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Braynes] a murdering whore, and the others villains, rascals, and knaves." When the widow held up to him the order of the Court, "he cryed unto her, 'Go! Go! A cart, a cart for you! I will obey no such order, nor I care not for any such orders, and therefore it were best for you and your companions to be packing betimes, for if my son Cuthbert come home he will thump you hence.'" Just then Cuthbert did "come home, and in very hot sort bid them get hence, or else he would set them forward, saying 'I care for no such order. The Chancery shall not give away what I have paid for.'" And so, after "great and horrible oaths" by James Burbage and his son, the widow and her friends "went their ways," taking with them again the order of the Court of Chancery.

Foiled in this second attempt, the widow, with her faithful attendant Robert Miles, and a friend named Bishop, went "to the Theatre, upon a play-day, to stand at the door . . . to take and receive for the widow half the money that should be given to come in." When they entered the empty Theatre they were met by young Richard Burbage, then nineteen years old, and his mother, who seem to have been engaged in sweeping the building. Richard promptly "fell upon the said Robert Miles, and beat him with a broom-staff, calling him murdering knave." When Bishop dared to protest at this, and spoke of the contemptuous treatment given the order of the Court of Chancery, "the said Richard Burbage," so Bishop deposed, "scornfully and disdainfully playing with this deponent's nose, said that if he mixed in the matter he would beat him also, and did challenge the field of him at that time." One of the actors, John Alleyn (brother of Edward Alleyn), hearing all this noise, came out of the dressing-room, and "found the foresaid Richard Burbage, the youngest son of the said James Burbage, there with a broom-staff in his hand; of whom, when this
deponent, Alleyn, asked what stir was there, he answered in laughing phrase, how they came for a moiety [i.e., a half-interest], 'but,' quoth he, holding up the said broom-staff, 'I have, I think, delivered him a moiety with this, and sent them all packing.'" Miles and the others had indeed fled from the broom-staff wielded by young Richard with histrionic fervor. Then the father, James Burbage, came bustling into the Theatre. The actor, Alleyn, felt called upon to warn the Burbages that Miles could bring an action for assault and battery against them. "Tush!" exclaimed the father. "No! I warrant you! But where my son hath now beat him hence, my sons, if they will be ruled by me, shall, at their next coming, provide charged pistols, with powder and hempseed, to shoot them in the legs."

Such were the Burbages. But this picture, drawn from a rather sordid episode, reveals only one side of their character. Richard Burbage, at least, was a man of wide intellectual interests, an excellent painter as well as a distinguished actor, and gifted with a personality that endeared him to his friends. Upon his death many touching elegies were written on him. One that deals with him as a man may here be cited. The Earl of Pembroke, writing to the Ambassador to Germany, gives the Court news about the mighty ones of the kingdom: "My Lord of Lenox made a great supper to the French Ambassador this night here, and even now all the company are at a play; which I, being tender-hearted, could not endure to see so soon after the loss of my old acquaintance Burbage."

The other sharers of the company were likewise men of note in their profession, whose acquaintance was prized by those interested in the drama and literature. I have already cited testimony to the amiability of William Kempe as a companion; Nashe declares that he was "oft
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in his company.” The poet, John Davies of Hereford, addressing actors in general, and singling out two members of the Chamberlain’s Company in particular, exclaims: “Players, I love yee”; and as a class they must have been very interesting men. They did not possess a university training, yet they all had a general education, were well-versed in the world, and were endowed with a natural wit that made them kings of good fellows. Young noblemen and gallants sought their society, and often entertained them at expensive suppers in the taverns.¹ Perhaps in their intellectual alertness, their lively personalities, and their genial spirits they differed in no essential way from the better grade of actors to-day.

Moreover — and this fact has not been properly stressed — the leading members of the Chamberlain’s Company were distinguished by a probity of character that impresses the close student of their lives. John Heminges was universally admired for his integrity, and, as we know, generously gave of his time and energy to helping his fellows. Both he and Condell were churchwardens of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, where they resided most of their lives. The moral earnestness of Phillips is clearly revealed in his will, a document that makes us feel that we should be proud to have such a man as our friend. Thomas Pope, who lived as a bachelor on the Bankside, left by testament “unto Susan Gasquine, whom I have brought up ever since she was born, the sum of one hundred pounds . . . and all my household stuff,” with “all that house or tenement wherein I now dwell, in the parish of St. Saviour’s”; to a certain young Thomas Bromley he left “the sum of fifty pounds . . . in regard the use thereof may bring up the boy”; and to his mother, his brothers, and to various friends he gave benefactions

¹ See Dekker, The Cui’s Horn-book; and Jonson, Every Man in His Humor, Character of the Persons; Poetaster, III, i; Bartholomew Fair, V, iii.
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in words that express great affection and kindness of heart.¹

These were the people with whom Shakespeare was henceforth to live on terms of close familiarity. We may well believe that he found their companionship to his liking. And so thoroughly did he make himself one of them, that Heminges and Condell call him not only "friend and fellow" but, speaking for the whole company, "our Shakespeare."

