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### **The History Of English Poetry**

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

**Warton, Thomas**

**London, 1778**

Section XVI. A digression on the origin of Mysteries. Various origins assigned. Religious dramas at Constantinople. Plays first acted in the monasteries. This ecclesiastical origin of the drama gives ...

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## S E C T. XVI.

**I**N a work of this general and comprehensive nature, in which the fluctuations of genius are surveyed, and the dawnings or declensions of taste must alike be noticed, it is impossible that every part of the subject can prove equally splendid and interesting. We have, I fear, been toiling for some time through materials, not perhaps of the most agreeable and edifying nature. But as the mention of that very rude species of our drama, called the MORALITY, has incidentally diverted our attention to the early state of the English stage, I cannot omit so fortunate and seasonable an opportunity of endeavouring to relieve the weariness of my reader, by introducing an obvious digression on the probable causes of the rise of the MYSTERIES, which, as I have before remarked, preceded, and at length produced, these allegorical fables. In this respect I shall imitate those map-makers mentioned by Swift, who

— — O'er inhospitable downs,  
Place elephants for want of towns.

Nor shall I perhaps fail of being pardoned by my reader, if, on the same principle, I should attempt to throw new light on the history of our theatre, by pursuing this enquiry through those deductions which it will naturally and more immediately suggest<sup>s</sup>.

About the eighth century, trade was principally carried on by means of fairs, which lasted several days. Charlemagne established many great marts of this sort in France; as did William the conqueror, and his Norman successors, in

<sup>s</sup> Compare vol. i. p. 235.

England.

England<sup>1</sup>. The merchants, who frequented these fairs in numerous caravans or companies, employed every art to draw the people together. They were therefore accompanied by jugglers, minstrels, and buffoons; who were no less interested in giving their attendance, and exerting all their skill, on these occasions. As now but few large towns existed, no public spectacles or popular amusements were established; and as the sedentary pleasures of domestic life and private society were yet unknown, the fair-time was the season for diversion. In proportion as these shews were attended and encouraged, they began to be set off with new decorations and improvements: and the arts of buffoonery being rendered still more attractive by extending their circle of exhibition, acquired an importance in the eyes of the people. By degrees the clergy, observing that the entertainments of dancing, music, and mimicry, exhibited at these protracted annual celebrities, made the people less religious, by promoting idleness and a love of festivity, proscribed these sports, and excommunicated the performers. But finding that no regard was paid to their censures, they changed their plan, and determined to take these recreations into their own hands. They turned actors; and instead of profane mummeries, presented stories taken from legends or the bible. This was the origin of sacred comedy. The death of saint Catharine, acted by the monks of saint Dennis, rivalled the popularity of the professed players. Music was admitted into the churches, which served as theatres for the representation of holy farces. The festivals among the French, called LA FETE DE FOUX, DE L'ANE<sup>2</sup>, and DES INNOCENS, at length

<sup>1</sup> See *supr.* vol. i. p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> For a most full and comprehensive account of these feasts, see "Memoires pour servir a l'histoire de la FETE DE FOUX, qui se faisoit autrefois dans plusieurs eg-lises. Par M. du TILLIOT, gentil-homme ordinaire de son Altesse royale

" Monseigneur le duc de BERRY. A LAUSANNE et a GENEVE, 1741." 4to. Groshead, bishop of Lincoln in the eleventh century, orders his dean and chapter to abolish the FESTUM ASINORUM, *quod sit vanitate plenum, et voluptatibus spurcum*, which used to be annually celebrated in Lincoln

became greater favorites, as they certainly were more capricious and absurd, than the interludes of the buffoons at the fairs. These are the ideas of a judicious French writer, now living, who has investigated the history of human manners with great comprehension and sagacity.

Voltaire's theory on this subject is also very ingenious, and quite new. Religious plays, he supposes, came originally from Constantinople; where the old Grecian stage continued to flourish in some degree, and the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides were represented, till the fourth century. About that period, Gregory Nazianzen, an archbishop, a poet, and one of the fathers of the church, banished pagan plays from the stage at Constantinople, and introduced select stories from the old and new Testament. As the antient Greek tragedy was a religious spectacle, a transition was made on the same plan; and the chorusses were turned into Christian hymns<sup>1</sup>. Gregory wrote many sacred dramas for this purpose, which have not survived those inimitable compositions over which they triumphed for a time: one, however, his tragedy called *Χριστός πασχών*, or CHRIST'S PASSION, is still extant<sup>2</sup>. In the prologue it is said to be in imitation of Euripides, and that this is the first time the Virgin Mary has been produced on the stage. The fashion of acting

Lincoln cathedral on the feast of the Circumcision. Grossetesti *EPISTOL.* xxxii. apud Browne's *FASCICUL.* p. 331. edit. Lond. 1690. tom. ii. Append. And p. 412. Also he forbids the archdeacons of his diocese to permit SCOT-ALES in their chapters and synods, (*Spelm. Gl.* p. 506.) and other *LUDI* on holidays. *Ibid.* *Epistol.* xxii. p. 314. [See *supr.* vol. i. p. 247.] See in the *MERCURE FRANÇOIS* for September, 1742, an account of a mummery celebrated in the city of Besançon in France, by the canons of the cathedral, consisting of dancing, singing, eating and drinking, in the cloisters and church, on Easter-day, called *BERGERETTA*, or the *SONG OF*

THE SHEPHERDS; which remained unabolished till the year 1738. From the *RITUAL* of the church, pag. 1930, ad ann. 1582. See Carpentier, *SUPPL. Du Cang. LAT. GLOSS.* tom. i. p. 523. in V. And *ibid.* V. *BOCLARE*, p. 570.

<sup>1</sup> See *supr.* vol. i. p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> *Op.* Greg. Nazianz. tom. ii. p. 253. In a manuscript cited by Lambecius, it is called *Δράμα καὶ Ἐπιπέδιον* iv. 22. It seems to have been falsely attributed to Apollinaris, an Alexandrian, bishop of Laodicea. It is, however, written with less elegance and judgement than most of Gregory's poetical pieces. Apollinaris lived about the year 370.

spiritual

spiritual dramas, in which at first a due degree of method and decorum was preserved, was at length adopted from Constantinople by the Italians; who framed, in the depth of the dark ages, on this foundation, that barbarous species of theatrical representation called MYSTERIES, or sacred comedies, and which were soon afterwards received in France". This opinion will acquire probability, if we consider the early commercial intercourse between Italy and Constantinople: and although the Italians, at the time when they may be supposed to have imported plays of this nature, did not understand the Greek language, yet they could understand, and consequently could imitate, what they saw.

In defence of Voltaire's hypothesis it may be further observed, that the FEAST OF FOOLS and of the Ass, with other religious farces of that sort, so common in Europe, originated at Constantinople. They were instituted, although perhaps under other names, in the Greek church, about the year 990, by Theophylact, patriarch of Constantinople, probably with a better design than is imagined by the ecclesiastical annalists; that of weaning the minds of the people from the pagan ceremonies, particularly the Bacchanalian and calendary solemnities, by the substitution of christian spectacles, partaking of the same spirit of licentiousness. The fact is, however, recorded by Cedrenus, one of the Byzantine historians, who flourished about the year 1050, in the following words. " Εργον εκεινα, η το νυν κρατειν  
 " εθος, εν ταις λαμπραις η δημολειεσιν εορταϊς υβριζεσθαι  
 " τον θεον, η τας τον αγιων μνημας, δια λογισματων  
 " απρεπων η γελωτων, η παραφορων κραυγων, τελουμενων  
 " των θειων υμνων ους εδει, μελα καταλυξεως η συλημμε  
 " καρδιας, υπερ της ημων σωτηριας, προσφερειν τω θεω.  
 " Πληθος γαρ συσησαμενος επιβρητων ανδρων, η εξαρχων

\* Hist. Gen. Addit. p. 138.

“ αἰοις ἐπισησας Εὐθυμιον τινα Καστην λεγουμενον, ὃν  
 “ αἶλος Δομεσικον της εκκλησιας προβαλλελο· ἢ τας  
 “ σαλανικας ορχησεις, ἢ τας ασημας κραυγας, ἢ τα εκ  
 “ τριοδων ἢ χαμαιυπειων ηρανισμενα ἀσμαλα τελεισθαι  
 “ ἐδιδάξεν.” That is, “ Theophylact introduced the prac-  
 “ tice, which prevails even to this day, of scandalising god  
 “ and the memory of his saints, on the most splendid and  
 “ popular festivals, by indecent and ridiculous songs, and  
 “ enormous shoutings, even in the midst of those sacred  
 “ hymns, which we ought to offer to the divine grace with  
 “ compunction of heart, for the salvation of our souls.  
 “ But he, having collected a company of base fellows, and  
 “ placing over them one Euthymius, surnamed Casnes, whom  
 “ he also appointed the superintendant of his church, ad-  
 “ mitted into the sacred service, diabolical dances, exclama-  
 “ tions of ribaldry, and ballads borrowed from the streets  
 “ and brothels.” This practice was subsisting in the Greek  
 church two hundred years afterwards: for Balsamon, pa-  
 triarch of Antioch, complains of the gross abominations  
 committed by the priests at Christmas and other festivals,  
 even in the great church at Constantinople; and that the  
 clergy, on certain holidays, personated a variety of feigned  
 characters, and even entered the choir in a military habit,  
 and other enormous disguises<sup>p</sup>.

I must however observe here, what perhaps did not imme-  
 diately occur to our lively philosopher on this occasion, that in  
 the fourth century it was customary to make christian parodies  
 and imitations in Greek, of the best Greek classics, for the use  
 of the christian schools. This practice prevailed much under  
 the emperor Julian, who forbid the pagan poets, orators,  
 and philosophers, to be taught in the christian seminaries.

\* Cedren. COMPEND. HIST. p. 639. B.  
 edit. Paris. 1647. Compare Baron. AN-  
 NAL. sub ann. 956. tom x. p. 752. C.  
 edit. Plantin. Antw. 1603. fol.

<sup>p</sup> COMMENT. ad CANON. lxii. SYNOD.  
 vi. in Trullo. Apud Beverigii SYNODIC.  
 tom. i. Oxon. fol. 1672. p. 230. 231. In  
 return, he forbids the professed players to  
 appear

Apollinaris bishop of Laodicea, abovementioned, wrote Greek tragedies, adapted to the stage, on most of the grand events recorded in the old Testament, after the manner of Euripides. On some of the familiar and domestic stories of scripture, he composed comedies in imitation of Menander. He wrote christian odes on the plan of Pindar. In imitation of Homer, he wrote an heroic poem on the history of the bible, as far as the reign of Saul, in twenty-four books<sup>9</sup>. Sozomen says, that these compositions, now lost, rivalled their great originals in genius, expression, and conduct. His son, a bishop also of Laodicea, reduced the four gospels and all the apostolical books into Greek dialogues, resembling those of Plato<sup>1</sup>.

But I must not omit a much earlier and more singular specimen of a theatrical representation of sacred history, than this mentioned by Voltaire. Some fragments of an antient Jewish play on the Exodus, or the Departure of the Israelites from Egypt under their leader and prophet Moses, are yet preserved in Greek iambics<sup>2</sup>. The principal characters of this drama are Moses, Sapphira, and God from the Bush, or God speaking from the burning bush. Moses delivers the prologue, or introduction, in a speech of sixty lines, and his rod is turned into a serpent on the stage. The author

appear on the stage in the habit of monks. Saint Austin, who lived in the sixth century, reproves the paganising christians of his age, for their indecent sports on holidays; but it does not appear, that these sports were celebrated within the churches. "In sanctis festivitibus choros ducendo, cantica luxuriosa et turpia, &c. Isti enim infelices ac miseri homines, qui balationes ac saltationes ANTE-IPSAS BASILICAS sanctorum exercere nec metuunt nec erubescunt." SERM. cxxv. tom. x. opp. S. Augustin. edit. Froben. 1529. fol. 763. B. See also SERM. cxcvii. cxcviii. opp. edit. Benedictin. tom. v. Paris. 1683. p. 904. et seq.

