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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

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Section VI. Adam Davie flourished in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Specimens of his poetry. His Life of Alexander. Robert Baston's comedies. Anecdotes of the early periods of the English, ...

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S E C T. VI.

ALTHOUGH much poetry began to be written about the reign of Edward the second, yet I have found only one English poet of that reign whose name has descended to posterity^a. This is Adam Davy or Davie. He may be placed about the year 1312. I can collect no circumstances of his life, but that he was marshall of Stratford-le-bow near London^b. He has left several poems never printed, which are almost as forgotten as his name. Only one manuscript of these pieces now remains, which seems to be coeval with it's author^c. They are VISIONS, THE BATTLE OF JERUSALEM, THE LEGEND OF SAINT ALEXIUS, SCRIPTURE HISTORIES, OF FIFTEEN TOKNES BEFORE THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT, LAMENTATIONS OF SOULS, and THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER^d.

In the VISIONS, which are of the religious kind, Adam Davie draws this picture of Edward the second standing before the shrine of Edward the Confessor in Westminster abbey at his coronation. The lines have a strength arising from simplicity.

To our Lorde Jeshu Crist in heven
Iche to day shawe myne sweven^e,

^a Robert de Brunne, above mentioned, lived, and perhaps wrote some of his pieces, in this reign; but he more properly belongs to the last.

^b This will appear from citations which follow.

^c MSS. Bibl. Bodl. Laud I. 74. fol. membran. It has been much damaged, and on that account is often illegible.

^d In the manuscript there is also a piece in prose, intitled, *The Pygrymages of the holy land*. f. 65.—66. It begins. "Qwerr
" soever a cros standyth ther is a forgyvenes
" of payne." I think it is a description of the holy places, and it appears at least to be of the hand-writing of the rest.

^e Dream.

That

That iche motte ^f in one nycht,
 Of a knyght of mychel mycht :
 His name is ^z yhote fyr Edward the kyng,
 Prince of Wales Engelonde the fair thyng;
 Me mott that he was armid wele,
 Bothe with yrne and with stele,
 And on his helme that was of stel,
 A coroune of gold bicom him wel.
 Bifore the shryne of Seint Edward he stood,
 Myd glad chere and myld of mood ⁿ.

Most of these Visions are compliments to the king. Our poet then proceeds thus :

Another suevene me mette on a twefnit ^l
 Bifore the fest of Alhalewen of that ilke knigt,
 His name is nempned ^z hure bifore,
 Blifsted be the time that he was bore, &c.
 Of Syr Edward oure derworth ^l kyng
 Iche mette of him anothere faire metyng, &c.
 Me thought he wod upon an affe,
 And that ich take God to witnesse;
 A wondur he was in a mantell gray,
 Toward Rome he nom ^m his way,
 Upon his hevede sate a gray hure,
 It semed him wel a mesure ;
 He wood withouten hose and sho,
 His wonen was not so to do ;
 His shankes semeden al bloodrede,
 Myne herte wop ⁿ for grete drede ;
 As a pylgrym he rood to Rome,
 And thider he com wel swithe sone.

^l Thought, dreamed. In the first sense, we have *me mette* in Chaucer, Non. Pr. T. v. 1013. Urr. And below.

^z Named. ^h fol. 27. ^l Twelfth-night.
^k Named. ⁱ Dear-worthy.
^m Took. ⁿ Wept.

The

The thrid suevene me mette a nigt
 Rigt of that derworth knight:
 On wednyfday a nigt it was
 Next the dai of feint Lucie bifore Christenmasse, &c.
 Me thought that ich was at Rome,
 And thider iche come fwith sone,
 The pope and fyr Edward our kyng
 Bothe ° hy hadde a new dublyng, &c.
 Thus Crist ful of grace
 Graunte our kyng in every place
 Maistrrie of his witherwines
 And of al wicked Sarafynes.
 Me met a suevene one worthig ° a nigth
 Of that ilche derworthi knigth,
 God iche it shewe and to witnesse take
 And so shilde me fro, &c.
 Into a chapel I cum of vre lefdy °,
 Jhe Crist her leve ° son stod by,
 On rod ° he was an loveliche mon,
 Al thilke that on rode was don
 He unneled ° his honden two, &c.
Adam the marchal of *Strattford atte Bowe*
 Wel fwith wide his name is iknowe
 He himself mette this metyng,
 To witnesse he taketh Jhu hevne kyng,
 On wedenyfday ° in clene leinte °
 A voyce me bede I schulde nougt feinte,
 Of the suevenes that her ben write
 I schulde fwith don ° my lord kyng to wite.
 The thurfdai next the beryng ° of our lefdy
 Me thought an aungel com fyr Edward by, &c.

° They.
 ° Lady.
 ° Crofs.
 ° Lent.

° Worþz. Orig.
 ° Dear.
 ° Unnailed.

° Wodenis day. Woden's day. *Wed-*
nesday.
 ° Make haste.
 ° Christmase-day.

Iche

Iche tell you forsoth withoutten les ^a,
 Als God of hevenē maide Marie to moder ches ^a,
 The aungell com to me *Adam Davie* and seide
 Bot thou *Adam* shewe this thee worthe wel yvel mede, &c.
 Whofo wil speke myd me *Adam* the *marchal*
 In Stretforde bowe he is yknown and over al,
 Iche ne schewe nougt this for to have mede
 Bot for God almygtties drede.

There is a very old prose romance, both in French and Italian, on the subject of the *Destruction of Jerusalem*^b. It is translated from a Latin work, in five books, very popular in the middle ages, entitled, *HEGESIPPI de Bello Judaico et Excidio Urbis Hierosolymitanæ Libri quinque*. This is a licentious paraphrase of a part of Josephus's Jewish history, made about the fourth century: and the name Hegesippus is most probably corrupted from Josephus, perhaps also called Josippus. The paraphrast is supposed to be Ambrose of Milan, who flourished in the reign of Theodosius ^c. On the subject of Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem, as related in this book, our poet Adam Davie has left a poem entitled the *BATTELL OF JERUSALEM*^d. It begin thus.

^a Lies.

^a "As sure as God chose the Virgin Mary to be Christ's Mother."

^b In an antient inventory of books, all French romances, made in England in the reign of Edward the third, I find the romance of *TITUS* and *VESPASIAN*. Madox, Formul. Anglican. p. 12. See also Scipio Maffei's *Traduttori Italiani*, p. 48. Crescimbeni (Volg. Poef. vol. i. l. 5. p. 317.) does not seem to have known of this romance in Italian. Du Cange mentions *Le Roman de la Prise de Jerusalem par Titus*, in verse. Glos. Lat. 3. IND. AUCT. p. cxciv. A metrical romance on this subject is in the royal manuscripts. 16 E. viii. 2. Brit. Mus. There is an old French play on this subject, acted in 1437. It was printed

in 1491. fol. M. Beauchamps, Rech. Fr. Theat. p. 134.

^c He mentions Constantinople and New Rome: and the provinces of Scotia and Saxonia. From this work the Maccabees seem to have got into romance. It was first printed at Paris. fol. 1511. Among the Bodleian manuscripts there is a most beautiful copy of this book, believed to be written in the Saxon times.

^d The latter part of this poem appears detached, in a former part of our manuscript, with the title *THE VENGEANCE OF GODDES DEATH*, viz. f. 22. b. This latter part begins with these lines.

And at the forty dayes ende,
 Whider I wolde he bade me wende,
 Upon the mount of olyvete, &c.

F f

Listeneth

Listeneth all that beth alyve,
 Both cristen men and wyve:
 I wol you telle of a wondur cas,
 How Jhesu Crist bihated was,
 Of the Jewes felle and kene,
 That was on him sithe yfene,
 Gospelles I drawe to witnesse
 Of this matter more or lesse, ° &c.

In the course of the story, Pilate challenges our Lord to single combat. This subject will occur again.

Davie's LEGEND OF SAINT ALEXIUS THE CONFESSOR, SON OF EUPHEMIUS, is translated from Latin, and begins thus:

All that willen here in ryme,
 Howe gode men in olde tyme,
 Loveden God almighth;
 That weren riche, of grete valoure,
 Kynges fones and emperoure
 Of bodies strong and lighth;
 Zee habbeth yherde ofte in geste,
 Of holi men maken feste
 Both day and nighth,
 For to have the joye in hevене
 (With aungells song, and merry stevene,
 The which is brode and brighth:
 To you all heige and lowe
 The righth sothe to biknowe
 Zour soules for to save, &c^f).