¹ For the wills of these actors, and other materials relating to them, see J. P. Collier, Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare, 1846.
CHAPTER XII

LABORS FOR THE CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN, 1594–1598

Shakespeare’s task now was to provide the Chamberlain’s Company with an adequate supply of plays, both through frequent revision of old manuscripts, and through the annual composition of two or more original pieces. Upon joining the troupe he was probably able to furnish the actors at once with a new comedy, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, on which, it seems, he had been working during his long period of enforced leisure. The play, with its Italian setting, gives unmistakable evidence of that wide reading in the Renaissance literature of the Continent which occupied much of his time from 1592 to 1594. Not only are various elements of the plot to be found in French and Italian story-tellers, but the main theme, of Proteus and Julia, was derived from the popular Spanish romance of Diana, by Montemayor. Since there was no printed English translation of this voluminous romance, the natural inference is that Shakespeare read it in the original, or in the French translation of 1578.\(^1\) The influence of Lyly’s Euphues, too, popular in fashionable circles, and of his “Court comedies,” well-approved by the Queen, is unmistakable. Indeed, the play seems to have been devised with a courtly audience distinctly in mind. This may explain why in style and in spirit it is closely akin to Love’s Labour’s Lost, written late

\(^1\) Shakespeare’s ability to read French cannot be questioned, and we have evidence, though less certain, that he had some command of Spanish. The English translation by Young was not printed until 1598, and then privately. There is, of course, a possibility that Shakespeare had the privilege of reading Young’s manuscript; but the bulkiness of the work would prevent many transcripts, and the chance of his seeing a copy was not great.
in 1592 when the plague made the Christmas performance before Elizabeth the chief concern of the actors. Although there is no positive evidence to fix the exact time of its composition, we may feel sure that The Two Gentlemen was produced after Love's Labour's Lost; and scholars are generally agreed that the date 1593–94 cannot be far astray.

If, as seems virtually certain, the play was ready for the actors in the autumn or early winter of 1594, it came at a most opportune moment; for the Chamberlain's Men were summoned to give two performances before Her Majesty during the Christmas festivities that followed.

And now for the first time, we discover Shakespeare's name associated with the Chamberlain organization. The record of the Treasurer reads:

To William Kempe, William Shakespeare, and Richard Burbage, servants to the Lord Chamberlain, upon the Council's warrant, dated at Whitehall xvto Marci 1594 [i.e., 1595], for two several comedies or interludes showed by them before Her Majesty in Christmas time last past, viz., upon St. Stephen's Day [December 26, 1594] and Innocents' Day [an error 1 for St. John's Day, December 27, 1594], xiii. viii., and by way of Her Majesty's reward, xili. xiiiis. ivd.; in all, xxli.

The linking of Shakespeare's name with those of Kempe and Burbage in order clearly to identify the troupe, 2

1 The treasurer's account elsewhere shows that on Innocents' Day, December 28, the Admiral's Men played before Her Majesty; and we know that on that day the Chamberlain's Men played before the members of Gray's Inn. It was the Queen's custom to have a play on December 27. The truth seems to be that the Chamberlain's Company performed before the Queen at Greenwich on December 26 and 27, and returned to London for their performance at Gray's Inn on December 28, and that, as the record shows, the Admiral's Men entertained the Queen on the latter date. Thus we must assume an error in the scribe's record, unless we resort to several unlikely suppositions.

2 I do not understand how Sir Sidney Lee supposes that, not the troupe as a whole, but these three actors alone were summoned, presented not complete plays, but selected scenes ("all the scenes came from Shakespeare's repertory"), and shared the reward among themselves. See his Shake-
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gives unmistakable testimony to the commanding position which at this early date he enjoyed in London theatrical circles, and is in striking contrast with the total absence of any allusion to him, or to his plays, in the Henslowe-Alleyn documents relating to the same troupe before June, 1594. This is merely one of many bits of evidence indicating that he was not connected with the Chamberlain's Company until its reorganization after the plague.

The brief record of the treasurer does not supply us with the titles of the "two several comedies" acted by the Chamberlain's Men at Greenwich. One of them, as has been suggested, may well have been The Two Gentlemen of Verona, the courtly style of which would render it highly suitable for performance before Her Majesty. The other, we may guess, was The Comedy of Errors, just rewritten by Shakespeare for a great Christmas celebration to be held by the members of Gray's Inn. Through our good luck in having a detailed account of this celebration, we are able to visualize an interesting episode in the early career of the dramatist.

The Inns of Court, four in number — the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn — were societies which gave instruction in the law, and exercised the exclusive right of admitting persons to practice at the bar. By ancient custom the members, consisting of benchers, barristers, and students, frequently devised plays, masques, and other entertainments for the amusement of themselves and invited guests. Following this custom, in December, 1594, the members of Gray's Inn held "a grand revel" — a veritable Feast of Fools — in which they elected one of their members, Henry Helmes, Lord of Misrule. Bestowing on him the title "Prince of

they celebrated his reign of folly, which lasted throughout the Christmas holidays, with hilarious merriment. The title-page of the printed account of these revels, with its allusions to nearly all the famous places of ill-repute about London, gives a fair notion of the spirit with which the young lawyers threw themselves into their fun-making: "Gesta Grayorum: or, The History of the High and Mighty Prince, Henry, Prince of Purpoole, Arch-Duke of Stapulia and Bernardia, Duke of High and Nether Holborn, Marquis of St. Giles and Tottenham, Count Palatine of Bloomsbury and Clerkenwell, Great Lord of the Cantons of Islington, Kentish-Town, Paddington and Knights-bridge, Knight of the Most Heroical Order of the Helmet, and Sovereign of the Same; Who Reigned, and died, A.D. 1594."  

On the twentieth of December the Prince was formally inducted into office. Attended by all his trait, he "marched from his lodging to the great Hall, and there took his place in his throne, under a rich cloth of state; his counsellors and great lords were placed about him." The elaborate ceremonies of coronation were followed by witty obscene speeches and high-sounding proclamations by various members of the society, lasting several hours. But the climax of the revels was arranged for the evening of December 28, when hundreds of outside guests were to be present. For this occasion the Chamberlain's Men were engaged to present a play. It is worth noting that the young Earl of Southampton was a member of Gray's Inn, and he may have had something to do with the choice of Shakespeare's company; such an assumption, however, is by no means necessary, for Shakespeare's reputation was in, itself sufficient to explain why the lawyers should desire a play from his pen.