<sup>9</sup> Sozomen (ubi infra) says, that he compiled a system of grammar, *Χριστιανικὴ γραμματικὴ*, on the christian model.

<sup>1</sup> Socrates, iii. 16. ii. 46. Sozomen, v. 18. vi. 26. Niceph. x. 25.

<sup>2</sup> In Clemens Alexandrin. lib. i. STROM. p. 344. seq. Eusebius, PRÆPARAT. EVANG. c. xxviii. xxix. Eustathius ad HEX. p. 25. They are collected, and translated into Latin, with emendations, by Fr. Morellus, Paris. 1580. See also CORPUS POETAR. GRÆC. TRAGICOR. et COMICOR. Genev. 1614. fol. And POETÆ CHRISTIAN. GRÆCI, Paris. 1609. 8vo.

of this piece is Ezekiel, a Jew, who is called *Ὁ τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν τραγωδιῶν ποιητής*, or the tragic poet of the Jews'. The learned Huetius endeavours to prove, that Ezekiel wrote at least before the christian era\*. Some suppose that he was one of the seventy, or septuagint, interpreters of the bible under the reign of Ptolomy Philadelphus. I am of opinion, that Ezekiel composed this play after the destruction of Jerusalem, and even in the time of Barocbas, as a political spectacle, with a view to animate his dejected countrymen with the hopes of a future deliverance from their captivity under the conduct of a new Moses, like that from the Egyptian servitude†. Whether a theatre subsisted among the Jews, who by their peculiar situation and circumstances were prevented from keeping pace with their neighbours in the culture of the social and elegant arts, is a curious speculation. It seems most probable, on the whole, that this drama was composed in imitation of the Grecian stage, at the close of the second century, after the Jews had been dispersed, and intermixed with other nations.

Boileau seems to think, that the antient PILGRIMAGES introduced these sacred exhibitions into France.

Chez nos devots ayeux le théâtre abhorré  
Fut long-tems dans la France une plaisir ignoré.  
De PELERINS, dit on, une troupe grossiere  
En public à Paris y monta la première ;  
Et sotement zélée en sa simplicité,  
Ioua les SAINTS, la VIERGE, et DIEU, par piété.  
Le Savoir, a la fin, dissipant l' Ignorance,  
Fit voir de ce projet la devote imprudence :  
On chassa ces docteurs prêchant sans mission,  
On vit renaître Hector, Andromaque, Iliou\*.

† See Scaliger, ad EUSEB. p. 401.

\* DEMONSTRAT. EVANGELIC. p. 99.

† See Le Moine, OBS. ad VAR. SACR. tom. i. pag. 336.

\* ART. POET. cant. iii. 81.



The authority to which Boileau alludes in these nervous and elegant verses is Menestrier, an intelligent French antiquary<sup>v</sup>. The pilgrims who returned from Jerusalem, saint James of Compostella, saint Baume of Provence, saint Reine, Mount saint Michael, Notre dame du Puy, and other places esteemed holy, composed songs on their adventures; intermixing recitals of passages in the life of Christ, descriptions of his crucifixion, of the day of judgement, of miracles, and martyrdoms. To these tales, which were recommended by a pathetic chant and a variety of gesticulations, the credulity of the multitude gave the name of *Visions*. These pious itinerants travelled in companies; and taking their stations in the most public streets, and singing with their staves in their hands, and their hats and mantles fantastically adorned with shells and emblems painted in various colours, formed a sort of theatrical spectacle. At length their performances excited the charity and compassion of some citizens of Paris; who erected a theatre, in which they might exhibit their religious stories in a more commodious and advantageous manner, with the addition of scenery and other decorations. At length professed practitioners in the histrionic art were hired to perform these solemn mockeries of religion, which soon became the principal public amusement of a devout but undiscerning people.

To those who are accustomed to contemplate the great picture of human follies, which the unpolished ages of Europe hold up to our view, it will not appear surprising, that the people, who were forbidden to read the events of the sacred history in the bible, in which they were faithfully and beautifully related, should at the same time be permitted to see them represented on the stage, disgraced with the grossest improprieties, corrupted with inventions and additions of

<sup>v</sup> Des Represent. en MUSIQUE. p. 153. seq.

the

the most ridiculous kind, sullied with impurities, and expressed in the language and gesticulations of the lowest farce.

On the whole, the MYSTERIES appear to have originated among the ecclesiastics; and were most probably first acted, at least with any degree of form, by the monks. This was certainly the case in the English monasteries<sup>2</sup>. I have already mentioned the play of saint Catharine, performed at Dunstable abbey by the novices in the eleventh century, under the superintendance of Geoffry a Parisian ecclesiastic: and the exhibition of the PASSION, by the mendicant friers of Coventry and other places. Instances have been given of the like practice among the French<sup>3</sup>. The only persons who could read were in the religious societies: and various other circumstances, peculiarly arising from their situation, profession, and institution, enabled the monks to be the sole performers of these representations.

As learning encreased, and was more widely disseminated from the monasteries, by a natural and easy transition, the practice migrated to schools and universities, which were formed on the monastic plan, and in many respects resembled the ecclesiastical bodies. Hence a passage in Shakespeare's HAMLET is to be explained; where Hamlet says to Polonius, "My lord, you played once in the UNIVERSITY, you say." Polonius answers, "That I did, my Lord, and was accounted a good actor.—I did enact Julius Cefar, I was killed 'i' th' capitol<sup>b</sup>." Boulay observes, that it was a custom, not only still subsisting, but of very high antiquity, *vetustissima*

<sup>2</sup> In some regulations given by cardinal Wolsey, to the monasteries of the canons regular of St. Aulfen, in the year 1519, the brothers are forbidden to be *LUSORES aut MIMICI*, players or mimics. Dugd. Monast. ii. 568. But the prohibition means, that the monks should not go abroad to exercise these arts in a secular and mercenary capacity. See *ANNAL. BURTONENSIS*, p. 437. *supra* citat. p. 205. By the

way, *MIMICUS* might also literally be construed a player, according to Jonson, *ERIG.* 195.

— But the *Vice* Acts old *iniquity*, and in the fit Of *MIMICRY* gets th'opinion of a wit.

<sup>3</sup> See *supra*, vol. i. 246.

<sup>b</sup> *Act.* iii. sc. 5.

*consuetudo*

*consuetudo*, to act tragedies and comedies in the university of Paris<sup>c</sup>. He cites a statute of the college of Navarre at Paris, dated in the year 1315, prohibiting the scholars to perform any immodest play on the festivals of saint Nicholas and saint Catharine. “*In festis sancti Nicolai et beatæ Catharinæ nullum ludum inboneſtum faciant*.” Reuchlin, one of the German classics at the restoration of ancient literature, was the first writer and actor of Latin plays in the academies of Germany. He is said to have opened a theatre at Heidelberg; in which he brought ingenuous youths or boys on the stage, in the year 1498<sup>d</sup>. In the prologue to one of his comedies, written in trimeter iambics, and printed in 1516, are the following lines.

*Optans poeta placere paucis versibus,  
Sat esse adeptum gloriæ arbitratus est,  
Si autore se Germaniæ SCHOLA luſerit  
Græcanicis et Romuleis LUSIBUS.*

The first of Reuchlin's Latin plays, seems to be one entitled, SERGIUS, SEU CAPITIS CAPUT, COMOEDIA, a satire on bad kings or bad ministers, and printed in 1508<sup>e</sup>. He calls it his *primiciæ*. It consists of three acts, and is professedly written in imitation of Terence. But the author promises, if this attempt should please, that he will write INTEGRAS

<sup>c</sup> HIST. UNIV. PARIS. tom. ii. p. 226. See also his History *De Patronis quatuor Nationum*, edit. 1662.

<sup>d</sup> HIST. UNIV. PARIS. tom. iv. p. 93. Saint Nicholas was the patron of scholars. Hence at Eton college saint Nicholas has a double feast. The celebrity of the Boy-bishop began on St. Nicholas's day. In a fragment of the cellarer's *COMPUTUS* of Hyde abbey near Winchester, A. D. 1397. “*Pro epulis PUERI CELEBRANTIS in festo S. Nicolai.*” That is the Chorister celebrating mass. MSS. Wulves. Winton. Car-

pentier mentions an indecent sport, called le *VIRELLI*, celebrated in the streets on the feast of St. Nicholas, by the vicar and other choral officers of a collegiate church. SUPPL. Du Cang. LAT. GLOSS. in V. tom. iii. p. 1178.

<sup>e</sup> “*Nunquam ante ipsius ætatem Comœdia in Germanorum scholis acta fuit, &c.*” G. Lizelii HISTOR. POETAR. GERMAN. Francof. et Leipf. 1730. 12mo. p. 11.

<sup>f</sup> Phorææ. 4to. It is published with a gloss by Simlerus his Scholar.

COMEDIAS,

COMEDIAS, that is comedies of five acts<sup>a</sup>. I give a few lines from the Prologue<sup>b</sup>.

*Si unquam tulistis ad jocum vestros pedes,  
Aut si rei aures præbuisstis ludicræ,  
In hac nova, obsecro, poetæ fabula,  
Dignemini attentiores esse quam antea;  
Non hic erit lasciviæ aut libidini  
Meretriciæ, aut tristi senum curæ locus,  
Sed histrionum exercitus et scommata.*

For Reuchlin's other pieces of a like nature, the curious reader is referred to a very rare volume in quarto, PROGYMNASMATA SCENICA, seu LUDICRA PRÆEXERCITAMENTA varii generis. Per Joannem Bergman de Olpe, 1498. An old biographer affirms, that Conradus Celtes was the first who introduced into Germany the fashion of acting tragedies and comedies in public halls, after the manner of the antients. "Primus comædias et tragædias in publicis aulis veterum more egit<sup>c</sup>." Not to enter into a controversy concerning the priority of these two obscure theatrical authors, which may be sufficiently decided for our present satisfaction by observing, that they were certainly cotemporaries; about the year 1500, Celtes wrote a play, or masque, called the PLAY OF DIANA, presented by a literary society, or seminary of scholars, before the emperor Maximilian and his court. It was printed in 1502, at Nuremberg, with this title, "Incipit LUDUS DYANÆ, coram Maximiliano rege, per Sodalitatem Litterariam Damulianam in Linzio<sup>d</sup>." It consists of the

<sup>a</sup> Fol. x.

<sup>b</sup> Fol. iv.

<sup>c</sup> VIROR. ILLUSTR. VITÆ, &c. published by Fischardus, Francof. 1536. 4to. p. 8. b. Celtes himself says, in his DESCRIPTIO URBS NORINBERGÆ, written about 1500, that in the city there was an

"AULA prætoriana, ubi PUBLICA NUPTIARUM ET CHOREARUM SPECTACULA celebrantur, hystoriis et ymaginibus imperatorum et regum nostrorum depicta." Cap. x.

<sup>d</sup> See Conradi Celtis AMORES, Noringb. 1502. 4to. ad calc. SIGNAT. q.

iambic,

iambic, hexameter, and elegiac measures; and has five acts, but is contained in eight quarto pages. The plot, if any, is entirely a compliment to the emperor; and the personages, twenty-four in number, among which was the poet, are Mercury, Diana, Bacchus, Silenus drunk on his ass, Satyrs, Nymphs, and Bacchanalians. Mercury, sent by Diana, speaks the Prologue. In the middle of the third act, the emperor places a crown of laurel on the poet's head: at the conclusion of which ceremony, the chorus sings a panegyric in verse to the emperor. At the close of the fourth act, in the true spirit of a German shew, the imperial butlers refresh the performers with wine out of golden goblets, with a symphony of horns and drums: and at the end of the play, they are invited by his majesty to a sumptuous banquet<sup>1</sup>.

