Shakespeare's stage.

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SHAKESPEARE'S STAGE

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Shakespeare's Stage

"Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."
-Milton

This casual reference to the Elizabethan stage cannot be accepted too readily or without reservation as indicative of the general attitude of Milton's contemporaries toward the drama. The great body of Puritans were openly hostile, looking askance on theatrical folk as instruments of the devil, and on the plays as "offerings of idolatry, pomp of worldlings, and the food of iniquity, riot and adultery!"[1] While in a city of over one hundred thousand population almost one third attended the theatres within a week and were delighted to hear that My Lord Chamberlain's Men will be at the Swan all next week, Puritanism launched vain invectives against Burbage's "ungodly edifice" as a menace to public morality, its ministers meanwhile urging the Lord Mayor and the City Council to close the doors from which issued so much contamination. Then, as now, it was believed that the youth of the city were being corrupted and their morals infected by the popular "feature" presentations of the stage. Ulterior

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[1] Sir Sidney Lee, A Life of William Shakespeare, pp. 15-56.

motives may have prompted this unrelenting condemnation of the drama: the theatres were better attended than the churches. A London preacher appreciated the situation keenly and thus expressed his realization of the truth in 1586 (the year of Shakespeare's arrival in London): "Woe is me! The playhouses are pestered, where churches are naked; at the one it is not possible to get a place, at the other void seats are plenty. When the bell tolls to the Lecturer, the trumpets sound to the stages."[1] Another divine reminds us how uncomely it is for youth "to run straight from prayer to plays, from God's service to the devil's."[2] Thus the Privy Council was called upon to condemn the conduct of actors who wore the livery of the very noblemen who sat at the Queen's council table and were masters of vice, teachers of wantonness, and sons of idleness. Pamphleteers expressed their disapproval of two hundred proud players "jetting in their silks" when five hundred poor people were starving in the streets.

Nor were the Puritans alone in their aversion to the stage. Merchants found the actors a serious hindrance to trade: performances were scheduled to begin at three o'clock in the afternoon, the very hour at which knots of persons should have been increasing the tradesman's income, not the box office receipts of the Globe or Fortune.

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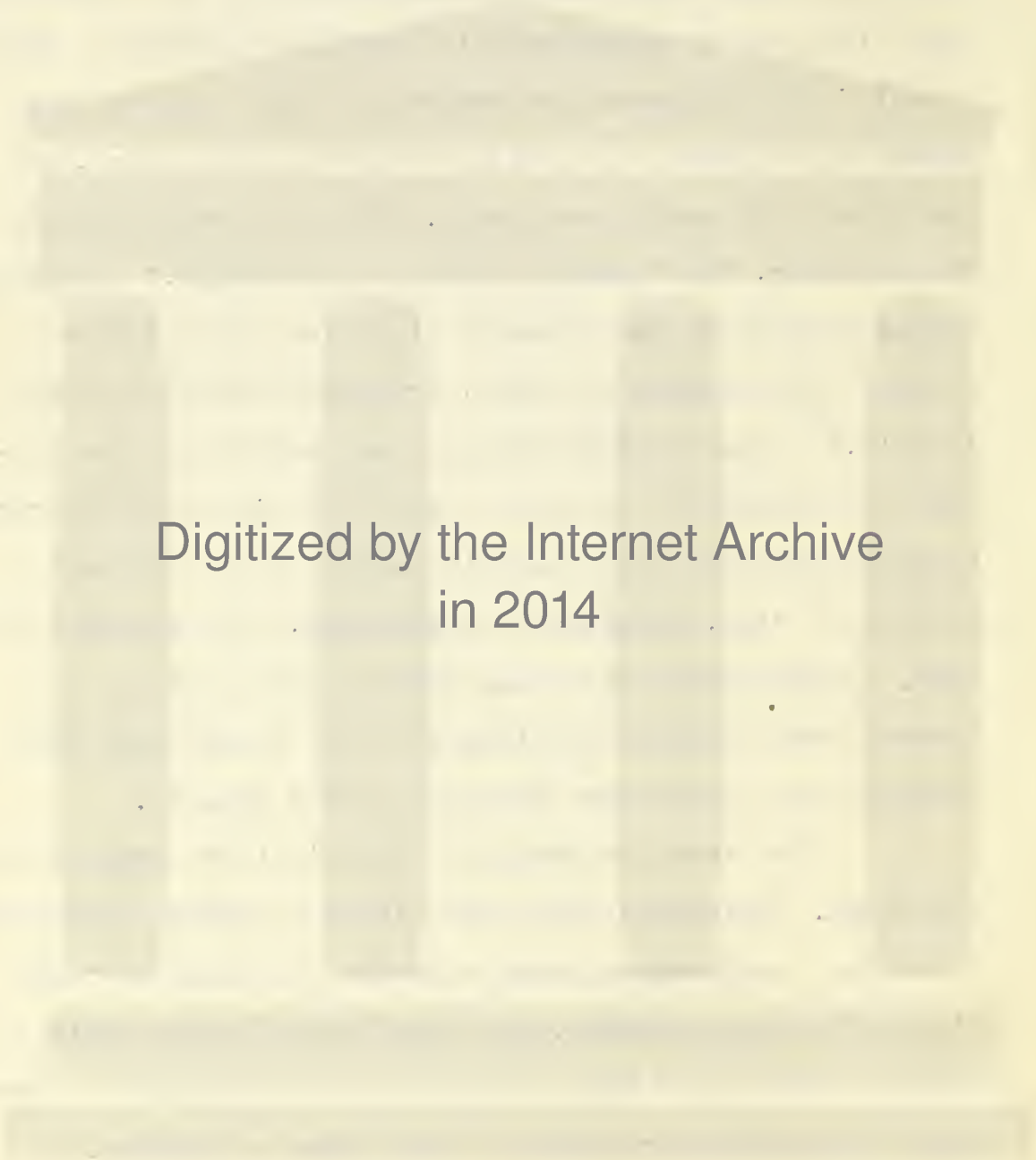
[1] Hamilton W. Mabie, Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist and Man, p. 131.

[2] Ibid.



Chettle tells us that bowling alleys were left empty by the recourse of good fellows into that unprofitable recreation of stage-playing. The drama was truly as popular then as the motion picture is to-day. We are told that for twenty years after the opening of the first public theatre Londoners were really theatre-mad.

Roundheads and Cavaliers joined with Puritans, merchants, and "self-appointed reformers" in condemning actors and the stage, an aversion fostered probably by the humble status of those engaged in the profession. Few were educated; many of them had previously followed a trade. Tarlton and Knill were tavern keepers; the elder Burbage a joiner; Shakespeare, a wool-comber. The Elizabethan theatre of 1587 was not a socially respectable place, and Elizabethan theatrical people were catalogued as Bohemians in a society where there was no alternative between formal respectability and the full license of professional crime. The actors, in brief, were not considered "nice people." Yet it was, withal, a democratic England, and being an actor did not ostracize one completely. Ben Jonson mingled with the London elite; Shakespeare acknowledged as patron the Earl of Southampton; King James and Good Queen Bess openly espoused the drama.

Shakespeare himself was cognizant of the low social

status of his profession. In his one hundred and eleventh sonnet we listen to the plaint:

> "O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

And again,

> "Alas, 't is true....I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view." 1

Thus the actor could be both honored and despised. His profession was looked down upon, while he himself might be popular. He might win the friendship of noblemen, and yet by law be his lordship's servant, dependent for a livelihood upon his master's good will. Without license of a noble, he could act only in fear of prosecution by law, and once licensed, he might gain the approbation of the highest in the land. Dekker speaks of the meaner sort of actors who "traveled upon the hard hoof from village to village for cheese and buttermilk," without the protection of some nobleman to shield them from the charge of vagabondage. In fact, it was only by becoming a member of a regularly licensed company that a player could escape being considered, in the phraseology of the statute law, a vagabond. The Lord Chamberlain had the power of issuing, in favor of certain of the court nobility, licenses which

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1 One hundred and tenth sonnet.

entitled the granter to incorporate a company of players. Thus were founded the companies of Lord Leicester, Warwick, Howard, Essex, Derby, the Lord Admiral's and others. When James I ascended the throne, Shakespeare's company was in possession of both the Globe and Blackfriars. James adopted the company as his own, and they were known thereafter as His Majesty's Servants. The royal license of 1603 autherizes Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, James Burbage, John Heminge and others "freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies, histories, interludes, morals, pastorals, and stage plays, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure when we shall think good to see them." This license gave Shakespeare and his fellow-actors permission to play in "any town hall, or morte hall, or other convenient places within the liberties and freedom of any other city, university town, or burgh, within our said realms or dominions." This license, however, contained a clause, subjecting all dramatic entertainments to the previous inspection of the Master of Revels. Edmund Tilney was appointed to this office in 1579, and regulated the stage for thirty-one years.

James I gave dignity and consequence to the theatrical profession and introduced into the theatrical world a new and better constituted arrangement of its parts. Three companies

were formed under his auspices: the Lord Chamberlain's Servants, whom he adopted as his own; the Earl of Worcester's, adopted by the Queen, and the Earl of Nottingham's by Prince Henry. James was known to favor the theatrical folk strongly, particularly Shakespeare, both as actor and playwright. The king welcomed him to his residence, Theobald's Palace at Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, and to Hampton Court and Whitehall. Elizabeth, also, was a devotee of the stage, although never frequenting the public theatre. Shakespeare appeared before her at Greenwich Palace in December, 1594, and again at Whitehall on New Year's Day, 1597. Elizabeth forbade plays that dealt with religion, fearing a quarrel with Spain. This aided in the secularization of the drama, and brought prosperity to those who dabbled in theatrical management. The good Queen did not look with royal favor upon tragedy, while historical plays she regarded as an improper reflection on the government of princes. Viewing with suspicion the plays of Shakespeare, says William Poel,[1] she refused to see his great comic creation, Falstaff, until the fat man had been put into modern Elizabethan comedy, and thus removed from the environment of historical and political events with which she considered it was not the province of actors to meddle. There was no breadth or depth in the Queen's outlook on life, adds

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[1] William Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre, pp. 1-32.

