered that she could speak no French, that she understood him not; and then at last another said he would have eyren, then the good wife said she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, eggs or eyren?"

Like a captain, who at first has some misgiving as to the sea-worthiness of his vessel, the English writers long distrusted the English language, and employed it, at first, with trepidation and almost in spite of their better judgment. As the daring of Columbus opened a new world, made it possible to charter unnavigated seas, so the successful attempts of writers to launch their choicest works on the uncertain waters of their own language made possible the creation of a Shakespeare, a Marlowe and a Spenser. To Caxton and the introduction of the printing press much of the credit for this new course must be given.

Religious life was more or less disturbed and feverish. True it was that thousands of good sincere Christians, both among the clergy and the laity, were endeavouring to imitate the holy life of their Founder, but unworthy men-sometimes in higher places-did much harm to religion. Deharbe thus summarizes the spiritual conditions of the time in England and on the continent. "In the meantime there appeared an exuberant growth of cockle among the wheat in the fields of God. There were pernicious feuds and wars, various acts of injustice and violence, and many scandals. In several places and especially in Germany, the custom had been

introduced by temporal princes, of putting the newly elected Bishops and Abbots in possession of their benifices by giving them the ring and Crosier, the symbols of pastoral authority, which ceremony was called, "investiture", and seemed to imply the conferring of spiritual jurisdiction. Not content with this, the Emperor, Henry the Fourth, used to bestow Bishoprics and Abbeys upon the most unworthy candidates, and even on such as offered him the largest sums of money. Pope Gregory the Eight, courageously inveighed against those crying abuses. After that there arose heretics, who kindled the fire of revolt against the Ecclesiastical, and then against the secular authorities, as in France the Albigenses, in upper Italy the Waldenses, in England the Wickliffites or Lollards, in Bohemia the Hussites. Peace, it is true, was restored to the church, and men, might in words and deeds, as St. Vincent Ferrr and St. John Capistrian went through the country of Europe, preaching penance to the princes and people. Nevertheless, an unholy fire lay hidden under the ashes; feelings of disrespect and hostility to the Church, and a fondness for innovations, had gained ground, and were increased by many other attendant evils. Nothing was wanted for

this fatal eruption of this volcano of wickedness and rebellion, but an opportunity; and this presented itself in the beginning of the Sixteenth century in Germany. Like a contagious disease, this lamentable evil spread atroad, thousands and thousands abandoned the Catholic Church; bloody wars, revolts, and the corruption of morals ensued; the most splendid establishments, founded by the piety of the former ages, were destroyed, and unspeakable misery was prepared for time and eternity."

Deharbe---------

The age was one of comparative peace. Elizabeth had the sagacity to see that England must be kept out of war because her people were disunited, divided into religious and political factions. The influence of peace made itself felt in literature. Schools and scholars, poets and dramatists do not abound in war time. Shakespeare, with all his genius, would have found scant encouragement in the wars of the Roses. Keat's "Ode to Autumn", with its theme of plenty and quiet peace, could hardly have been written during a civil war. Because Elizabeth was more anxious to establish the monarchy at home than to make foreign conquests, because she wished to make the nation attribute to her influence a tranquil and enterprising nation rather than to have the doubtful honour of foreign conquests, the period was without wars of long duration or great intensity.

Many writers attribute the progress in literature, in fine arts, and in drama, as directly due to the influence of the Reformation.

"The breaking up of the idea that the church alone had the authority to decree what was to be believed, and the giving of the Bible to the laity had stirred the imaginations of the people and made them think,

and this earnest thinking quickened the intellect and awakened originality." --Buckland.

"Alike in theology, scholarship, and literature, a richer and a wider conception of life appeared, and after some hesitation and opposition prevailed."--Strong.

To what extent was the reformation the cause of this literary improvement? The shrill whistle of a locomotive is heard when the train begins to move but it is not the cause of the motion. The regime of many a Conservative or Liberal government has been marked by the prosperity of our peoples when the politicians were not in any way the reason of it. A tenant on a farm, cannot claim any honour in the bounteous crop which has resulted from the zeal of his predecessor.

So was it with the great strides made in literature and learning. The decay of the feudal system had bettered the condition of the workers, it had made new citizens. The crusades had given Englishmen an insight into the customs of other lands, had stimulated commerce and enterprise. The renaissance, the art of printing, the new discoveries in America, paved the way for an age which expressed the activities, the strivings and the pent emotions of previous times.

The radical changes which were introduced had a tendency to halt the advancement of the liberal arts. The suppression of the monasteries abolished the schools which they had conducted. The priceless libraries, contained within their walls, were scattered. "These books were all in manuscript. Single books had taken in many cases, half a long life-time to compose and copy out fair. Whole libraries, the getting of which together, had taken ages upon ages, and had cost immense sums of money, were scattered abroad, when they had robbed the covers of the rich ornaments."--W. Cobbett. The greatness of the loss and the consequent handicap to scholars was emphazised by W. Maskell when he was compiling his liturgical books for the use of the clergy and laity of the Reformed church of England. Mivart extols the usefulness of the service performed by Maskell and corroborates the scantiness of the materials with which he was forced to work. "How great the destruction was may be realized, when we note, on the one hand, the extreme rarity of our ancient service books now, and on the other hand, the amazing number of them which existed in mediaeval times. Every one of the ten thousand parish churches of England had (as we may judge from the extracts

given from the thirteenth century inventories) a variety of service books. Besides these, there were the books of the multitudes of chapels, chanteries, and hospitals, while the monasteries and cathedrals possessed their hundreds of liturgical volumes." Essays and criticisms--Mivart. Hallam, Arnold and D'Aubigne, although they support the cause of the Reformers, deplore the destruction of the libraries and the consequent results on English Literature.

In spite of this check English Literature continued to develop. The flood could not be stemmed and it rushed forth, gaining fresh momentum as it went, leaving here and there a limpid lake of Spencerian verse, an inland sea of drama, an island of Baconian philosophy until it reached the great ocean of Shakespeare, deep, wide, immense where it was lost in the vast expanse.

The great variety of poetry has caused this time to be compared to a beautiful garden. Every kind of flower is flourishing side by side; some are more beautiful than others. One has a greater growth, another a more exquisite beauty. Here and there, dwarfed by their sturdier fellows, grow clusters of small dainty flowers, not distinctive enough to stand

out individually, but making a pleasing background. When the observer has been drawn from the garden the fragrance of these humbler blossoms lingers on, as the odor of incense in a church, long after the service is over.

The realization that Englishmen were far behind other nations in literary endeavours, the desire to use this language, which they had rediscovered, the blind faith and trust the age placed in the poet, stimulated a wide range in style. The English scholars of the day felt that they had dallied too long. The literature of France was far in advance of their own, the lays of ancient Greece and Rome had no counterpart in their treasury of literature. England was now recovering the lost grounds in explorations, in seafaring accomplishments. She must be on an equal position in literary accomplishments. Emulating the same spirit that actuated Frobisher and Raleigh in their adventurous voyages, the learned men of the day attempted lyrics and epics, tragedy and comedy, essays and romantic tales, philosophical discourses and critical historical comment. The poet became again the prophet revered by the ancient pagans; his word took on a meaning and a force far beyond that of the ordinary

mortal. To gain fame--and these Elizabethans were greedy for fame--the ambitious courtier studied and revelled in poetry of every kind, and fortunate was he, who could win the attention of the Queen, by some well-turned verse or beauteous sonnet.