It is more generally known, that the practice of acting Latin plays in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, continued to Cromwell's usurpation. The oldest notice I can recover of this sort of spectacle in an English university, is in the fragment of an antient account-roll of the dissolved college of Michael-house in Cambridge: in which, under the year 1386, the following expence is entered. "*Pro ly pallio brusdato et pro sex larvis et barbis in comedia.*" That is, for an embroidered pall, or cloak, and six visors and six beards, for the comedy<sup>m</sup>. In the year 1544, a Latin comedy, called PAMMACHIUS, was acted at Christ's college in Cambridge: which was laid before the privy council by bishop Gardiner, chancellor of the university, as a dangerous libel, containing

<sup>1</sup> In the colleges of the Jesuits in Italy this was a constant practice in modern times. Denina says, that father Granelli's three best tragedies were written, for this purpose, between 1729, and 1731. ch. v. § 9. The tragedies of Petavius, Bernardinus and Stephonius, all Jesuits, seem intended for this use. See Morhof, POLYHIST. LITERAR. lib. vii. cap. iii. tom. i. 15. pag. 1069.

edit. Fabric. Lubec. 1747. 4to. Riccoboni relates, that he saw, in the Jesuit's college at Prague, a latin play acted by the students, on the subject of Luther's heresy; and the ridicule consisted in bringing Luther on the stage, with a bible in his hand, quoting chapter and verse in defence of the reformation.

<sup>m</sup> Inter MSS. Rawlinf. Bibl. Bodl. Oxon.

many offensive reflections on the papistic ceremonies yet unabolished". The comedy of GAMMAR GURTON'S NEEDLE was acted in the same society about the year 1552. In an original draught of the statutes of Trinity college at Cambridge, founded in 1546, one of the chapters is entitled, *De Præfecto Ludorum qui IMPERATOR dicitur*, under whose direction and authority, Latin comedies and tragedies are to be exhibited in the hall at Christmas; as also *Sex SPECTACULA*, or as many *DIALOGUES*. Another title to this statute, which seems to be substituted by another and a more modern hand, is, *De Comediis ludisque in natali Christi exhibendis*. With regard to the peculiar business and office of *IMPERATOR*, it is ordered, that one of the masters of arts shall be placed over the juniors, every Christmas, for the regulation of their games and diversions at that season of festivity. At the same time, he is to govern the whole society in the hall and chapel, as a republic committed to his special charge, by a set of laws, which he is to frame in Latin or Greek verse. His sovereignty is to last during the twelve days of Christmas, and he is to exercise the same power on Candlemas-day. During this period, he is to see that six *SPECTACLES* or *DIALOGUES* be presented. His fee is forty shillings°. Probably

° MSS. Coll. C. C. Cant. CATAL. Namsmith. p. 92. This mode of attack was seldom returned by the opposite party: the catholic worship, founded on sensible representations, afforded a much better hold for ridicule, than the religion of some of sects of the reformers, which was of a more simple and spiritual nature. But I say this of the infancy of our stage. In the next century, fanaticism was brought upon the English stage with great success, when polished manners had introduced humour into comedy, and character had taken place of spectacle. There are, however, two English interludes, one of the reign of Henry the eighth, called *EVERY MAN*, the other of that of Edward the sixth, call-

ed *LUSTY JUVENUS*, written by R. Weever: the former defends, and the latter attacks, the church of Rome.

° This article is struck out from CAP. xxiv. p. 85. MSS. Rawlins. Num. 233. Only that part of the statute is retained, in which *Comedies* and *Tragedies* are ordered to be acted. These are to be written, or rather exhibited, by the nine lecturers. The senior lecturer is to produce one: the eight others are charged with four more. A fine of ten shillings is imposed for the omission of each interlude. Another clause is then struck out, which limits the number of the plays to *THREE*, if *FIVE comode exponi non queant*.

the

the constitution of this officer, in other words, a *Master of the Revels*, gave a latitude to some licentious enormities, incompatible with the decorum of a house of learning and religion; and it was found necessary to restrain these Christmas celebrities to a more rational and sober plan. The *SPECTACULA* also, and *DIALOGUES*, originally appointed, were growing obsolete when the substitution was made, and were giving way to more regular representations. I believe these statutes were reformed by queen Elizabeth's visitors of the university of Cambridge, under the conduct of archbishop Parker, in the year 1573. John Dee, the famous occult philosopher, one of the first fellows of this noble society, acquaints us, that by his advice and endeavours, both here, and in other colleges at Cambridge, this master of the Christmas plays was first *named* and *confirmed* and *EMPEROR*. "The first was Mr. John Dun, a very goodly man of person, habit, and complexion, and well learned also<sup>1</sup>." He also further informs us, little thinking how important his *boyish attempts and exploits scholastical* would appear to future ages, that in the refectory of the college, in the character of Greek lecturer, he exhibited, before the whole university, the *Eugenyn*, or *PAX*, of Aristophanes, accompanied with a piece of machinery, for which he was taken for a conjuror: "with the performance of the scarabeus his flying up to Jupiter's palace, with a man, and his basket of victuals, on her back: whereat was great *wondering*, and many *vain reports* spread abroad, of the means how that was effected<sup>1</sup>." The tragedy of Jephthah, from the eleventh chapter of the book of *JUDGES*, written both in Latin and Greek, and dedicated to king Henry the eighth, about the year 1546, by a very grave and learned divine, John Christopherfon, another

<sup>1</sup> COMPENDIOUS REHEARSALL of Glastonienfis CHRON. edit. Hearne, Oxon. 1726.  
JOHN DEE, &c. written by himself, A. D. 1592. ch. i. p. 501. 502. APPEND. J. <sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 502.

of the first fellows of Trinity college in Cambridge, afterwards master, dean of Norwich, and bishop of Chichester, was most probably composed as a Christmas-play for the same society. It is to be noted, that this play is on a religious subject. Roger Ascham, while on his travels in Flanders, says in one of his Epistles, written about 1550, that the city of Antwerp as much exceeds all other cities, as the refectory of saint John's college in Cambridge exceeds itself, when furnished at Christmas with its theatrical apparatus for acting plays. Or, in his own words, "*Quemadmodum aula Johannis, theatrali more ornata, seipsam post Natalem superat.*" In an audit-book of Trinity college in Oxford, I think for the year 1559, I find the following disbursements relating to this subject. "*Pro apparatu in comoedia Andriae, vii l. ix s. iv d. Pro prandio Principis NATALICII eodem tempore, xiii s. ix d. Pro refectioe praefectorum et doctorum magis illustrium cum Bursariis prandentium tempore comoediae, iv l. vii d.*" That is, For dresses and scenes in acting Terence's ANDRIA, for the dinner of the CHRISTMAS PRINCE, and for the entertainment of the heads of the colleges and the most eminent doctors dining with the bursars or treasurers, at the time of acting the comedy, twelve pounds, three shillings, and eight pence. A CHRISTMAS PRINCE, OR LORD OF MISRULE, corresponding to the IMPERATOR at Cambridge just mentioned, was a common temporary magistrate in the colleges at Oxford: but at Cambridge, they were censured in the sermons of the puritans, in the reign of James the first,

\* Buchanan has a tragedy on this subject, written in 1554. Hamlet seems to be quoting an old play, at least an old song, on Jephthah's story, *HAML. ACT. II. SC. 7.* There is an Italian tragedy on this subject by Benedicte Capuano, a monk of Casino. Florent. 1587. 4to.

\* There is a latin tragedy, *ARCHIPROPHETA, sive Jobannes Baptista*, written in 1547, by Nicolas Grimald, one of the first

Students of Christ-church, Oxford, which probably was acted in the refectory there. It is dedicated to the dean, doctor Richard Cox, and was printed, Colon. 1548. 8vo. This play coincided with his plan of a rhetoric lecture, which he had set up in the college.

\* Aschami *EPISTOL.* p. 126. b. Lond. 1582.



as a relic of the pagan ritual". The last article of this disbursement shews, that the most respectable company in the university were invited on these occasions. At length our universities adopted the representation of plays, in which the scholars by frequent exercise had undoubtedly attained a considerable degree of skill and address, as a part of the entertainment at the reception of princes and other eminent personages. In the year 1566, queen Elizabeth visited the university of Oxford. In the magnificent hall of the college of Christ Church, she was entertained with a Latin comedy

Fuller, CH. HIST. Hist. of Cambridge, p. 159. edit. 1655. See OBSERVAT. on Spenser, ii. 211. In the court of king Edward the sixth, George Ferrers, a lawyer, poet, and historian, bore this office at Greenwich, all the twelve days of Christmas, in 1552. "Who so pleasantly and wisely behaved himself, that the king had great delight in his PASTIMES." Stowe's CHRON. p. 632. Hollingshead says, that "being of better credit and estimation than commonie his predecessors had bene before, he received all his commissions and warrants by the name of the MAISTER OF THE KING'S PASTIMES. Which gentleman so well supplied his office, both in shew of sundrie *fighis* and *devices* of rare inventions, and in act of divers INTERLUDES, and matters of pastime *plaid by persons*, as not onlie satisfied the common sort, but also were verie well liked and allowed by the COUNCELL, and others of *skill* in the like PASTIMES, &c." CHRON. iii. p. 1067. col. 2. 10. The appointment of so dextrous and respectable an officer to this department, was a stroke of policy; and done with a design to give the court popularity, and to divert the mind of the young king, on the condemnation of Somerset.

In some great families this officer was called the ABBOT OF MISRULE. In Scotland, where the reformation took a more severe and gloomy turn, these and other festive characters were thought worthy to be suppressed by the legislature. See PARL. of queen Mary of Scotland, 1555. "It

"is statute and ordained, that in all times cumming, na maner of person be chosen ROBERT HUBE nor LITTLE JOHN, ABBOT OF UN-REASON, QUEENIS OF MAY, nor utherwise, nother in burgh, nor to landwart, [in the country,] in onie time to cum." And this under very severe penalties, viz. In burghs, to the chufers of such characters, loss of Freedom, with other punishments at the queen's pleasure: and those who accepted such offices were to be banished the realm. In the country, the chufers forfeited ten pounds, with an arbitrary imprisonment. "And gif onie women or uther about summer hees [hies, goes,] singand [singing] . . . thorow Burrowes and uthers Landward townes, the women . . . fall be taken, handled, and put upon the cuck-stules, &c." See Notes to the PERCY HOUSEHOLD-BOOK. p. 441. Voltaire says, that since the Reformation, for two hundred years there has not been a fiddle heard in some of the cantons of Switzerland.