Our author's SCRIPTURE HISTORIES want the beginning. Here they begin with Joseph, and end with Daniel.

° MS. ut supr. f. 72. b.

^f MS. ut supr. f. 22.—72. b.

Ffor thritti pens ^r thei fold that childe
 The feller high Judas,
^b Itho Ruben com him and myssed him
 Ffor ynow he was ⁱ.

HIS FIFTEEN TOKNES ^k BEFORE THE DAY OF JUDGMENT,
 are taken from the prophet Jeremiah.

The first signe thar ageins, as our lord hymselfe fede,
 Hungere schal on erthe be, trecherie, and falthede,
 Batteles, and littell love, sēkenesse and haterede,
 And the erthe schal quaken that vche man schal ydrede:
 The mone schal turne to blood, the funne to derkhede^l, &c.

Another of Davie's poems may be called the LAMENTA-
 TION OF SOULS. But the subject is properly a congratulation
 of Christ's advent, and the lamentation, of the souls of the
 fathers remaining in limbo, for his delay.

Off joye and blisse is my song care to bileve ^m,
 And to here hym among that altour soroug shal reve,
 Ycome he is that swete dewe, that swete hony drope,
 The kyng of alle kynges to whom is our hope:
 Becom he is our brother, whar was he so long?
 He it is and no other, that boughth us so strong:
 Our brother we mowe ⁿ hym clepe wel^o, so feith hymself
 ilome ^p.

My readers will be perhaps surprised to find our language
 improve so slowly, and will probably think, that Adam Davie
 writes in a less intelligible phrase than many more antient
 bards already cited. His obscurity however arifes in great

^r Thirty pence ^b Ipo. Orig. ^m Leave. ⁿ May.
ⁱ MS. ut supr. f. 66.—72. b. ^o Sometimes.
^k Tokens. ^l MS. ut supr. f. 71. b. ^p MS. ut supr. f. 72.

measure from obsolete spelling, a mark of antiquity which I have here observed in exact conformity to a manuscript of the age of Edward the second; and which in the poetry of his predecessors, especially the minstrel-pieces, has been often effaced by multiplication of copies, and other causes. In the mean time it should be remarked, that the capricious peculiarities and even ignorance of transcribers, often occasion an obscurity, which is not to be imputed either to the author or his age¹.

But Davie's capital poem is the LIFE OF ALEXANDER, which deserves to be published entire on many accounts. It seems to be founded chiefly on Simeon Seth's romance above-mentioned; but many passages are also copied from the French ROMAN D' ALEXANDRE, a poem in our author's age perhaps equally popular both in England and France. It is a work of considerable length². I will first give some extracts from the Prologue.

Divers in this myddel erde
To lewed men and lered, &c.
Natheles wel fele and fulle
Bethe ifound in hart and skulle,
That hadden lever a rybaudye,
Then here of god either feint Marye;
Either to drynke a copful ale,
Than to heren any gode tale:
Swiche ich wolde weren out bishet
For certeynlich it were nett
For hy ne habbeth wilbe ich woot wel
Bot in the got and the barrel, &c.³

¹ Chaucer in *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA* mentions "the grete diversite in English, "and in *writing of our tongue*." He therefore prays God, that no person would *miswrite, or misse-metre* his poem. lib. ult. v. 1792. seq.

² MS. ut supr. f. 28.—65.

³ *Leg. lerd.* Learned.

⁴ The work begins thus. f. 28.

Whilom clarkes wel ylerede
On thre digten this myddel erde,
And cleped him in her maistris,
Europe, Affryk, and Asie:

Adam Davie thus describes a splendid procession made by Olympias.

In thei tyme faire and jalyf^a,
 Olympias that fayre wyfe,
 Wolden make a riche fest
 Of knightes and lefdyes^w honest,
 Of burges and of jugelors
 And of men of vch mesters^x,
 For mon seth by north and south^y
 Wymen
 Mychal^z she desireth to shewe hire body,
 Her fayre hare, her face rody^a,
 To have lees^b and al praifing,
 And al is folye by heven king.
 She has marshales and knyttes
 to ride and ryttes,
 And levadyes and demofile
 Which hanf thousands fele,
 In fayre attyre in dyvers
 Many thar rood^c in rich wife.
 So dude the dame Olympias
 Forto shawe hire gentyll face.
 A mule also, whyte fo^e mylke,
 With fadel of gold, sambuc of fylke,
 Was ybrought to the quene
 And mony bell of fylver shene,
 Yfastened on orfreys^f of mounde
 That hangen nere downe to grounde :

At Afie also mychel ys
 As Ethiope, and Affrike, I wis, &c.
 And ends with this distich. f. 65.
 Thus ended Alifander the kyng :
 God graunte us his bliffyng. Amen.
^u Jolly. ^w Ladies.

^x Of each, or every, profession, trade,
 fort.
^y " All mankind are agreed."
^z Much. ^a Ruddy. ^b Praise.
^c F. Guise. ^d Rode. ^e As.
^f Embroidered work, cloth of gold. *Aurifrigium*, Lat.

Fourth



Fourth she ferd^e myd her route,
 A thousand lefydes of rych foute^h.
 A sperwekⁱ that was honest^k
 So sat on the lefdye's fyft :
 Ffoure trompes toforne^l hire blewe ;
 Many men that day hire knewe.
 A hundred thousand, and eke moo,
 Alle alonton^m hire untoo.
 All the towne bihongedⁿ was
 Agens^o the lefdy Olympias^p :
 Orgues, chymbes, vche maner glee^q,
 Was drynan ayen that levady fre,
 Wythoutin the tounis murey^r
 Was mered vche maner pley^s,
 Thar was knyttes tornaying,
 Thar was maydens karoling,
 Thar was champions skirmynge^t,
 also wrestlynge.
 Of lyons chace, and bare bayting,
 A bay of bore^u, of bole slaying^v.
 Al the city was byhonge
 With ryche famytes^x and pelles^y longe.
 Dame Olympias, myd this prees^z,
 Sangle rood^a al mantellefs.—

^e Fared. Went. ^h Sort.

ⁱ Sparrow-hawk. A hawk.

^k Well-bred. ^l Before.

^m Went. *Aller*, Fr.

ⁿ "Hung with tapestry." We find this ceremony practised at the entrance of lady Elifabeth, queen of Henry the seventh, into the city of London.—"Al the strets
 "ther whiche she shulde passe by wer clen-
 "ly dressed and befene with cloth, of
 "tappetrye and arras, and some fireetes
 "as Chepe, hanged with riche clothes of
 "golde, velvettes and silkes." This was
 in the year 1481. Leland. Coll. iv. Opuf-
 cul. p. 220. edit. 1770.

^o "Against her coming."

^p See the description of the tournament in Chaucer, *Knights Tale*, where the city is hanged with cloth of gold. v. 2570. Urr.

^q "Organs, chimes, all manner of music."

^r The town-wall. ^s "All sorts of sports."

^t Skirmishing.

^u "Baying, or bayting of the boar."

^v *Slaying bulls*, bull-feasts. Chaucer says that the chamber of Venus was painted with "white *bolis grete*." Compl. of Mars and Ven. v. 86.

^x Sattin. ^y Skins.

^z Croud. Company. ^a Rode single.

Hire yalewe har^b was fayre attired
 Mid riche streng^c of golde wyred,
 It helyd^c hire abouten al
 To hire gentil myddle smal.
 Bryght and shine was hir face^d
 Everie fairehede^e in hir was^f.

Much in the same strain the marriage of Cleopatras is described.

There was many a blithe grome:
 Of olive and of ruge^g floures
 Weren ystrewed halle and boures:
 Wyth famytes and baudekyns
 Weren curtayned the gardyns.
 All the innes of the ton
 Hadden litel foyfon^h,
 That day that comin Cleopatras,
 So michel people with hir was.
 She rode on a mule white so mylke,
 Her harneys were gold-beaten fylke:

^b Yellow hair.

^c "Covered her all over."

^d fol. 55. a.

^e Beauty.

^f John Gower, who lived an hundred years after our author, has described the same procession. *Confess. Amant. lib. vi. fol. 137. a. b. edit. Berthel. 1554.*

But in that citee then was
 The quene, whiche Olimpias
 Was hote, and with solempnitee
 The feste of hir nativitee,
 As it befell, was than hold:
 And for hir lust to be behold,
 And prised of the people about,
 She shop hir for to ridenout,
 Al afur meet al opinly.
 Anon al men were redie;
 And that was in the month of Maie:
 This lusty quene in gode araie
 Was fette upon a mule white
 To fene it was a grete delite

The joye that the citee made,
 With fresh thinges and with glade
 The noble towne was al behonged;
 And everie wight was fon alonged
 To see this lustie ladie ryde.
 There was great mirth on al syde,
 When as she passed by the freate
 There was ful many a tymbre beate,
 And many a maide carolende.
 And thus throughout the town plaiende
 This quene unto the plaiene rode
 Whar that she hoved and abode
 To se divers games plaie,
 The lustie folke just and tornaye.
 And so couth every other man
 Which play with, his play began,
 To please with this noble queen.