The poetry was forceful and original. The poet must speak with authority, confident in his theme, conscious of his own ability. It lacked the healthy, natural, optimistic tone of Browning's poetry with its eternal faith in God and a willingness to wait His time; it sought with a hectic activity to make England a land of poets almost over night. Consequently the poetry was somewhat exaggerated and unreal. Emile Legouis not untruly declares. "The generation lived in this fever (adulation of poetry). Poetry was then neither the privilege of a caste nor the apanage of a few. It was widely disseminated, heated men's brains, and sometimes turned their heads, gave a lyrical turn to the whole of literature, beflowered and falsified the prose which was all poetic. To the poets whose names are known, many anonymous writers must be added whom a set of verses or a song, sometimes exquisite, proves to have had at least their hour of illumination. Everyone felt the breath that was passing-

the passion for the artifices of language, the perception that words hold something beyond their meaning, the pleasure in savouring words, the pleasure in the beautiful or at least in the fantastic. The courtier was surprised to find the man of the people as ingenious as himself. "The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe," says Hamlet, as he listens to the gravediggers pruning. The awakening of the mind and the imagination was sudden, lively and general. It occurred first at court, but spread throughout the nation."

A considerable portion of the prose followed the style adopted by John Lyly in his tale, "Euphues", the anatomy of wit. Euphüism is a deliberate attempt by grammatical structure of the sentences, by antitheses, by repetition, to cause an artificial emphasis. Many contemporary writers imitated the style of Lyly, and the name of Euphuism has persisted as the best description of their artificial style.

"Warriors and kings, and ministers of kings, have power; but poets and philosophers have influence, for their ideas go coursing around the world until they

have changed governments and institutions for better or for worse."

If this statement is true of poets in general, with more force may it be applied to Spenser in particular. "The poets' poet", has become better known as the years roll on and each succeeding generation finds new beauty, new ideals of goodness and truth in in the letter and spirit of his works.

While his earlier poems are of high poetical worth his genius is best displayed in his masterpiece, "The Faerie Queene." Although never finished, the portions that were completed show Spenser at his best.

The poem is highly imaginative. The shores of reality becomes dimmer and dimmer as the reader progresses, the islands of fancy loom closer and closer. The Red Cross Knight, the dragon, the prisoners of pride, Una, the monster, Error, Orgogdio, come and go with such vivid personalities that the reader forgets that he is now in the world of ideas. A mannerism, the harmony between the character portrayed and the virtue or vice for which it stands strengthen this impression. Such an effect can be experienced in the meeting between the Knight and Lucifera:

"Soon as the Elfin knight in presence came,
And false Duessa seeming lady faire,
A gentle Husher, Vanitie by name,
Made rowme, and passage for them did prepaire;
So goodly brought them to the lowest staire
Of her high throne, where they on humble knee,
Making obeyssance, did the cause declare,
Why they were come, her royal state to see,
To prove the wide report of her great magestee."

Spenser was an ardent exponent of the maxim, later formulated by Keats, "Beauty is truth, truth , beauty." His poetry is full of sensuous beauty but generally it is chaste and refined. Natural beauty is pictured with the reminder that it is but a faint representation of the divine. Luxuriant verse is freely employed in his delineation of Una, the personification of truth.

"A lovely ladee, rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly asse more white than snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a black stole she did throw,
As one that inly mourned."

"Her angel face
As the great eye of heaven shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shadie place;
Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace."

The descriptions of the poem are painted with a master stroke. Picture follows picture, pageant is succeeded by pageant, person or place, knight or dragon, all are adorned with wonderful finery drawn from the rich storehouse of his poetic inventive genius. The house of pride stands forth:

"A stately palace built of square bricke,
Which cunningly was without morter laid,
Whose wals were high, but nothing strong nor thick.
And golden foile all over them displaid,
That purest sky with brightnesse they dismaid:
High lifted up were many loftie towres,
And goodly galleries farre over laid,
Full of faire windowes and delightful bowres:
And on top a Diall told the timely howres."

The treatment of the knight, after the combat, suggests rest and healing:

"Home is he brought, and laid in sumptous bed:
Where many skilfull leeches him abide,
To salve his hurts, that yet still freshly bled.

In wine and oyle they wash his wounds wide,
And softly can embalme on every side.
And all the while, most heavenly melody
About the bed sweet musicke did
Him to beguile of grief and agony divide."

A haunting charm and a soft musical effect are in keeping with this world of spirits. The music is like the regular beat of the waves upon some rocky shore, never hurried, sobering if not saddening. In the home of Morpheus:

"To lulle him in slumber soft,
A trickling stream from high rocks tumbling downe,
And ever-drizzling raine upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sownde,
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swonyne:
No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
As still are wont t'annoy the walled towne
Might there be heard: but careless Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternal silence farre from enemyes."

The Spenserian stanza lends itself to this musical effect. It has nine lines, and the last line has an extra foot in it.

As a long story the"Faerie Queene" is marred by the lack of continuity and by the minuteness of details. His descriptions-beautiful as they are--break the chain of action. But it is not on the narrative his greatness depends, but on the vividness and grandeur of his word-pictures, on the smoothness and musical spell of his rhyme. He has been ranked and not without reason, next to Dante among the Italians, next to Virgil among the ancients. Hallam pays him this tribute: "We must not fear to assert, with the best judges of this and former ages, that Spenser is still the third name in the poetical literature of our country, and that he has not been surpassed, except by Dante, in any other."

Preceding Spenser in order of time but of far lower rank in poetry were Wyatt, Surrey and Sackville. Wyatt blazed the way for new expressions of poetic feeling, but compared with Chaucer, his style was laborius and difficult. Surrey was superior to Wyatt but only in so far as he could "Mould his English to the sonnet-form where Wyatt could only cramp his." Sackville's "Induction" and "The Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham," which appeared in a collection of poetry called "The Mirror for

Magistrates" forms a unifying bond between Chaucer and Spenser.

The scope of Sackville was restricted. Part poet, part politician his time was divided and the full force of his genius was not given full play. Employing the heroic verse, he wields it with skill. As a picture of gloom it is almost unique. No ray of hope breaks through the dark clouds of despair to dispel the air of melancholy that pervades the poem. His opening stanze introduces the suggestion of sombre sadness and, as well, makes evident the rythm of his verse and his apt descriptive power.

"The wrathful winter prochings on a pace,
With blustering blasts had al ybarde the treen,
And olde Saturnus with his frosty face
With chilling colde had pearst the tender green:
The mantels rent, wherein enwrapped been
The gladsom groves that nowe laye overthrowen,
The tapets torne, and every bloome down blowen."

Although, ostensibly, England was at peace, the bitterness engendered by the religious struggle, is reflected in the literature of the age. With some

an intolerant spirit made their literary efforts a mask for instilling sentiments of hate and ill will, with others, as Spenser, it took the form of excessive praise of their own leaders. On one of them, the tragic conflict served but to make a gentle, heroic soul rely strongly on divine providence.

Southwell whose energetic life, as a missionary, was ended at the hands of the executioner has bequeathed several beautiful poems to posterity. Dealing with the trials of this life and the solace of religion they strike a note of quiet confidence in the midst of dangers. Ben Jonson moved by the religious earnestness of "The Burning Babe", exclaimed: "So I had written that piece of his, I would have been content to destroy many of mine." The elevated sentiment, the harmony of his verses and his deep religious feeling are manifested in this poem. These characteristics may be observed in the stanza that follows:

"As I in the hoary winter's night
Stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat
Which made my heart to glow:
And lifting up a fearful eye

To view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright
Did in the air appear,
Who scorched with excessive heat,
Such flood of tears did shed,
As tho' His floods should quench His flames
Which with His tears were fed.
"Alas, quoth He," but newly born
In fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts
Or feel My fire but I."