In the French towns there was L'ABBE DE LIESSE, who in many towns was elected from the burgesies by the magistrates, and was the director of all their public shews. Among his numerous mock-officers were a herald, and a *Maitre d'Hotel*. In the city of Auxerre he was especially concerned to superintend the play which was annually acted on Quinquagesima Sunday. Carpentier, SUPPL. GLOSS. LAT. Du, Cange, tom. i. p. 7. V. ABBAS LÆTITIÆ. See also, *ibid.* V. CHARAVARITUM, p. 923.

called

called *MARCUS GEMINUS*, the Latin tragedy of *PROGNE*, and an English comedy on the story of Chaucer's *PALAMON AND ARCITE*, all acted by the students of the university. The queen's observations on the persons of the last mentioned piece, deserve notice: as they are at once a curious picture of the romantic pedantry of the times, and of the characteristical turn and predominant propensities of the queen's mind. When the play was over, she summoned the poet into her presence, whom she loaded with thanks and compliments: and at the same time turning to her levee, remarked, that Palamon was so justly drawn as a lover, that he certainly must have been in love indeed: that Arcite was a *right martial knight, having a swart and manly countenance, yet with the aspect of a Venus clad in armour*: that the lovely Emilia was a virgin of uncorrupted purity and unblemished simplicity, and that although she sung so sweetly, and gathered flowers alone in the garden, she preserved her chastity undeflowered. The part of Emilia, the only female part in the play, was acted by a boy of fourteen years of age, a son of the dean of Christ-Church, habited like a young princess; whose performance so captivated her majesty, that she gave him a present of eight guineas\*. During the exhibition a cry of hounds, belonging to Theseus, was counterfeited without, in the great square of the college: the young students thought it a real chace, and were seized with a sudden transport to join the hunters: at which the queen cried out from her box, "O excellent! These boys, in very  
" troth, are ready to leap out of the windows to follow the

\* This youth had before been introduced to the queen's notice, in her privy chamber at her lodgings at Christ-Church; where he saluted her in a short Latin oration with some Greek verses, with which she was so pleased, that she called in secretary Cecill, and encouraging the boy's modesty with many compliments and kind speeches,

begged him to repeat his elegant performance. By Wood he is called, *Summa spei puer*. *HIST. ANTIQ. UNIV. OXON.* lib. i. p. 287. col. 2. See also *ATHEN. OXON.* i. 152. And *Peck's DESIG. CURIOS.* vol. ii. lib. vii. Num. xviii. p. 46. seq.

" hounds!"

“ hounds \*!” In the year 1564, queen Elizabeth honoured the university of Cambridge with a royal visit<sup>7</sup>. Here she was present at the exhibition of the *AULULARIA* of Plautus, and the tragedies of *DIDO*, and of *HEZEKIAH*, in English: which were played in the body, or nave, of the chapel of King’s college, on a stage extended from side to side, by a select company of scholars, chosen from different colleges at the discretion of five doctors, “ especially appointed to set forth such plays as should be exhibited before her grace<sup>8</sup>.” The chapel, on this occasion, was lighted by the royal guards; each of whom bore a staff-torch in his hand<sup>9</sup>. Her majesty’s patience was so fatigued by the sumptuous parade of shews and speeches, with which every moment was occupied, that she could not stay to see the *AJAX* of Sophocles, in Latin, which was prepared. Having been praised both in Latin and Greek, and in prose and verse, for her learning and her chastity, and having received more compliments than are paid to any of the pastoral princesses in Sydney’s *ARCADIA*, she was happy to return to the houses of some of her nobility in the neighbourhood. In the year 1583, Albertus de Alasco, a Polish prince Palatine, arrived at Oxford<sup>10</sup>. In the midst of a medley of pithy orations, tedious sermons, degrees, dinners, disputations, philosophy, and fire-works, he was invited to the comedy of the *RIVALES*<sup>c</sup>, and the

\* Wood. *ATHEN. OXON.* ubi sup.

<sup>7</sup> For a minute account of which, see Peck’s *DESID. CURIOS.* ut sup. p. 25. Num. xv. [MSS. Baker. vol. x. 7037. p. 109. Brit. Mus.] The writer was probably N. Robinson, domestic chaplain to archbishop Parker, afterwards bishop of Bangor. See Wood, *ATHEN. OXON.* i. col. 696. MS. Baker, ut sup. p. 181. And Parker’s *ANT. BRIT. ECCLES.* p. 14. *MATH. Vir fuit prudens, &c.* edit. 1572-3.

<sup>8</sup> Peck, ut sup. p. 36. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Peck, *ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Supposed to be the person whom Shakespeare, in the *MERCHANT OF VENICE*,

called the *Count Palatine.* Act. i. Sc. i.

<sup>c</sup> This was in Latin, and written by William Gager, admitted a student of Christ-Church in 1572. By the way, he is styled by Wood, the best *comedian* of his time, that is dramatic poet. But he wrote only Latin plays. His Latin *MELEAGER* was acted at Christ-Church before lord Leicester, sir Philip Sydney, and other distinguished persons, in 1581. *ATH. OXON.* i. p. 366. This Gager had a controversy with doctor John Rainolds, president of Corpus, at Oxford, concerning the lawfulness of plays: which produced from the latter a pamphlet, called *THE OVERTHROW*

tragedy of Dido, which were presented in Christ-Church hall by some of the scholars of that society, and of saint John's college. In the latter play, Dido's supper, and the destruction of Troy, were represented in a marchpane, or rich cake: and the tempest which drove Dido and Eneas to the same cave, was counterfeited by a snow of sugar, a hail-storm of comfits, and a shower of rose-water<sup>d</sup>. In the year 1605, king James the first gratified his pedantry by a visit to the same-university<sup>e</sup>. He was present at three plays in Christ-Church hall: which he seems to have regarded as childish amusements, in comparison of the more solid delights of scholastic argumentation. Indeed, if we consider this monarch's insatiable thirst of profound erudition, we shall not be surpris'd to find, that he slept at these theatrical performances, and that he sat four hours every morning and afternoon with infinite satisfaction, to hear syllogisms in jurisprudence and theology. The first play, during this solemnity, was a pastoral comedy called ALBA: in which five men, almost naked, appearing on the stage as part of the representation, gave great offence to the queen and the maids of honour: while the king, whose delicacy was not easily shocked at other times, concurred with the ladies, and availing himself of this lucky circumstance, peevishly expressed his wishes to depart, before the piece was half finished<sup>f</sup>. The second play was VERTUMNUS, which although *learnedly penned* in Latin, and by a doctor in divinity, could not keep the king awake, who was wearied in consequence of having executed the office of moderator all that day at

THROW OF STAGE-PLAYS, &c. Printed 1599. Gager's letter, in defence of his plays, and of the students who acted in them, is in Bibl. Coll. Univ. MSS. J. 18. It appears by a pamphlet written by one W. Heale, and printed at Oxford in 1609, that Gager held it lawful, in a public Act of the university, for husbands to beat their wives.

<sup>d</sup> Hollinsh. CHRON. iii. 1355.

<sup>e</sup> See PREPARATIONS AT OXFORD, &c. APPEND. LELANDI COLL. vol. ii. p. 626. seq. edit. Lond. 1774. [MSS. Baker, ut supr. Brit. Mus.] They were written by one present.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid. p. 637.

the

the disputations in saint Mary's church<sup>a</sup>. The third drama was the AJAX of Sophocles, in Latin, at which the stage was varied three times<sup>b</sup>. "The king was very wearie before he came thither, but much more wearied by it, and spoke "many words of dislike<sup>c</sup>." But I must not omit, that as the king entered the city from Woodstock, he was saluted at the gate of saint John's college with a short interlude, which probably suggested a hint to Shakespeare to write a tragedy on the subject of Macbeth. Three youths of the college, habited like witches, advancing towards the king, declared they were the same who once met the two chiefs of Scotland, Macbeth and Bancho; prophesying a kingdom to the one, and to the other a generation of monarchs: that they now appeared, a second time, to his majesty, who was descended from the stock of Bancho, to shew the confirmation of that prediction<sup>d</sup>. Immediately afterwards, "Three young youths, "in habit and attire like Nymphs, confronted him, representing England, Scotland, and Ireland; and talking dialogue wise, each to the other, of their state, at last concluded, yielding themselves up to his gracious government<sup>e</sup>."

<sup>a</sup> The queen was not present: but next morning, with her ladies, the young prince, and gallants attending the court, she saw an English pastoral, by Daniel, called ARCADIA REFORMED. Ibid. p. 642. Although the anecdote is foreign to our purpose, I cannot help mentioning the reason, why the queen, during this visit to Oxford, was more pleased to hear the Oration of the professor of Greek, than the king. "The king heard him willingly, and the Queen much more; because, she sayd, "she never had heard Greek." Ibid. 636.

<sup>b</sup> Towards the end of the hall, was a scene like a wall, "painted and adorned "with stately pillars, which pillars would "turn about, by reason whereof, with the "help of other painted clothes, their "stage did vary three times in the acting "of one tragedy." LEL. APPEND. ut supr. p. 631. The machinery of these plays, and the temporary stages in St.

Mary's church, were chiefly conducted by "one Mr. Jones, a great traveller, who "undertooke to furnish them with rare devices, but performed very little to that "which was expected." Ibid. p. 646. Notwithstanding these slighting expressions, it is highly probable that this was Inigo Jones, afterwards the famous architect. He was now but thirty-three years of age, and just returned into England. He was the principal Contriver for the masques at Whitehall. Gerrard, in STRAFFORDE'S LETTERS, describing queen Henrietta's popish chapel, says, "Such a glorious scene "built over the altar! Inigo Jones never "presented a more curious piece in any of "the masques at Whitehall. [dat. 1635.] vol. i. pag. 505.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. p. 639.  
<sup>d</sup> REX PLATONICUS, five MUSÆ REGNANTES, Oxon. 1607. 4to. p. 18.

<sup>e</sup> LEL. APPEND. ut supr. p. 636.

It would be unnecessary to trace this practice in our universities to later periods. The position advanced is best illustrated by proofs most remote in point of time; which, on that account, are also less obvious, and more curious. I could have added other antient proofs; but I chose to select those which seemed, from concomitant circumstances, most likely to amuse.

Many instances of this practice in schools, or in seminaries of an inferior nature, may be enumerated. I have before mentioned the play of ROBIN and MARIAN, performed, according to an annual custom, by the school-boys of Angiers in France, in the year 1392<sup>m</sup>. But I do not mean to go abroad for illustrations of this part of our present inquiry. Among the writings of Udal, a celebrated master of Eton, about the year 1540, are recited *Plures Comediæ*, and a tragedy *de Papatu*, on the papacy: written probably to be acted by his scholars. An extract from one of his comedies may be seen in Wilson's LOGIKE<sup>n</sup>. In the antient CONSUETUDINARY, as it is called, of Eton-School, the following passage occurs. "Circa festum divi Andreae, ludimagister eligere solet, pro suo arbitrio, SCENICAS FABULAS optimas et accommodatissimas, quas Pueri feriis Natalitiis subsequenter, non sine LUDORUM ELEGANTIA, populo spectante, publice aliquando peragant. — Interdum etiam exhibet Anglico sermone contextas fabulas, siquæ habeant acumen et leporem<sup>o</sup>." That is, about the feast of saint Andrew, the thirtieth day of November, the master is accustomed to chuse, according to his own discretion, such Latin stage-plays as are most excellent and convenient; which the boys are to act in the following Christmas holidays, before a public audience, and with all the elegance of scenery and ornaments

<sup>m</sup> Supr. i. 245. See more instances, *ibid.*

<sup>n</sup> Written in 1553, p. 69.

<sup>o</sup> Supposed to have been drawn up about

the year 1560. But containing all the antient and original customs of the school. MSS. Rawlinf. Bibl. Bodl.

usual

usual at the performance of a play. Yet he may sometimes order English plays; such, at least, as are smart and witty. In the year 1538, Ralph Radcliffe, a polite scholar, and a lover of graceful elocution, opening a school at Hitchin in Hertfordshire, obtained a grant of the dissolved friery of the Carmelites in that town: and converting the refectory into a theatre, wrote several plays, both in Latin and English, which were exhibited by his pupils. Among his comedies were *Dives and Lazarus*, Boccacio's *Patient Grisilde*, *Titus and Gesippus*<sup>p</sup>, and Chaucer's *Melibeus*: his tragedies were, the *Delivery of Susannah*, the *Burning of John Husk*, *Job's Sufferings*, the *Burning of Sodom*, *Jonas*, and the *Fortitude of Judith*. These pieces were seen by the biographer Bale in the author's library, but are now lost<sup>q</sup>. It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that this very liberal exercise is yet preserved, and in the spirit of true classical purity, at the college of Westminster<sup>r</sup>. I believe, the frequency of these school-plays suggested to Shakespeare the names of Seneca and Plautus as

<sup>p</sup> See *supr.* p. 341.