Mr. Poel. Other writers stress Elizabeth's enthusiasm for the drama in general, and for Shakespeare, in particular. When the first and second parts of Henry IV were produced in 1597, the Queen was delighted, especially with Falstaff. Later Shakespeare wrote "Merry Wives of Windsor," for the Queen in an outburst of enjoyment and delight over Falstaff, had said that she wished to see him in love. The play met with general favor at the court. "What Augustus said of Rome may be remarked of Elizabeth and her stage," says Dr. Nathan Drakes, "she found it brick and left it marble."[1] Warmly attached to theatrical amusements, she was frequently entertained in her chapel royal by the performance of plays on profane subjects by the children belonging to that establishment. Ben Jonson agrees with the critics that both James and Elizabeth were devotees of the dramatic art:

> "Sweet Swan of Avon! What a sight it were
> To see thee on our waters yet appear,
> And make these flights upon the banks of Thames
> That so did take Eliza and our James."

The drama also met with popular favor. Let us investigate the Elizabethan audience in its relationship with the stage:

The theatre of Shakespeare's time, writes H. W. Mabie, owed its immense productiveness to the closeness of its relations with English life and English people. The

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[1] Dr. Nathan Drake, Shakespeare and His Time, Chapter VII, p. 200.

stage was the scene of tumultuous passions, of fierce emotions whose tidal volume and intensity swept everything before them, of violence, cruelty and blood shedding. The theatre was the channel through which the rising life of the people found expression and accurately reflected the public taste, feeling and culture; it was the contemporary library, lecture-room and newspaper. Drama was saturated with the spirit of the age; it was passionate, reckless, audacious, adventurous, indifferent to tradition, but throbbing vitality; full of sublimity when a great poet was behind it, and of rant and bluster when it came from a lesser hand; it was insolent, bloody, vituperative, coarse, indecent, noble, pathetic, sweet with all tenderness and beautiful with all purity; there was no depth of crime or foulness into which it did not descend, there was no heighth of character, achievement, sacrifice and service to which it did not climb with easy and victorious steps. It was intensely alive, and became not only the greatest expression of English genius but also the mirror of English spiritual life. No stage was ever so human; no poetic life so intense. Wild, reckless, defiant of all past traditions, of all conventional laws, the English dramatists owned no teacher, no source of poetic inspiration, but the people itself.

And who were these people?

In January, 1609, a whale came up the Thames within eight miles of London.[1] Its body was longer than

the largest ship on the river. Finally it returned to the sea. In 1613 the little town of Standish in Lancashier saw the birth of a maiden child with four legs, and a head with two faces. In 1575, Kinnaston was visited by an earthquake. The earth began to open and a hill with a rock under it....lifted itself up to a great height and began to travel bearing along with it the trees that grew upon it, the sheepfolds and flocks of sheep abiding there at the time. Passing along it overthrew a chapel standing in the way, and removed a ewe tree planted in the churchyard, from the West into the East. Having walked in this sort from Saturday in the evening until Monday noon it then stood still. Truly, Birnam Wood may have moved to Dunsinane! It was an age of credulity, but it was also an age of brutality. M. Taine says that Nature was never so completely acted out.[2] "These robust men gave reign to all their passions, delighted in the strength of their limbs, like carmen, indulged in coarse language, enjoyed gross jests, brutal buffoonery, for humanity was as much lacking as decency." Yet the English people were morally sound. Their coarseness existed only in their habits, speech, manner of expression; it was not a matter of character.

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[1] C. D. Wainer, People for Whom Shakespeare Wrote, p. 586

[2] Ibid. pp. 127-128

Taine insists, however, that blood and suffering did not move them. The court frequented bull and bear baitings. "Elizabeth beat her maids and boxed Essex' ears; great ladies whipped their children and their servants. The sixteenth century is like a den of lions. Amid passions so strong as these there is not one lacking. It is the entire man who is displayed, heart, mind, body, senses, with his noblest and finest aspirations as with his most bestial and savage appetites, without the preponderance of any dominant passion to cast him altogether in one direction, to exalt or degrade him. "They would take in everything," says Taine, "sanguinary ferocity and refined generosity, the brutality of shameless debauchery and the most divine innocence of love, accept all the characters, wantons and virgins, princes and mountebanks; pass quickly from trivial buffoonery to lyrical sublimities, listen alternately to the quibble of clowns, and the songs of lovers."[1] The drama had to satisfy many-sided natures. It had to take all tongues, pompus, inflated verse, loaded with imagery, and side by side with this vulgar prose; it must distort its natural style and limits, put songs and poetical devices into the discourse of courtiers and the speeches of statesmen, bring out on the stage the fairy world of opera, as Middleton says, gnomes,

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[1] C. D. Wainer, People for Whom Shakespeare Wrote.

nymphs of the land and sea, with their groves and meadows, yes, compel the gods to descend upon the stage, and hell itself to furnish its world of marvels. No other theatre is so complicated, for nowhere else do we find men so complete.

To please an Elizabethan audience, the stage must present unusual spectacles, and brutal physical suffering. "They liked battles and murders, processions and fireworks, ghosts, insanity," says Thorndike. "Richard the Third surrounded by ghosts, or fighting Richmonds in battle delighted them. Stories of rape and revenge were pleasantly thrilling to their ears. The dashing out of a child's brains, the tearing out of Gloucester's eyes, the dance of madmen, a chamber of horrors, a burning town--all of these constituted a "thrill" for Shakespeare's audience.[1] Physical activity and emotional excess are the keywords to success; hence the plays abounded in villainy, plots, poisons, rape, incest and mutilation." But the Elizabethans could get real blood and torture daily at the bear baiting, and public executions were common. The theatres attracted others than seekers after brutal sensation. It supplied the desire for story and discussion; it represented romance, imagination, realism and art. The mood of the theatre-goer was delightfully childlike. It was "Tell me a story." Characterization was relatively unimportant. The theatre

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[1] A. H. Thorndike, Shakespeare's Theater, pp. 404-431.

took the place of our novel, short story, drama, newspaper, movie. The audience liked variety, incident and action.

Tears and laughter, horror mixed with fun, jigs, stories of strange lands, past times and heroic deeds--stories of shoemakers, clothiers, grocers, gnomes, fairies, ghosts,--this was their dramatic diet. Hungry for stories, they were neither romanticists nor realists and had no fixed criteria. They did not even insist upon the proverbial happy ending or the triumph of virtue. Their keenest delight was in human nature. Each man was less a cog, less an item of society, more and more an individual, carving out a career for himself, and fame and fortune. He came to the theatre to hear and see the exploits, successes, trials and defeats of others, individuals like himself. The Elizabethan was youthful, curious about the ways of men, interested in the experiences of others. He asked that he be given a story which excited his imagination; he listened to it with a mixture of impatience and responsiveness, and a willingness to let his imagination go,--an eagerness to have it spurred on.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."

The great tribute to the Elizabethan audience is the host of persons created for its recognition. Shakespeare believed that the actors interpreted the moods, emotions and ideals of their

audiences. When the players came to Elsinore, Hamlet thus admonished Polonius:

> "Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear? Let them be well used, for they are the abstract and belief chronicles of the time; after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live." [1]

Shakespeare has left little criticism or compliment of his audience, and when he addressed it directly he did so in the terms of pleasant raillery. In Hamlet he speaks of the groundlings being incapable of anything but dumb shows and noise; in Julius Caesar and Coriolanus he ridicules the mob and their instability. Massinger says they are affected only with jigs and ribaldry, and Webster complains that most of the people who came to the playhouse resemble those ignorant asses, who visiting stationers shops, their use is not to inquire for good books, but new books.[2] The criticism of authors is often directed at the gallants and would-be critics. The general condemnation of an audience usually occurs only when an author is excusing the failure of his play, or writing condoling verses on the failure of a brother dramatist. The prefaces and inductions of Jonson and others often premise a large amount of intelligence and reading on the part of their audience. Marston for his tragedies and Johson for his comedies bespeak from the audience a most serious appreciation of the author's

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[1] Hamlet, Act II, Scene II.

[2] Webster, Address to the White Devil.

aims and art. Elizabethan dramatists had their moods both of irritation and of confidence with their audience but on the whole they were unwilling to trust their wares unreservedly to the public verdict. Shakespeare says in Henry the Eighth:

> "'T is ten to one this play can never please all
> that are here:
> Some come to take their ease and sleep an act
> or two but those we fear, [1]
> We have frighted with our trumpets."

How could a great dramatic genius like Shakespeare pin his faith to the dramatic sense of an ever shifting, changing audience who liked whate'er they looked on, and whose looks went everywhere? In the pit were the groundlings, who, we must remember, were incapable of anything but "inexplicable dumb show and noise"; while in the three-legged stools on the stage lounged patrons of the drama, the Earls of Oxford and Southampton. These young lords of the Elizabethan court were not greatly distinguished by taste and learning, and probably were not much superior to the apprentices in their liking for obscene jokes and bad puns. Truly, there was a scant background of culture.

Let us, in imagination, attend one of the theatres of Shakespeare's London. We find it on the Bankside, Southwark, on the South side of the Thames. Surrounded by bear-pits,

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[1] Henry the Eighth, epilogue, first four lines.

brothels and gambling dens it is indeed a disreputable district, but here the city corporation insisted the theatres must remain.

As the playgoers neared the theatre in the fields their attention would be attracted to the bills of the play, posted wherever they could best arrest the eye. John Northbroke said they used to set up bills upon posts some certain days before to admonish people to make resort to the theatre. The hour of commencing the performance is stated on the bill as three o'clock. The following proclamation was made by an actor in "Histriomastix" in 1610:

> "All that can sing and say
> Come to the town house and see a play.
> At three o'clock it shall begin," 1

Let us listen to the comment of a theatre enthusiast:

> "Luscus, what's played to-day? Faith, now I know,
> I set thy lips abroad, from whence doth flow
> Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo," 2

Since whatever the actor says is warranted by "Curtain plaudeties", the interrogator decides to attend the play. Playbills as we have noted above, were circulated about the town and affixed to posts and public buildings, a custom which forms the subject of a repartee recorded by Taylor, the water-poet, who began to write toward the close of Shakespeare's life. Master Field, the player, was riding up Fleet Street at a great speed when a gentleman called and asked him what play was played

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1 A. C. Calmour, Facts and Fixtion about Shakespeare, p. 16, actor in Histriomastix speaking.