Other poets flourished whose songs, for the moment, charmed their fellow countrymen. What Spenser said of Samuels Daniel,

"There is a new sheperd late up sprung,
The which doth all afore him far surpass."

might have been placed on the tongues of the admiring friends of Drayton, Lodge, Sydney and Campton. The ardent hopes of their followers were not fulfilled because these men were over-shadowed in an age abounding in poets. Here, at least, the fame of the fittest survived.

The drama had kept pace with the great strides

made in other branches of poetry. The miracle plays had been followed by the moralities. Since a pleasure-loving court found the moralities too serious, many writers attempted short plays in a single act. Unlike the moralities, their purpose was satirical and comic. Oftentimes, these farces were acted during a banquet and hence came to be called interludes. In themselves, they made no great addition to the drama but they were instrumental in preparing the way for the introduction of the comedy.

One of the first English comedies was Nicholas Udall's play, "Ralph Royster Doyster." Written for school boys it is more refined than many of its successors. It aims to promote laughter and innocent merriment without resorting to coarse jokes and unrefined language. While based on one of the classical comedies of Plautus, many of the characters are representative of those living in Udall's own age. The maids of Dame Tibet, Talkapace and Annot Alyface are essentially English. The songs, that abound in the comedy, are the author's own creation. The plot is well developed, the language is natural, but the verse degenerates, at times, into doggerel.

The earnest prayer of Constance to be delivered

from the unwelcome attentions of her suitor suggests, in a degree, the noble character of Portia.

"O Lord necessary it is now of all days,
That each baby live uprightly all manner ways,
For let never so little a gap be open,
And be sure of this, the worst shall be spoken.
How innocent stand I in this for deed or thought:
And yet see what mistrust toward me it hath wrought.
But thou, Lord, Knowest all folks' thoughts and eke intents,
And thou art the deliverer of all innocents.
Thou didst help the Advoutress, that she might be amended,
Much more then help, Lord, that never ill intended.
Thou didst help Susanna, wrongfully accused,
And no less dost thou see, Lord, how I am abused.

Act V Scene III

Another early comedy was"Gammer Gurton's Needle." The publishers in 1575 described it as, "A right pithy, pleasant and Merry Comedy." It is filled with humorous situations created by the attempts to find a needle. Neighbor suspects neighbor, everyone is very much

in earnest and their credulity and suspicion cause many amusing incidents. While the play cannot compare with later comedies it does excel in one particular. Shakespeare and the great dramatists portrayed life in the towns or pastoral life; but this comedy is concerned exclusively with an English village. The speech of the characters, the street scenes, the local magistrate are all rural and give us a vivid and lasting impression of an English village in the time of Elizabeth. The humor is coarse, the speech is rustic, the characters, frequently, are brutally frank.

"the humor of the play is confessedly broad: a great deal depends on the merely physical, and we are very close to mother earth."

Brett-Smith.

The following passages give an indication of the trend of the whole play.

Hodge, a ditcher, is trying to light the fire.

"Gogs crosse Gammer if ye will laugh, looke in but at the doore
And see how Hodge lieth tomblynge and tossing amids the floure
Rakyng there some fyre to find amonge the ashes dead

Where there is not a sparke, so big as a pyns head,
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees
Which were indede nought els but Gyb our cats two eyes,
Puffe quod Hodge, thinking thereby to have fyre, without doubt,
With that Gyb shut her two eyes, and so the fyre was out.
And by and by them opened, even as they were before.
With that sparkes appeared even as they had done of yore,
And even as Hodge blew the fire, as he did thincke,
Gyb, as she felt the blast, strayght-way began to wyncke,
Tyll Hodge fell of swering, as came best to his turne,
The fier was sure bewicht, and therefore would not burne:
At last Gyb up the stayers, among the old postes and pinnes,
And Hodge he hied him after till broke were both his shinnes:
Cursynge and swering othes, were never of his making,
That Gyb would fyre the house, if that shee were not taken." Act I Scene V

The rude plenty and boisterous good cheer which

prevailed in the midst of boggy and untidy homes is suggested by the drinking song, in Act I Scene V:

"I can not eate, but lytle meate,
my stomache is not good:
But sure I thinke, that I can drynke
with him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
I am nothinge a colde:
I stuffe my skyn, so full within,
of ioly good ale and olde.
Backe and syde go bare, go bare,
both foote and hand go colde:
But belly god send the good ale inoughe
whether it be new or olde.
I loue no rost, but a nut browne toste
and a Crab layde in the fyre,
A lytle bread, shall do me stead,
much bread I not desyre:
No froste nor snow, no winde I trowe
can hurte mee if I wolde,
I so wrapt, and throwly lapt
of ioly good ale and olde.

Lyly, whose name has been mentioned in connection

with Euphuism, had his share in the development of comedy. While his style is artificial and followed old models he introduced a decided change. Prose now became a medium for the expression of comedy. Moreover Lyly's comedy is intellectual and was written for higher critics. He helped to educate the public to an appreciation of plays that depended on a keen understanding of intellectual wit. "Their spectale and music and their lively and refined dialogue were designed above all to please. Everything is graceful and ingenious, there is scarecly a hint of tragedy, and all serious purpose is veiled in allegory or relieved by merriment and song." The gentle rythm of Lyly's prose may be felt in the following short quotation from Endmion--"The Man in the Moone" Endmion is speaking to Tellus--

"No, Tellus; thou knowest that the stately cedar, whose top reaches to the clouds, never boweth his head to the shrubs that grow in the valley; nor ivy that climbeth up by the elm, can ever get hold of the beams of the sun; Cynthia I honor in all humility, whom none ought, or dare to venture to love, whose affections are immortal, and virtues infinite. Suffer me, therefore to gaze on the moon, at whom, were it not for thy-

self, I would die with wondering."

Act II Scene I

Peele, a contemporary of Lyly, found his comedies a means of expressing his critism of other plays. To appreciate his humor, his audience must have been able to see the weakness of many of the existing comedies. His, "Old Wives' Tale", turns into ridicule the romantic plays, with their lack of order and their multiplicity of detail.

These plays, mentioned above, bear the earmarks of the Greek and Latin plays in their arrangement of acts, in their observance of the classical laws of unity of time and action and place. A wide gap still yawned between Lyly, Peele and the mature works of Shakespeare. The tragedy had yet to be developed and as yet no one had appeared who could skilfully combine comedy and tragedy. To Kyde and Marlowe fell the task of bridging this wide chasm.

Thomas Kyde was an ardent student of Seneca. He admired the old poets' skill in producing terrifying scenes, in depicting the vengeance which falls on the heads of wrong-doers, in representing the melancholy and the sad. The "Spanish Tragedy" resembles Shakespeare's "Hamlet", in the play within the play, in

the appearance of the ghost demanding revenge, in the disregard of unity of time and place. He also makes a deliberate attempt to delineate the characters, to allow certain characters and types to develop within the period of the play itself.

It is difficult to convey the atmosphere of gloom that pervades "The Spanish Tragedy", but the speech of Hieronimo in Act III Scene II, strikes the keynote of sadness and human helplessness.

"O eyes! No eyes but fountains
fraught with tears;
O Life! No life but lively form of death;
O World! No world but mass of public wrongs,
Confused and fill'd with murder and misdeeds.
O sacred heavens! if this unhallowed deed,
If this inhuman and barbarous attempt,
If this incomparable murder thus
Of mine, but now no more mine, my son,
Shall unrevealed and unrevenged pass,
How should we term your dealings to be just,
If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust.
The night, sad secretary to my moans,

With direful visions wakes my vexed soul,
And with the wounds of my distressed son
Solicits me for notice of his death.
The ugly fiends do sally forth of hell,
And frame my steps to unfrequented paths,
And fills my heart with fierce inflamed thoughts.
The cloudy day my discontent records,
Early begins to register my dreams,
And drives me forth to seek the murderer."