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1 This was first printed from the manuscript in 1688. There is an excellent reprint by W. W. Greg in The Malone Society Reprints, 1914.
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As befitting the reign of a Lord of Misrule Shakespeare selected for presentation before the Prince and his guests *The Comedy of Errors*. But for so important an occasion he would naturally revise the play, rewriting such portions as most needed it, or as the limited time at his disposal allowed. The text of the comedy as it has come down to us distinctly shows the marks of this hurried revision. Much of the original doggerel verse and rhyme, the wooden balancing of speeches, and the absurd plays on words, remain; yet in the more pivotal scenes the revising hand of the mature artist is plainly discernible. The text, indeed, presents a curious mixture of Shakespeare's earliest and worst style, with his later and more masterly style.

To be the special guests of honor at this grand climax of their revels, the members of Gray's Inn sent a formal invitation to the members of the rival Inner Temple, with the request that the latter bring with them an Ambassador properly accredited to the High and Mighty Prince of Purpoole. The Templars accepted the invitation, appointed an Ambassador Extraordinary, and prepared to attend in full force. Unluckily the individual members of Gray's Inn made the mistake of sending out too many invitations to their private friends, so that the Hall could not nearly accommodate all who came.

For what happened on the night of December 28 I may summarize the published account. "There was a great presence of lords, ladies, and worshipful personages that did expect some notable performance"; but the numbers were "so exceeding great, that thereby there was no convenient room." At nine o'clock, the Templars arrived, with their Ambassador "very gallantly appointed, and attended by a great number of brave gentlemen." In spite of the throngs that interfered with the proposed ceremonies, the Ambassador was received with a set
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speech of mock solemnity, and seated in a place of honor on the stage itself. But, "when the Ambassador was placed, as aforesaid, and that there was something to be performed for the delight of the beholders, there arose such a disordered tumult and crowd upon the stage, that there was no opportunity to effect that which was intended, there came so great a number of worshipful personages upon the stage that might not be displaced, and gentlewomen whose sex did privilege them from violence." The upshot of this embarrassing state of affairs was that at last the members of the Inner Temple, presumably the special guests of honor, became "discontented and displeased," and in unmistakable anger left the Hall. "After their departure the throngs and tumults did somewhat cease, although so much of them continued as was able to disorder and confound any good inventions whatsoever." Finally, at midnight, the turmoil was quieted, and the stage sufficiently cleared to enable Shakespeare and his fellows to begin their performance: "a Comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his Menechmus)."

When the title was announced it must have provoked among the audience considerable laughter by its appropriateness to the occasion; at any rate the point was not lost on the members of Gray's Inn: "So that night was begun, and continued to the end, in nothing but confusion and Errors; whereupon it was ever afterwards called 'The Night of Errors.'" ¹

¹ The following night the students held a mock-trial to inquire into the "great disorders," which were humorously attributed to witchcraft. Among the charges brought against the "Sorcerer or Conjuror that was supposed to be the cause of that confused inconvenience" was mentioned, in the spirit of fun that characterized the whole proceedings, his fetching in a Play of Errors: "And, lastly, that he had foisted a company of base and common fellows to make up our disorders with a Play of Errors and Confusions." Scholars, forgetting that this was a mock-trial conducted in farcical language, have misinterpreted the passage quoted above. Even Mrs. Stopes, in her recent Southampton (1922), pp. 71 ff., says: "The play was considered the crowning disgrace of the evening"; and she advances the theory that the masque
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But such things as an appearance at Court, or the revamping of an old comedy for the members of Gray’s Inn, were mere episodes in Shakespeare’s busy career as an actor and a playwright. We should like to know something of the rôles he assumed before the public, and something of the success he achieved in histrionic art. Chettle, it will be recalled, declared as early as 1592 that he was “excellent in the quality” he professed; and Heminges and Condell, in publishing his comedies, histories, and tragedies, placed his name at the head of the list “of the principal actors in all these plays.” But the parts that an actor assumed not being a matter of record, it is only accident when we can say that a given player assumed a given rôle. In the case of Shakespeare, as with most of his fellows, accident has not favored us.¹

Moreover, not a little of his labor as a dramatist escapes us, for doubtless he was often employed in revamping old plays. When he joined the Chamberlain’s Company he found its stock of manuscripts large; as a troupe it had long been in existence, and recently it had acquired by purchase a number of old pieces from the disrupted Pembroke’s Company. Many of these would need touching up, and not a few even drastic revision in order to make them effective; for, it should be remembered, the standards of dramatic entertainment were from year to year presented on January 3 was for the purpose of blotting out the disgrace of a vulgar play. But the passage she cites by way of proof indicates no such thing: “The performance of which night [i.e., the performance on January 3], being carefully and orderly handled, did so delight and please . . . that thereby Gray’s Inn did not only recover their lost credit, and quite take away all the disgrace that the former Night of Errors had incurred,” but made friends again with the Templars. Clearly the emphasis is on the fact that “the performance” was “carefully and orderly handled,” and that, as a result of this orderly handling, the Templars who, it should be remembered, left the hall before the play began) were appeased. The “disgrace” was due to the “Night of Errors” not to the “Play of Errors”; as one of the members of Gray’s Inn put it: “That Night had gained to us Discredit, and itself a nickname of Errors.”

¹ For a discussion of the rôles he is supposed to have assumed, see pp. 424–27.
being steadily raised. The work of Shakespeare in these revisions cannot now be traced with certainty. Many of the manuscripts he possibly furbished never came into print, and so perished; some were later subjected to further revision, either by Shakespeare or by other playwrights;¹ and a few, perhaps, are extant to-day with hasty lines from his pen that cannot easily be recognized.² It is only of the plays that constitute the canon as fixed by Heminges and Condell that we can speak with anything like confidence.

Of these the first that probably received his attention was George Peele's Henry VI. By a curious turn of Fortune's wheel, the Chamberlain's Company, which in 1592 scored a remarkable success with this play, had come into possession (through purchase from the bankrupt Pembroke's Company) of The True Tragedy and its sequel, The Contention, the old chronicles Shakespeare had reworked as a competing attraction. All three plays had met with such hearty approval from theatre-goers that it would be a mistake to suppress any one of them. Shakespeare therefore combined them into a Henry VI trilogy by using Peele's play as an introduction or prologue to the two Marlowe plays — a feat he was able to accomplish with very little manipulation. No doubt the three histories, acted in sequence, continued, as they had done before the inhibition of 1592, to attract great crowds.