Gower continues this story, from a romance mentioned above, to fol. 140.

^g Red.

^h Provision.

The

The prince hir lad of Sandas,
 And of Sydoyne Sir Jonachas.
 Ten thousand barons hir come myde,
 And to chirche with hir ryde.
 Yspoused she is and fett on deys:
 Nowe gynneth gestes of grete nobleys:
 At the fest was harpyng
 And pipyng and tabouryng¹.

We have frequent opportunities of observing, how the poets of these times engraft the manners of chivalry on ancient classical history. In the following lines Alexander's education is like that of Sir Trifram. He is taught tilting, hunting, and hawking.

Now can Alexander of skirmyng,
 And of stedes derayning,
 Upon stedes of justyng,
 And witte swordes turneyng,
 Of assayling and defendyng:
 In green wood and of huntynge:
 And of ryver of haukyng^k:
 Of battaile and of alle thyng.

In another place Alexander is mounted on a steed of Narbone; and amid the solemnities of a great feast, rides through the hall to the high table. This was no uncommon practice in the ages of chivalry^l.

¹ fol. 63. a.

^k Chaucer, R. of Sir Thop. v. 3245.
 Urry's edit. p. 145.

He couth hunt al the wild dere,
 And ride an *hawkyng by the rivere*.

And in the *Squyr of low degree*, *supr. citat.*
 p. 179.

— Shall ye ryde

On hawkyng by the rivere syde.
 Chaucer, *Frankleins Tale*, v. 1752. p. 111.
 Urr. edit.

These fauconers upon a faire rivere
 That with the hawkis han the *heron* slaine.

^l See *Observations on the Fairy Queen*,
 i. §. v. p. 146.

On a stede of Narabone,
 He dasheth forth upon thi londe,
 The ryche coroune on hys honde,
 Of Nicholas that he wan :
 Beside hym rydeth mony a gentil man,
 To the paleys he comethe ryde,
 And fyndeth this feste and all this pryde ;
 Fforth good Alifaundre fauns stable
 Righth unto the hith table ^m.

His horse Bucephalus, who even in classical fiction is a horse of romance, is thus described.

An horne in the forehead armyd ward
 That wolde perce a shelde hard.

To which these lines may be added.

Alifaunder arisen is,
 And in his deys fitteth ywys :
 His dukes and barons fauns doute
 Stondeth and fitteth him aboute, &c ⁿ.

The two following extracts are in a softer strain, and not inelegant for the rude simplicity of the times.

Mery is the blast of the stynoure °,
 Mery is the touchyng of the harpoure ^p :

^m fol. 64.

ⁿ MS. ut supr. f. 46. b.

^o I cannot explain this word. It is a wind-instrument.

^p This poem has likewise, in the same vein, the following well-known old rhyme, which paints the manners, and is perhaps the true reading. fol. 64.

Merry swithe it is in halle
 When the *berdes wawoeth alle*.

And in another place we have,

Merry it is in halle to here the harpe ;
 The minstrelles syngge, the jogelours carpe.
 fol. *fine num.* ad fin.

Here, by the way, it appears, that the minstrels and juglers were distinct characters. So Robert de Brunne, in describing the coronation of king Arthur, apud Anstis, Ord. Gart. i. p. 304.

Jogeleurs wer ther inouh
 That wer queitife for the drouh,
Myntrels many with dyvers glew, &c.

And Chaucer mentions "*minstrels* and the "*jogelours*." Rom. R. v. 764. But they are often confounded or made the same.

G g

Sweete

Sweete is the smellynge of the flower,
 Sweete it is in maydens bower :
 Appel sweete beneth faire coloure [¶].

Again,

In tyme of May the nightingale
 In wood maketh mery gale,
 So don the foules grete and female,
 Sum in hylles and fum in dale [¶].

Much the same vernal delights, cloathed in a similar style, with the addition of knights turneyng and maidens dancing, invite king Philip on a progres; who is entertained on the road with hearing tales of antient heroes.

Mery tyme yt is in May
 The foules syngeth her lay,
 The knightes loveth to tournay;
 Maydens do dauncen and they play,
 The kyng ferth rydeth his journey,
 Now hereth gests of grete noblay [¶].

Our author thus describes a battle [¶].

Alifaundre tofore is ryde,
 And many gentill a knighth hym myde;
 As for to gader his meigne free,
 He abideth under a tree:
 Ffourty thousande of chyvalerie
 He taketh in his compaignye,
 He dasfheth hym than fast forthward,
 And the other cometh afterward.
 He seeth his knigttes in meschief,
 He taketh it gretlich a greef,

[¶] fol. 40.

[¶] Ibid.

[¶] fol. *sine num.*

[¶] MS. ut supr. f. 45. b.

He

He takes Bultyphal ⁿ by thi side,
 So as a fwalewe he gynneth forth glide,
 A duke of Perce sone he mett
 And with his launce he hym grett.
 He perceth his breney, cleveth his sheldè,
 The herte tokeneth the yrnè ;
 The duke fel downe to the grounde,
 And starf quickly in that stounde :
 Alifaunder aloud than seide,
 Other tol never ich ne paiede,
 Zut zee schullen of myne paie,
 Or ich gon mor assaie.
 Another launce in honde he hent
 Again the prince of Tyre he went
 He hym thorow the brest and thare ^w
 And out of fadel and crouthe hym bare,
 And I figge for soothe thyng
 He braak his neck in the fallyng.
 with mychell wonder,
 Antiochus hadde hym under,
 And with swerd wolde his heved
 From his body habbe yreved :
 He seig Alifaundre the gode gome,
 Towardes hym swithe come,
 He lete his pray, and flew on hors,
 Ffor to save his owen cors :
 Antiochus on stede lep,
 Of none woundes ne tok he kep,
 And eke he had foure forde
 All ymade with speres ord ^{*}.
 Tholomeus and alle his felawen ^y
 Of this socour so weren welfawen,

ⁿ Bucephalus.^w Sic.^{*} Point.^y Fellows.

Alysaunder made a cry hardy
 " Ore toft aby aby."
 Then the knightes of Achaye
 Justed with them of Arabye,
 Thoo^a of Rome with hem of Mede
 Many londe
 Egipste justed with hem of Tyre,
 Simple knightts with riche fyre:
 Ther nas foregift ne forberying
 Bitwene vavafoure^a ne kyng;
 To fore men migtten and by hynde
 Cuntecke seke and cuntecke^b fynde.
 With Perciens fougten the Gregeys,
 Ther was cry and gret honteys^c.
 They kidden^d that they weren mice
 They broken speres alto flice.
 Ther might knighth fynde his pere,
 Ther les^e many his deffrere^f:
 Ther was quyk in litell thrawe^g,
 Many gentill knighth yflawe:
 Many arme, many heved^h
 Some from the body reved:
 Many gentill lavedyⁱ
 Ther les quyk her amy^j.
 Ther was many maym yled^k,
 Many fair pensel babled^l:
 Ther was swerdes liklakyng^m,
 There was speres bathingⁿ
 Both kynges ther faunz doute
 Beeth in dasht with al her route.

^a They.^b Servant. Subject.^c Strife.^d Greeks.^e Shame.^f Thought.^g Loft.^h Horse. Lat. *Dextrarius*.ⁱ Short time.^j Head.^k Lady.^l Paramour.^m "Led along, maimed, wounded."ⁿ "Many a rich banner, or flag, sprinkled
with blood." ^o Clashing.^p MS. *bajing*. I do not understand the
word.

speke

. speke
 The other his harmes for to wreke.
 Many londes neir and ferre
 Lefen her lord in that werre.
 quaked of her rydyng,
 The wedar^a thicked of her cryeyng :
 The blode of hem that weren yflawe
 Ran by floods to the lowe, &c.

I have already mentioned Alexander's miraculous horn.

He blewe in horne quyk fans doute,
 His folk hym swithe^b aboute :
 And hem he said with voice clere
 Iche bidde frendes that ge ine here
 Alifaunder is comen in this londe
 With strong knittes with migty honde, &c.