Mystery shrouds the life of many an Elizabethan dramatist, and around one of the great masters it has thrown a cloud of uncertainty and suspicion. The few facts known about his life are not sufficient to enable one to estimate adequately his character or his ideals. He has been held as a degenerate and a braggart by some, but Drayton was able to eulogize him in no unstinted terms. When all is considered he does not seem to have been of high character.

The heroes of his works, their disregard for laws of God and man, the unscrupulous manner in which they attain their ends, confirm this estimate of the low ideals of his life. It cannot be gainsaid that he possessed real skill as a dramatist.

The tragical history of"Dr. Faustus"and"The Jew of Malta"and"Tambourlane", all reveal the power that was Marlowes.

Marlowe is the poet of human ambition. No thought of divine justice, no kind providence, no eternity of eternal blessedness or everlasting woe must sway his heroes. Their whole endeavour is for earthly bliss, whether it be intellectual greatness or full satiety of sensual pleasure. In"Tambourlane"we find this outlook on life definitely stated:

"Nature that framed us out of the four elements,
Warring within our breast for regiment,
Dost teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend,
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown."

Marlowe's heroes have an almost uncontrollable

wish to know all things, to attempt all things, good or bad. Everything that thwarts them must be cast aside and trampled underfoot. Faustus would indeed wish: "Oh! might I see hell, and return again safe, how happy were I then," but, if to enjoy his ambitions, he must abandon his soul. It shall be done. "Faustus gives to thee his soul." Barabus, in "The Jew of Malta," scruples at no crime to obtain vengeance and, when the hand of death is upon him, regrets that he has not perpetrated more evil.

Marlowe has an almost uncanny power in depicting the baser emotions of man. Some of his scenes have terrified those who followed his plays. Shakespeare in "Macbeth," announces the death of Duncan; Marlowe, in "Edward the Second," describes, with minute details, the murder of Edward. It is hard to erase from the mind the picture of Tambourline enjoying a bountiful meal, while Bajazet in a cage nearby, is famished, or Faustus, in despair, as the time draws near when the demon will claim his due, or Barabas in his treasure-chamber, exulting in his riches. He carries his audience with him as they follow the terrifying fate of his frenzied heroes. Amazed at his skill, fearful of his daring, condemning his rash disregard of all

lawful restraints, his audience sees the flood of passion rush, "like a swollen river sweeping down on its dried-up channel, filling its broad banks and moving on majestically." Marlowe, in "Edward the Second," sums up the life of most of the characters of these plays when he sadly comments:

"Base fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
There is a point, to which when men aspire,
They tumble headlong down: that point I touched,
And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
Why should I grieve at my declining fall?"

Marlowe, as a dramatist, is far below the great master. His knowledge of human nature is limited: he cannot appreciate purity, if we are to judge by the heroes he creates; he is not a success in the portrayal of woman's character: he lacks humor;

Dying so young his genius did not have a chance to develop to its greatest height. With the peculiar, fatalistic outlook that he had on life he could only be successful in a narrower field. His own tragic death and his turbulent life has many of the characteristics of the life and death of Faustus.

"Cut is the branch that might have grown straight,

And burned is Appolo's laurel-bough,
That sometimes grew within this learned man."

Many another strove to depict life's course on the stage. The masses demanded entertainment and would not brook interference with their amusement. "The people had tasted this new joy, and, as we could not hope to suppress newspapers now,--no, not by the strongest party,--neither then could king, prelate, or puritan, alone or united, suppress an organ which was ballad, epic, newspaper, Caucus, lecture, punch and library, at the same time."--- Emerson--"Shakespeare--The Poet." Fortunate was it that the genius, Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of the age, lifted the masses from the sordid scenes of Marlowe to the contemplation of nobler heroes and heroines.

Shakespeare is great because he combines in himself the best qualities of those who had preceeded him and he surpassed them in most details. The force and power of Marlowe's dramas, the poetic charm of Spenser are merged in Shakespeare. He has an almost unfathomable understanding of human grandeur and man's weaknesses. "His thoughts, passions, feelings, strains of fancy, all are of this day as they

were of his own; and his genius may be contemporary with the mind of every generation for a thousand years to come." Wilson.

The plays of Shakespeare are varied in nature. From 1590 when he published his first play, "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," until a year or two previous to his death his pen seemed never to rest. Comedies, tragedies and chronicle or historical plays fall within the range of his poetic power. His latest plays, "Lear", "Hamlet," "Othello," "Macbeth," and "The Tempest," are considered his finest, although many critics rate the tragedy of Macbeth as his greatest effort. The materials for these productions were drawn from classical sources, from"Plutarch's Lives," from Holinshed's chronicles and from mediaeval sources.

His poetry is strong, natural and above all musical. There is a soothing sweetness in it. Intangible, abstract thoughts take real form at his command. His verse is spontaneous, involuntary, living. His language is always suited to the character who employs it and corresponds to the thought enunciated.

He can adopt himself to every mood. The passing burst of mirth, the serious contemplation of death, the father's joy, the mother's sorrows, the soul in

doubt, the man conscious of the right and with the strong faith in the testimony of a good conscience, all find their expression in his poetry. Ariel leaves behind him every thought of serious care:

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie.....
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.
I drink the air before me, and return
Or e'er your pulse twice beat again.

The Tempest.

The parent's constant grief at the memory of the child that is gone will never change:

"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form."

King John.

The uncertainty of the doubting soul, fearful to perform or omit an action has an immortal part in "Hamlet":

"To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?"

Hamlet.

The righteous man affirms:

"What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
There is he armed that has his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

Henry--VI

"I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities--
A still and quiet conscience."

Henry--VIII

The sudden realization of the worth of something we have lost is brought before us:

"for so it falls out
That what we have, we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost,
Why, then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
While it was ours."

Much Ado About Nothing

The troubled state of-one, about to venture on some

desperate undertaking, is emphasized by Brutus:

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first notion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council: and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection."

The unhappy victim of circumstances resolves to stake all on one last venture:

"So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on 't."

The idle dreamer in pensive mood watches the ever-changing clouds:

"Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish
A vapour sometimes like a bear or lion,
A towered citadel, a pendent rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't."

Antony and Cleopatra

The sights, that pass before the eyes and imagination of a drowning man, are in the mind of Shakespeare:

"Lord, Lord! me thought what pain it was to drown,

What dreadful noise of water in mine ears,
What ugly sights of death within my eyes.
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks,
Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon,
Wedges of gold, great anchors, huge pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea."

The world of nature is an open book to him. He knows the sad murmur of the sea, the beauty of some lonely isle, the charm of daybreak, the woodland flower, the powerful remedies for human ills that are in simple herbs, the well ordered life of the busy bee. In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" how beautiful is the bank:

"Where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and nodding violets grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and eglantine."

The home of the bee, the co-ordinated work of its inhabitants, the individual tasks of worker and nurse bees, the stern expulsion of the drones when autumn announces that winter stores must be conserved, would gladden the heart of any modern apiarist.

He makes one of his few mistakes when he ascribes the rule of the hive to a king and not to the queen-bee.

"They have a king, and officers of sorts:
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home,
Others, like merchants, venture trades abroad,
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
The civil citizens kneading up the honey;
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate;
The sad-eyed justice, with his surley hum
Delivering o'er to executioners pale
The lazy yawning drone."

In things religious he displays the greatest reverence and respect. In Hamlet, he alludes to the traditions connected with Christmas time:

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein Our Saviours birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

Of his own personal beliefs hardly anthing is known. He is so completely united , yet apart from his creations that it is impossible to distinguish which are the beliefs of Shakespeare and which are the convictions, suitable to the characters.