The extraordinary success the Henry VI plays had attained with the public was the main reason, we may suppose, that led Shakespeare to continue the historical vein. But there were other reasons also. The patriotic fervor arising from the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and the consequent spirit of national unity, had produced among

¹ For example Hamlet, which Shakespeare is thought to have touched up long before his final and triumphant revision.
² Sir Thomas More is a possible example.
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Englishmen an intense interest in the history of their country, and had created an unprecedented demand for the "chronicle," a distinctively native type of dramatic entertainment. Moreover, at a time when the Puritans were bitter in their attacks upon the theatre, the actors gained no little credit from the educational value of such studies. As Heywood boasted in his *Apology for Actors*: "Plays have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English chronicles; and what man have you now of that weak capacity that cannot discourse of any notable thing recorded even from William the Conqueror, nay from the landing of Brute, until this day?" Since the vogue of the historical drama was now at its height, it was quite natural for Shakespeare to provide his troupe with plays of this type.

Accordingly, turning to Holinshed’s *Chronicle* he took up English history at the precise point where *III Henry VI* left off, namely at the death of the King, and, beginning with the funeral obsequies of that sovereign, created *Richard III*. Although external proof is lacking, internal evidence makes it reasonably certain that the play was being presented on the stage of the Theatre early in 1595. Its style reveals the profound influence which Marlowe’s genius exercised upon the youthful Shakespeare, and the text in many ways indicates an intimate association with the three Henry VI plays. But the new play surpassed its prototypes by giving to the episodic chronicle something of artistic unity and tragic effectiveness through the dominating figure of Richard, whose rise and fall constitute the proper movement of the plot, and whose character

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1 The theory has been advanced that *Richard III* is a revision by Shakespeare of an older play written as a sequel to *The True Tragedy; see the London Times Literary Supplement*, September 20 and 27, 1918, pp. 438 and 452.
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forms the central interest. Its immediate success with the public was astounding. Even from men of letters it won high praise; for example, the author of the poem entitled The Ghost of Richard the Third (1614), makes the spirit of Richard say:

To him that impt my fame with Clio’s quill,
Whose magic rais’d me from oblivion’s den,
That writ my story on the Muses’ hill,
And with my action dignifi’d his pen;
He that from Helicon sends many a rill,
Whose nectared veins are drunk by thirsty men,
Crown’d be his style with fame, his head with bays;
And none detract, but gratulate his praise.

Nor was Shakespeare the only one for whom the play won fame; young Burbage attained instant renown by his impassioned utterance of the line —

A horse! a horse! my Kingdom for a horse!

Such a deep impression did this line as shouted in the Theatre by Burbage make upon the public that for many years after it was a stock expression for quotation and parody. Bishop Corbet, about 1618, relates an interesting anecdote of an old “host,” whom he describes as “full of ale and history.” On one occasion this merry soul, while acting as a guide to visitors on the battlefield of Bosworth, and eloquently describing the death of Richard — “Why, he could tell the inch where Richmond stood, where Richard fell” — in his fervor of utterance “mistook a player for a king,” —

For when he would have said “King Richard died
And called ‘A horse! a horse!’” he “Burbage” cried.¹

The success of Richard III naturally inspired Shakespeare to attempt other historical plays. Again turning to Holinshed’s Chronicle he selected the story of King Richard II, dramatizing it apparently with such speed as to be

¹ Iter Boreale, pp. 193-94.
able to deliver the manuscript to the actors by the summer or early autumn of 1595. Although it failed to achieve the sensational popularity of Richard III, it was for many years a favorite with London audiences. Queen Elizabeth, who did not relish its deposition scene, had occasion to complain at the frequency with which it was acted in London; and even so late as 1631 Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, thought it still popular enough to warrant his choosing it for his benefit performance.

Richard II was promptly followed by another historical play, King John, in all probability acted by the Chamberlain’s Men before the close of 1595. In its composition Shakespeare made free use of an old two-part chronicle, The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England,¹ long known on the stage, and printed in 1591. But his skilful condensation of the plot, and vivid portrayal of the characters, make this revamping one of the most effective of his historical studies. Its continued favor with London audiences is indicated by the issue of the old source-play in 1611 with the statement on the title-page “written by W. Sh.,” and again in 1622 with the bolder statement “written by W. Shakespeare.”

Through the production of these six chronicle-plays Shakespeare had established himself as the most famous interpreter of English history to the common people; and the esteem in which his efforts were long held by the public is echoed in Jonson’s The Devil is an Ass, 1616:

Fitz. I know not that, sir. But Thomas of Woodstock,
I’m sure was duke, and he was made away
At Calice, as Duke Humphrey was at Bury:
And Richard the Third, you know what end he came to.

Mee. By my faith you are cunning in the chronicle, sir.

¹Almost certainly the work of George Peele; see H. Dugdale Sykes, Sidelights on Shakespeare, 1919, pp. 99 ff.
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Fitz. No, I confess I have it from the playbooks,
And think they are more authentic.
Eng. That is sure, sir.

After completing this notable series of historical plays, Shakespeare turned back to the composition of light courtly comedy, which he had begun in Love's Labours Lost and further developed in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and by the spring of 1596 had delivered to his company A Midsummer Night's Dream. He drew the Hippolyta-Theseus story from North's translation of Plutarch's Lives — our first indication of his acquaintance with this work which was later to supply him with so many excellent plots. A new edition had just been issued from the press of Richard Field in 1595.¹ One would like to believe that Field presented his friend with a copy of this edition, and that A Midsummer Night's Dream, giving evidence of a prompt reading of the volume, shows the dramatist's appreciation of the gift.