Alexander's adventures in the deserts among the Gymnosophists, and in Inde; are not omitted. The authors whom he quotes for his vouchers, shew the reading and ideas of the times^c.

Tho Alifaunder went thoroug defert,
 Many wonders he feig apert^d,
 Whiche he dude wel descryve,
 By gode clerkes in her lyve;
 By Aristotle his maistr that was,
 Beeter clerk fithen non nas;
 He was with him, and sew and wroot,
 All thise wondre god it woot :
 Salomon that al the world thoroug yede
 In soothe witnesse held hym myde.

^a Weather. Sky. ^b Came, followed. ^c MS. ut supr. f. 50. ^d Saw openly.
 Yfidre

Yfidre^a also that was so wys
 In his boke telleth this:
 Maister Eufstroe bereth hym witnesse,
 Of the wondres more and lesse.
 Seynt Jerome gu schullen ywyte
 Them hath also in booke ywryte:
 And Magestene, the gode clerk,
 Hath made therof mychel werk,
 . . . that was of gode memorie
 It sheweth al in his boke of storie:
 And also Pompeie^w, of Rome lorde,
 written everie worde.
 Bie heldeth me thareof no fynder^x
 Her bokes ben my shewer:
 And the Lyf of Alyfaunder
 Of whom fleig so riche sklauder.
 Gif gee willeth give listnyng,
 Nowe gee shullen here gode thyng.
 In somers tyde the daye is long,
 Foules syngeth and maketh song:
 Kyng Alyfaunder ywent is,
 With dukes, erles, and folk of pris,
 With many knyghts, and douty men,
 Toward the city of Fa aen;
 After kyng Porus, that flouen^y was
 Into the citee of Bandas,
 He woulde wende thorough desert
 This wonders to sene apert,
 Gromyes he nome^z of the londe,
 Ffyve thousand, I understonde,

^a *Isidore*. He means, I suppose, Isidorus Hispalensis, a Latin writer of the seventh century.

^w He means Justin's Trogius Pompeius

the historian, whom he confounds with Pompey the Great.

^x "Don't look on me as the inventor."

^y Fled. ^z Took.

That

That hem shulden lede ryth ^a
 Thoroug deferts, by day and nyth.
 The Sy . . res loveden the kyng nough,
 And wolden have him bicaughth.
 Thii ledden hym therefore, als I fynde,
 In the straungest peril of Ynde:
 As so iche fynd in thi book
 Thii weren ashreynt in her crook.
 Now rideth Alysaunder with his oost,
 With mychel pryde and mychel boost;
 As ar hii comen to a castel . . ton.
 I schullen speken another lesson.
 Lordynges, also I fynde
 At Mede so bigynneth Ynde,
 Fforsothe ich woot it stretcheth ferrest
 Of all the londes in the Est
 And oth the ^b southhalf fikerlyk
 To the see of Affryk,
 And the north half to a mountayne
 That is ycleped Caucasayne ^c:
 Fforsothe zee shullen undirstonde,
 Twyes is fomer in that londe,
 And nevermore wynter, ne chele ^d,
 That lond is ful of all wele.
 Twyes hii gaderen fruyt there
 And wyne and corne in one yere.
 In the londe also I fynd of Ynde
 Bene cites fyve-thousynd,
 Withouten ydles, and castelis,
 And borugh tounnes swithe feles ^e.
 In the londe of Ynde thou might lere
 Vyve thousand folk of felcouth ^f manere

^a Strait. ^b MS. oppe. ^c Caucasus. ^d Chill. Cold. ^e Very many. ^f Uncommon.

That

That ther non is other ylyche
 Bic holde thou it nough ferlyche,
 And bi that thou underfande the geftes,
 Both of men and of beftes, &c.

Edward the fecond is faid to have carried with him to the fiege of Stirling caſtle, in Scotland, a poet named Robert Baſton. He was a Carmelite friar of Scarborough; and the king intended that Baſton, being an eye-witneſs of the expedition, ſhould celebrate his conqueſt of Scotland in verſe. Hollingshead, an hiftorian not often remarkable for penetration, mentions this circumſtance as a ſingular proof of Edward's preſumption and confidence in his undertaking againſt Scotland: but a poet ſeems to have been a ſtated officer in the royal retinue when the king went to war^e. Baſton, however, appears to have been chiefly a Latin poet, and therefore does not properly fall into our ſeries. At leaſt his poem on the ſiege of Striveling caſtle is written in monkish Latin hexameters^h: and our royal bard being taken priſoner in the expedition, was compelled by the Scotch to write a panegyric, for his ranſom, on Robert Brus, which is compoſed in the ſame ſtyle and languageⁱ. Bale mentions his *Poemata, et Rhythmi, Tragædiæ et Comædiæ vulgares*^k. Some of theſe indeed appear to have been written in Engliſh: but no Engliſh pieces of this author now remain. In the mean time, the bare exiſtence of dramatic compositions in England at this period, even if written in

^e Leland. Script. Brit. p. 338. Hollingh. Hiſt. ii. p. 217. 220. Tanner mentions, as a poet of England, one Gulielmus Peregrinus, who accompanied Richard the firſt into the holy land, and ſung his achievements there in a Latin poem, entitled *ODOEPORICON RICARDI REGIS*, lib. i. It is dedicated to Herbert archbiſhop of Canterbury, and Stephen Turnham, a captain in the expedition. He flouriſhed about

A. D. 1200. Tann. Bibl. p. 591. See Voff. Hiſt. Lat. p. 441. He is called "poeta per eam ætatem excellens." See Bal. iii. 45. Pitf. 266.

^h It is extant in Fordun's *Scoti-chron.* c. xxiii. l. 12.

ⁱ Leland. ut ſupr. And MSS. Harl. 1819. Brit. Muſ. See alſo Wood, *Hiſt. Ant. Univ. Oxon.* i. p. 101.

^k Apud Tanner, p. 79.

the

the Latin tongue, deserve notice in investigating the progress of our poetry. For the same reason I must not pass over a Latin piece, called a comedy, written in this reign, perhaps by Peter Babyon; who by Bale is styled an admirable rhetorician and poet, and flourished about the year 1317. This comedy is thus entitled in the Bodleian manuscript, *De Babione et Croceo domino Babionis et Viola filiastra Babionis quam Croceus duxit invito Babione, et Pecula uxore Babionis et Fodio suo, &c.*¹ It is written in long and short Latin verses, without any appearance of dialogue. In what manner, if ever, this piece was represented theatrically, cannot easily be discovered or ascertained. Unless we suppose it to have been recited by one or more of the characters concerned, at some public entertainment. The story is in Gower's CONFESSIO AMANTIS. Whether Gower had it from this performance I will not enquire. It appears at least that he took it from some previous book.

I find writte of Babio,
Which had a love at his menage,
Ther was no fairer of hir age,
And hight Viola by name, &c.
And had affaited to his hande
His serviant, the which Spodius
Was hote, &c.
A fresh a free and friendly man, &c.
Which Croceus by name hight, &c.^m

In the mean time it seems most probable, that this piece has been attributed to Peter Babyon, on account of the likeness of the name BABIO, especially as he is a ridiculous character. On the whole, there is nothing dramatic in the structure of this nominal comedy; and it has certainly no claim to that title, only as it contains a familiar and comic story car-

¹ Arch. B. 52.

^m Lib. v. f. 109. b. Edit. Berth. 1554.

ried on with much scurrilous satire intended to raise mirth. But it was not uncommon to call any short poem, not serious or tragic, a comedy. In the Bodleian manuscript, which comprehends Babyon's poem just mentioned, there follows *COMEDIA DE GETA*: this is in Latin long and short verses^a, and has no marks of dialogue^b. In the library of Corpus Christi college at Cambridge, is a piece entitled, *COMEDIA ad monasterium de Hulme ordinis S. Benedicti Diocef. Norwic. directa ad Reformationem sequentem, cujus data est primo die Septembris sub anno Christi 1477, et a morte Joannis Falstaffe militis eorum benefactoris^c precipui 17, in cujus monasterii ecclesia burnatur^d*. This is nothing more than a satyrical ballad in Latin; yet some allegorical personages are introduced, which however are in no respect accommodated to scenical representation. About the reign of Edward the fourth, one Edward Watson, a scholar in grammar at Oxford, is permitted to proceed to a degree in that faculty, on condition that within two years he would write one hundred verses in praise of the university, and also compose a COMEDY^e. The nature and subject of Dante's COMEDIES, as they are styled, is well known. The comedies ascribed to Chaucer are probably his Canterbury tales. We learn from Chaucer's own words, that tragic tales were called TRAGEDIES. In the Prologue to the MONKES TALE.