<sup>q</sup> Bale viii. 98. *ATH. OXON.* i. 73. I have seen an anonymous comedy, *APOLLO SHROVING*, composed by the Master of Hadleigh-school, in Suffolk, and acted by his scholars, on Shrove-tuesday, Feb. 7. 1626. printed 1627. 8vo. Published, as it seems, by E. W. Shrove-tuesday, as the day immediately preceding Lent, was always a day of extraordinary sport and feasting. So in the song of Justice Silence in Shakespeare, See *P. HENRY IV. A. V. S. 4.*

Tis merry in hall when beards wag all,  
And welcome MERRY SHROVETIDE.

In the Romish church there was antiently a feast immediately preceding Lent, which lasted many days, called *CARNISCAPIUM*. See Carpentier, in *V. SUPPL. LAT. GL.* Du Cang. tom. i. p. 831. In some cities of France an officer was annually chosen, called *LE PRINCE D'AMOUREUX*, who presided over the sports of the youth for six days before Ash-wednesday. *Ibid.* *V. AMORATUS.* p. 195, and *V. CARDINA-*

*LIS.* p. 818. also *V. SPINETUM*, tom. iii. p. 848. Some traces of these festivities still remain in our universities. In the *PERCY HOUSEHOLD-BOOK*, 1512, it appears that the clergy and officers of lord Percy's chapel performed a play "before his lordship upon Shrowftewesday at night." pag. 345.

<sup>r</sup> It appears antiently to have been an exercise for youth, not only to act but to write interludes. Erasmus says, that *fr* Thomas More, "adolescens *COMOEDI-* "OLAS et scripsit et egit." *EPISTOL.* 447. But see what I have said of More's *PAGE-AUNTS*, *Observat. on Spens.* ii. 47. And we are told, that More, while he lived a Page with archbishop Moreton, as the plays were going on in the palace during the christmas holidays, would often step upon the stage without previous notice, and exhibit a part of his own, which gave much more satisfaction than the whole performance besides. Roper's *LIFE AND DEATH OF MORE*, p. 27. edit. 1731. 8vo.

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dramatic

dramatic authors; where Hamlet, speaking of a variety of theatrical performances, says, "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light." Jonson, in his comedy of *THE STAPLE OF NEWES*, has a satirical allusion to this practice, yet ironically applied: where *CENSURE* says, "For my part, I beleeve it, and there were no wiser than I, I would have neer a cunning schoole-master in England: I mean a Cunning-man a schoole-master; that is, a conjurour, or a poet, or that had any acquaintance with a poet. They make all their schollers Play-boyes! Is't not a fine fight to see all our children made Enterluders? Doe we pay our money for this? Wee send them to learne their grammar and their Terence, and they learne their play-bookes. Well, they talk we shall have no more parliaments, god blesse us! But an wee have, I hope *Zeale of the Land Buzzy*, and my gossip Rabby *Trouble-truth*, will start up, and see we have painfull good ministers to keepe schoole, and catechise our youth; and not teach em to speake Playes, and act fables of false newes, &c'.

In tracing the history of our stage, this early practice of performing plays in schools and universities has never been considered, as a circumstance instrumental to the growth and improvement of the drama. While the people were amused with Skelton's *TRIAL OF SIMONY*, Bale's *GOD'S PROMISES*, and *CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL*, the scholars of the times were composing and acting plays on historical subjects, and in imitation of Plautus and Terence. Hence ideas of a legitimate fable must have been imperceptibly derived to the popular and vernacular drama. And we may add, while no settled or public theatres were known, and plays were chiefly acted by itinerant minstrels in the halls of the nobility at Christmas, these literary societies supported some idea of a

<sup>a</sup> ACT ii. Sc. 7.

<sup>t</sup> ACT iii. p. 50. edit. fol. 1631. This play was first acted in the year 1625.

stage:



stage: they afforded the best accommodations for theatrical exhibition, and were almost the only, certainly the most rational, companies of players that existed.

But I mean yet to trespass on my reader's patience, by pursuing this inquiry still further; which, for the sake of comprehension and connection, has already exceeded the limits of a digression.

It is perhaps on this principle, that we are to account for plays being acted by singing-boys: although they perhaps acquired a turn for theatrical representation and the spectacular arts, from their annual exhibition of the ceremonies of the boy-bishop; which seem to have been common in almost every religious community that was capable of supporting a choir. I have before given an instance of the singing-boys of Hyde abbey and saint Swithin's priory at

<sup>u</sup> In a small college, for only one provost, five fellows, and six choristers, founded by archbishop Rotheram in 1481, in the obscure village of Rotheram in Yorkshire, this piece of mummery was not omitted. The founder leaves by will, among other bequests to the college, "A Myter for the *carne-bishop* of cloth of gold, with two knopps of silver, gilt and enamelled." Hearne's *LIT. NIC. SCACC. APPEND.* p. 674. 686. This establishment, but with a far greater degree of buffoonery, was common in the collegiate churches of France. See Dom. Marlot, *HISTOIRE de la Metropole de Rheims*, tom. ii. p. 769. A part of the ceremony in the church of Noyon was, that the children of the choir should celebrate the whole service on Innocent's day. Brillou, *DICTIONNAIRE DES ARRETS*, Artic. NOYON. edit. de 1727. This privilege, as I have before observed, is permitted to the children of the choir of Winchester college, on that festival, by the founder's statutes, given in 1380. [See *supr.* vol. i. 248.] Yet in the statutes of Eton college, given in 1441, and altogether transcribed from those of Winchester, the chorister-bishop of the chapel is permitted to celebrate the holy

offices on the feast of saint Nicholas, but *by no means* on that of the INNOCENTS.—  
 " In festo sancti Nicolai, in quo et NUL-  
 " LATENUS in festo sanctorum INNOCEN-  
 " TIUM, divina officia (præter Missæ  
 " Secreta) exequi et dici permittimus per  
 " Episcopum Paerorum, ad hoc, de eisdem  
 " [pueris choristis] annis singulis eligen-  
 " dum." STATUT. Coll. Etonens. Cap.  
 xxxi. The same clause is in the statutes of  
 King's college at Cambridge. Cap. xlii.  
 The parade of the mock-bishop is evi-  
 dently akin to the *Fete des Foux*, in which  
 they had a bishop, an abbot, and a pre-  
 centor, of the fools. One of the pieces of  
 humour in this last-mentioned shew, was  
 to shave the precentor in public, on a stage  
 erected at the west door of the church. M.  
 Tilliot, *MEM. de la Fete des Foux*, ut *supr.*  
 p. 13. In the Council of Sens, A. D.  
 1485, we have this prohibition. " Turpem  
 " etiam illum abusum in quibusdam fre-  
 " quentatum ecclesis, quo, certis annis,  
 " nonnulli cum mitra, baculo, ac vestibus  
 " pontificalibus, *more episcoporum* benedi-  
 " cunt, alii ut reges et duces induti, quod  
 " Festum FATUORUM, vel INNOCEN-  
 " TIUM, seu PUERORUM, in quibusdam  
 " regionibus nuncupatur, &c." CONCIL.  
 SENON.

Winchester, performing a MORALITY before king Henry the seventh at Winchester castle, on a Sunday, in the year 1487. In the accompts of Maxtoke priory near Coventry, in the year 1430, it appears, that the eleemosynary boys, or choristers, of that monastery, acted a play, perhaps every year, on the feast of the Purification, in the hall of the neighbouring castle belonging to lord Clinton: and it is specified, that the cellarer took no money for their attendance, because his lordship's minstrels had often assisted this year at several festivals in the refectory of the convent, and in the hall of the prior, without fee or gratuity. I will give the article,

SENON. cap. iii. Harduin. ACT. CONCIL. Paris. 1714. tom. ix. p. 1525. E. See also ibid. CONCIL. BASIL. Sess. xxi. p. 1122. E. And 1296. D. p. 1344. A. It is surprising that Colet, dean of saint Paul's, a friend to the purity of religion, and who had the good sense and resolution to censure the superstitions and fopperies of popery in his public sermons, should countenance this idle farce of the boy-bishop, in the statutes of his school at saint Paul's; which he founded with a view of establishing the education of youth on a more rational and liberal plan than had yet been known, in the year 1512. He expressly orders that his scholars, "shall every Childermas [Innocents] daye come to Paulis church, and hear the CHILDE-BYSHOP's [of S. Paul's cathedral] sermon. And after, be at the hygh masse; and each of them offer a penny to the CHILDE-BYSHOP, and with them the maisters and surveyors of the scole." Knight's LIFE OF COLET, (MISCELL. Num. V. APPEND.) p. 362. I take this opportunity of observing, that the anniversary custom at Eton of going *ad Montem*, originated from the ancient and popular practice of these theatrical processions in collegiate bodies. In the statutes of New college in Oxford, founded about the year 1380, there is the following remarkable passage. "Ac etiam illum LUDUM vilissimum et horribilem RADENDI BARBAS, qui fieri solet in

nocte præcedente Inceptionis Magistrorum in Artibus, infra collegium nostrum prædictum, vel alibi in Universitate prædicta, ubicunque, ip[s]is [sociis et scholaribus] penitus interdiximus, ac etiam prohibemus expresse." RUSSELL. xxv. Hearne endeavours to explain this injunction, by supposing that it was made in opposition to the Wickliffites, who disregarded the laws of scripture; and, in this particular instance, violated the following text in LEVITICUS, where this custom is expressly forbidden. xix. 27. "Neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard." NOR. ad Joh. Trokelowe. p. 393. Nothing can be more unfortunate than this elucidation of our antiquary. The direct contrary was the case: for the Wickliffites entirely grounded their ideas of reformation both in morals and doctrine on scriptural proofs, and often committed absurdities in too precise and literal an acceptance of texts. And, to say no more, the custom, from the words of the statute, seems to have been long preserved in the university, as a mock-ceremony on the night preceding the solemn Act of Magistration. It is styled *LUDUS*, a Play: and I am of opinion, that it is to be ranked among the other ecclesiastic mummeries of that age; and that it has some connection with the exhibition mentioned above of shaving the Precentor in public.

which

which is very circumstantial, at length, "*Pro jentaculis puerorum eleemosynæ exeuntium ad aulam in castro ut ibi LUDUM peragerent in die Purificationis, xiv. d. Unde nihil a domini [Clinton] thesaurario, quia sæpius hoc anno ministralli castri fecerunt ministralliam in aula conventus et Prioris ad festa plurima sine ullo regardo*." That is, For the extraordinary breakfast of the children of the almonry, or singing-boys of the convent, when they went to the hall in the castle, to perform the PLAY on the feast of the Purification, fourteen-pence. In consideration of which performance, we received nothing in return from the treasurer of the lord Clinton, because the minstrels of the castle had often this year plaid at many festivals, both in the hall of the convent and in the prior's hall, without reward. So early as the year 1378, the scholars, or choristers, of saint Paul's cathedral in London, presented a petition to king Richard the second, that his majesty would prohibit some ignorant and unexperienced persons from acting the HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, to the great prejudice of the clergy of the church, who had expended considerable sums for preparing a public presentation of that play at the ensuing Christmas. From MYSTERIES this young fraternity proceeded to more regular dramas: and at the commencement of a theatre, were the best and almost only comedians. They became at length so favorite a set of players, as often to act at court: and, on particular occasions of festivity, were frequently removed from London, for this purpose only, to the royal houses at some distance from town. This is a circumstance in their dramatic history, not commonly known. In the year 1554, while the princess Elizabeth resided at Hatfield-house in Hertfordshire, under the custody of sir Thomas Pope, she was visited by queen Mary. The next morning, after mass, they were entertained with a grand exhibition of bear-baiting, *with*

\* Penes me. supr. citat. \* See RISE AND PROGRESS, &c. CIBB. L. vol. ii. p. 118.