The epithalamic ending of the play has led scholars to suspect that it was originally composed for performance at the marriage of some great nobleman, and that the complimentary allusion to the "fair vestal throned by the west" indicates the presence on this occasion of Queen Elizabeth. It seems impossible, however, to determine which of the several noteworthy marriages that took place about this time Shakespeare may have been called upon to celebrate.² The play, of course, was also presented, perhaps with slight modification, on the public stage;³ and as one of the airiest products of the poet's

¹ For an excellent reprint of the portions used by Shakespeare, see C. F. Tucker Brooke, Shakespeare's Plutarch, 1909.
³ W. J. Lawrence, "A Plummet for Bottom's Dream," Fortnightly Review, May, 1922, ingeniously argues that the play was originally composed for presentation before the public, and was revised for a special performance at Lady Russell's house on her daughter's wedding night.
fancy it won instant favor. The character of Bottom the weaver became then, as it has remained since, a classic in the humor of simplicity. Designed especially for William Kempe, the rôle must have been acted by that great comedian with rare effectiveness.

A second comedy that may be tentatively assigned to the year 1596 is *Love's Labour's Won*, mentioned by Meres in 1598 as among the dramatist's best work. It no longer survives, however, under this title. Probably it is to be identified with *All's Well that Ends Well*, which obviously is a reworking of an early comedy of about this date. It was customary for the actors to give a new title to a revised play in order to enhance its drawing power; "new titles," exclaims Shakespeare's troupe in one of its prologues, "warrant not plays for new." We have no reason to suppose that *Love's Labour's Won* has perished; and *All's Well* can better be identified with Meres' title than any other of the extant plays.

To the latter half of 1596 may also be assigned the appearance on the stage of Shakespeare's first venture in tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. Parts of the play he had certainly written as early as 1593 or 1594, while he was engaged in the composition of *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece,* and the *Sonnets*. But for some reason, it seems, he had laid the manuscript aside unfinished, and did not give it the final touches and offer it to the public until 1596. There are no references to the play that can safely be dated earlier than 1597; and the great stir it then made precludes the likelihood that it had been on the stage for years. Not only do the numerous allusions to its popularity at this time indicate that it was new to London audiences, but its phenomenal success led to the theft of the text, and the issue in 1597 of a corrupt pirated edition.

The fame of *Romeo and Juliet*, indeed, surpassed that
of any of the dramatist's previous efforts, even *Richard III*;¹ and its appearance must be set down by the historian of the stage as one of the most notable theatrical events in the closing decade of the century. John Marston, in *The Scourge of Villainy*, published in 1598, thus addresses the stage-haunting gallant, Lucus:

Lucus, what's play'd to-day? Faith, now I know  
I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow  
Naught but pure *Juliet and Romeo*.

The play won equal fame at the universities. In the Cambridge *Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1598) we find several quotations from it; and in the sequel, *The Return from Parnassus* (1600), Ingenioso thus comments on the language of one of the students: "We shall have nothing but pure Shakespeare . . . Mark *Romeo and Juliet*! O monstrous theft!" At Oxford the estimation in which the play was held is shown by evidence of a different kind and of a later date, but not the less conclusive. In the recently discovered original Bodleian copy of the First Folio, which was chained to shelves where it could be read by the students, the wear on the leaves shows that of all the plays of Shakespeare the one which most pleased the young men of the university was *Romeo and Juliet*, and "the page most worn of all is the one which faced a well-known Balcony Scene introduced by the stage direction 'Enter Romeo and Juliet aloft,'" the paper here being "worn completely through, not torn."²

¹ John Weever, in an epigram *Ad Guilelum Shakespeare*, published in 1599 but said to have been written earlier, links the play with *Richard III* in popular favor.

² See *The Original Bodleian Copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 1905.
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set his tongue going, one that presumably was often discussed among gentlemen fond of the theatre:

Say, who acts best, Drusus or Roscio?

The allusion is to Alleyn and Burbage, and to the keen rivalry between them for first place in the esteem of the public. Incidentally it suggests also the rivalry between the Admiral’s Men at the Rose and the Chamberlain’s Men at the Theatre, the two great competing troupes that virtually monopolized the drama in London. The clownish Peter, we know, was acted by William Kempe, doubtless with his usual success. Even more successful, however, seems to have been the comedian (William Slye?) who assumed the part of the Nurse, if imitation be good evidence; for in the comedy Wily Beguiled, almost certainly revised by Marston and Dekker for the Paul’s Boys in 1598, there is a frank and highly amusing copy of the rôle in the “old Nurse” attending the heroine Lelia.

In this, Shakespeare’s first tragedy, the influence of Marlowe is again apparent, especially in the rhetorical passages; but the sympathetic portrayal of romantic love, which constitutes the chief glory of the play, was quite beyond Marlowe’s power; nor could Marlowe have created the keen wit of Mercutio, or the realistic humor of the garrulous old Nurse. In these things Shakespeare was beginning to discover the riches of his own genius, and from now on he rapidly freed himself from the influence of his early master.

It is worth noting, too, that he seems to have been much irritated by the corrupt edition of 1597, which gave the reading public a mangled text of his play. Love’s Labour’s Lost also had just been piratically issued in a debased text.¹ Being still sensitive about his reputation with men

¹ No copy of this pirated edition of Love’s Labour’s Lost has survived. For a fuller discussion see pp. 516–17.
of letters, he secured the permission of his company to print both these plays in correct form. The publication was entrusted to Cuthbert Burby, and the actors' own prompt-copies were delivered to the printer for the use of the type-setters, as evinced by the stage-directions; for instance, in one place instead of "Enter Peter" we, have the prompter's note, "Enter Kempe." Later Shakespeare became less easily disturbed about his fame as a literary craftsman, but at this early stage of his career he seems to have been eager to maintain his good standing in the poetic circles of London.