TRAGEDY is to tell a certaine story,
As old bokis makin ofte memory,

^a Carmina composuit, voluitque placere poeta.

^b f. 121.

^c In the episcopal palace at Norwich is a curious piece of old wainscot brought from the monastery of Hulme at the time of its dissolution. Among other antique ornaments are the arms of Sir John Falstaff, their principal benefactor. This magnificent knight was also a benefactor to Mag-

dalese College in Oxford. He bequeathed estates to that society, part of which were appropriated to buy liveries for some of the senior scholars. But this benefaction, in time, yielding no more than a penny a week to the scholars who received the liveries, they were called, by way of contempt, *Falstaff's buckram-men*.

^d Miscell. M. p. 274.

^e Hist. Antiq. Univ. Oxon. ii. 4. col. 2.

Of hem that stode in grete prosperite,
And be fallen out of her high degree, &c^s.

Some of these, the Monke adds, were written in prose, others in metre. Afterwards follow many tragical narratives: of which he says,

TRAGIDIES first wol I tell
Of which I have an *hundred* in my cell.

Lidgate further confirms what is here said with regard to comedy as well as tragedy.

My maister Chaucer with fresh COMEDIES,
Is dead, alas! chief poet of Britaine:
That whilom made ful piteous TRAGEDIES^s.

The stories in the MIRROR OF MAGISTRATES are called TRAGEDIES, so late as the sixteenth century^s. Bale calls his play, or MYSTERY, of GOD'S PROMISES, a TRAGEDY, which appeared about the year 1538.

I must however observe here, that dramatic entertainments, representing the lives of saints and the most eminent scriptural stories, were known in England for more than two centuries before the reign of Edward the second. These spectacles they commonly styled MIRACLES. I have

^s v. 85. See also, *ibid.* v. 103. 786, 875.

^t Prol. F. Pr. v. i. See also Chaucer's *Troil.* and *Cr.* v. 1785. 1787.

^u The elegant Fontenelle mentions one Parafols a Limosin, who wrote *Cinque belles TRAGEDIES des gestes de Jeûne reine de Naples*, about the year 1383. Here he thinks he has discovered, so early as the fourteenth century, "une Poete tragique." I have never seen these five Tragedies, nor perhaps had Fontenelle. But I will venture to pronounce, that they are nothing more than five tragical narra-

tives: Queen Jane murdered her four husbands, and was afterwards put herself to death. See Fontenelle's *Hist. de Theatr. Fr. Oeuv.* tom. troif. p. 20. edit. Paris, 1742. 12^{mo}. Nor can I believe that the *Tragedies* and *Comedies*, as they are called, of Anselm Fayditt, and other early troubadours, had any thing dramatic. It is worthy of notice, that pope Clement the seventh rewarded Parafols for his five *tragedies* with two canonries. Compare *Recherches sur les Theatr. de France*, par M. de Beauchamps, Paris, 1735. 4^{to}. p. 65.

H h 2

already

already mentioned the play of faint Catharine, acted at Dunstable about the year 1110*. William Fitz-Stephen, a writer of the twelfth century, in his DESCRIPTION OF LONDON, relates that, "London, for its theatrical exhibitions, has "holy plays, or the representation of miracles wrought by "confessors, and of the sufferings of martyrs". These pieces must have been in high vogue at our present period; for Matthew Paris, who wrote about the year 1240, says that they were such as "MIRACULA VULGARITER APPELLA- "MUS.". And we learn from Chaucer, that in his time PLAYS OF MIRACLES were the common resort of idle gossips in Lent.

Therefore made I my visitations,
To prechings eke and to pilgrimagis,
To PLAYS of MIRACLES, and mariagis, &c*.

This is the genial WIFE OF BATH, who amuses herself with these fashionable diversions, while her husband is absent in London, during the holy season of Lent. And in PIERCE PLOWMAN'S CREDE, a piece perhaps prior to Chaucer, a friar Minorite mentions these MIRACLES as not less frequented than markets or taverns.

We haunten no tavernes, ne hobelen abouten,
Att markets and MIRACLES we medeley us never^b.

Among the plays usually represented by the guild of Corpus Christi at Cambridge, on that festival, LUDUS FILIORUM

* DISSERTATION ii.

† "Lundonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores, representationes miraculorum quæ sancti confessores operati sunt, seu representationes passionum quibus claruit constantia martyrum." Ad calc. STOWE'S SURVEY OF LONDON, p. 480. edit. 1599. The reader will observe, that I have construed *sanctiores* in a positive sense.

Fitz-Stephen mentions at the end of his tract, "Imperatricem Matildem, Henricum regem tertium, et beatum Thomam. &c." p. 483. Henry the third did not accede till the year 1216. Perhaps he implied *futurem* regem tertium.

* Vit. Abbat. ad calc. Hist. p. 56. edit. 1639.

^a Prolog. Wif. B. v. 555. p. 80. Urr.

^b Signat. A. iii. b. edit. 1561.

ISRAELIS was acted in the year 1355^c. Our drama seems hitherto to have been almost entirely confined to religious subjects, and these plays were nothing more than an appendage to the specious and mechanical devotion of the times. I do not find expressly, that any play on a profane subject, either tragic or comic, had as yet been exhibited in England. Our very early ancestors scarce knew any other history than that of their religion. Even on such an occasion as the triumphant entry of a king or queen into the city of London, or other places, the pageants were almost entirely scriptural^d. Yet I must observe, that an article in one of the pipe-rolls, perhaps of the reign of king John, and consequently about the year 1200, seems to place the rudiments of histrionic exhibition, I mean of general subjects, at a much higher period among us than is commonly imagined. It is in these words. "Nicola uxor Gerardi de Canvill, reddidit computum de centum marcis pro maritanda Matildi filia sua cuicumque voluerit, exceptis Mimicis regis."—"Nicola, wife of Gerard of Canville, accounts to the king for one hundred marks for the privilege of marrying his

^c Masters's Hist. C. C. C. C. p. 5. vol.

^d What was the antiquity of the *Guany-Miracle*, or *Miracle-Play* in Cornwall, has not been determined. In the Bodleian library are three Cornish interludes, written on parchment. B. 40. Art. In the same library there is also another, written on paper in the year 1611. Arch. B. 31. Of this last there is a translation in the British Museum. MSS. Harl. 1867. 2. It is entitled the CREATION OF THE WORLD. It is called a Cornish play or opera, and said to be written by Mr. William Jordan. The translation into English was made by John Keigwin of Moushole in Cornwall, at the request of Trelawney, bishop of Exeter, 1691. Of this William Jordan I can give no account. In the British Museum there is an ancient Cornish poem on the death and resurrection of Christ. It is on vellum,

and has some rude pictures. The beginning and end are lost. The writing is supposed to be of the fifteenth century. MSS. Harl. 1782. 4^{to}. See the learned Lwyd's *Archæol. Brit.* p. 265. And Borlase's *Cornwall, Nat. Hist.* p. 295. edit. 1758.

^e When our Henry the sixth entered Paris in 1431, in the quality of king of France, he was met at the gate of Saint Denis by a Dumb Shew, representing the birth of the Virgin Mary and her marriage, the adoration of the three kings, and the parable of the sower. This pageant indeed was given by the French: but the readers of *Hollinghead* will recollect many instances immediately to our purpose. See *Monstrelet. apud Fonten. Hist. Theatr. ut supr.* p. 37.

^f Rot. incert. ut videtur Reg. Johann. Apud. MSS. James, Bibl. Bôd. vii. p. 104.

"daughter

“ daughter Maud to whatever person she pleases, the king’s “ MIMICS excepted.” Whether or no MIMICI REGIS are here a sort of players kept in the king’s household for diverting the court at stated seasons, at least with performances of mimicry and masquerade, or whether they may not strictly imply MINSTRELLS, I cannot indeed determine. Yet we may remark, that MIMICUS is never used for MIMUS, that certain theatrical entertainments called mascarades, as we shall see below, were very antient among the French, and that these MIMICI appear, by the context of this article, to have been persons of no very respectable character^f. I likewise find in the wardrobe-rolls of Edward the third, in the year 1348, an account of the dresses, *ad faciendum Ludos domini regis ad festum Natalis domini celebratos apud Guldeford*, for furnishing the plays or sports of the king, held in the castle of Guildford at the feast of Christmas^g. In these LUDI, says my record, were expended eighty tunics of buckram of various colours, forty-two visours of various similitudes, that is, fourteen of the faces of women, fourteen of the faces of men with beards, fourteen of heads of angels, made with silver; twenty-eight crests^h, fourteen mantles embroidered with heads of dragons: fourteen white tunics wrought with heads and wings of peacocks, fourteen heads of swans with wings, fourteen tunics painted with eyes of peacocks, fourteen tunics of English linen painted, and as many tunics embroidered with stars of gold and silverⁱ. In the rolls of

^f John of Salisbury, who wrote about 1160, says, “ *Histriones et mimi non possunt recipere sacram communionem.*” POLICRAT. i. 8.