2 Israel Gallancz, Life of Shakespeare, pp. 23-54

that day. He, being angry to be delayed for so frivolous a

demand, answered that he might see what play was played upon every post.

"Mercey", said the gentleman, "I took you for a post, you rode so fast."[1]

In Henry the Eighth Shakespeare guarantees the play-goer complete satisfaction: "Those that come I'll undertake may see their shilling richly in two short hours."

Now let us observe the motley crew that gathers in an Elizabethan playhouse to "see a play": citizens of London, apprentices to trades, grooms, riotous boys, and masked ladies. Tilted gentlemen, aristocrats and young dandies have paid extra for the privilege of occupying three-legged stools on the stage.

"Rude as the theatre might be, all the world was there," said Green.[2] The stage was crowded with nobles and courtiers; the benches in the yard below were thronged with apprentices and citizens. "The rough mob of the pit inspired, as it felt, the vigorous life, the rapid transitions, the passionate energy, the reality, the life-like medley and confusion, the racy dialogue, the chat, the wit, the pathos, the sublimity, the rant and buffoonery, the coarse horrors and vulgar blood-shedding, the immense range over all classes of society, the intimacy with the foulest as well as the fairest developments

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[1] Dr. Nathan Drake, Shakespeare and His Times, p. 114.

[2] H. W. Mabie, Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist and Man, p. 114.

of human temper, which characterized the English stage," says Mabie.[1] The people in the yard, we are told, were more respectful to the plays and players than those on the stage. Yet the prologue was often interrupted and sometimes ended by the violence of the groundlings, or the late arrival of some rakish gentlemen upon the stage. Shakespeare describes them in King Henry VIII:

"There are the youths that thunder at a playhouse, and fight for bitten apples, that no audience but the Tubulation of Tower Hill, or the Limbs of Limehouse, their dear brothers, are able to endure." Vendors of nuts and fruits moved about among the audience, selling apples, pears, nuts, wine, tobacco and beer. When the trumpet sounded thrice for the opening of the play, the audience might be discovered eating, drinking, smoking or playing cards. Pickpockets frequented the plays, and if caught were tied to a post on the stage, according to Kemp's comment in "Nine Days Wonder". The baseball crowd of to-day may be compared with the audience that assembled at the Curtain or Theatre. We must remember that the rivals of the theatre were the cockfights, acrobatics, trained animals, monsters, puppet shows, and bull and bear baitings. Yet the audience was not entirely unlearned, for Shakespeare's historical plays were in vogue,

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[1] H. W. Mabie, Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist and Man, pp. 113-114.

and for fifteen years from the defeat of the Spanish Armada to the death of Elizabeth, the stage was crowded with plays based on the events of the English chronicles. A familiarity with English history had become a cultural asset of the London crowd. The Elizabethan audience was well informed in law, (civil law having developed considerably in the sixteenth century), and many law students were patrons of the theatre, later becoming playwrights. The audience was used to the spoken word; it knew Marlowe's "mighty line". It found listening easier than reading; it liked oratory, repartee, sonorous declamation, and found Mercutio's Queen Mab speech soothing to the ears. It would have liked our vaudeville monologues, college debates, acrobatics, stump speeches and Chautauqua lectures. New words, phrases, classical allusions, malapropisms and strange proper names pleased them. Shakespeare knew their love for puns and metaphors. Glenn Hughes says that the Elizabethan audience was not cultivated or attentive; the men were noisy and quarrelsome.[1] Actors were the targets of missiles and verbal insults. In the yard were the rowdies who ate, drank, smoked and exchanged crude witticisms with the painted ladies in the lower galleries. George P. Baker says of them: "Shakespeare was writing for an audience that had stronger tastes and

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[1] Glenn Hughes, The Story of the Theatre, p. 157.

tougher nerves than ours. They came to the play as to a melodrama. They were enthusiastic over horror, horror such as we find in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy. The Elizabethans liked strong contrasts, a blend of the comic and the tragic."[1] Yet some Elizabethan audiences were decidedly critical. Ben Jonson tells us that it is interesting to observe the sway and variety of opinion--"one says he likes not the writing, another likes not the plot, another likes not the playing." And of gallants at a premiere, Ben adds: "They have taken such a habit of dislike in all things that they will not approve any thing, but sit depressed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears and crying, 'Filthy! Filthy!' simply uttering their own convictions and using their wryed countenances instead of a vice, to turn the good aspects of all that shall sit near them from what they behold."[2] Ben's consternation is expressed by others who declare that the audience mewed and hissed the actors. Dekker speaks of Jonson's behavior, as appearing on the stage afterward to make the people cry, "That's Horace! That's he that pens and purges humours." Jonson in "Devil is an Ass" describes young men who sat on the stage to display their fine suits there: "Here is a cloak that cost fifty pounds, Wife, which I can

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[1] George P. Baker, Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, p. 141.

[2] Ben Jonson, Case is Allered, acted at Blackfriar's, 1599.

sell for thirty when I have seen all London has seen me. To-day I go to the Children's playhouse, rise up between the acts, let my cloak fall, publish a handsome man and a rich suit. And that's a special end why we go thither. All that pretend to stand for it on the stage: The ladies ask, 'Who's that?' for they do come to see us, love, as we do to see them."[1] Stephen Gosson in his "School of Abuse", (1579), says that the young men tho tell young ladies to apples, and that nut cracking was common by the meaner class. The auditors would often take down jests and passages in their tablets or table books, and often maimed and corrupted copies of plays were then printed and sold. Heywood says, "some by stenography drew the plot and put it in print, scarce one word true." Critics, likewise, carried to the theatres their table books, made of small plate of slate bound together in duodecimo and took down passages from the play, for the purpose of ridiculing them in taverns or parties, or with the view of ridiculing and degrading the author. "To such, wherever they sit concealed," said Ben Jonson in 1601, "let them know, the author defies them and their writing tables." Are we not reminded here of the young prince of Denmark: "My tables, meet it is I set it down." Some of the audience were hired to lead in the applause.

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[1] Ben Jonson, Devil is an Ass.

Others detracted from the success of a play and the vanity of the actors by hissing, shouting, and mewing like a cat. Spenser described it as

> "A troublous noyes
> That seemed some perilous tumult to desire
> Confused with women's cries and shouts of boyes
> Such as the troubled theatre oft times annoyes." [1]

Sometimes gallants, patrons of the dramatic art, sitting on the stage, beat down the mews and hisses of the opposed rascality. "The scarecrows in the yard hoot at you," says Dekker, "hiss at you, spit at you, yea, throw dirt even in your teeth; 't is most gentleman-like patience to endure all this, and to laugh at the silly animals--but if the rabble with a full throat, cries, 'Away with the foole', you were worse than a madman to tarry by it, for the gentleman and the foole should never sit on the stage together."[2]

The genre and theme of the play were indicated in the prologue. A diffident and supplicatory manner was thought essential to this character. The speaker usually wore a long black velvet cloak, a little beard, a starched face, and was possessed of a supple leg. Dekker alludes to the prologue thus: "Present not yourself on the stage until the quaking prologue hath by rubbing got colour into his cheeks and is

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[1] Spenser, quoted by E. A. G. Lamborn in Shakespeare, the Man and His Stage, Part III.

[2] Dekker, Gull's Horn Book.

ready to give the trumpets their cue that he is upon point to enter, for then it is time to creep from behind the arras."[1] Then the Gull would hoot, hiss, spitt and throw dirt at the pests, "befeathered estridges" who sat on the stage and impeded a view of the action. He would laugh aloud at the sad scenes, and if he hated an author would get up in the middle of the play and walk out, speaking to all as he went. If it rained he would sit and turn plain ape. "Take up a rush and tickle the ears of your fellow gallants," says Dekker, "mew at passionate speeches, blare at merry, find fault with the music, whew at the children's action, whistle at songs."[2] He would wait to take his place, if the piece was a new one, until the play was just beginning.

Henry Fitzgeffrey in his Third Book of Humorists says that the military element was present at the theatre,--gallant, courtier, captain, "the soundest pay-masters." They were fashion mongers, plumed dandibrats, and spruce coxcombs--carrying mirrors in the lides of their tobacco boxes or watches and always looking at themselves to see

> "How his Band jumpeth with his Peccadilly
> Whether his Band strings balance equally
> Which way his feather wags." 3

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1 Dekker, Gull's Horn Book.

2 Ibid.

3 Members of the Shakespeare Association, Shakespeare and the Theatre, p. 186.

The behavior of these gallants was more infectious than the pestilence, for they "took men's lives with a tobacco face." The ignorant critic of Cynthia's Revels is described as entering, handing a cloak to a boy sitting on a stool and lighting a pipe. "There is not the fifth part of a good face among them all," he says, "the music is abominable--a man were better visit fifteen jails or a dozen or two of hospitals that once adventure to come near them."[1]

The ordinary theatre-goer may be a Justice of the Peace, Mayor's son or a knight of an inn's-of-court man. The grocer and freeman of London may sit on the stage with the gentlemen but he will tolerate no innuendoes at his class. He comforts his wife, frightened by the stage combat, by going out and fetching her a drink. This plebeian element was largest and was referred to as "stinkards." They were pressed together closely, were friendly and talkative, but opinionated. Light women sitting in the galleries found the theatre a profitable place, but ladies of position came masked and sat in private rooms with no ulterior motive but the innocent enjoyment of the play. Housewives brought sweetmeats, liquorice, sugar candy and green ginger, and sent their husbands out for ale. It was seldom, however, that women of good character attended the public playhouses; they strongly preferred the private

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[1] Ben Jonson, Cynthia's Revels.

theatre, Queen Elizabeth steadily maintaining her preference for the latter. Respectability was distinguished by its absence or quietness. The groundlings, or, as Ben Jonson called them, "the understanding gentlemen of the ground" were delighted with low comedy with rapid and sensational action. Audiences generally accepted and were apt to applaud any meritorious work. They have been described as a rude barbarous crew having no brains, yet grounded judgments. The theatre, being sensational and sanguinary, appealed to them. It presented feasts of horror for the groundlings, and an Elizabethan audience delighted in bloody scenes and ranting declamations. Their taste for horrors and exaggeration of speech was glorified by Marlowe's genius but remained essentially unchanged by him. There was neither any prudery in the plays or the players, and the audiences in behavior were no better than the plays. The whole Bankside, with its taverns, brothels, playhouses, bear pits and gardens was the scene of roystering and course amusement. The people were fond of dancing and other sports, and had a taste for cruel and barbarous amusements. They delighted in brutal encounter and drew the sword and swung the cudgel with great promtitude. Country gentleman, squire, parson, pedantic schoolmaster who was regarded as one-half conjurer, the yeoman or farmer, dairy maid, sweet English girls,

country lout, shepherds, boors, fools,--all these were at the play, hungry for intense physical sensations and hair-raising horrors. Theatres were built for the people and the audience included all classes.