In the following year, 1597, he produced *The Merchant of Venice*, or as it often was called, and perhaps originally, *The Jew of Venice*. The main plot he derived from a novella in the *Pecorone* of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, reading the story in the original Italian, for there was no translation available in English, or for that matter in any other language. For his portrait of the Jew he drew heavily upon Marlowe's successful play, *The Jew of Malta*, as the title *The Jew of Venice* would suggest. Shylock and his daughter Jessica are obvious imitations of Barabas and Abigail. Abigail, like Jessica, loves a young Christian, and deserts her father. Barabas, like Shylock, is cruel and revengeful. There are even numerous echoes of Marlowe's phraseology, although *The Jew of Malta* had not as yet been printed (it was not allowed to come to press until 1633). For example, Barabas exclaims:

O my girl!
My gold! my fortune! my felicity! . . .
O girl! O gold! O beauty! O my bliss!

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The exact date of composition is a matter of conjecture; but on July 27, 1598, the Chamberlain's Company had their printer friend, Roberts, enter the play in the Stationers' Registers in order to secure the copyright and thus prevent piracy. Roberts, of course, was acting in behalf of the players, and had no intention of printing the play. The license he secured reads: "provided it be not printed without license first had from the Lord Chamberlain," i.e., the patron of the troupe.
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Shakespeare, from recollection of the play on the stage, represents Shylock as exclaiming:

My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! the law! my ducats! and my daughter!

Again, in Marlowe’s play the Jew, Barabas, says:

I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
That can so soon forget an injury....
I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog.

And Shylock, in ironic vein, echoes this:

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug....
Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats? Or
Shall I bend low, and in a bondsman’s key,
With bated breath, and whispering humbleness,
Say this? —
* “Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn’d me such a day; another time
You call’d me dog.”

Very familiar, too, is Barabas’ demand of the Governor,
“Let me have law,” and the Governor’s grim reply, “You shall have law!”

But the superiority of Shakespeare’s characterization
of the Jew over Marlowe’s clearly shows how far he had
now advanced in his art: Barabas is a caricature, Shylock
is poignantly human. And it is significant that here we
have the last trace of the influence of Marlowe on the
rapidly developing young dramatist. From this time on,
confident in his own powers, he marches forward from
play to play without once glancing back at the “famous
gracer of tragedians.”

A second comedy that Shakespeare provided for his
company in 1597 was a revision entitled The Taming of
the Shrew. The Chamberlain’s Men had secured the origi-
nal play from the disrupted Pembroke’s Company, and
had presented it at Newington Butts during their temporary stay at that house in June, 1594. Apparently some member of the Pembroke's Company had disposed of a transcript to the printers, for it was entered in the Stationers' Registers on May 2, 1594, and published before the end of the year with the title: *A Pleasant Conceited Historie called The Taming of a Shrew. As it was sundry times acted by the Right Honorable the Earle of Pembrook his Servants.* Many scholars think that before Shakespeare put his hand to it, it had been revised for the Chamberlain's Men by an inferior playwright, who added the Bianca sub-plot.\(^1\) If so, in 1597 Shakespeare undertook a further revision of the play. He retained the main outlines of the old story, and spent his energies chiefly on the Petruchio-Katharina theme. He also touched up with wonderful effectiveness the Christopher Sly Induction by which the play proper is set in a frame. The allusions to Burton Heath (i.e., Barton on the Heath), the home of his uncle Edmund Lambert, and to Wincot, a town near Stratford noted for its good ale, reflect the poet's early associations. It is curious, however, that, having spent so much care in presenting the drunken Sly to the audience, and placing him gloriously in bed to witness the shrew-taming play acted by the traveling troupe, Shakespeare fails to mention him after the first scene, and makes no provision at all for ultimately removing him from his exalted position to his original place in front of the alehouse. No doubt Shakespeare was working in great haste; yet his failure to complete so important a part of the text as the frame in which the whole drama is set, cannot be explained as an oversight. Probably the rôle of Christopher Sly was put into the hands of William Kempe, or William Slye, and Shakespeare, after outlining the comic

\(^1\) Its latest editor, Mr. F. S. Boas, stoutly denies this; see his edition in *The Shakespeare Classics*, 1908, p. xxxix.
setting of the plot, left the working out of the later details to the improvisation of the sharp-witted actor, for the skill of the Elizabethan comedians at extemporization was proverbial. If this explanation be accepted, we must note that the dramatist’s well-known advice to the players in *Hamlet*, “Let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them,” would not be applicable to his hasty revision of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

It is true that Shakespeare worked hurriedly on the old play, and at times sketchily; yet he succeeded in making it one of the best-liked comedies in the repertory of the Chamberlain’s Men. The humor of the drunken Sly, and the almost universal appeal of the wife-taming theme, rendered it for many years a favorite on the stage. Fletcher paid it the compliment of frank imitation by writing *The Tamer Tamed*, 1606, in which the tables were turned on Petruchio, who is reduced to complete submission by his second wife. Even so late as 1633 Herbert notes its performance at Court before King Charles, adding to his brief record the significant — and still pertinent — comment, “lik’t.”