^g Comp. J. Cooke, *Provisoris Magnæ Garderob. ab ann. 21. Edw. i. ad ann. 23. Membr. ix.*

^h I do not perfectly understand the Latin original in the place, viz. “ *xiiij Crestes cum tibiis reversatis et calceatis, xiiij Crestes cum montibus et cuniculis.*” Among the stuffs are “ *viii pelles de Roan.*”

In the same wardrobe rolls, a little above, I find this entry, which relates to the same festival. “ *Et ad faciendum vi pennecellos pro tubis et clarionibus contra festum natalis domini, de syndone, vapulatos de armis regis quartellatis.*” Membr. ix.

ⁱ Some perhaps may think, that these were dresses for a MASQUE at court. If so, Hollingshead is mistaken in saying, that in the year 1512, “ on the daie of Epiphanie at night, the king with eleven others were disguised after the manner of Italie called

the wardrobe of king Richard the second, in the year 1391, there is also an entry which seems to point out a sport of much the same nature. "Pro xxi coifs de tela linea pro hominibus de lege contrafactis pro LUDO regis tempore natalis domini anno xii^k." That is, "for twenty-one linen coifs for counterfeiting men of the law in the king's play at Christmas". It will be sufficient to add here on the last record, that the serjeants at law at their creation, antiently wore a cap of linen, lawn, or silk, tied under the chin: this was to distinguish them from the clergy who had the tonsure. Whether in both these instances we are to understand a dumb shew, or a dramatic interlude with speeches, I leave to the examination of those who are professedly making enquiries into the history of our stage from its rudest origin. But that plays on general subjects were no uncommon mode of entertainment in the royal palaces of England, at least at the commencement of the fifteenth century, may be collected from an old memoir of shews and ceremonies exhibited at Christmas, in the reign of Henry the seventh, in the palace of Westminster. It is in the year 1489. "This cristmas I saw no disguyfings, and but *right few* PLAYS. But ther was an abbot of Mistrule, that made much sport, and did right well his office." And again, "At nyght the kyng, the qweene, and my ladye the kynges moder, cam into the Whitehall, and ther hard a PLAY^l."

^k called a maske, a thing not seen before in England. They were apparelled in garments long and broad wrought all with gold, with visors and caps of gold, &c." Hist. vol. iii. p. 812. a. 40. Besides, these maskings most probably came to the English, if from Italy, through the medium of France. Hollinghead also contradicts himself: for in another place he seems to allow their existence under our Henry the fourth, A. D. 1400. "The conspirators ment upon the sudden to have to have set upon the king in the castell of Windsor, under

"colour of a maske or mummerie, &c." ibid. p. 515. b. 50. Strype says there were PAGEAUNTS exhibited in London when queen Eleanor rode through the city to her coronation, in 1236. And for the victory over the Scots by Edward the first in 1298. Anecd. Brit. Topograph. p. 725. Lond. edit. 1768.

^l Comp. Magn. Garderob. an. 14. Ric. ii. f. 193. b.

^m Leland. Coll. iii. Append. p. 256. edit. 1770.

As

As to the religious dramas, it was customary to perform this species of play on holy festivals in or about the churches. In the register of William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, under the year 1384, an episcopal injunction is cited, against the exhibition of SPECTACULA in the cemetery of his cathedral^m. Whether or no these were dramatic SPECTACLES, I do not pretend to decide. In several of our old scriptural plays, we see some of the scenes directed to be represented *cum cantu et organis*, a common rubric in the missal. That is, because they were performed in a church where the choir assisted. There is a curious passage in Lambarde's Topographical Dictionary written about the year 1570, much to our purpose, which I am therefore tempted to transcribe". "In the dayes of ceremonial religion, they used at Wytney (in Oxfordshire) to set fourthe yearly in maner of a shew, or interlude, the resurrection of our Lord, &c. For the which purposes, and the more lyvely heareby to exhibite to the eye the hole action of the resurrection, the priestes garnished out certain smalle puppettes, representing the persons of Christe, the watchmen, Marie, and others; amongest the which, one bare the parte of a wakinge watchman, who espiinge Christe to arise, made a continual noyce, like to the found that is caused by the metynge of two styckes, and was thereof commonly called *Jack Snacker of Wytney*. The like toye I myself, beinge then a childe, once sawe in Poule's church

^m Registr. lib. iii. f. 88. "Canere Cantilenas, ludibriorum *spectacula* facere, saltationes et alios ludos inhonestos frequentare, choreas, &c." So in Statut. Eccles. Nannett. A. D. 1405. No "mimi vel joculatores, ad *monstra larvarum* in ecclesia et cemeterio," are permitted. Marten. Thesaur. Anecd. iv. p. 993. And again, "Joculatores, histriones, saltatrices, in ecclesia, cemeterio, vel porticu.—nec aliqua choreæ." Statut. Synod. Eccles. Leod. A. D. 1287. apud Marten. ut supr.

p. 846. Fontenelle says, that antiently among the French, comedies were acted after divine service, in the church-yard. "Au sortir du sermon ces bonnes gens alloient a la Comedie, c'est a dire, qu'ils changeoint de Sermon." Hist. Theatr. ut supr. p. 24. But these were scriptural comedies, and they were constantly preceded by a BENEDICTE, by way of prologue. The French stage will occur again below.

ⁿ Pag. 459. edit. 1730. 4^{to}.

" at

“ at London, at a feast of Whitfuntyde; where the
 “ comynge downe of the Holy Gost was fet forthe by a
 “ white pigion, that was let to fly out of a hole that yet is
 “ to be sene in the mydst of the rooffe of the greate ile,
 “ and by a longe censer which descendinge out of the same
 “ place almost to the verie grounde, was swung up and
 “ downe at suche a lengthe, that it reached with thone
 “ swepe almost to the west-gate of the churche, and with
 “ the other to the quyre staires of the same; breathinge out
 “ over the whole churche and companie a most pleasant per-
 “ fume of such swete thinges as burned therein. With the like
 “ doome shewes also, they used everie where to furnish
 “ sondrye parts of their church service, as by their specta-
 “ cles of the nativitie, passion, and ascension, &c.”

This practice of acting plays in churches, was at last grown to such an enormity, and attended with such inconvenient consequences, that in the reign of Henry the eighth, Bonner, bishop of London, issued a proclamation to the clergy of his diocese, dated 1542, prohibiting “ all maner of common plays, games, or interludes to be played, set forth, or declared, within their churches, chapels, &c.” This fashion seems to have remained even after the Reformation, and when perhaps profane stories had taken place of religious^p. Archbishop Grindal, in the year 1563, remonstrated against the danger of interludes: complaining that players “ did especially on holy days, set up bills inviting to their play^q.” From this ecclesiastical source of the modern drama, plays continued to be acted on sundays so late as the reign of Elizabeth, and even till that of Charles

^o Burnet, Hist. Ref. i. Coll. Rec. pag. 225.

^p From a puritanical pamphlet entitled THE THIRD BLAST OF RETRAIT FROM PLAIES, &c. 1580. 12^{mo}. p. 77. Where the author says, the players are “ permitted to publish their mametrie in everie

“ temple of God, and that, throughout England, &c.” This abuse of acting plays in churches is mentioned in the canon of James the first, which forbids also the profanation of churches by court-leets, &c. The canons were given in the year 1603.

^q Strype's Grindall, p. 82.

the first, by the choristers or singing-boys of Saint Paul's cathedral in London, and of the royal chapel.