His heroes and heroines and lesser characters are distinctively his own. King and queen, sage and fool, philosopher and clown, villain and benefactor, lordly knight and simple peasant are found in his masterpieces. These men and women are real, so lifelike, so natural that we feel that we should recognize them if we met them. It is as if we had known them for years, had talked with them, could anticipate what they would do in any given circumstances. When one sees"Macbeth","Lear","The Merchant of Venice","Hamlet"or "Julius Caesar" acted by a Sir Herbert Tree, a Mantell or others the feeling is the same.

The appearance of Shylock or Macbeth may differ somewhat from our mental picture , but their speech, their mannerisms, their own personality are much as we have imagined them to be. Falstaff, Iago and Portia exemplify this trait of picturing men and women animated, natural, fascinating.

Falstaff is such a mixture of fat good-nature,

dissoluteness, profanity and unmitigated boasting, tempered by a nimble wit, that he amuses rather than repells. He has a philosophy peculiar to himself. His explanation for his many falls could be made by him alone:

> "Dost thou hear, Hal? Thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff
> do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh
> than another man, and therefore more frailty."
> "Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive
> thee for it. Before I knew thee Hal, I knew nothing;
> and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better
> than one of the wicked. I must give over this life,
> And I will give it over:
> By the Lord, and I do not, I am a villain."
>
> Henry IV Part I

His ready wit never deserts him. In fact, he enjoys difficult situations in order that he may have

an opportunity of extricating himself. His extravagant boasting on all occasions serves but to heighten the effect of his humor. Poins looks forward to the explanations he will make for his failure in repulsing the disguised robbers.

> "The virtue of this jest will be, the incomprehensible
> lies that this same fat man and rogue will tell us when
> we meet at supper: how thirty, at least, he fought with."
>
> Henry IV

His account of the loss of money more than lives up to expectations: "His wounds have been manifold, his sword hack'd like a hand-saw."

After the Prince of Wales has killed Hotspur, Falstaff, who has counterfeited death to escape Douglas, carries the dead body out and claims the honor of having slain him.

"There is Percy (throwing him down): if your father will not do me the honor, so; if not let him kill the next Percy himself." When the prince contradicts him he is very grieved at the lying of this young gentleman: "how this world is given to lying."

Though cowardly in nature he never loses his self command. Even, when trembling at the fear of death on the battlefield, he finds consolation in his bottle. Arrested, at the instance of Dame Quickly, he browbeats the officers and succeeds in securing ten pounds from the one who summoned them.

He has an insight into the characters of others. When he wishes to silence Mrs. Quickly he appeals to her pride:

"And did'st thou not, when she had gone downstairs desire
me to be no more familiar with such poor people;
saying that ere long she should call me madam."

When the chief justice intervenes, he passes the matter as a joke of an insane woman. "She says up and down the town that her eldest is like you."

The vices of Falstaff do not corrupt others. While his lying, his stealing, his coarseness cannot be condoned, there is something attractive in his rare good humor. This quality of intriguing and amusing his associates can be seen in one of his speeches to Bardolph. He is describing his life when he was still virtuous:

"I was as virtuous given as a gentleman need to;

virtuous enough; swore little; diced not above seven times
a week,.....paid money that I borrowed, three or four times; lived well and in good compass: and now I live out of all order, out of all compass."

Iago, in "Othello," is in striking contrast to Falstaff. Unscrupulous, hypocritical, most ambitious, he spares no one who thwarts his plans. Even the innocent--if it will further his purposes--are abandoned to a cruel fate. Desdemona is made to suffer because it helps to arouse enmity between Cassio and Othello. She had done him no wrong, but it matters not. Brabantio is brought to an untimely death, more by the manner in which he is told of his daughter's marriage, than by the act itself. But he will be the more inflamed if he learns of it quickly and in an unpleasant manner.

Iago seems to lack all feeling of pity or remorse. The scientist dissecting some insect, cutting here, tearing there, goes about his work in a systematic, orderly manner. Not less so does Iago. He has his fixed purpose of revenge constantly before him: his plans are laid and the experiments he performs upon

the emotions, the suspicions and fears of Othello, Cassio and Desdemona are studied with the searching but placid gaze of an interested student. Cassio, having lost his rank as officer, because of Iago's plot, laments-- "O I have lost my reputation, I have lost the immortal part of myself and what remains is bestial." Iago, calmly, and cynically replies: "I thought you had received some mortal wound." When Othello, in his anguish of grief at the apparent falseness of Desdemona, falls in a trance, Iago is moved, not by grief, but at the success of his plans: "Work on my medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught and many worthy and chaste dames, even thus all guiltless, meet reproach." At Othello's awakening, he casually inquires, "How is it, general? Have you not hurt your head? Roderigo has been wounded in his fight with Cassio. Iago, presumably coming to his assistance, stabs him with no more concern than if he were a troublesome insect. He must take no chances. "This is the night that either makes me or fordoes me quite."

His inhuman plots are worked out with ingenious artifice and finesse. He frequently openly accuses by endeavouring to excuse the faults of others. With what dexterity, and with what feigned reluctance does

he incriminate Cassio as a drunken brawler:

......"And I returned the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath; which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. When I came back--
For this was brief,--even as again they were
When you yourself did part them.
More of this matter cannot I report;
But men are men; the best sometimes forget:-
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,-
As men in rage strike them that love them best,-
Yet surely Cassio, I believe, receiv'd
From him that fled some strange indignity
When patience could not pass.

How subtly has he poisoned Othello against Cassio!

Othello-----I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love dost mince this matter
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love
thee;
But never more be officer of mine.

The fears and suspicions of Othello are heightened by the ambiguity of Iago's language and by the implication that he knows much more than he cares to tell.

Iago..... For Michael Cassio,
I dare be sworn I think he is honest,
Othello..I think so too.
Iago.....Men should be what they seem;
or those that be not, would they might be more.
Othello..Certain, men should be what they seem.
Iago.....I think Cassio's an honest man.
Othello..Nay, yet there is more in this:
I prythee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate; and give thy worst of thoughts
Worst of words.
Iago.....Good my lord pardon me:
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that all slaves are free to,
Utter my thoughts? Why say they are vile and false.

A dogged, crafty courage never forsakes him. When he can use Roderigo to fight his battles for him, he doe not scruple to employ his services. But when he is unmasked, when his perfidious crimes are open to Othello, when he knows that death is his fate, he does not falter. Wounded by Othello he nonchalantly re-

marks," I bleed sir, but not killed." He craves no pardon for he knows he will receive none. Even in his helplessness he retains his bitter, misanthropic spirit:

"Demand me nothing: what you know, you know:
From this time forth I never will speak word."

Like Edmund, in "King Lear", his career of crime is over, his day of reckoning is at hand. "The wheel is come full circle: I am here."

Portia with her strong but gentle nature, her upright life, her innocent wiles is pleasingly unlike the deep, scheming Iago. Her innocence, her guiless love, her girlish joy, her sports, her tricks, serve but to accentuate the firm underlying character which manifests itself throughout the play. She is a noble woman, but whe has also the hopes and fears, the susceptibilities and imaginative fancies of her sex. How many sided is her nature!

Alone with Nerissa she gossips and chats about her suitors. The Neapolitan prince "doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself." The county Palatine "bears merry tales and smiles not;" he is the "weeping philosopher." The English baron

"hath neither Latin, French or Italian." The young German does not please her fancy for "when he is best he is a little worse than a man; and when he is worst, little better than a beast." No company at a bridge party of modern days could better estimate the foibles and weaknesses of their acquaintances.