In this same year, 1597, Shakespeare turned again to history, and picking up the thread where he left it at the end of *Richard II*, produced *1 Henry IV*. For his material he went to his thumb-worn copy of Holinshed, and at the same time, it seems, read Samuel Daniel’s poetic rendering of the events in his fourth book of *The Civil Wars*, 1595. He also availed himself of an old play entitled *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, containing the mad pranks of Prince Hal with his disreputable companions in Eastcheap.¹ This ancient chronicle had been entered for publication in 1594, and may then have been printed,

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although our earliest extant copy bears the date 1598. It had originally been performed by the Queen's Men before the death of Tarlton in 1588, as we learn from the following jest recorded of that famous clown:

At the Bull at Bishopsgate was a play of Henry the Fifth, wherein the judge was to take a box on the ear; and because he was absent that should take the blow, Tarlton himself, ever forward to please, took upon him to play the same judge, beside his own part of the clown: and Knel, then playing Henry the Fifth, hit Tarlton a sound box indeed, which made the people laugh the more because it was he; but anon the judge goes in, and immediately Tarlton in his clown's cloaths comes out, and asks the actors "What news?" "O," saith one, "hadst thou been here, thou shouldst have seen Prince Henry hit the judge a terrible box on the ear." "What, man!" said Tarlton, "strike a judge?" "It is true, yfaith," said the other. "No other like," said Tarlton; "and it could not be but terrible to the judge, when the report so terrifies me that methinks the blow remains still on my cheek that it burns again." The people laughed at this mightily.¹

Shakespeare studied The Famous Victories in connection with the more serious narratives in Holinshed's Chronicle and Daniel's Civil Wars, and, drawing upon them all for material or inspiration, produced Henry IV.

The play, we know, was put on the stage of the Theatre in the latter half of 1597. Immediately Falstaff captured the hearts of all London, and scored for the author the greatest popular triumph in comedy he perhaps ever achieved. The unbounded enthusiasm with which fat Sir John was received then, and later, is indicated by Leonard Digges in thus comparing Henry IV with Jonson's most successful plays:

And though the Fox and subtle Alchemist
Long intermitted, could not quite be mist,
Though these have sham'd all the ancients, and might raise
Their author's merit with a crowne of bayes,

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Yet these sometimes, even at a friend's desire
Acted, have scarce defrai'd the sea-coale fire
And doore-keepers: when, let but Falstaffe come,
Hal, Poines, the rest — you scarce shall have a roome,
All is so pester'd.

But perhaps the most convincing evidence of the success of Falstaff is to be found in the two lines to be quoted below. One should remember that throughout the performance of a play the Elizabethan spectators were continuously eating nuts in the theatre, the noise of the cracking shells being, according to no less an authority than Ben Jonson, "most damnable." Yet the entrance of Falstaff on the stage, we are told, produced in the theatre a sudden stillness as each eager listener held the inevitable nut poised half-way in its progress to the mouth:

I could praise Heywood now; or tell how long
Falstaff from cracking nuts hath kept the throng.

The remarkable success of the play would naturally lead the public and the actors alike to demand a sequel; and within a few months Shakespeare had placed on the stage the second part of Henry IV, with the further exploits of Sir John, Poin, Pistol, Peto, and Bardolph. To these characters he added the immortal Justice Shallow, who seems to have attained a popularity second only to that of Falstaff. At once he became proverbial. Sir Charles Percy in a letter to Carleton, 1600, writes: "I think you will find me so dull that I shall be taken for

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1 The reference is to the Blackfriars playhouse, which was heated in the winter.
2 Prefixed to Shakespeare's Poems, 1640; the lines, however, were written about 1623.
3 Verses by Sir Thomas Palmer, prefixed to the First Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher, 1647.
4 Shakespeare was at work on the play in the autumn of 1595, before he had changed the name of Oldcastle to Falstaff; this is indicated by the catch-name "Old." for "Fal." in I, ii, 114, and by the description of Falstaff, in III, ii, 27, as having been a "page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk," which was true of Sir John Oldcastle.
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Justice Silence, or Justice Shallow”; and again: “Exempt me from the opinion of Justice Shallow.” Jonson, in Every Man Out of his Humor, 1600, exclaims: “This is a kinsman of Justice Shallow”; Dekker, in Satiromastix, 1602, speaks of “These true heirs of Mr. Justice Shallow”; and Woodhouse, in The Flea, 1605, writes: “When thou sittest, to consult about any weighty matter, let either Justice Shallow or his cousin Mr. Weathercock be foreman of the jury.”

Shakespeare’s gratification at the success of I and II Henry IV, however, was marred by an unlucky accident. The name he originally gave to Falstaff was Sir John Oldcastle, taken over directly from The Famous Victories. There it had provoked no comment. But the extraordinary notoriety of the character as portrayed by Shakespeare led to resentment 1 on the part of Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, who was a lineal descendant of Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard martyr. Lord Cobham made complaint, probably to the Master of the Revels, who was responsible for licensed plays; or, possibly, to his near neighbor, the Lord Chamberlain, who had general oversight of dramatic affairs, and who was the patron of the company acting the offending plays. In order to avoid giving further distress to the Cobham family Shakespeare, readily no doubt, agreed to change the name of his comic hero. Casting about in his mind for a new name, he stumbled upon Sir John Fastolfe, who figured as a coward in I Henry VI, a play he was then engaged in refurbishing:

Here had the conquest fully been seal’d up  
If Sir John Fastolfe had not play’d the coward.  
He, being in the vaward, — placed behind  
With purpose to relieve and follow them, —  
Cowardly fled, not having struck one stroke. •

1 Especially occasioned, it seems, by the performance of the two plays at Court during the Christmas of 1597–98.  

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SIR JOHN FALSTAFF AND THE HOSTESS OF THE
BOAR'S HEAD TAVERN

From the frontispiece of Francis Kirkman’s *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport*, 1663. This probably represents the impersonation of the characters in Shakespeare’s time.
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Altering the name slightly, Shakespeare rechristened the cowardly Sir John Oldcastle with the new designation Sir John Falstaff. Probably the change made it necessary to delete a few passages, yet one was overlooked; in Act I, Scene ii, of Part I, Hal, addressing Falstaff, exclaims: “As the honey of Hybla, my old lad of the Castle,” a pun which, of course, had now entirely lost its force.¹

Shakespeare had done what he could to right a wholly unintentional wrong against the Cobham family. Yet so indelibly had the “old lad of the castle” stamped his name upon the minds of the public during the short interval preceding the birth of “Falstaff,” that it could not be so easily effaced. For many years afterwards writers of the best intelligence allude to Falstaff as Sir John Oldcastle; and the general public, doubtless, was even slower to accept the change of name in their hero. Shakespeare felt called upon to remind the London audiences in an Epilogue attached to the second part of Henry IV, that “Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man.” He went even farther. Early in 1598 (the play was entered in the Stationers’ Registers on February 25) he gave I Henry IV to the press in order to show, in black and white, as it were, that the fat Knight of Eastcheap was called “Sir John Falstaff.” But all in vain. The name “Oldcastle” could not be expunged from the minds of the public.