Lamborn tells us that a clown had to be included in the cast in order to provide the buffoonery and horseplay to which the crowd had been long accustomed and which they insistently demanded. They had been used to a devil who would jump off the scaffold and make a sally among the people. Most of the spectators desired a clown or fool to depart from his book in order to make jokes at the expense of his audience. In the course of the play the clown would favor the audience with outbreaks of extemporaneous wit and practical joking, in virtue of a time-honored privilege of the clown to speak more than was set down for him.[1] Greene in Tu Quoque (1614) says: "Here they two talk and rayle what they list--than Rash speakes to Staynes." Between the acts there would be dancing and singing, and after the play a jig, a kind of comic solo, sung, said, acted and danced by the clown to the accompaniment of his own pipe and tabor. He was privileged to notice what was passing in the audience and to enter into familiar conversation with the spectators either between acts or in the midst

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[1] Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2.

of the scene.

The Vice and the Devil obtruded their impertinent buffoonery on scenes of the most serious and solemn import, and the audience who witnessed such absurdity with delight may well be supposed to be incapable of relishing a performance of pure and simple beauty.

George P. Baker believes that the dramatist, if he does not wish to employ his gifts in an effort condemned to failure in advance, must consider his public, respect their sentiments, and skilfully conform himself to their ideas and customs, and, he adds, no play can have lasting popularity which neglects the prejudices, tastes, above all, the ideals of its own day.[1] Shakespeare's puns, malapropisms and mere verbal trifling show a desire to please a part of his audience, but no fixed aim to maintain all parts on a high level. He indulged the popular taste for noise and brawls by including storms, cannonnades, trumpetings, and the clash of weapons in his stage directions, but he seems to have lamented the necessity for this crude realism. We have found, however, that scenes of cruelty did not affect Shakespeare's audience, as for instance, the killing of Macduff's child, the blinding of Gloucester. These were demanded of a dramatist who could

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[1] George P. Baker, Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, p. 7.

fully arouse the feelings, and in this case the feelings were blunt. They loved to hear of the "filthy mantled pool" near Prospero's cell, and the ordering of a fellow creature to be burned alive in their presence. Shakespeare knew that he must reckon with all this bluntness, cruelty and stupidity. The fooling things in his plays were written to please the foolish; the filthy for the filthy, and the brutal for the brutal.

"If, out of our respect for his genius we are led to admire or even tolerate such things, we may be thereby not conforming ourselves with him but only degrading ourselves to the level of his audience, and learning contamination from those wretched beings who can never be forgiven for their share in preventing the greatest poet and dramatist of the world from being the greatest artist."[1] So spoke Robert Bridges.

Yet this audience had an immense capacity for make-believe. Time and place meant little to them; Shakespeare gave them a feeling, an atmosphere that sufficed them. They craved exciting stories, medley of incidents, great exhibitions of physical skill, alarums, excursions, music, dancing, noise and spectacle. Their all absorbing interest was human nature, and they were most concerned in a spectacle of human beings caught up in a situation and knowing what the characters did at

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[1] Robert Bridges, The Stage of the Globe, pp. 334-351.

the crisis. Delighting in a story, thrills and excitement, they were almost childish in their enthusiasm and love for make-believe. The audience came without prejudieces; the dramatist had only to furnish entertainment, either high or low. The pit would laugh at and applaud his coarsest jokes; the wits and gallants gave appreciation to his loftiest flights of fancy. As long as audiences were pleased the managers were satisfied. Elizabethan audiences were easily satisfied.

A most fascinating phase of the Elizabethan stage is costume. Frederick, Duke of Wurtemberg, visited London in 1592 and was much impressed with the magnificent apparel of the inhabitants. Ben Jonson refers to this in his commendatory verses to Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess:

> "The wise and many headed Bench that sits,
> Upon the life, and Death of Playes and Wits,
> Composed of gamester, captain, knight, knight's man,
> Lady or Pusil that wears mask or fan,
> Velvet or taffeta cap, ranked in the dark,
> With the shop's Foreman or some such brave sparke."

Women aped the ladies of the court with their enormous farthingales and ruffs; men sold their acres to put costly garments on their backs. Clothing was absurd and ran to extremes in sizes of ruffs; in style of farthingales and

breeches, or to gaudy colors and jewels. In spite of all

this luxury of outer apparel, cleanliness did not thrive, for, we are told, perfumes took the place of baths. Extravagance in dress was a characteristic of the time. Elizabeth, parsimonious as she was known to be, left a wardrobe of three thousand dresses; and under James the First the reckless expenditure and display ran to the limits of extravagance. Even legal enactments were resorted to in order to curb the great expenditures and to limit the width of the ruff and the farthingale. Mr. Furnivall gives us a description of a costume of the period. Orazio Busino, chaplain of Piero Contarino, the Venetain ambassador to James I, went to the Fortune theatre. Somebody, playing a practical joke on the chaplain, placed him among a bevy of young women. We must remember that the theatres, especially the Red Bull and the Fortune, were frequented by a number of respectable, handsome ladies who came in freely and seated themselves among the men without the slightest hesitation. The chaplain relates the incident thus:

"Scarely was I seated ere a very elegant dame, in a mask, came and placed herself beside me--she asked me for my address both in French and in English, and on my turning a deaf ear, she determined to honor me by showing me some fine diamonds on her fingers, repeatedly taking off no fewer than

three gloves which were worn one over the other. This lady's bodice was of yellow satin, richly embroidered, her petticoat of gold tissue with stripes, her robe of red velvet with raised pile, lined with broad stripes of pure gold. She wore an apron of point lace of various patterns, her head tire was highly perfumed, and the collar of white satin beneath the delicately wrought ruff struck me as exceedingly pretty."[1]

As to the richness and elegance of actors' costumes critics disagree. In Henslowe's Diary we read of an orange tawny satin doublet, laid thick with gold lace, a blue taffeta suit, an ash-coloured satin doublet, laid with gold, a peach coloured doublet, and a pair of cloth of gold hose with silver pins. He disgraises a doublet of white satin, gold lace and "rowne pynnes" hose of cloth of silver at seven pounds, and a black velvet cloak with sleeves embroidered with silver and gold at thirty-seven pounds. Henslowe speaks of paying four pounds and fourteen shillings for a pair of hose; Allen, of paying sixteen pounds, (four hundred dollars then), for one embroidered velvet cloak, and twenty pounds, ten shillings for another. Yet, we are told, these costumes were often second-handed, being slightly worn or out of season the gorgeous robes used at coronations. Near the end of the last

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[1] J. J. Jusserand, Shakespeare in France, pp. 127-128

century, according to Stevens, there was yet in the wardrobe of Covent Garden theatre a rich suit of clothes that once belonged to James I. Ben Jonson, writing in 1625, betrays the poverty of stage dresses when he exclaims in the Induction to his Staple of News, "Oh, curiosity, you come to see who wears the new suit to-day; whose clothes are best pen'd, etc.,--what king plays without cuffs, and his queen without gloves, who rides past in stockings, and dances in boots".[1] However, we are assured that no stage ever cared more for fine clothes than the Elizabethan, or lavished on dress a larger portion of its expenses. Henslowe's Diary records many purchases of silk, velvet, copper lace and tinsel, and frequent payments to the silk man, the little tailor, and the mercer. For every new play there was an outlay for new clothes; Cardinal Wolsey, for example, requiring over thirty-eight pounds for coats, velvets, satins and copper lace in 1601. There were such purchases as a pair of Venetians of cloth of silver wrought in red silk and another pair of crimson satin Venetians with a stripe of gold lace. Costumes for women were equally elaborate; the skirts of a woman's gown of silver camlet costing fifty-five shillings, and skirts of white satin laid with white lace, thirty-three

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[1] Whalley, Works of Ben Jonson, Prologue in Introduction.

shillings. The two angry women of Abingdon had taffeta gowns costing nine pounds; taffeta and tinsel for the body of Alice Pierce's gown cost one pound, and a gown of black velvet for Mrs. Kindness cost six pounds and thirteen shillings. There are also records of costumes having been procured for Time, giants, fire drakes, devils, spirits, witches, and silk garters for Thomas Heywood. And evidence is not lacking that old clothes were repaired, as in the case of Hugh Davis' tawny coat, "eaten by the rats", and that new indispensable were ordered from time to time, as "a pair of hose for Nick to tumble in before the Queen". A few of the costumes mentioned in Henslowe's Diary are as follows:

> One senator's gown, one hood, five senator capes.
> One suit for Neptune, firedrakes' suits for Dobe.
> Four Heralds' coats, three soldiers' coats, one green gown for Maid Marian.
> Six green coats for Robin Hood, four knaves' suits.
> Two russet coats, one black frieze coat, three priests' coats.
> Two black say gowns, two cotton gowns, one red say gown.
> One 'maw' gown of calico for the Queen, one Cardinal's hat.
> One red suit of cloth for John Dyger, laid with white lace.
> Five pair of hose for the clown, five gerkins for them.
> Eve's bodice, one pedant trusser, three dons' hats.
> One pair of yellow cotton sleeves, one ghost's suit, one ghost's bodice.
> Eighteen capes and hats, Verone's son's hose.
> Three trumpets, a drum, a treble viol, a base viol, a bandore, a cittern, an ancient flag, one white hat.
> Five shirts, four farthingales. [1]

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[1] A. H. Thorndike, Shakespeare's Theatre, pp. 396-398.