She can be the playful girl, full of innocent fun, using every wile to entice the ring from Bassanio.

"Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;
And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you:
Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more;
And you in love shall not deny me this."

Her mock seriousness and indignation at Bassiano's explanations conceal the amusement which she is deriving from his embarrassment.

"If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honor to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
Nerissa teaches me what to believe;
I'll die for't, but some woman had the ring."

At the trial scene she is the stern judge endeav-

ouring to temper justice with mercy; to fulfill the law yet not to punish the innocent. Although she could decide for Antonio, she will not do so. Shylock has his rights:

"Of a strange nature is the suit you follow:
Yet in such rule, that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed."

Bassanio entreats her "to do a great right, do a little wrong" and she unhesitatingly replies:

"It must no be; there is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree established:
'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error, by the same example,
Will rush into the state: it cannot be."

But she earnestly endeavours to turn the heart of the Jew from his hard legal course to a milder demand. Knowing the law and aware of the fact that Antonio is in danger, she would have Shylock avoid the rude awakening that must be his, when he discovers that his plans for revenge are futile. How beautifully are the qualities and effects of mercy brought before his view!

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;

It blesses him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein dost sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptered sway,-
It is enthroned in the heart of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
An earthly power dost then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea consider this--
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there."

Portia has been critized for using a "joker" in the law to free Antonio and for the severity of the sentence passed on the Jew. These accusations are hardly justified. Shylock had dissembled his real

purpose in exacting the bond: "To buy his favour I extend this friendship;" He had been adamant in his refusal to accept anything but the strict letter of the law. "I crave the penalty and the forfeit of my bond." His trial has been fair; he has not been intimidated, as he confesses"

"It doth appear you are a worthy judge;
You know the law; your exposition
Has been most sound."

Shylock does not complain of any injustice when Portia informs him of the law. "Is that the law?"... "Why then the devil give him good of it! I'll stay no longer question." The sentence is a heavy one and the condition to become a Christian is a mockery, in the case of Shylock. This proposal was advanced by Antonio, not by Portia. Were Shylock the judge, the heavy fine would not have been sufficient to satisy "the ancient grudge" he bears him.

Portia quickly shakes off the atmosphere of hatred and revenge and becomes the sentimental woman, whose imagination sees in the flickering light of the candle, "a good deed in a naughty world," who philosophizes on the beauty and harmony of music;

"The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark

When neither is attended; and, I think,
The nightingale, if she would sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by seasons season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection."

The true Portia, simple, trusting, devoted, knowing no ambition save to be a faithful wife, caring for no earthly happiness but in the love of a loyal husband is manifested in her anwser to Bassanio , in the scene of the caskets:

"You see me Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am: though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better, yet for thou
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
more rich;
That only to stand high on your account
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account: but the full sum of me
Is sum of something, which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd unpractis'd:

Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; and happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all is, that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine, to you and yours
Is now converted: but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord;"

If Shakespeare excelled in his representations of the real world he was equally happy in his presentation of the world of spirits. His nimble imagination has full sway, his power of poetry is well adapted to the musical voices of the fairies, to the spirit-life on some enchanted isle or to the weaving of some magical charm to influence the fates of men. As some skilfull teacher, by an apt illustration or lucid explanation, makes some difficulty of Euclid or Aristotle seem simple and clear, so does Shakespeare make the shadowy world of spirits live and breathe. Nor

does he cause them to lose their care-free nature nor their air of aloofness from the vulgar care of men. His poetic fancy has indulged itself to the full in his delineation of Queen Mab:

"She comes
in the shape no bigger than agate stone,
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athward men's noses as they sleep:
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinner's legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web;
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash of film;
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out mind the fairies coachmakers."

Romeo and Juliet.

The isle of Prospero has a drowsy, soothing effect lulling the senses into a dreamy sleep:

"Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after a long sleep,
Would make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me: when I wak'd
I cried to dream again."

The Tempest.

Even when fairies are brought in contact with mortals there seems to be no incongruity. What is more remarkable, the love of Titania, the fairy queen, for Bottom the weaver is most humorous, but both Bottom Titania retain their own characteristics. They act and speak in a manner, true to their nature. Titania would have her fairy servants:

"Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricots and dewberries,

The honey bags steal from the bumble-bees,
And, for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worms eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise:

And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon beams from his sleeping eyes;
Nod to him elves, and do him courtesies."

Bottom who is never nonplussed, receives these attentions in his inimitable way:

"Bottom.....Your name, honest gentleman?

Peas.....Peasblossom.

Bottom.....I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master peascod, your father.....Your name I beseech you, sir?

Mus.....Mustardseed.

Bottom.....Good master Musterseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly giant-like, ox-beef hath devoured many gentlemen of your house: I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now."

Never were fairies sent to perform such tasks as he would have them do:

"Bottom.....Where's Peasblossom?

Peas.....Ready.

Bottom.....Scratch my head.

Bottom.....Where's Monsieur Cobweb?

Cob.....Ready.

Bottom.....Monsieur Cobweb: good monsieur, get your

weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped bumble-bee on the top of a thistle; and good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag."

Titania, under the influence of Oberon's spell, would shower every favour on Bottom. Nothing disconcerted, by the lavish attentions of the fairy Queen, Bottom maintains his dignity.

"Tita.....What, wilt thou bear some music, my sweet love?

Bottom.....I have a reasonable good ear in music; let us have the tongs and bones.

Tita.....Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

Bottom.....Truly, a peck of provender; I could munch your good dry oats, methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay: hath no fellow.

Tita.....I have a venturous fairy that shall seek, the squirrels hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bottom.....I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me; I have an exposition of sleep come upon me."

The jolly, mischievous Puck is a source of never-ending delight. The "merry wanderer of the night" deems fool mortals fit subjects for his many pranks. He lives a life of sheer delight, rejoicing in every new adventure, proud of the fact he is a light hearted fairy and not beset with the responsibilities of man. He it is:

"That frights the maiden of the villagery,
Skims milk, and sometimes labours in the quern,
And bootless makes the breathless housewife churn,
And sometimes makes the drink to bear no barn;
Misleads night-wanders laughing at their harm. "

Few more delightful scenes have been described then the final appearance of the fairies, skipping through the silent house, dancing in the dim light of the fire.

"Puck.....And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house;
I am sent with broom before,

Puck cont..To sweep the dust behind the door.

Obe.....Through this house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire:
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier:
And this ditty, after me,
Sing and dance it trippingly.

Tita.....First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a rambling note,
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place."

The sonnets of Shakespeare are much inferior to his other works. In them the sensuous often becomes the sensual: the poet forgets the dignity of his calling and becomes a mere peddler of obscene verse. His poetic powers suffer because of it. In his plays, the whole soul of his subjects are before us; in his sonnets, the beauty of a pleasing exterior is substituted for grandeur and nobleness of character.

With more truth might it be said of Shakespeare than of Lincoln, "he belongs to the ages." While the old Greek tragedies are forgotten, the tragedies of Shakespeare are constantly acted and studied; while the humor of Aristophanes is dimmed with the passing

of the ages, the humor of Shakespeare is no less bright and clear than it was in his own day. The historian, the scientist, the philosopher claim him as their own. Like the vast ocean which charms every generation, which has new mysteries for every age, which is so old and yet so mighty, the genius of Shakespeare fascinates every age, affords new realm of thought, interprets every mood and fancy. He is "like a great primeval forest, whose timber shall be cut and used as long as the wind blows and leaves are green."

"And he the man, whom nature selfe had made, to mock her selfe, and truth to imitate." Spenser--Tears of Music.