*which*

which their highnesses were right well content. In the evening, the great chamber was adorned with a sumptuous suit of tapestry, called *The Hanginge of Antioch*: and after supper, a play was presented by the *children of Paul's*<sup>y</sup>. After the play, and the next morning, one of the children, named Maximilian Paines, sung to the princess, while she *plaid at the virginalls*<sup>z</sup>. Strype, perhaps from the same manuscript chronicle, thus describes a magnificent entertainment given to queen Elizabeth, in the year 1559, at Nonfuch in Surry, by lord Arundel, her majesty's housekeeper, or superintendent, at that palace, now destroyed. I chuse to give the description in the words of this simple but picturesque compiler. "There the queen had great entertainment, with banquets, especially on Sunday night, made by the said earl: together with a Mask, and the warlike sounds of drums and flutes, and all kinds of musick, till midnight. On Monday, was a great supper made for her: but before night, she stood at her standing in the further park, and there she saw a Course. At night was a Play by the *Children of Paul's*, and their [music] master Sebastian. After that, a costly banquet, accompanied with drums and flutes. This entertainment lasted till three in the morning. And the earl presented her majesty a cupboard of plate<sup>a</sup>." In the year 1562, when the society of parish clerks in London celebrated

<sup>y</sup> Who perhaps performed the play of HOLOPHERNES, the same year, after a *greate and rich maskinge and banquet*, given by sir Thomas Pope to the princess, in the *greate hall at Hatfelde*. LIFE of sir THO. POPE. SECT. iii. p. 85.

<sup>z</sup> MS. ANNALES OF Q. MARIE'S REIGNE. MSS. Cotton. VITELL. F. 5. There is a curious anecdote in Melville's MEMOIRS, concerning Elizabeth, when queen, being surprized from behind the tapestry by lord Hunfdon, while she was playing on her virginals. Her majesty, I know not whether in a fit of royal prudery, or of

royal coquetry, suddenly rose from the instrument and offered to *strike* his lordship: declaring, "that she was not used to play before men, but when she was solitary to shun melancholy." MEM. Lond. 1752. pag. 99. Leland applauds the skill of Elizabeth, both in playing and singing. ENCOM. fol. 59. [p. 125, edit. Hearn.]

Aut quid commemoram quos tu testudine sumpta

Concentus referas mellifluosque modos?

<sup>a</sup> ANN. REF. vol. i. ch. xv. p. 194. edit. 1725. fol.

one of their annual feasts, after morning service in Guildhall chapel, they retired to their hall; where, after dinner, a *goodly play* was performed by the choristers of Westminster abbey, with *waits, and regals, and singing*<sup>b</sup>. The children of the chapel-royal were also famous actors; and were formed into a company of players by queen Elizabeth, under the conduct of Richard Edwards, a musician, and a writer of Interludes, already mentioned, and of whom more will be said hereafter. All Lilly's plays, and many of Shakespeare's and Jonson's, were originally performed by these boys<sup>c</sup>: and it seems probable, that the title given by Jonson to one of his comedies, called *CYNTHIA'S REVELS*, first acted in 1605 "by the children of her majesties chapel, with the allowance of the Master of the Revels," was an allusion to this establishment of queen Elizabeth, one of whose romantic names was *CYNTHIA*<sup>d</sup>. The general reputation which they gained, and the particular encouragement and countenance which they received from the queen, excited the jealousy of the grown actors at the theatres: and Shakespeare, in *HAMLET*, endeavours to extenuate the applause which was idly indulged to their performance, perhaps not always very just, in the

<sup>b</sup> Strype's edit. of Stowe's *SURV. LOND.* B. v. p. 231.

<sup>c</sup> Six of Lilly's nine comedies are entitled *COURT-COMEDIES*: which, I believe, were written professedly for this purpose. These were reprinted together, Lond. 1632. 12mo. His last play is dated 1597.

<sup>d</sup> They very frequently were joined by the choristers of saint Paul's. It is a mistake that these were rival companies; and that because Jonson's *POETASTER* was acted, in the year 1601, by the boys of the chapel, his antagonist Decker got his *SATIROMASTIX*, an answer to Jonson's play, to be performed, out of opposition, by those of saint Paul's. Lilly's court-comedies, and many others, were acted by the children of both choirs in conjunction. It is certain

that Decker sneers at Jonson's interest with the Master of the Revels, in procuring his plays to be acted so often at court. "Sir *Vaughan*. I have some cossen-germans "at court shall beget you the reversion of "the master of the king's revels, or else to "be his lord of misraile nowe at Christmas."

*SIGNAT. G. 3.* Dekker's *SATIROMASTIX, or the Untrusting of the Humorous Poet.* Lond. for E. White, 1602. 4to. Again, *SIGNAT. M.* "When your playes are misse- "likt at court, you shall not crie mew like "a puffed-cat, and say you are glad you "write out of the courtier's element." On the same idea the satire is founded of sending Horace, or Jonson, to court, to be dubbed a poet: and of bringing "the quivering "bride to court in a malke, &c." *Ibid. SIGNAT. I. 3.*

Vol. II.

E e e

following

following speeches of Rosencrantz and Hamlet.—“ There is  
 “ an aiery of little children, little eyafes”, that cry out on  
 “ the top of the question, and are most tyrannically clapped  
 “ for’t: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the *common*  
 “ stages, so they call them, that many wearing rapiers are  
 “ afraid of goose quills, and dare scarce come thither.—  
 “ *Ham.* What, are they children? Who maintains them?  
 “ How are they escoted? Will they pursue the *Quality* no  
 “ longer than they can sing, &c.” This was about the  
 year 1599. The latter clause means, “ Will they follow the  
 “ *profession* of players, no longer than they keep the voices  
 “ of boys, and sing in the choir?” So Hamlet afterwards  
 says to the player, “ Come, give us a taste of your *quality*:  
 “ come, a passionate speech.” Some of these, however,  
 were distinguished for their propriety of action, and became  
 admirable comedians at the theatre of Black-friers’. Among  
 the children of queen Elizabeth’s chapel, was one Salvadore  
 Pavy, who acted in Jonson’s *POETASTER*, and *CYNTHIA’S*

<sup>g</sup> Nest of young hawks.

<sup>h</sup> Paid.

<sup>i</sup> Act. ii. Sc. vi. And perhaps he  
 glances at the same set of actors in *ROMEO*  
*AND JULIET*, when a play, or maske, is  
 proposed. Act i. Sc. v.

We’ll have no Cupid, hood-wink’d with a  
 scarf,

Bearing a Tartar’s painted bow of lath.—  
 Nor a *without-book* prologue faintly spoke  
 After the prompter. — — —

<sup>k</sup> Ibid. Sc. iii.

<sup>l</sup> There is a passage in *STRAFFORDE’S*  
*LETTERS*, which seems to shew, that the  
 dispositions and accommodations at the  
 theatre of Black-friers, were much better  
 than we now suppose. “ A little pique  
 “ happened betwixt the duke of Lenox and  
 “ the lord chamberlain, about a box at a  
 “ new play in the Black-friers, of which  
 “ the duke had got the key.” The dispute  
 was settled by the king. G. GARRARD to  
 the LORD DEPUTY. Jan. 25. 1635. vol. i.

p. 511. edit. 1739. fol. See a curious ac-  
 count of an order of the privy council, in  
 1633, “ hung up in a table near Pauls and  
 “ Black-fryars, to command all that resort  
 “ to the play-house there, to send away  
 “ their coaches, and to disperse abroad in  
 “ Pauls church-yard, carter-lane, the con-  
 “ duit in fleet-fleet, &c. &c.” Ibid. p. 175.  
 Another of Garrard’s letters mentions a  
 play at this theatre, which “ cost three or  
 “ four hundred pounds setting out; eight  
 “ or ten suits of new cloaths he [the author]  
 “ gave the players, an unheard of prodi-  
 “ gality!” Dat. 1637. Ibid. vol. ii. 150.

It appears by the Prologue of Chapman’s  
*ALL FOOLS*, a comedy presented at Black-  
 friers, and printed 1605, that only the spec-  
 tators of rank and quality sat on the stage.

— — To fair attire the stage  
 Helps much; for if our *other audience* see  
 You on the stage depart before we end,  
 Our wits go with you all, &c. —

REVELS,

REVELS, and was inimitable in his representation of the character of an old man. He died about thirteen years of age, and is thus elegantly celebrated in one of Jonson's epigrams.

*An Epitaph on S. P. a child of queene Elizabeth's chapell.*

Weep with me, all you that read  
 This little story!  
 And know, for whom a teare you shed  
 DEATH's selfe is sorry.  
 Twas a child, that so did thrive  
 In grace and feature,  
 As HEAVEN and NATURE seem'd to strive  
 Which own'd the creature.  
 Yeares he numbred scarce thirteene,  
 When Fates turn'd cruell;  
 Yet three fill'd zodiackes had he beene  
 The Stage's Jewell:  
 And did acte, what now we moane,  
 Old men so duely;  
 As, sooth, the PARCÆ thought him one,  
 He plaid so truely.  
 So, by errour, to his fate  
 They all consented;  
 But viewing him since, alas! too late,  
 They have repented:  
 And have sought, to give new birthe,  
 In bathes to steep him:  
 But, being so much too good for earthe,  
 HEAVEN vowes to keep him<sup>k</sup>.

To this ecclesiastical origin of the drama, we must refer the plays acted by the society of the parish-clerks of London,

<sup>k</sup> EPIGRAMMES, Epig. cxx.

for eight days successively, at Clerkenwell, which thence took its name, in the presence of most of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, in the years 1390, and 1409. In the ignorant ages, the parish-clerks of London might justly be considered as a literary society. It was an essential part of their profession, not only to sing but to read; an accomplishment almost solely confined to the clergy: and, on the whole, they seem to come under the character of a religious fraternity. They were incorporated into a guild, or fellowship, by king Henry the third about the year 1240, under the patronage of saint Nicholas. It was antiently customary for men and women of the first quality, ecclesiastics, and others, who were lovers of church-music, to be admitted into this corporation: and they gave large gratuities for the support, or education, of many persons in the practice of that science. Their public feasts, which I have already mentioned, were frequent, and celebrated with singing and music; most commonly at Guildhall chapel or college'. Before the reformation, this society was constantly hired to assist as a choir, at the magnificent funerals of the nobility, or other distinguished personages, which were celebrated within the city of London, or in its neighbourhood. The splendid ceremonies of their anniversary procession and mass, in the year 1554, are thus related by Strype, from an old chronicle. " May the sixth, was a goodly evensong at Guild-  
" hall college, by the Masters of the CLARKS and their Fel-  
" lowship, with singing and playing; and the morrow after,  
" was a great mass, at the same place, and by the same  
" fraternity: when every clark offered an halfpenny. The  
" mass was sung by diverse of the queen's [Mary's] chapel  
" and children. And after mass done, every clark went their  
" procession, two and two together; each having on, a sur-  
" plice and a rich cope, and a garland. And then, four-

† Stowe's SURV. LOND. ut supr. lib. v. p. 231.