Costume was a means of indicating rank and office, [illegible] time and place; it was meant to reveal the characters portrayed. Foresters were green, the shepherds white; senators, heralds, soldiers, friars, clowns, kings and queens were clothed with a certain appropriateness. But costumes were often anachronistic, and for historical appropriateness no effort was made. Cleopatra was dressed like Queen Elizabeth: Caesar, Macbeth, and Romeo like the Earl of Essex. A gorgeous display was all that was demanded; it helped to atone for lack of scenery, and satisfied both actors and audience. The stage was the glass of fashion, and the art of wearing clothes was one to be cultivated by the actor.

A few more characteristic memoranda from Henslowe will indicate the arrangements for dressing the parts:

"Sowld Mr. Richard Jones, player, a manes gowne of peche color in grayne, the second of Septembr, 1594, to be payd by fyve shelenges a weeke imediately folowinge and begininge as foloeth."

The weekly payments were punctually made, and are recorded in the diary. The actors obviously shared the responsibility of the management, and were answerable for their [illegible] [illegible]. The tireman of the theatre brought apparel; he probably had [illegible]

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supply and lent the rear to the actors on hire. There is an entry of sale to him; Stephen Hacett, of a "dubiet of freschen plaine and a payer of Venesyones of brade cloth, with laces of helement." Sometimes the material was purchased and made up into apparel afterward. The fireman buys a cloak of sad grene. On January second, 1597, he sells unto Thomas Towne, a player, a Blacke clothe cloake layed with sylke lace. There are many entries showing that money was lent by the company to managers and actors for the purchase of costumes:

"Lent unto marten slater to bye coper lace and frenge for the play of Valteger the twenty-eight of november 1596--thirty shillings."

"Lent unto my sonne (Edward Alleyn) to by the saten doublet with sylverlace." There were numberous loans, many of which were made to actors, and often with the details of repayment. Sometimes money is advanced on pledges. Thus Thomas Towne, the player, who bought the black cloth coat, borrowed five shillings on a scarf in 1598, and two years later received a similar accomodation:

"Lent unto thomas towne the third of march 1600 upon a gowld Ringe with a greene stone in it the sum of twenty shillings."

"Lent unto thomas towne the third of march, 1601, by my wiffe, upon a paire of sylcke stockens, tenne shellens, which stockens he fetched again and payd us not; so he owethe us ten shellens." One entry is somewhat emphatic in tone:

"Lent unto Thomas Dowton the twenty-eighth of Jenewary 1598 to bye a whitte satten dublette for phaycton, forty shyllenges. I saye Lent--forty shyllenges."

Sharply contrasted with the costliness and magnificence of the apparel was the simplicity of the stage itself, on which the actors appeared in their regal splendor. The stage was bare or strewed with rushes; there was little or no painted scenery, and properties were of the humblest description. The theatre was a circular wooden booth open to the sky, except over the stage and gallery, where it was roofed in from the weather. Some lanterns shed a dim light through the body of the house, and a few branches with candles stuck into them hung over the stage. The private theatres were artificially lighted. The stage had a fixed roof, painted blue to represent the sky, says Sir Henry Irving, and when tragedies were performed, it was generally hung with black. One playgoer exclaims:

> "Look! Comedie, I marked it not till now
> The stage is hung with black, and I perceive
> The auditors prepared for tragedy." [1]

The play begins, and we note the absence of adequate scenery and properties, but we do not miss them keenly, for the Elizabethans were like the woman whose "speech is as a

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[1] From Warning for Fair Women, 1599.

thousand eyes through which we see the earth." We find the wealth of the rainbow in the word pictures of Shakespeare.

The use of elaborate and suggestive properties was steadily increasing after 1590. George P. Baker believes there were signs saying merely, "this is a street," etc., but that the use of signs to denote special places was old, decreasing rapidly, and by 1600 passe. Of stage setting and properties Irving says: "The exhibition of a bedstead indicated a bed-chamber; a table with pen and ink, a sitting room". A few rude models or drawings of towers, walls, trees, tombs and animals were sometimes introduced. Sir Philip Sidney, writing in 1583, alludes to the rough and simple condition of the stage:

"In most pieces the player when he comes in must ever begin with telling where he is--or else the tale will not be conceived. Nor you shall have three ladies (boys in female attire), walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden; by and by we hear news of a shipwreck in the same place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Then comes a hideous monster, with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave, while in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four

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swords, and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?"

The Elizabethan theatre was symbolic, and the Elizabethans were ready to accept not complete realism, but a suggestion of realism, in effects produced on the stage. If a dramatist wishes to show two characters in Rome and then to foreshorten their journey to Venice, he bids them go out at one door and enter at another, and the voyage is done.

Henslowe records the use of such properties as, "one rocke, one cage, one tombe, one Hell mought (Hell mouth being a relic of mystery plays), tombe of Guids, bed-steade, marche panes, sittie of Rome, the 'clothe of the Sone and Mone,' globes, golden scepters, clubs, gowlden fleece, rackets, baye tree, wooden canepie, owld Mahemets head, Ierosses (Iris' head), raynbowe, littell alter, Cupedes bowe and quiver, bores head, moss banckes and snakes, Mercures winge, helmet with a dragon, shelde, tymbrels, dragoon in Faustus, lyon, lyon heades, great horse with his leages, Imperial crownes, playne crown, gostes crowne, and a cauldron for the Jew of Malta."

The stage was a platform extending into the body of the theatre, and exposed on three sides to the view of the spectators. Chambers' imaginary picture of the Globe is illuminating, as most of the theatres were modeled after it:

"I think of the Globe as a very simple affair, with a large, open outer stage, forty-three feet wide by twenty-seven and one-half feet deep, and a flat back wall hung with arras. Above is the balcony or upper stage with its short transverse; beneath, the two doors to the extreme right and left, and between them another transverse, some thirty feet long, a parting in the middle of which furnishes the third door which some stage directions imply. When this transverse is drawn, it discloses an inner stage contrived in the twelve and one-half feet depth of the tiring house and hung around with more arras. The inner stage was an alcove, and its transverse did not interfere with the use of the principal doors or the upper stage."[1] Many and varied were the uses of this inner stage. It was large enough for a lobby, study, bedchamber, shop, friars' cell, inside of a tomb, banquet or court of justice. It was raised two or three steps above the outer stage, and must have been immediately under the gallery, for in Marlowe's Jew of Malta Barabas falls through a trap door in the upper stage (the gallery above the tiring room), into a cauldron discovered in the recess when the curtain is drawn back. The inner stage was used, then, for a specific, restricted, propertied locality, and for scenes requiring the discovery of a tableau, as Bethsabe at her bath, Friar Bungay

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[1] Sir E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage.

in bed with his magical apparatus about him, or Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. The use of the inner stage was extended so that it represented any propertied background, especially for scenes in a forest, church or temple. The forest of Arden might be disclosed there. The curtain was employed for a change of scene. One instance of the use of this inner stage is the immediate change from an outdoor to an indoor scene, or vice versa. The scene is in the street, on the front stage; the character knocks at one of the doors and is admitted to a house; when he reappears it is through the inner stage, the curtains of which have been drawn, disclosing the setting of a room. The outer stage with curtains closed was without scenery, setting or properties and was used for unlocalized scenes; the inner stage with scenery and heavy properties was used for localized scenes. The inner stage became an integral part of the outer stage, or the outer stage embraced the inner. The Elizabethan stage had its neutral unlocalized main stage, and its place for localized scenes in the upper and inner stage. The main stage was open and curtained at the back. A tree in a tub might suggest a forest; a bed wheeled in sufficed for a bedchamber; and a flaming torch might suggest in the warmth of a June sun the darkness of a cavern. Since the inner stage was a place for setting properties and indicating a change of scene by drawing and closing the

curtains, it follows that scenes wanting in properties and indications of place were obviously planned for a bare stage and a presentation without setting of any kind. The inner stage, then, could be used for an inner locality, a discovery and scenes with heavy properties. Scenes fall generally into three classes: those in which are no indications whatever of locality and no properties and which are clearly acted on the outer stage; those in which a curtain or discovery is mentioned, or in which properties are considerable and require an inner stage; and those which have vague indications of locality or properties, and no clear evidence whether the scene was on the outer or the full stage. Chambers traces the evolution of the inner stage and its uses: first, caves, arbors, studios and shops, settings in which the inner stage is a localized part of the outer stage; second, discoveries of persons or localities, after the discovery the action moving to the front; third, various scenes requiring heavy properties, the inner stage providing a background as in forest scenes, or in temple, church, palace or other elaborate interiors; fourth, in sudden alternations when actors pass immediately from the outside of a house to the inside, or the reverse; fifth, any change from an outdoor scene to an indoor scene or the reverse; sixth, scenes when the action will hardly bear the full light of the

front stage; and seventh, scenes for the indication of any notable change of place.

At the back of the stage was a screen or partition, a wall in which were two doorways opening out of the actors' tiring room, and between them was a third door, hidden by a curtain that formed the background of the stage. Here a player like Palonius could wait concealed behind the arras and here the prompter might be.

The upper stage was used to represent the battlements of a castle wall, the upper story of a house, the balcony of Juliet's bedroom or any scene described as above in the stage directions. In Julius Caesar the upper stage is used to obtain greater stage effect in scenes which could be played quite well without it. Here it is the scene of the orations in the Forum, and later the hill from which Pindarus watches the battle. In Troilus it is used by the spectators at the duel between Ajax and Hector. Julius Caesar has two split scenes, scenes where the locality is shifted by a change from front to double stage. One of these, the Senate House scene, is perhaps the most skilful use of this device. The meeting of Caesar and Artemidorus must be in the street, for Artemidorus has no business in the Capitol. But when Caesar is accosted by Popilius he is already in the Senate House, for

the curtains have opened and the whole stage has taken on the locality of the inner stage.