Of all the dramatists who were contemporary to Shakespeare "Rare Ben Jonson" was outstanding. He is the "Cato" of that age; fearless, a hard fighter, honest, self reliant but harsh and egotistical. His life is an open book. He was acquainted with nearly all the great men of his day and, in his declining years, the younger poets gathered about him, as the disciples of Socrates flocked about their master. To associate with him was to be his friend or enemy. His His enemies--perhaps, more than his friends--have given us many traits of his character and features of his

writings. For example, Suckling, with a gentle thrust, reveals Jonson's bluntness in expressing his opinion of other writers:

"And he told them plainly he deserved the bays,
For his were called works, where others were but plays,
And bid them remember how he had purged the stage
Of errors, that had lasted many an age."

Indifferent to the taunts of enemies, he pursued the even tenor of his ways, refusing to beg for favours. His bookseller received the terse notice to allow his volume to be upon the stall till it be sought, not offered, as if it made suit to be bought. The sun, even in eclipse, makes its presence felt and Jonson had an abiding faith in his own genius and his power to compel men to acknowledge his worth. This view occasioned much criticism and led to many of his quarrels with other writers, Marston held him as one of the,

"Bombast wits,
that are puft up with arrogant conceit
Of their own worth; as if omnipotence
Had horsed them to such unequal height
That they surveyed our spirits with an eye

Only to create censure from above."

Jonson, with all his faults, is a true interpreter of the Elizabethan age. The follies of his day, the attitude of the poets toward their work, the character of his associates are reflected in his writings, as in a mirror.

As a writer of comedies, he earned his place among the masters of that art. "Every Man in his Humor," "Volpone," "The Silent Woman" and "The Alchemist", can be favourably compared to any English comedy except Shakespeare's.

He had his own theory of what a comedy should be. English poets had dragged comedy down from its high place among the ancients and transformed it into a farce. The proper purpose of the comedy was "to create laughter to the end that man's lesser faults might be made to appear ridiculous and so may be avoided." Comedy and tragedy have an ethical aim, but the material upon which they work are different. Tragedy, employing pity and pain and fear, brings into plainer view the horror and wickedness of crime; comedy should endeavour to make the small faults or the sins of men appear ridiculous in order that man might shun them. Unseemly mirth was not necessarily comedy, but

comedy often consisted in "delight without laughter."

In writing his comedies he was consciously influenced by his purpose to develop in a scientific way, and in a pleasing manner, "the humors" and to make the plot a work of art.

He derived his notion of the humors from the old idea that prevailed in medical circles. Four humors were supposed to exist in men, corresponding to the four elements of moisture, dryness, warmth and cold. The assimilation of these humors in any given individual constituted the temperament of that man. Since no two human beings had these elements united in like proportion, no two characters were similar. In some, one humor dominated the others and so a sanguine, a melancholy, a happy or enthusiastic spirit was the result.

Jonson estimated that the development of the humors would lead men away from the romantic follies which he despised. The true comedy would emphasize the element which was extreme, would hold it up to the view of the audience, and with the merriment, o occasioned by the view, draw a moral. This theory allowed him to consider men "in their humor" and "out of their humor." The man, whose predominating humor

was avarice, would be"in his humor" under the stress of ordinary life; he would be "out of his humor" if he were surrounded by spendthrifts or troublesome persons who would cause the already dominating characteristice to grow and become stronger. He constantly strove to maintain a balance between "reasonable excess" and a demand for humor.

His theory caused him to introduce many features which marred his poetical efforts. The characters are often too rigid and too similar and are, as a consequence, unreal, His men and women do not develop; they remain as they are at their first appearance. Unlike the creations of Shakespeare, they depend on their setting for a proper appreciation. Another age finds them less interesting. Like Jonson himself, their faults and virtues are most apparent to all.

The plot, in his comedy, generally did not exceed the compass of one day. It had an almost perfect unity. Sub-plots were wrought together that they might be clearly related to the main one.

His method of analysis limited his materials for plays; often he finds his best types among the lower grades of life. A Portia would have a too-perfect combination of humors to suit his purpose. Dryden condemned

him for this fault:

"Jonson with skill dissected human kind,
And showed their faults, that they their faults find:
But then, as all anatomists must do,
He to the meanest of mankind did go,
And took from gibbets such as he would show."

In "Every Man in his Humor" his speculations are put in practice. Simple in plot, realistic in presentation, it affords a study of the different peculiarities and whims of his characters. Many "humors" present themselves. Town folk, the pleasant magistrate, a clown and an abundant supply of fools are contrasted, one with the other. Bobadil, the good-natured braggart, is one of the finest of Jonson's humorous characters. The play is witty rather than humorous, it would be appreciated by an English audience of Elizabethan times since it is concerned with passing foibles. Hallam commends Jonson for this successful attempt to delineate English social life.

"Every Man in His Humor" is perhaps the earliest of European domestic comedies that deserves to be remembered; for even the Mandragora of Machiavel shrinks to a mere farce in comparison. A much greater

poet and master of comic powers than Jonson was indeed his contemporary, and, as Jonson perhaps fancied, his rival; but for some reason Shakespeare had never drawn his story from the domestic life of his countrymen. Jonson avoided the common defect of the Italian and Spanish theatre, the sacrifice of all other dramatic objects to one only, a rapid and amusing succession of incidents: his plot is slight and of no great complexity; but his excellence is to be found in the variety of his characters, and in their individuality, very clearly defined with little extravagance."

Hallam's "Literature of Europe"

The influence of Jonson does not lie in the number of those who imitated his style. Few could do successfully; a very small group would try, if they had the power. He was an intellectual genius, but his genius was greater than his poetical power. But the personality of Jonson did make itself felt. He gathered about him many admirers such as Herrick, Donne, Drummond and Shirley. With them he discussed, with a critical eye, the works of the great poets and authors; he declaimed against the affected poets "Who can hit nothing but smooth cheeks, who cannot express roughness or gravity." His critical temper, united

with his knowledge of poetry and drama gave rise to literary criticism. From that date it had an individual place in literature, it counteracted the extravagant claims of blind admirers, it furnished a new instrument to those who would study poetry. To him rather than to Dryden, rightfully belongs the title, "Father of English Criticism."

The plays of Beumont and Fletcher are the result of the collaboration of these two dramatists. United in friendship, they worked together until the death of Beaumont. The language is elegant, but unrefined, the plots are well constructed, but the moral tone is low. The standard of the English stage was becoming lower and grossness of thought in their plays is but an expression of this change. Vice is portrayed in its many hideous details because it is a part of life. Their works resemble Shakespeare's in that they are romantic comedies, but they fall far below his in their treatment. In the "Knight of the Burning Pestle" they unite a comedy and burlesque. The play ridicules the critics of the stage and the absurdities of Knight-errantry.

As in poetry, many others playwriters might be mentioned whose names were respected in their own days.

Webster, Marston, Peele, Chapman, Dekker, Rowley and Shirley have their admirers. Unfortunately the private life of many of these dramatists was most irregular and licentious. Their passions and unbridled license finds an outlet in their plays. The English stage went from bad to worse until theatres were closed by an act of parliament.

Sir Francis Bacon, the great prose writer of the age, was an enthusiast in the acquirement of knowledge. All other things were subordinated to this purpose. While yet a boy of ten, he was interested in the cause of a strange echo in the brick wall near his home; at nineteen his wide reading and wisdom had won the approbation of the French Sandedrim. He became a judge that he might earn enough money to give all his time to study at a later date; his death was occasioned by a severe chill which was the result of exposure during one of his experiments. In the midst of political storms, in times of prosperity, in days of disgrace he saved some minutes each day for his pursuit of knowledge.