“ score



“ score standards, streamers, and banners; and each one  
 “ that bare them had an albe or a surplice. Then came in  
 “ order the waits playing: and then, thirty clarkes, sing-  
 “ ing *FESTA DIES*. There were four of these choirs. Then  
 “ came a canopy, borne over the Sacrament by four of the  
 “ masters of the clarkes, with staffe torches burning, &c<sup>m</sup>.”  
 Their profession, employment, and character, naturally  
 dictated to this spiritual brotherhood the representation of  
 plays, especially those of the scriptural kind: and their con-  
 stant practice in shews, processions, and vocal music, easily  
 accounts for their address in detaining the best company  
 which England afforded in the fourteenth century, at a re-  
 ligious farce, for more than a week.

Before I conclude this inquiry, a great part of which has  
 been taken up in endeavouring to shew the connection be-  
 tween places of education and the stage, it ought to be re-  
 marked, that the antient fashion of acting plays in the inns  
 of court, which may be ranked among seminaries of in-  
 struction, although for a separate profession, is deducible  
 from this source. The first representation of this sort which  
 occurs on record, and is mentioned with any particular cir-  
 cumstances, was at Gray's-inn. John Roos, or Roo, student  
 at Gray's-inn, and created a serjeant at law in the year 1511,  
 wrote a comedy which was acted at Christmas in the hall of  
 that society, in the year 1527. This piece, which probably  
 contained some free reflections on the pomp of the clergy,  
 gave such offence to cardinal Wolsey, that the author was  
 degraded and imprisoned<sup>n</sup>. In the year 1550, under the  
 reign of Edward the sixth, an order was made in the same  
 society, that no comedies, commonly called Interludes, should  
 be acted in the refectory in the intervals of vacation, except  
 at the celebration of Christmas: and that then, the whole  
 body of students should jointly contribute towards the dresses,

<sup>n</sup> *ECCLES. MEM.* vol. iii. ch. xiii. p. 121.

<sup>o</sup> *HOLLINSH. CHRON.* iii. 894.

scenes,

scenes, and decorations\*. In the year 1561, Sackville's and Norton's tragedy of FERREX AND PORREX was presented before queen Elizabeth at Whitehall, by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple<sup>o</sup>. In the year 1566, the SUPPOSES, a comedy, was acted at Gray's-inn, written by Gascoigne, one of the students. Dekker, in his satire against Jonson above cited, accuses Jonson for having stolen some jokes from the Christmas plays of the lawyers. "You shall sweare not to humbaft out a new play with the old lyning of jestes stolne from the Temple-revells<sup>o</sup>." It the year 1632 it was ordered, in the Inner Temple, that no play should be continued after twelve at night, not even on Christmas-eve<sup>o</sup>.

But these societies seem to have shone most in the representation of Masques, a branch of the old drama. So early as the year 1431, it was ordered, that the society of Lincoln's inn should celebrate four revels<sup>o</sup>, on four grand festivals, every year, which I conceive to have consisted in

<sup>o</sup> Dugdale, ORIG. JURID. cap. 67. p. 285.

<sup>o</sup> Printed at London, 1565. 12mo. In one of the old editions of this play, I think a quarto, of 1590, it is said to be "set forth as the same was shewed before the queen's most excellent majestie, in her highness's court of the inner-temple." It is to be observed, that Norton, one of the authors, was connected with the law: For the "Ap- probation of Mr. T. Norton, counsellor and sollicitor of London, appointed by the bishop of London," is prefixed to Ch. Marbury's *Collection of Italian Proverbs*, Lond. 1581. 4to.

<sup>o</sup> SATIROMASTIX, edit. 1602. ut supr. SIGNAT. M.

<sup>o</sup> Dugd. ut supr. cap. 57. p. 140. seq. also c. 61. 205.

<sup>o</sup> It is not, however, exactly known whether these revels were not simply DANCES: for Dugdale says, that the students of this inn "anciently had DANCINGS for their recreation and delight." *IBID.* And he

adds, that in the year 1610, the under barristers, for example's sake, were put out of commons by decimation, because they offended in not DANCING on Candlemas-day, when the JUDGES were present, according to an antient order of the society. *Ibid.* col. 2. In an old comedy, called CUPID'S WHIRLIGIG, acted in the year 1616, by the children of his majesty's revels, a law-student is one of the persons of the drama, who says to a lady, "Faith, lady, I remember the first time I saw you was in quadragesimo-sexto of the queene, in a michaelmas tearme, and I think it was the morrow upon *mensis Michaelis*, or *crastino Animarum*, I cannot tell which. And the next time I saw you was at our REVELLS, where it pleased your ladyship to grace me with a galliard; and I shall never forget it, for my velvet pantables [pantofles] were stolne away the whilst." But this may also allude to their masks and plays. SIGNAT. H. 2. edit. Lond. 1616. 4to.

great

great measure of this species of imperfonation. In the year 1613, they presented at Whitehall a masque before king James the first, in honour of the marriage of his daughter the princess Elizabeth with the prince Elector Palatine of the Rhine, at the cost of more than one thousand and eighty pounds<sup>1</sup>. The poetry was by Chapman, and the machinery by Jones<sup>2</sup>. But the most splendid and sumptuous performance of this kind, plaid by these societies, was the masque which they exhibited at Candlemas-day, in the year 1633, at the expence of two thousand pounds, before king Charles the first; which so pleased the king, and probably the queen, that he invited one hundred and twenty gentlemen of the law to a similar entertainment at Whitehall on Shrove Tuesday following<sup>3</sup>. It was called the TRIUMPH OF PEACE, and written by Shirley, then a student of Gray's-inn. The scenery was the invention of Jones, and the music was composed by William Lawes and Simon Ives<sup>4</sup>. Some curious

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale *IBID.* p. 246. The other societies seem to have joined. *IBID.* cap. 67. p. 286. See also Finett's *PHILOXENIS*, p. 8. 11. edit. 1656. and *Ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Printed LOND. 1614. 4to. "With a description of the whole shew, in the manner of their march on horseback to the court from the Master of the Rolls his house, &c." It is dedicated to sir E. Philipps, Master of the Rolls. But we find a masque on the very same occasion, and at Whitehall, before the king and queen, called *The masque of Grays inn gentlemen and the Inner temple*, by Beaumont, in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher.

<sup>3</sup> Dugd. *ibid.* p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> It was printed, Lond. 1633. 4to. The author says, that it exceeded in variety and richness of decoration, any thing ever exhibited at Whitehall. There is a little piece called *THE INNS OF COURT ANAGRAMMATIST*, or *The Masquers Masqued in Anagrams*, written by Francis Lenton, the queen's poet, Lond. 1634. 4to. In this piece, the names, and respective houses, of each masquer are specified; and in commendation

of each there is an epigram. The masque with which his majesty returned this compliment on the shrove-tuesday following at Whitehall, was, I think, Carew's *CÆLUM BRITANNICUM*, written by the king's command, and played by his majesty, with many of the nobility and their sons who were boys. The machinery by Jones, and the music by H. Lawes. It has been given to Davenant, but improperly.

There is a play written by Middleton about the year 1623, called *INNER TEMPLE MASQUE*, or the *MASQUE OF HEROES*, presented as an entertainment for many worthy ladies, by the members of that society. Printed, Lond. 1640. 4to. I believe it is the foundation of Mrs. Behn's *CITY-HEIRESS*.

I have also seen the *MASQUE OF FLOWERS*, acted by the students of Grays-inn, in the Banqueting-house at White-hall, on Twelfth Night in 1613. It is dedicated to sir F. Bacon, and was printed, Lond. 1614. 4to. It was the last of the court-solemnities exhibited in honour of Carr, earl of Somerset.

anecdotes.

anecdotes of this exhibition are preserved by a cotemporary, a diligent and critical observer of those seemingly insignificant occurrences, which acquire importance in the eyes of posterity, and are often of more value than events of greater dignity. “ On Monday after Candlemas-day, the gentlemen  
 “ of the inns of court performed their MASQUE at Court.  
 “ They were sixteen in number, who rode through the  
 “ streets<sup>7</sup>, in four chariots, and two others to carry their  
 “ pages and musicians; attended by an hundred gentlemen on great horses, as well clad as every I saw any:  
 “ They far exceeded in bravery [splendor] any Masque that  
 “ had formerly been presented by those societies, and performed the dancing part with much applause. In their  
 “ company, was one Mr. Read of Gray’s-inn; whom all the  
 “ women, and some men, cried up for as handsome a man  
 “ as the duke of Buckingham. They were well used at  
 “ court by the king and queen. No disgust given them,  
 “ only this one accident fell: Mr. May, of Gray’s-inn, a  
 “ fine poet, he who translated Lucan, came athwart my  
 “ lord chamberlain in the banquetting-house<sup>8</sup>, and he broke  
 “ his staff over his shoulders, not knowing who he was; the  
 “ king present, who knew him, for he calls him HIS POET,  
 “ and told the chamberlain of it, who sent for him the next  
 “ morning, and fairly excused himself to him, and gave  
 “ him fifty pounds in pieces.—This riding-shew took so  
 “ well, that both king and queen desired to see it again, so  
 “ that they invited themselves to supper to my lord mayor’s  
 “ within a week after; and the Masquers came in a more  
 “ glorious shew with all the riders, which were increased  
 “ twenty, to Merchant-taylor’s Hall, and there performed  
 “ again<sup>9</sup>.” But it was not only by the parade of processions,

<sup>7</sup> They went from Ely house.

<sup>8</sup> At Whitehall.

<sup>9</sup> STRAFFORDE’S LETTERS, Garrard to the Lord Deputy, dat. Feb. 27. 1633.

vol. i. p. 207. It is added, “ On Shrove-Tuesday at night, the king and the lords  
 “ performed their Masque. The templars  
 “ were all invited, and well pleased, &c.”

See

and the decorations of scenery, that these spectacles were recommended. Some of them, in point of poetical composition, were eminently beautiful and elegant. Among these may be mentioned a masque on the story of Circe and Ulysses, called the *INNER TEMPLE MASQUE*, written by Wil-

See also p. 177. And Fr. Osborn's *TRADIT. MEM.* vol. ii. p. 134. *WORKS*, edit. 1722. 8vo. It seems the queen and her ladies were experienced actresses: for the same writer says, Jan. 9. 1633. "I never knew a duller Christmas than we had at Court this year; but one play all the time at Whitehall!—The queen had some little infirmity, which made her keep in: only on Twelfth-night, she feasted the king at Somerset-house, and presented him with a play, newly studied, long since printed, the *FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS* [of Fletcher] which the king's players acted in the robes *she and her ladies acted their PASTORAL in the last year.*" Ibid. p. 177. Again, Jan. 11. 1634. "There is some resolution for a Maske at Shrovetide: the queen, and fifteen ladies, are to perform, &c." Ibid. p. 360. And, Nov. 9. 1637. "Here are to be two masques this winter; one at Christmas, which the king and the young noblest do make; the other at Shrovetide, which the queen and her ladies do present to the king. A great room is now building only for this use betwixt the guard chamber and the banquetting-house, and of fir, &c." Ibid. vol. ii. p. 130. See also p. 140. And Finett's *PHILOXENIS*, "There being a maske in practice of the queen in person, with other great ladies, &c." p. 198. See Whitelock, sub. an. 1632. She was [also] an actress in Davenant's masque of the *TEMPLE OF LOVE*, with many of the nobility of both sexes. In Jonson's *CLO-RIDIA* at Shrovetide, 1630.—In Jonson's Masque called *LOVE FREED FROM IGNORANCE AND FOLLY*, printed in 1640.—In W. Mountagu's *SHEPHERD'S ORACLE*, a Pastoral, printed in 1649.—In the masque of *ALBION'S TRIUMPH*, the Sunday after Twelfth-night, 1631. Printed