Above the upper stage was a wooden turret from which a trumpeter announced the opening of the play by three blasts of his instrument and from the roof of which a flag bearing the sign of the house was flown to indicate a performance. From the hut in the public, and from an upper loft in the private theatres, gods and goddesses could be lowered and raised to the stage and apparatus provided for suns, moons, clouds and other celestial effects. On the outer and inner stage and in the gallery trapdoors provided entrances and exits for ghosts, devils and other subterranean inhabitants.

Curtains of woolen or silk were hung in the front of the greater or lower stage, not suspended in the modern style, by lines and pullies, but opening in the middle and sliding on an iron rod. Malone believed there was a front curtain which opened in this way. Hardly anyone, except Mr. Sidney Lee, believes in this front curtain. Such curtains as were used were hung at back, rather than at front of stage, and divided it from a room behind which served as a tiring house for the actors. At the Fortune the curtains were of worsted, and it was the custom of the audience to fling tiles and pears against them before the beginning of the play

to allure the actors forth. Scenes in the modern sense of cloths painted in perspective, fastened upon rollers and shifting to indicate change of locality, although they were introduced from Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and were used in masques at court and in university plays found no footing upon the public stage until D' Avenant opened his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields after the Restoration. We find that curtains were used for the discovery of an interior room, a change from indoors to outdoors with one of the actors remaining on the stage, and a change from outdoors back to the same interior, and a change again from the interior to the outside. The arras or background alone could be used to indicate scenery by means of crude pictures painted on cloth; no doubt these pictures were changed with the scenes of the play. Scenery of the modern kind began in the reign of James the First when the audience sat facing the stage. At a performance in Christ Church Hall, Oxford, in 1605, it was said that the stage was built close to the upper end of the Hall and adorned with stately pillars that could turn about and with the help of other painted cloths their stage varied three times in the acting of one tragedy. "Shakespeare's poetry was great," says M. Jusserand, "because he had to make up for the deficiency of scenery by his wonderful descriptions of landscapes and wild

moors."

We have discovered that previous to the construction of regular theatres the travelling players were accustomed to enacting their plays in any place that presented itself, barns, town-halls, street squares, churches, or as it happened oftenest, the yards of inns. Consisting of a large open court and surrounded by two or more galleries, the inns were well suited to the presentation of drama, and those situated in and about London were visited by the players very frequently. We may almost say that the predecessor of the playhouse was the inn-yard. Even in our own day we may note the resemblance of the ancient inn-yards to the interior of theatres. In the large open court the players could erect a temporary platform, boards set on barrel heads, and in the nearby stables a dressing-room could be provided for the actors, while the groundlings could find standing room about the stage, and the aristocratic element could be seated comfortably in the galleries overhead. There is positive evidence of this in the early morality play, Mankind: "O, ye sovereigns that sit, and ye brothers that stand right up."[1] It seems that the "understanding gentlemen of the ground" stood so very close to the stage that the actors frequently had difficulty in passing them on the way to the dressing-room. One actor entreats: "Make space, sirs, let me

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[1] Early morality play, Mankind.

go out!" While another threatre, "Out of my way, sirs, for dread of a beating!"[1] This standing so close to the stage was possibly only a childlike eagerness to hear and see the actors better.

The inn-yard, as a substitute for a playhouse, presented its disadvantages, also. The players were barely tolerated, being regarded often as rogues and vagabonds, when unlicensed. Stage facilities were inadequate, and actors were often financially embarrassed when their only remuneration came from "passing around the hat." Finally attendance at the plays increased so perceptibly that it was found necessary to devote certain inns to dramatic presentations almost exclusively. Then were built permanent stages, well equipped for play presentation, and wooden benches to seat the ever increasing numbers of theatre devotees. Some of these inn, were now dignified by the appellation of the theatre. Among them were the Bell and the Cross Keys, in Gracechurch Street; the Bull, in Bishopgate Street; the Bell Savage, or Ludgate Hill; and the Boar's Head in Whitechapel Street. The order of the Common Council on December 6, 1574 forbidding any innkeeper to "openly show, or play, or cause or suffer to be openly showed or played within the house, yard, or any other place within the liberties of the city and dramatic repre-

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[1] Morality play, Mankind, New Gyse entering.

sentations did not prevent the actors from presenting plays in the inns during the larger part of the year. But in 1580 Queen Elizabeth, who seemed a drama enthusiast, gave her permission to London authorities to "thrust the players out of the city, and to pull down all playhouses within their liberties." The Privy Council, however, always friendly and kindly disposed toward the actors, gave them official permission to use the inns during a large part of each year. There was censorship then as now, and on September fifth, 1559, the Council instructed the Lord Mayor of London to send his officers to the Boar's Head at Aldgate where a lewd play was being presented. The officers were ordered to arrest the players, and send their playbook to the Council. We also find a record of the elder Burbage being arrested while going down Gracious Street on his way to a play. The Queen's Players were given permission by the Lord Mayor, at the request of the Privy Council, to play at the sign of the Bull in Gracious Street. Tarlton, a great Elizabethan comedian, tells of one of his experiences:

"At the Bull in Bishopgate Street, where the Queen's players oftentimes played, Tarlton coming on the stage, one from the gallery threw a pippin at him."[1] Again we find the Privy Council entreating the Lord Mayor to allow the players of the

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[1] Tarlton's Jests, 1600, first printed, 1611; reprinted, J. O. Halliwell, for Shakespeare Society, 1844.

Earl of Oxford and of the Earl of Worcester, now united in one company, to present their plays at the Bear's Head, "the place they have especially used and do best like of." Thus there were several important causes for the erection of a professional playhouse: The antagonism of the city authorities to the drama, and need of a building with adequate facilities for the player and the playgoer, and the appearance of a business-minded actor and producer, James Burbage. Groups of actors had discussed the possibility of a theatre outside the jurisdiction of the Common Council, yet within a short distance of the city. Two localities presented themselves as possible homes for the first theatre,--The Bankside and Finsbury Fields. The unsavoury reputation of the Bankside, with its notorious bear-baitings and stews admonished the elder Burbage wisely to choose the second locality,--Finsbury Fields. Here The Theatre, as it was to be denominated, was easily accessible to all. Citizens could walk or ride through Cripplegate or Moorgate into the Fields, and thence to The Theatre, or they could go to the playhouse direct through Bishopgate without going through the Fields. Distance only lent enchantment; forbidden pleasures tasted sweeter; nothing, not even the terrible danger of the plague, could turn the Elizabethan playgoer from the drama which he loved. Since the year 1315 the Field had been used

as a public playground, a place where picnics, archery contests, and military drills could be held. It was an ideal site for the erection of the first professional playhouse. The land and dilapidated buildings which Burbage selected were owned by one Gyles Allen and his wife Sara. On April 13, 1576, the lease was signed, and Burbage's dream of a real home for the drama was realized. Some of the provisions of the lease were as follows:

Firstly: The lease was to run for twenty-one years from April 13, 1576, at an annual rental of fourteen pounds.

Secondly: Burbage was to spend before the expiration of ten years the sum of two hundred pounds in rebuilding and improving the decayed tenements.

Thirdly: Burbage was to have at the end of the ten years the right to renew the lease at the same rental for twenty-one years, making the lease good in all thirty-one years.

Fourthly: Burbage might, at any time before the expiration of the lease, take down and carry away to his own use any building that in the meantime he might have erected on the vacant ground for the purpose of a playhouse.

Thus, with practically everything in his favor, Burbage proceeded to the erection of his theatre. His brother-in-law, John Brayne, a wealthy grocer of London, helped him finance the enterprise. Possibly Brayne furnished the greater part of the money, while Burbage conceived the idea and contributed the plan of the building, its stage and auditorium. Burbage was singularly fitted for this undertaking. Before his apprenticeship to the

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stage, he had been a builder and joiner; now he was a talented, experienced actor and a theatrical manager of importance.

The Theatre, erected at a cost of seven hundred pounds, was large and commodious for its time. Burbage built it of timber, taking the inn as his model, but planning its yard as a circle, like the bear-baiting and bull-baiting rings already existing on the other side of the Thames in Southwark. Here many of Shakespeare's early plays were produced and it was of this theatre Shakespeare wrote in Henry the Fifth, asking pardon for

> "The spirit that hath dared
> On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
> So great an object: can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France?
> Or may we cram within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?" [1]

The Theatre has been referred to as "the great house called The Theatre" and described again as "vast". As we may judge from Shakespeare's reference, The Theatre in shape was circular or polygonal. Built of timber, its exterior was no doubt of lime and plaster. The interior consisted of three galleries surrounding an open space called the yard. A German traveler described the London theatres as singular houses, so constructed that they have about three galleries, one above the other. The yard had no roof; the galleries, however, were protected by a roof, and were divided into "rooms", which were

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[1] Henry V, Prologue.

provided with seats. Gyles Alleyn, having refused to renew the lease for the land on which The Theatre stood, Cuthbert and Richard Burbage decided to thward his purpose by building a new theatre, forming a syndicate or stock company of some of the best actors of the day, and allowing the actors to share in the ownership of the building and in the profits. The following were selected: William Shakespeare, actor and playwright; John Heminge, actor and business man; Augustine Phillips and Thomas Pope; William Kempe, and Richard Burbage. But where should the new playhouse be erected? Thousands of persons flocked each day to the Bankside, already the theatrical center of London. Here were located The Swan, The Rose, and the Bear Garden. Sir Nicholas Brend owned a plot of land near St. Mary Overies, which won their approbation. He was willing to lease it for a reasonable rate and for a long period. The lease began on December twenty-fifth, 1598, and on December twenty-eighth Richard and Cuthbert Burbage, having employed the well-known carpenter, Peter Street and his workmen, tore down the old Theatre and transported the timber and other materials to this new site across the river. Then was erected the Globe, a fine, handsome theatre. It was constructed not only of the timber and other materials of the

Theatre, but also a new materials. When it was finished it was regarded as a most artistic piece of architecture. Dekker said of it:

"How wonderfully is the world altered! And no marvel, for it has lyein sick almost five thousand years: so that it is no more like the old Theatre du Munde, than old Paris Garden at Paris. What an excellent workman therefore were he that could cast the Globe of it into a new mould."[1]

Ben Jonson showed great enthusiasm for this "fair-fitted globe" and called it "the glory of the Bank." The building was polygonal on the outside, and circular within. From all parts of the house there was a full view of the stage. Ben Jonson referred to the roof as being "round as a tailor's clew." The frame, as we have seen, was of timber; the roof of thatch. The cost has been variously estimated at six hundred pounds, and at four hundred. But as J. Q. Adams points out, if the Globe in 1576 cost nearly seven hundred pounds, and the second Globe cost fourteen hundred, the sum of four hundred seems too small. The Globe must have been open to the public on or about May fifteenth, 1599. From then on until the closing of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642, the Globe held undisputed sway; it was the leader in dramatic presentations. King James recognized its importance and adopted the Lord Chamberlain's men as his own

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[1] Dekker, The Gull's Hornbook, published in 1609, but written earlier.

servants. Shakespeare and Burbage had reached the highest niche of success. An astrologer of this time, Simon Forman, tells us that he attended the play Macbeth, at the Globe in April, 1611, and that Macbeth and Banquo both appeared on the stage on horseback (a hobby horse being used), and on May fifteenth he saw The Winter's Tale in the same theatre, also Cymbeline. On June 29, 1613, this large theatre was filled with people, among them such notables as Ben Jonson, John Taylor, and Sir Henry Walton, to see a new play by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, called "All is True" or "Henry the Eighth". When the King entered in the fourth scene of the first act, two cannon were discharged. One of the cannon hurled a bit of the wadding upon the roof and set fire to the thatch. In less than an hour, we are told, nothing was left of the stately Globe. Sir Henry Walton records the story from actual observation in a letter to a friend:

"The King's Players had a new play, Henry the Eighth, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the Knights of the Order with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats, and the like--now King Henry, making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's house, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper or other stuff wherewith one

of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoke, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran around like a train consuming within less than an hour the whole house to the very ground. This was the fatal period of that virtious fabrick; wherein yet nothing did perish but wood and straw, and a few forsaken cloaks; only one man had his breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broiled him, if he had not, by the benefit of a provident wit, put it out with a bottle of ale."[1] John Chamberlain adds that a dwelling house was also destroyed by the flames, but "it was a great marvel and fair grace of God that the people had so little harm, having but two narrow doors to get out." With two new leases, the Globe sharers proceeded to the erection of a "bigger and better" Globe, at a cost of fourteen hundred pounds. The New Globe was built of timber, with a tiled roof probably brick-veneered and plastered over, and erected on the same site and same foundation. Chamberlain writes of the New Globe: "Indeed, I hear much speech of this new playhouse, which is said to be fairest that ever was in England."[2] It also was octagonal in form, more substantial in construction, and had a more ornamental interior. The King's Men used the Blackfriars in winter

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[1] Reliquiae Wottonianae, edition of 1672, p. 425.

[2] Birch, The Court and Times of James I, p. 329; quoted by Wallace, Children of Chapel of Blackfriars, p. 35.

and the Globe in summer. In 1632 Donna Hollandia, looking forth from her fortress, one of the stews, saw the "dying Swanne hanging down her head, seeming to say her own dirge," and the Hope which "wild beasts and gladiators did most possess," but the Globe was "still the Continent of the World of Beauties, and brave Spirits resorted unto it."[1]

Henslowe and Alleyn, somewhat alarmed by the proximity of this handsome rival, decided to erect a theatre of greater size and magnificence. The latter, therefore, seeing a plot of ground lying between Golding Lane and Whitecross Street, to the north of the city in the Parish of St. Giles without Cripplegate, purchased a thirty-three-year lease of it for two hundred and forty pounds. Again Peter Street is summoned to erect a playhouse, to be completed by July twenty-fifth, 1600, "provided that the workmen are not by any authority restrained." But now the Parish of St. Giles interfered, and Alleyn is compelled to appeal to his patron, the Earl of Nottingham, and this proving ineffectual, to the Privy Council itself, who issued a warrant "to the Justices of Peace of the County of Middlesex, especially of St. Giles without Cripplegate, and to all others whom it shall concern" that they should permit Henslowe and Alleyn "to proceed in the effecting and finishing of the same new house."[2]

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1 T. Goodman, Holland's Leaguer, 1632.

2 Ibid. p. 51.

After much delay, the foundations were completed on the eighth of May, and the building finished by August eighth. The final cost of the theatre was five hundred and twenty pounds, we learn from Alleyn's memoranda. And yet it was not ready for occupation: the entire building was yet to be painted; and the stage adequately equipped with curtains, hangings, and machines. Some of the more interesting specifications were:

The foundation was to be good, sure and strong, of piles, brick, lime, and sand, without and within, to be wrought one foot of assize at the least above the ground.

The frame was to be set square and to contain four-score foot of lawful assize every way square without, and fifty-five foot of like assize square every way within. It was to be larger and bigger in assize than the scantlings of the newly erected Globe. As to the height of galleries, the frame was to contain twelve feet of lawful assize in height; the second story, eleven feet of lawful assize in height; and the third, or upper story, to contain nine feet of lawful assize in height. The galleries were to be twelve feet in breadth, and to have a gutter forward in either of the said two upper stories of ten inches of lawful assize. There were to be four convenient divisions for gentlemen's rooms, and other sufficient and converient divisions for two-penny rooms. These

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were to be ceiled with lath, lime and hair. Seats should be placed and set, as well in those rooms as throughout all the rest of the galleries. The stage and tiring house were to be made, erected, and set up within the said frame, with a shadow or cover over the said stage. The stage should contain in length forty and three foot of lawful assize, and in breadth extend to the middle of the yard of the said house. The same stage was to be paled in below with good, strong, and sufficient new oaken boards--And the said stage was to be in all other proportions contrived and fashioned like unto the stage of the said playhouse called the Globe--And the said stage was to be covered with tile, and to have a sufficient gutter of lead to carry and convey the water from the covering of the said stage to fall backwards. The tiring house was to have convenient windows and lights, glazed.

There are no pictures or representations of the Fortune; we must be content to see it in our mind's eye. It was, no doubt, a plastered structure, eighty feet square and forty feet high with small windows marking the gallories, a turret and flagpole surmounting the red-tiled roof, and over the main entrance a sign representing Dame Fortune.

"A very fair sweet room," says Sir Davey in The Roaring Girl, and Sir Alexander responds:

"The furniture that doth adorn this room
Cost many a fair grey groat ere it come here:
But good things are most cheap when they're most dear.
Nay, when you look into my galleries,
How bravely they're trimmed up, you all shall swear,
You're highly pleased to see what's sent down there." 1

The Admiral's Men under the leadership of Edward Alleyn now occupied the new playhouse, and remained there until May fifth, 1603, when according to Henslowe, they "left off playe now at the King's coming." Then came the plague, that enemy of plays and playhouses, and for a time the Admiral's Men "went on the road," but returned to the Fortune under the title The Prince's Servants. Again the plague raged, and doom was the distress of the players. Henslowe and Alleyn desired to alleviate the general distress by making the chief actors stockholders in the company and formulated the following plan: They held together three-fourths of the stock, or twelve shares each, and the eight chief actors together held one-fourth of the stock, or one share each (there being thirty-two shares in all). Later the company became known as Palsgrave's Men. In 1616 Henslowe died, and soon after the entire Fortune property passed into the hands of Alleyn, who finally gave the Fortune to Dulwich College but retained its management. The name of this theatre was inapplicable to its destiny, for in 1621, we are told by Alleyn, the Fortune was destroyed by fire. And John Chamberlain wrote again to Sir Dudley Carleton: 'On Sunday night there was a

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1 The Roaring Girl, 1, Pointed out by W. W. Greg, Modern Language Notes, June, 1915.

great fire at the Fortune in Golding Lane, the fairest playhouse in the town. It was quite burnt down in two hours, and [illegible] apparel and playbooks lost, whereby those poor companions are quite undone." A new playhouse, larger and more impressive than the previous one, was started upon and the sharers set about constructing it. It was to be built of brick with a tile roof, and in form, circular. The New Fortune then, was to be a large round brick building, "farre fairer" than the old playhouse. The cost of its erection has been variously estimated, usually at one thousand pounds. When it was completed in June, 1623, it was again occupied by Palsgrave's Men. Ill luck seems to have pursued them for in 1631 they were compelled to give up their home, which was later to be occupied by the Red Bull Company. Due to the closing of the theatres by order of the Privy Council, this company of actors found it extremely difficult to pay the rent, and to add the their already embarrassed exchequer, they were fined one thousand pounds for setting up an altar, a basor; two candlesticks, and bowing down before it upon the stage as though in contempt of the ceremonies of the church. The Fortune, as well as the Red Bull, was looked down upon as a place for the common and vulgar to congregate. Finally the old troupers, their ranks thinned by time, returned to the Fortune to remain there until the end. And the end was when the Long Parliament in 1642 passes an

ordinance suppressing all stage plays. The Fortune closed its doors forever to the drama, and in 1649 it was pulled down on the inside by the soldiers, the stage and seats being dismantled so as to render the building unsuitable for dramatic performances.

Sir Sidney Lee tells us that the Red Bull was built about 1600, but he gives no evidence. The builder was a yeoman "utterly unlearned and illiterate," one Aaron Holland. He erected it as a "playhouse for acting and setting forth plays, comedies and tragedies." The name of the playhouse was taken from the name of the estate on which it was erected. As near as we can guess the building was completed in or about the year 1605. We know that the Queen's Men were playing regularly at the Red Bull in 1609, and they may have been playing there at intervals after 1605.

The Queen's Men were well able to cope with the players of the Globe and the Fortune, due to the superior ability of its members. Thomas Greene, the leader, was a famous comedian, ranking with Kempe and Tarlton. We read in Greene's "Tu Quoque":

Scat: "Yes, faith, brother, if it please you; let's go see a play at the Globe."

But: "I care not; any whither, so the clown have a part; for i' faith, I am nobody without a fool."