Judged by the standards of our day he was not a great moral hero, since he displayed on many occasions weakness of character. But it must be remembered that his defects have had the merciless glare of publicity

turned upon them. The genius of Macauly, the invective of Pope, the literary skill of Campbell have combined in transmitting to posterity a portrait of a great man but selfish, proud, false, mean and unscrupulous. It is almost impossible to believe that a man whose thoughts were so high and lofty, whose labours to help his fellow men were so great, whose private life was free from many of the evil practices of a corrupt age, could fall so low.

Neither as a scientist nor as a philosopher was he very successful. His methods failed to contribute anything to actual discoveries. He may have brought to the study of nature "the faith of the discoverer, the imagination of the poet, the voice of the prophet," but he lacked the scientific touch that would have turned his experiments into new discoveries. His inductive system of philosophy was in use before his time, although it had never received the attention that he bestowed on it. In proceeding from concrete to general conclusions he sometimes infers a general law on the observations of certain experiments.

As a prose writer, he ranks first in that age. He wrote because he had something to tell, and for that reason, he said it well and clearly.

Forceful and vivid his language is a means of conveying his ideas on government, on health, on science, on philosophy. His subjects were intensely interesting to him; he wished others to share his viewpoint and so he expressed his thoughts in interesting, unaffected, and emphatic words. In his "essays" he does not attempt elaborate style nor order. He speaks his message without preface, abruptly, but with telling effect. As a spectator, watching the participants in the game of life, he gives his impressions with a kindly touch. Truth, Death, Delays, Studies, Friendship receive attention. From the world of men and women he passes to the delights of nature, to the joys of "The Garden." Amidst the scent of lavender, the Juniper and Maryoram, human actors are forgotten in the "the purest of human pleasures," in"the greatest refreshment of the spirits of man." His essays are to be pondered if they are to be understood. The truth of many of his assertions sink deeper and deeper as we read them a second or third time. To indicate but a few of these:

"Prosperity is the blessing of the old Testement; adversity is the blessing of the New. -Of Adversity

"The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall."--Of Goodness.

"I had rather believe all the fables in the legends and the Talmud and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind."---Of Atheism.

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested."--Of Studies.

"Young men are fitter to invent than to judge, fitter for execution than for counsel, and fitter for new projects than for settled business."--Of Youth and Age.

"The sun, which passeth through pollutions and itself remains as pure as before."--Advancements of Learning.

"No pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage-ground of truth."

The influence of Bacon has been pronounced. His method can be detected in Hume, in Locke and Mill. Even they admit that he exaggerated the value of the inductive method as a means of scientific discovery and that he erred in totally disregarding the deductive process. His essays have attracted nearly everyone who has made a study of the English language. His very life is a lesson in itself to all men. He is a living example that "when man departs from the divine

means of reaching the divine end, he suffers harms and losses."

In the thirty-two years of his life the chivalrous Philip Sidney endeared himself to his associates and made for himself a place among the prose writers of the Elizabethan age. His romantic tale "Arcadia" and his "Defence of Poesy" mirror his own nobleness of thought and his courteous heart. The charm of his language, and the poetic turn of his prose atone for the lack of maturity and the traces of artificiality found therein. He died too young to fully develop the power he possessed but interest in his works has never grown cold. "He cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner." ---"Defense of Poesy."

To lessen the tedium of his long hours in prison, Sir Walter Raleigh turned his versatile powers to the writing of "The History of the World." He regards history as a means of teaching that virtuous rulers are rewarded and vicious princes are attended with failure. As a history it is not a success but it does contain numerous touching passages. Influenced by his own hard fate, he is best at depicting "oblivion, dust and endless darkness." His didactic

view of history and his style are exemplified in this exerpt from "The History of the World."

"If we seek a reason of the succession and continuance of this boundless ambition of mortal men, we may add to that which has already been said, that the kings and princes of the world have always laid before them the actions but not the ends of those great ones which preceeded them. They are always transported with the glory of the one, but they never mind the misery of another, till they find the experience in themselves. They neglect the advice of God, while they enjoy life or hope it; but they follow the counsel of death upon his first approach. It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world, without speaking a word, which God, with all the words of His law, promises or threats, dost not infuse. Death, which hateth and destroyeth man, is believed; God, which has made him and loves him, is always deferred.....It is Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant, makes them cry, complain, and repent, yea, even to hate their forepast happiness. He takes account of the rich, and proves him a beggar, a naked beggar, which hath interest in nothing but the

gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein their deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge it."

Religious differences caused numerous polemical works to be written. Hooker defended the Estabilshed Church against the attacks of the Puritans in his "Laws of Eccesiastical Policy." His language is correct and methodical, but is influenced by his Latin models. A pleasing absence of Fanaticism manifests itself throughout. An earnest, peaceful man, he endeavoured to persuade rather than to intimidate, to reason rather than to move the passions of malice and bitterness.

Robert Parsons, a Jesuit, made in fluent prose a defense of the Catholic attitude. His most interesting treatise is "The Three Conversions of England." Although the literary workmanship of Hooker is lacking, the style is robust and is not lacking literary form.

Translations of the Bible were begun in this period, but the Douay and King James version of the Holy Scriptures rightfully belong to the next age. The research work necessary for their completion, was being done. The mere fact that scholars were willing to

spend time on such a task manifests the new importance attached to the English language.

So passed the Elizabethan age. Barren and feeble in the beginning, a new life had been infused into English Literature which even an era of Religious strife could not interrupt. Halting and afraid Englishmen had taken up the study of their own language and found it apt for the expression of their poetic thought. Great geniuses served their apprenticeship in the literary workshop and launching forth as master-workmen had eclipsed the best efforts of their teachers. If the industrial revolution transformed the whole structure of mediaeval industrial structure, replacing the sailing vessel with the steamboat, and the old hand-loom with the spinning machines, no less did this Augustan age of Literature change the literary world of prose and poetry. Under the leadership of its poets and men of letters, fallow fields of English verse shone with all the luxuriant growth of new land. The workmen, who had long cast envious glances at the harvests of foreign countries suddenly realized the possibilities of their own. The houses of the ordinary citizen, that had been closed to the light of English poetry, began to boast of new

windows of literary appreciation. The fire of poetry was rekindled in many a hearth that had long been cold and cheerless. Shakespeare, Spenser and Bacon trod the high and difficult paths where all might view and admire but few attempt to follow. In many a deserted side-road, in many a humble hamlet, some less-gifted man performed a loving task in disseminating an appreciation of the beautiful, in arousing the townsmen's latent desire to see the great truths of life clothed in the rich language of poetry. Though the greater honour was not theirs, their influence was large and enduring. From London city to the small country village, England's sons gloried in their heroes of the sea, in their shadowy forests and broad-flowing rivers. Before an appreciative audience the actors in the drama put forth their best efforts since no mediocre production would please nor hasty literary work satiate their thirst. Unhappily, religious difference and internal strife marred an otherwise glorious age.

Elizabethan literature has sent its influence down through the centuries. Signs of decline were visible in the age of the Stuarts but it was only temporary. As some mountain stream disappears within

the crevasses of some lofty cliff to reappear in greater grandeur in the plain below, so the disappearance of the flood of English literature was not permanent. The mighty songs of the sightless Milton, the mystic visions of Blake, the tender pathos of Burns, the romanticism of Wordsworth were made possible by the inspiration they received from this era. Our own age marvelling at the results they obtained, using of the stores they laid up, regard them as a "God-created, fire-breathing Spirit host, who emerged from the inane, hastened stormfully across the astonished earth," who proceeded "through mystery to mystery, from God to God."

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