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1631.—In *LUMINALIA*, or *The Festival of Light*, a masque, on Shrove-tuesday in 1637. Printed Lond. 1637. 4to.—In *SALMACIDA SPOLIA* at Whitehall, 1639. Printed Lond. 1639. 4to. The words, I believe, by Davenant; and the music by Lewis Richard, master of her majesty's music.—In *TEMPE RESTORED*, with fourteen other ladies, on Shrove-tuesday at Whitehall, 1631. Printed Lond. 1631. 4to. The words by Aurelian Townsend. The king acted in some of these pieces. In the preceding reign, queen Anne had given countenance to this practice; and, I believe, she is the first of our queens that appeared personally in this most elegant and rational amusement of a court. She acted in Daniel's Masque of *THE VISION OF THE FOUR GODDESSES*, with eleven other ladies, at Hampton-court, in 1604. Lond. 1624. 4to.—In Jonson's *MASQUE OF QUEENS*, at Whitehall, in 1609.—In Daniel's *GETHYS'S FESTIVAL*, a Masque, at the creation of prince Henry, Jun. 5. 1610. This was called the *QUEEN'S WAKE*. See Winwood. iii. 180. Daniel dedicates to this queen a pastoral tragedy, in which she perhaps performed, called *HYMEN'S TRIUMPH*. It was presented at Somerset-house, where she magnificently entertained the king on occasion of the marriage of lord Roxburgh. Many others, I presume, might be added. Among the *ENTERTAINMENTS* at *RUTLAND-HOUSE*, composed by Davenant in the reign of Charles the first, there is a *DECLAMATION*, or rather *Disputation*, with music, concerning *Public Entertainment by Moral Representation*. The disputants are Diogenes and Aristophanes. I am informed, that among the manuscript papers of the late Mr. Thomas Coxeter, of Trinity college in Oxford, an ingenious and inquisitive gleaner of anecdotes for a biography

F f f

liam Brown, a student of that society, about the year 1620\*. From this piece, as a specimen of the temple-masques in this view, I make no apology for my anticipation in transcribing the following ode, which Circe sings as a charm to drive away sleep from Ulysses, who is discovered reposing under a large tree. It is addressed to Sleep.

## THE CHARME.

Sonne of Erebus and Nighte!  
 Hye away, and aime thy flighte,  
 Where conforte none other fowle  
 Than the batte and fullen owle:  
 Where, upon the lymber gras,  
 Poppy and mandragoras,  
 With like simples not a fewe,  
 Hange for ever droppes of dewe:  
 Where flowes Lethe, without coyle,  
 Softly like a streame of oyle.  
 Hye thee thither, gentle Sleepe!  
 With this Greeke no longer keepe.

of English poets, there was a correspondence between sir Fulke Greville and Daniel the poet, concerning improvements and reformations proposed to be made in these court-interludes. But this subject will be more fully examined, and further pursued, in its proper place.

After the Restoration, when the dignity of the old monarchical manners had suffered a long eclipse from a Calvinistic usurpation, a feeble effort was made to revive these liberal and elegant amusements at Whitehall. For about the year 1675, queen Catharine ordered Crowne to write a Pastoral called CALISTO, which was acted at court by the ladies Mary and Anne daughters of the duke of York, and the young nobility. About the same time lady Anne, afterwards queen, plaid the part of Semandra, in Lee's MITHRIDATES. The young noblemen were instructed by Betterton, and the princesses by his wife; who perhaps conceived Shakespeare more fully

than any female that ever appeared on the stage. In remembrance of her theatrical instructions, Anne, when queen, assigned Mrs. Betterton an annual pension of one hundred pounds. Langb. DRAM. P. p. 92. edit. 1691. Cibber's APOL. p. 134.

This was an early practice in France. In 1540, Margaret de Valois, queen of Navarre, wrote Moralities, which she called PASTORALS, to be acted by the ladies of her court.

\* Printed from a manuscript in Emanuel-college at Cambridge, by Tho. Davies. WORKS OF W. BROWNE, Lond. 1772. vol. iii. p. 121. In the dedication to the Society the author says, "If it degenerate in kinde from those other the society hath produced, blame yourselves for not keeping a happier muse." Wood says that "Browne" retiring to the inner temple, "became famed there for his poetry." ATH. OXON. i. p. 492.

Thrice

Thrice I charge thee by my wand,  
 Thrice with moly from my hand  
 Doe I touch Ulysses' eyes,  
 And with th' iaspis. Then arise  
 Sagest Greeke !

In praise of this song it will be sufficient to say, that it reminds us of some favorite touches in Milton's *Comus*, to which it perhaps gave birth. Indeed one cannot help observing here in general, although the observation more properly belongs to another place, that a masque thus recently exhibited on the story of Circe, which there is reason to think had acquired some popularity, suggested to Milton the hint of a masque on the story of *Comus*. It would be superfluous to point out minutely the absolute similitude of the two characters: they both deal in incantations conducted by the same mode of operation, and producing effects exactly parallel.

From this practice of performing interludes in the inns of court, we may explain a passage in Shakespeare: but the present establishment of the context embarrasses that explanation, as it perplexes the sentence in other respects. In the SECOND PART OF HENRY THE FOURTH, Shallow is boasting to his cousin Silence of his heroic exploits when he studied the law at Clement's-inn. "I was once of Clement's inn, where I think they will talk of mad Shallow yet. *Sil.* You were called *lusty Shallow* then, cousin. *Shal.* I was called any thing, and I would have done any thing, indeed too, and roundly too. There was I, and little John Doit of Staffordshire, &c. You had not four such swinge-bucklers in the inns of court again. We knew where all the Bona Roba's were, &c.—Oh, the mad days that I have spent !" Falstaffe then enters, and is recognised by Shallow, as his brother-student at Clement's-

<sup>c</sup> Pag. 135.

<sup>d</sup> Act iii. Sc. iii.

inn; on which, he takes occasion to resume the topic of his juvenile frolics exhibited in London fifty years ago. "She's old, and had Robin Night work, before I came to Clement's inn.—Ha, cousin Silence, that thou hadst That that this knight and I have seen! Hah, Sir John, &c." Falstaffe's recruits are next brought forward to be inrolled. One of them is ordered to handle his arms: when Shallow says, still dwelling on the old favorite theme of Clement's-inn, "He is not his craft-master, he doth not do it right. I remember at Mile-End Green, when I lay at Clement's-inn, I was then Sir Dagonet in ARTHUR'S SHOW, there was a little quiver fellow, and he would manage you his piece thus, &c." Does he mean, that he acted sir Dagonet at Mile-end Green, or at Clement's-inn? By the application of a parenthesis only, the passage will be cleared from ambiguity, and the sense I would assign will appear to be just. "I remember at Mile-end Green, (when I lay at Clement's-inn, I was then Sir Dagonet in ARTHUR'S SHOW,) there was a little quiver fellow, &c." That is, "I remember, when I was a very young man at Clement's-inn, and not fit to act any higher part than Sir Dagonet in the interludes which we used to play in the society, that among the soldiers who were exercised in Mile-end Green, there was one remarkable fellow, &c." The performance of this part of Sir Dagonet was another of Shallow's feats at Clement's-inn, on which he delights to expatiate: a circumstance, in the mean time, quite foreign to the purpose of what he is saying, but introduced, on that account, to heighten the ridicule of his character. Just as he had told Silence, a little before, that he saw Schoggan's head broke by Falstaffe at the court-gate,

\* In the text, "When I laid at Clement's inn," is *lodged*, or *lived*. So Leland. "An old manor-place, where in tymes paste sum of the Moulbrays LAY for a starte." That is *LIVED for a time*, or *sometimes*.

ITIN. vol. i. fol. 119. Again, "Maister Page hath translated the House, and now much LYITH there." Ibid. fol. 121. And in many other places.

" and



“ and the *very same day*, I did fight with one Sampson Stock-fish, a fruiterer, behind Gray’s-inn.” Not to mention the satire implied in making Shallow act Sir Dagonet, who was King Arthur’s Fool. ARTHUR’S SHOW, here supposed to have been presented at Clement’s-inn, was probably an interlude, or masque, which actually existed, and was very popular, in Shakespeare’s age: and seems to have been compiled from Mallory’s MORTE ARTHUR, or the history of king Arthur, then recently published, and the favorite and most fashionable romance<sup>1</sup>.

When the societies of the law performed these shews within their own respective refectories, at Christmas, or any other festival, a Christmas-prince, or revel-master, was constantly appointed. At a Christmas celebrated in the hall of the Middle-temple, in the year 1635, the jurisdiction, privileges, and parade, of this mock-monarch, are thus circumstantially described<sup>2</sup>. He was attended by his lord keeper, lord treasurer, with eight white staves, a captain of his band of pensioners and of his guard; and with two chaplains, who were so seriously impressed with an idea of his regal dignity, that when they preached before him on the preceding Sunday in the Temple church, on ascending the pulpit, they saluted him with three low bows. He dined, both in the hall, and in his privy-chamber, under a cloth of estate. The pole-axes for his gentlemen pensioners were borrowed of lord Salisbury. Lord Holland, his temporary Justice in Eyre, supplied him with venison, on demand: and the lord mayor and sheriffs of London, with wine. On twelfth-day, at going to church, he received many petitions,

<sup>1</sup> That Mile-end green was the place for public sports and exercises, we learn from Froissart. In the affair of Tyler and Straw he says, “ Then the kyng sende to them that they shulde all drawe to a fayre playne place, called Myle-end, where the people of the cytie did sport themselves

“ in the somer season.” &c. Berner’s TRANSL. tom. i. c. 383. f. 262. a.

<sup>2</sup> See also Dugd. ORIG. Jurid. p. 151. where many of the circumstances of this officer are described at large: who also mentions, at Lincoln’s-inn, a KING OF THE COCKNEYS on childermas-day, cap. 64. p. 247.

which

which he gave to his master of requests: And, like other kings, he had a favorite, whom, with others, gentlemen of high quality, he knighted at returning from church. His expences, all from his own purse, amounted to two thousand pounds<sup>b</sup>. We are also told, that in the year 1635, “ On Shrovetide at night, the lady Hatton feasted the king, queen, and princes, at her house in Holborn. The Wednesday before, the PRINCE OF THE TEMPLE invited the prince Elector and his brother to a Masque at the Temple<sup>c</sup>, which was very compleatly fitted for the variety of the scenes, and excellently well performed. Thither came the queen with three of her ladies disguised, all clad in the attire of citizens.—This done, the PRINCE was deposed, but since the king knighted him at Whitehall<sup>k</sup>.”

But these spectacles and entertainments in our law-societies, not so much because they were romantic and ridiculous in their mode of exhibition, as that they were institutions celebrated for the purposes of merriment and festivity, were suppressed or suspended under the false and illiberal ideas of reformation and religion, which prevailed in the fanatical court of Cromwell. The countenance afforded by a polite court to such entertainments, became the leading topic of animadversion and abuse in the miserable declamations of the puritan theologists; who attempted the business of national reformation without any knowledge of the nature of society, and whose censures proceeded not so much from principles of a purer morality, as from a narrowness of mind, and from that ignorance of human affairs which necessarily accompanies the operations of enthusiasm.

<sup>b</sup> STRAFFOLDE'S LETTERS, ut supr. vol. i. p. 507. The writer adds, “ All this is done, to make them fit to give the prince elector a royal entertainment, with masks, dancings, and some other exercises of wit in orations or arraigments, that day they invite him.”

<sup>c</sup> This, I think, was Davenant's TRI-

UMPHS OF PRINCE D'AMOUR, written at their request for the purpose, in three days. The music by H. and W. Lawes. The names of the performers are at the end.

<sup>k</sup> Ibid. p. 525. The writer adds, “ Mrs. Basslet, the great lace-woman of Cheap-side, went foremost, and led the queen by the hand, &c.” See *ibid.* p. 506.