It is certain, that these MIRACLE-PLAYS were the first of our dramatic exhibitions. But as these pieces frequently required the introduction of allegorical characters, such as Charity, Sin, Death, Hope, Faith, or the like, and as the common poetry of the times, especially among the French, began to deal much in allegory, at length plays were formed entirely consisting of such personifications. These were called MORALITIES. The miracle-plays, or MYSTERIES, were totally destitute of invention or plan: they tamely represented stories according to the letter of scripture, or the respective legend. But the MORALITIES indicate dawnings of the dramatic art: they contain some rudiments of a plot, and even attempt to delineate characters, and to paint manners. From hence the gradual transition to real historical personages was natural and obvious. It may be also observed, that many licentious pleasantries were sometimes introduced in these religious representations. This might imperceptibly lead the way to subjects entirely profane, and to comedy, and perhaps earlier than is imagined. In a 'Mystery of the MASSACRE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, part of the subject of a sacred drama given by the English fathers at the famous council of Constance, in the year 1417', a low buffoon of Herod's court is introduced, desiring of his lord to be dubbed a knight, that he might be properly qualified to *go on the adventure* of killing the mothers of the children of Bethlehem. This tragical business is treated with the most ridiculous levity. The good women of Bethlehem attack our knight-errant with their spinning-wheels, break his head with their distaffs, abuse him as a coward and a disgrace to chivalry, and send him home to Herod as a recreant champion with much ignominy. It is in an enlightened age only

* MSS. Digb. 134. Bibl. Bodl.

† L'Enfant. ii. 440.

that

their nakedness: this very pertinently introduces the next scene, in which they have coverings of fig-leaves. This extraordinary spectacle was beheld by a numerous assembly of both sexes with great composure: they had the authority of scripture for such a representation, and they gave matters just as they found them in the third chapter of Genesis. It would have been absolute heresy to have departed from the sacred text in personating the primitive appearance of our first parents, whom the spectators so nearly resembled in simplicity: and if this had not been the case, the dramatists were ignorant what to reject and what to retain.

In the mean time, profane dramas seem to have been known in France at a much earlier period^u. Du Cange gives the following picture of the king of France dining in public, before the year 1300. During this ceremony, a sort of farces or drolls seems to have been exhibited. All the great officers of the crown and the household, says he, were present. The company was entertained with the instrumental music of the minstrels, who played on the kettle-drum, the flagellet^v, the cornet, the Latin cittern, the Bohemian flute,

God's curse. The serpent *exit* hissing. They are driven from Paradise by four angels and the cherubim with a flaming sword. Adam appears digging the ground, and Eve spinning. Their children Cain and Abel enter: The former kills his brother. Adam's lamentation. Cain is banished, &c.

^u John of Salisbury, a writer of the eleventh century, speaking of the common diversions of his time, says, "Nostra aetas prolapsa ad fabulas et quævis inania, non modo aures et cor prostituit vanitati, &c." POLICRAT. i. 8. An ingenious French writer, Mons. Duclos, thinks that PLAYS are here implied. By the word *Fabula*, says he, something more is signified than dances, gesticulation, and simple dialogue. *Fable* properly means composition, and an arrangement of things which constitute an action. Mem. Acad. Infer. xvii. p. 224. 4^{to}. But perhaps *fabula* has too

vague and general a sense, especially in its present combination with *quævis inania*, to bear so precise and critical an interpretation. I will add, that if this reasoning be true, the words will be equally applicable to the English stage.—At Constantinople it seems that the stage flourished much under Justinian and Theodora, about the year 540. For in the Basilical codes we have the oath of an actress *μη αναχωρησεν της πορνησιας*. Tom. vii. p. 682. edit. Fabrot. Græco-Lat. The antient Greek fathers, particularly saint Chrysostom, are full of declamation against the drama: and complain, that the people heard a comedian with much more pleasure than a preacher of the gospel.

^v I believe, a sort of pipe. This is the French word, viz. Demy-canon. See Carpent. Du Cange, Gl. Lat. i. p. 760.

the

the trumpet, the Moorish cittern, and the fiddle. Besides there were "des FARCEURS, des jongleurs, et des plaisantins, qui divertissoient les compagnies par leur faceties et par leur COMEDIES, pour l'entretien." He adds, that many noble families in France were entirely ruined by the prodigious expences lavished on those performers^x. The annals of France very early mention buffoons among the minstrells at these solemnities; and more particularly that Louis le Debonnaire, who reigned about the year 830, never laughed aloud, not even when at the most magnificent festivals, players, buffoons, minstrels, singers, and harpers, attended his table^y. In some constitutions given to a cathedral church in France, in the year 1280, the following clause occurs. "Nullus SPECTACULIS aliquibus quæ aut in Nuptiis aut in Scenis exhibentur, interfit^z." Where, by the way, the word *Scenis* seems to imply somewhat of a professed stage, although the establishment of the first French theatre is dated not before the year 1398. The play of ROBIN and MARIAN is said to have been performed by the school-boys of Angiers, according to annual custom, in the year 1392^a. A royal caroufal given by Charles the fifth of France to the emperor Charles the fourth, in the year 1378, was closed with the theatrical representation of the *Conquest of Jerusalem by Godfrey of Bulloign*, which was

^x Dissertat. Joinv. p. 161.

^y Ibid.

^z Montfauc. Catal. Manuscript. p. 1158. See also Marten. Thesaur. Anecd. tom. iv. p. 506. Statut. Synod. A. D. 1468. "Lar-
" varia ad Nuptias, &c." Stowe, in his SURVEY OF LONDON, mentions the practice of acting plays at weddings.

^a The boys were *deguisez*, says the old French record: and they had among them *un Fillete deguizée*. Carpent. ubi sup. V. ROBINET. PENTECOSTE. Our old character of MAYD MARIAN may be hence illustrated. It seems to have been an early

fashion in France for school-boys to present these shews or plays. In an antient manuscript, under the year 1477, there is mentioned "Certaine MORALITE, ou FARCE, que les escolliers de Pontoise avoit fait, ainsi qu'il est de coutume." Carpent. ubi sup. V. MORALITAS. THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT is said to have been represented in 1424, by the boys of Paris placed like statues against a wall, without speech or motion, at the entry of the duke of Bedford, regent of France. See J. de Paris, p. 101. And Sauval, Ant. de Paris. ii. 101.

exhibited

exhibited in the hall of the royal palace ^b. This indeed was a subject of a religious tendency; but not long afterwards, in the year 1395, perhaps before, the interesting story of PATIENT GRISILDE appears to have been acted at Paris. This piece still remains, and is entitled, *Le MYSTERE de Grisildis marquise de Saluce* ^c. For all dramatic pieces were indiscriminately called MYSTERIES, whether a martyr or a heathen god, whether saint Catharine or Hercules was the subject.

In France the religious MYSTERIES, often called PITEAUX, or PITOUX, were certainly very fashionable, and of high antiquity: yet from any written evidence, I do not find them more ancient than those of the English. In the year 1384, the inhabitants of the village of Aunay, on the Sunday after the feast of saint John, played the MIRACLE of Theophilus, "ou quel Jeu avoit un personnage de un qui devoit getter d'un canon ^d." In the year 1398, some citizens of Paris met at saint Maur to play the PASSION of CHRIST. The magistrates of Paris, alarmed at this novelty, published an ordonnance, prohibiting them to represent, "aucuns jeux de personages soit de vie de saints ou autrement," without the royal licence, which was soon afterwards obtained ^e. In the year 1486, at Anjou, ten pounds were paid towards supporting the charges of acting the PASSION of CHRIST, which was represented by masks, and, as I suppose, by persons hired for the purpose ^f. The chaplains of Abbeville, in the year 1455, gave four pounds and

^b Felib. tom. ii. p. 681.

^c It has been printed, more than once, in the black letter. Beauchamps, p. 110.

^d Carpentier, Suppl. Du Cange Lat. Gl. V. LUDUS.

^e Beauchamps, ut supr. p. 90. This was the first theatre of the French: the actors were incorporated by the king, under the title of the *Fraternity of the passion of our Saviour*. Beauch. *ibid.* See above, Sect. ii. p. 91. n. The *Jeu de personages* was a very

common play of the young boys in the larger towns, &c. Carpentier, ut supr. V. PERSONAGIUM. And LUDUS PERSONAG. At Cambray mention is made of the shew of a boy *larvatus cum mazza in collo* with drums, &c. Carpent. *ib.* V. KALENDÆ JANUAR.