Gera: "Why, then, we'll go to the Red Bull; they say Greene's a good clown." [1]

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[1] Greene's Tu Quoque, Hazlitt's Dodsley, Chapter XI, 240.

Thomas Heywood, playwright and actor, was also a member and shareholder in the company. Edward Alleyn wrote in his Account Book of visits to the Red Bull and of selling a play there for three pounds. After Greene's death in 1612 Christopher Beeston, a well known theatrical man, became leader of the troupe which was finally dissolved in 1619 after the death of Queen Anne. Beeston joined Prince Charles's Men and established that troupe at the Cockpit, while other members of Queen Anne's company continued at the Red Bull under the title, The Red Bull Company. Later, we find this company securing a license "to bring up children in the quality and exercise of playing comedies, histories, interludes, morals, pastorals, stage-plays and such like--to be called by the name of the Children of the Revels."[1] They occupied the theatre until the summer of 1623, when we find the Red Bull sheltering Prince Charles's Men, who had moved here from the less winsome Curtain. In 1625 the Red Bull was "reedified and enlarged," after which its reputation for noise and vulgarity seemed to increase. It was described as a place where noise prevails, and a drouth of wit, always crowded with people while the better playhouses stood empty. We read: "And I will hasten to the money-box, And take my shilling out again: I'll go to the Red Bull or Fortune, and there see a play for two-pence, and a jig to boot."[2] Another writer speaks of the "base plots"

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[1] Malone, Variorum, Chapter III, 62.

[2] Ibid. p. 70.

acted with great applause at the Red Bull, which was usually frequented by citizens and the meaner sort of people. It sought patronage of more vulgar audiences than the Globe, Fortune or the private theatres, and was the constant object of gibes at the vulgar and sensational character of its plays and actors. It was constantly getting into trouble with the Middlesex justices. In May 1610, William Tocastle, yeoman, and John Bryne, Edward Brian, Edward Burdett, and Thomas Williams, felt-makers, were called upon to give recognisances to answer for a "notable outrage" at the playhouse called the Red Bull, and on March third, 1614, Alexander Bulsis was bailed out on a charge of picking Robert Sweet's pocket of a purse and three pounds at this theatre. Even after Parliament passes the ordinance of 1642 closing the playhouses and forbidding all dramatic performances, venturous players appeared in plays at the Red Bull, and in 1672 Tarlton writes: "I have seen the Red Bull Playhouse which was a large one, so full that as many went back for want of room as had entered; and as meanly as you now think of these drolls, they were then acted by the best comedians then and now in being."[1] but not, however, without occasional trouble. For in 1649 some strolling players in St. John's Street were "apprehended by troopers, their clothes taken away, and themselves carried to prison."

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[1] Shoreman, Preface to the Wits or Sport upon Sport, (1672)

And again we read in The Perfect Account that on December 30, 1654, "the players at the Red Bull, being gotten into all their borrowed gallantry and ready to act, were by some of the soldiery despoiled of all their bravery; but the soldiery carried themselves very civilly towards the audience."[1] Again on Friday, September eleventh, 1655, "these players at the Red Bull, their acting being against the Act of Parliament, the soldiers secured the persons of some of them who were upon the stage and in the tiring-house; they seized also upon the clothes in which they acted, a great part whereof was very rich."[2] At the time of the Restoration the Red Bull was one of the first playhouses to reopen. The scattered remains of the old company were brought together and unified by that old Elizabethan actor, Anthony Turner. At first the players were interrupted by the Middlesex authorities, who fined them fifty pounds for the unlawful maintaining of stage-plays and interludes "at the Red Bull in St. John's Street."

Samuel Pepys writes of his plans to attend the Red Bull with Mrs. Pierce and her husband on August third, 1660, but was prevented by business. He describes a visit to the same theatre on March 23, 1661:

"All the morning at home, putting papers in order;

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[1] Told by C. H. Firth, in Notes and Queries, August 18, 1888, Series VII, Volume VI, p. 1[illegible].

[2] Ibid.

dined at home, and then out to the Red Bull (where I had not been since plays came up again), but coming too soon I went out again and walked up and down the Charterhouse Yard and Aldersgate Street. At last came back again and went in, where I was led by a seaman that knew me, but is here as a servant, up to the tiring room, where strange the confusion and disorder that there is among them in fitting themselves, especially here, where the clothes are very poor, and the actors but common fellows. At last into the pit, where I think there was not above ten more than myself, and not one hundred in the whole house. And the play, which is called, "All's Lost by Lust," poorly done; and with so much disorder, among others, that in the musique room, the boy that was to sing a song not singing it right, his master fell about his ears and beat him so, that it put the whole house in an uproar."[1]

Leaving the Red Bull the actors built for themselves a new theatre in Drury Lane, where they moved on April eighth, 1663, and after this the old playhouse was deserted:

"Tell them the Red Bull stands empty for fencers:
There are no tenants in it but old spiders."[2]

The Hope is among the most interesting theatres of Elizabethan times. It was built with a two-fold purpose: the

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[1] Samuel Pepys' Diary, March 23, 1661.

[2] Pepys' Diary, April 25, 1664.

presentation of plays and the baiting of animals. The contract contained some interesting and valuable features:

1. To newly erect, build and set up a playhouse, fit and convenient in all things both for players to play in, and for the game of bears and bulls to be baited in.

2. To provide for the building a good, sure, and sufficient foundation of piles;--thirteen inches at the least above the ground..

3. To make three galleries.

4. To make two boxes in the lowermost story, fit and decent for gentlemen to sit in.

5. To construct a stage, to be carried and taken away, and to stand upon trussels, good, substantial, and sufficient for the carrying and bearing of such a stage.

6. To build the heavens all over the said stage, to be borne or carried without any posts or supporters to be fixed or set upon the said stage.

7. To equip the stage with a fit and convenient tyre-house.

8. To have the playhouse finished near or before the last day of November, 1613.

The cost of the building is estimated at six hundred pounds.[1]

The Hope is represented as circular in shape. The exterior was of lime and plaster. John Taylor, the Water-

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[1] Contract for The Hope, printed in Wheatley's London, p. 10.

Poet, spoke of the Hope as a "sweet, rotuntious college." But this praise was not unmixed with passion's dross, for Taylor owed a debt of gratitude to the players,--a debt which he sought to repay by this encomium. He and one William Fennor were to engage in a battle of wit at the Hope Playhouse on October 7, 1614, but when the hour arrived, and the house was 'filled with a great audience' no Fennor did appear. Taylor writes:

> "I then went out, their furies to appease;
> But they all raging, like tempestuous seas,
> Cry'd out, their expectations were defeated,
> And how they all were cony-catched and cheated.
> Some laughed, some swore, some star'd and stamp'd and curst,
> And I in confused humors all out burst.
> I (as I could) did stand the desp'rate shock,
> And bid the brunt of many dang'rous knock--
> For now the stinkards, in their ireful wraths,
> Bepelted me with lome, with stones, and laths.
> One madly sits like bottle-ale and hisses;
> Another throws a stone, and 'cause he misses,
> He yawnes and bawles....
> Some run to the door to get again their coin....
> One valiantly stepped upon the stage,
> And would tear down the hangings in his rage....
> What I endured upon that earthly hell
> My tongue or pen cannot describe it well." [1]

The actors relieved the tension by presenting a play.

When Henslowe died in 1616, Edward Alleyn assumed charge of the Hope, and he and Meade engaged Prince Charles' Men to continue at this theatre. Later they moved to the Blackfriars playhouse, and the Hope came to be used almost exclusively for animal baiting, fencing, and feats of activity.

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[1] John Taylor's Works, folio of 1630, p. 142, Spenser, Society's Reprint, p. 304.

One writer in 1637 remarks that "wild beasts and gladiators did most possess it." And in Stowe's Annals we read:

"The Hope, on the Backside, in Southwarke, commonly called The Bear Garden, a playhouse for stage plays on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and for the baiting of beares on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the stage being made to take up and down when they please. It was built in the year 1610, and now pulled down to make tenements, by Thomas Walker, a petticoat-maker in Cannor Street, on Tuesday, the twenty-fifth day of March, 1656. Seven of Mr. Godfrey's beares, by the command of Thomas Pride, then high sheriff of Surrey, were then shot to death on Saturday, the ninth day of February, 1656, by a company of soldiers."[1]

The Phoenix or Cockpit opened in Drury Lane in 1617. Again we recall Henry V in which Shakespeare likened his playhouse to a cockpit: "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France?" The Phoenix, then, may have been an old cockpit at one time, and may have furnished Englishmen with the pleasures of cock-fighting. James Randolph in verses prefixed to James Shirley's "Grateful Servant" writes:

> "When they intelligence on the Cockpit stage
> Gives it a soul from her immortal rage,
> I hear the Muse's birds with full delight
> Sing where the birds of Mars were wont to fight."

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[1] Greg, Henslowe Papers, p. 93, also the chapter on Rosseter's Blackfriars.

The theatre was probably newly erected in 1617 upon the site of an old cockpit. The name Phoenix suggests that possibly the old cockpit had been destroyed by fire, and that from its ashes had arisen a new building.

The embers on the hearth are burning low. But in them we have seen the whole gorgeous spectacle of the Elizabethan stage: the Puritan with "long white face and small black-headed eyes" [illegible] the whole tribe of actors; the actor himself [illegible] his name receives a brand; the [illegible] dignity of a king and [illegible] softening at the quickening touch of the drama's magic wand; the gentle Shakespeare welcomed at Whitehall. We have witnessed a play [illegible] [illegible], [illegible]. [illegible], [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible], the [illegible]. We have visited the [illegible], the Fortune, the Rose, and the Phoenix. And as that great bird, the phoenix, rises from its ashes stronger and glorified, quickened to new life forever, so would we hope that the gentle spirit might hover over that beloved stage, refining its drama, transforming its crudeness, [illegible] eternal beauty and [illegible], might come to [illegible], to hear the mighty tones, and [illegible] stage." Sometimes, [illegible] critics have [illegible] there, where the gods look down on the [illegible]

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eternal human drama, and Ben Jonson's words to you:

"Soule of the Age!
The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
My Shakespeare, rise!"

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