^f "Decem libr. ex parte nationis, ad onera supportanda hujus Misterii." Carpent. ut supr. V. PERSONAGIUM.

ten shillings to the PLAYERS of the PASSION*. But the French MYSTERIES were chiefly performed by the religious communities, and some of their FETES almost entirely consisted of a dramatic or personated shew. At the FEAST of ASSES, instituted in honour of Baalam's Ass, the clergy walked on Christmas day in procession, habited to represent the prophets and others. Moses appeared in an alb and cope, with a long beard and rod. David had a green vestment. Baalam with an immense pair of spurs, rode on a wooden ass, which inclosed a speaker. There were also six Jews and six Gentiles. Among other characters the poet Virgil was introduced as a gentile prophet and a translator of the Sibylline oracles. They thus moved in procession, chanting versicles, and conversing in character on the nativity and kingdom of Christ, through the body of the church, till they came into the choir. Virgil speaks some Latin hexameters, during the ceremony, not out of his fourth eclogue, but wretched monkish lines in rhyme. This feast was, I believe, early suppressed^b. In the year 1445, Charles the seventh of France ordered the masters in Theology at Paris to forbid the ministers of the collegiate^c churches to celebrate at Christmas the FEAST of FOOLS in their churches, where the clergy danced in masques and antic dresses, and exhibited *plusieurs*

* Carpent. ut supr. V. LUDUS. Who adds, from an ancient Computus, that three shillings were paid by the ministers of a church in the year 1537, for parchment, for writing LUDUS RESURRECTIONIS DOMINI.

^b See p. 210.

^c Marten. Anecd. tom. i. col. 1804. See also Belet. de Divin. offic. cap. 72. And Guffanvill. post. Not. ad Petr. Blesens. Feilbien confounds *La Fete de Fous et la Fete de Sotise*. The latter was an entertainment of dancing called *Les Saultes*, and thence corrupted into *Soties* or *Sotise*. See Mem. Acad. Inscript. xvii. 225, 226. See also Probat. Hist. Antissiodor. p. 310.

Again, the *Feast of Fools* seems to be pointed at in Statut. Senonens. A. D. 1445. Infr. tom. xii. Gall. Christian. Coll. 96. "Tempore divini servitii larvatos et mon-
"struosos vultus deferendo, cum vestibus
"mulierum, aut lenonum, aut histrio-
"num, choreas in ecclesia et choro ejus du-
"cendo, &c." With the most immodest spectacles. The nuns of some French convents are said to have had *Ludibria* on saint Mary Magdalene's and other festivals, when they wore the habits of seculars, and danced with them. Carpent. ubi supr. V. KALENDARÆ. There was the office of *Rex Stultorum* in Beverley church, prohibited 1391. Dugd. Mon. iii. Append. 7.

mocqueries

mocqueries spectacles publics, de leur corps deguisements, farces, rigmeries, with various enormities shocking to decency. In France as well as England it was customary to celebrate the feast of the boy-bishop. In all the collegiate churches of both nations, about the feast of Saint Nicholas, or the Holy Innocents, one of the children of the choir completely apparelled in the episcopal vestments, with a mitre and crozier, bore the title and state of a bishop, and exacted ceremonial obedience from his fellows, who were dressed like priests. They took possession of the church, and performed all the ceremonies and offices¹, the mass excepted, which might have been celebrated by the bishop and his prebendaries². In the statutes of the archiepiscopal cathedral of Tullis, given in the year 1497, it is said, that during the celebration of the festival of the boy-bishop, "MORALITIES were presented, and shews of MIRACLES, with farces and other sports, but compatible with decorum.---After dinner they exhibited, without their masks, but in proper dresses, such farces as they were masters of, in different parts of the city³." It is probable that the same entertainments attended the solemnisation of this ridiculous festival in England⁴: and from this supposition some critics may be in-

¹ In the statutes of Eton-college, given 1441, the EPISCOPUS PUERORUM is ordered to perform divine service on saint Nicholas's day. Rubr. xxxi. In the statutes of Winchester-college, given 1380, PUERI, that is, the boy-bishop and his fellows, are permitted on Innocent's-day to execute all the sacred offices in the chapel, according to the use of the church of Sarum. Rubr. xxix. This strange piece of religious mockery flourished greatly in Salisbury cathedral. In the old statutes of that church there is a chapter DE EPISCOPO CHORISTARUM: and their *Processionale* gives a long and minute account of the whole ceremony. edit. Rothom. 1555.

² This ceremony was abolished by a proclamation, no later than 33 Hen. viii.

Brit. Mus. MSS. Cott. Tit. B. 1. f. 208. In the inventory of the treasury of York cathedral, taken in 1530, we have "Item una mitra parva cum petris pro episcopo puerorum, &c." Dugd. Monast. iii. 169. 170. See also 313. 314. 177. 279. See also Dugd. Hist. S. Paul's, p. 205. 206. Where he is called EPISCOPUS PARVULORUM. See also Antis. Ord. Gart. ii. 309. Where, instead of *Nibilenfis*, read *Nicolatensis*, or NICOLATENSIS.

³ Statut. Eccles. Tullenf. apud Carpent. Suppl. Lat. Gl. Du Cang. V. KALENDÆ.

⁴ It appears that in England, the boy-bishop with his companions went about to different parts of the town; at least visited the other religious houses. As in Rot. Comp. Coll. Winton. A. D. 1461.

"In

clined to deduce the practice of our plays being acted by the choir-boys of St. Paul's church, and the chapel royal, which continued, as I before observed, till Cromwell's usurpation. The English and French stages mutually throw light on each other's history. But perhaps it will be thought, that in some of these instances I have exemplified in nothing more than farcical and gesticulatory representations. Yet even these traces should be attended to. In the mean time we may observe upon the whole, that the modern drama had its foundation in our religion, and that it was raised and supported by the clergy. The truth is, the members of the ecclesiastical societies were almost the only persons who could read, and their numbers easily furnished performers: they abounded in leisure, and their very relaxations were religious.

I did not mean to touch upon the Italian stage. But as so able a judge as Riccoboni seems to allow, that Italy derived her theatre from those of France and England, by way of an additional illustration of the antiquity of the two last, I will here produce one or two MIRACLE-PLAYS, acted much earlier in Italy than any piece mentioned by that ingenious writer, or by Crescimbeni. In the year 1298, on "the feast of Pentecost, and the two following holidays, "the representation of the PLAY OF CHRIST, that is of his "passion, resurrection, ascension, judgment, and the mission of the holy ghost, was performed by the clergy of

"In Dat. episcopo Nicolatenfi." This I suppose, was one of the children of the choir of the neighbouring cathedral. In the statutes of the collegiate church of S. Mary Ottery, founded by bishop Grandison in 1337, there is this passage. "Item statuimus, quod nullus canonicus, vicarius, vel secundarius, pueros choristas in festo sanctorum Innocentium extra Parochiam de Ottery trahant, aut eis licentiam vagandi concedant." cap. 50. MS.

Registr. Priorat. S. Swithin. Winton. quat. 9. In the wardrobe-rolls of Edward iii. an. 12. we have this entry, which shews that our mock-bishop and his chapter sometimes exceeded their adopted clerical commission, and exercised the arts of secular entertainment. "EPISCOPO PUERORUM ecclesie de Andeworp cantanti coram domino rege in camera sua in festo sanctorum Innocentium, de dono ipsius dom. regis. xiii. s. vi. d."

K k

" Civita

“ Civita Vecchia, in curia domini patriarchæ Austriæ civitatis
 “ honorifice et laudabiliter .” And again, “ In 1304, the
 “ chapter of Civita Vecchia exhibited a Play of the creation
 “ of our first parents, the annunciation of the virgin Mary,
 “ the birth of Christ, and other passages of sacred scripture .”
 In the mean time, those critics who contend for the high
 antiquity of the Italian stage, may adopt these instances as
 new proofs in defence of that hypothesis.

In this transient view of the origin and progress of our
 drama, which was incidentally suggested by the mention of
 Bafton’s supposed Comedies, I have trespassed upon future
 periods. But I have chiefly done this for the sake of con-
 nection, and to prepare the mind of the reader for other
 anecdotes of the history of our stage, which will occur in
 the course of our researches, and are reserved for their res-
 pective places. I could have enlarged what is here loosely
 thrown together, with many other remarks and illustrations:
 but I was unwilling to transcribe from the collections of
 those who have already treated this subject with great com-
 prehension and penetration, and especially from the author of
 the Supplement to the Translator’s Preface of Jarvis’s *Don*
Quixote *. I claim no other merit from this digression, than
 that of having collected some new anecdotes relating to the
 early state of the English and French stages, the original of
 both which is intimately connected, from books and manu-
 scripts not easily found, nor often examined. These hints
 may perhaps prove of some service to those who have leisure
 and inclination to examine the subject with more precision.

* Chron. Forojul. in Append. ad Mo-
 num. Ecl. Aquilej. pag. 30. col. 1.

° Ibid. pag. 30. col. 1. It is extraor-
 dinary, that the Miracle-plays, even in

the churches, should not cease in Italy till
 the year 1660.

° See also Doctor Percy’s very ingenious
 ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ENG-
 LISH STAGE, &c.