Thereupon Lord Cobham, it would seem, in order to clear the reputation of his ancestor, induced the Admiral's Company to produce a rival two-part play narrating to the people the “true life” and martyrdom of the real Sir John Oldcastle. The task of composing the work was put into the hands of some of the best and most ex-

¹ In the second part of Henry IV the catch-name “Old.” appears in one place for “Fal.”
² Only the first part is extant.

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experienced dramatists then writing for the stage, Michael Drayton, Anthony Munday, Robert Wilson, and Richard Hathaway, who produced a tiresome, but presumably veracious, history of the old Lollard martyr, under the title The True and Honorable Historie of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, the Good Lord Cobham. In a Prologue the authors say to the public:

It is no pamperd glutton we present,
Nor aged Councillor to youthfull sinne,
But one, whose vertue shone above the rest,
A valiant Martyr, and a vertuous peere,
In whose true faith, and loyaltie exprest
Unto his sovereigne, and his countries weale,
We strive to pay that tribute of our Love,
Your favours merite: let faire Truth be grac’te,
Since forg’de invention former time defac’te.

The play was acted by the Admiral’s Men at the Rose in the autumn of 1599, no doubt with Lord Cobham and his friends loudly applauding. And shortly afterwards, in order to give it wider publicity, it was printed and offered to the public from the bookstalls. In 1601, as a still further counterblast to Shakespeare’s misrepresentation of the ancestor of the Cobham family, John Weever issued a narrative poem entitled The Mirror of Martyrs, or The Life and Death of That Thrice Valiant Captain and Most Godly Martyr, Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham.¹

But Lord Cobham and his friends, and even Shakespeare himself, were laboring against the stream. In spite of all their efforts the name “Oldcastle” for “Falstaff” simply would not down. For instance, when on March 6, 1600, Shakespeare’s company presented Henry IV at the Lord Chamberlain’s house before Vereiken and the other ambassadors from the Spanish Low Countries,

¹ In the Dedication Weever states that the work “some two years ago was made fit for the print.”
Rowland Whyte wrote in a gossipy letter to Sir Robert Sidney: "Thursday my Lord Chamberlain feasted him [Vereiken], and made him a very great and a delicate dinner; and there in the afternoon his players acted before Vereiken Sir John Oldcastle, to his great contentment." And even so well-informed a man as Nathaniel Field, actor and playwright, in his *Amends for Ladies*, 1618, writes:

Did you never see
The play where the fat Knight, hight Oldcastle,
Did tell you truly what this "honor" was?

Shakespeare was not altogether happy in the choice of the second name, for some people connected Sir John Falstaff with a certain Sir John Fastolpe, an historical personage of good repute. Later Dr. Richard James, Bishop Fuller, and George Daniel all made protests. But these protests went for naught, so that Sir Paunch still bears the name with which Shakespeare rechristened him.

The dramatist probably was growing tired of Falstaff. At the end of *II Henry IV* he represents him as having deteriorated in character, and as being rejected by Hal, now crowned King of England. When Sir John thrusts himself forward, confident of being received by the new sovereign with open arms, the King frowns upon him, and says:

I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.  
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!

And a few moments later we see him, thus humiliated, carried off to prison. But if Shakespeare hoped to get rid of him so easily, he reckoned without the public, and without Queen Elizabeth. Yielding to the popular demand, he made the following promise in a late Epilogue to *II Henry IV*: "Our humble author will continue the

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story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France; where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat." From this announcement we may infer that the dramatist intended to amuse the public with one more — and the last — representation of Falstaff in his humors; and, in order to get rid of him for ever, planned to end his life in the sweat of some arduous exploit in France.

But before he could carry out this promise, his intentions were interfered with by no less a person than Queen Elizabeth. As was her custom, she summoned the Lord Chamberlain's Men in the Christmas season of 1597-98 to amuse Her Majesty at Windsor with their latest plays. Naturally the actors would present before her the two parts of Henry IV, then new, and the chief sensation of London. According to a well-founded tradition, she was so much delighted with Falstaff that she called for the author, and requested him to write specially for her a play in which Falstaff should be made to fall in love.\(^1\) A request from the Queen could not be ignored; and Shakespeare was forced to lay aside his proposed Henry V, with his already announced purpose of putting Sir John to death, and at once set to work on a comedy representing the hero in an amorous escapade.\(^2\) Tradition states that he completed the comedy within two weeks, for the

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1 See John Dennis, The Comical Gallant (1702), Nicholas Rowe, Life of Shakespeare (1709), and Charles Gildon, Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare (1710). These men record the story as an old and trustworthy tradition; Gildon states that he is "very well assured of it"; Malone observes that Dennis probably got his information "from Dryden, who, from his intimacy with Sir William Davenant, had an opportunity of learning many particulars concerning our author." The Queen's interest in love is well known; and the story is borne out by both internal and external evidence.

2 It has been pointed out by various scholars that in the play Falstaff was originally called Oldcastle. I suspect that Lord Cobham took offense at the time the two Henry IV plays were acted at Court, and that shortly after Shakespeare was required to change the name of the comic hero — possibly, though we cannot be sure, before The Merry Wives was presented before the Queen.
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Queen "was so eager to see it that she commanded it to be finished in fourteen days" — possibly in order to have it acted before the end of the Christmas festivities then in progress at Windsor. It is likely that he merely reworked an old manuscript, entitled The Jealous Comedy, which had been in the possession of his troupe since 1593.

In this fashion, we may believe, came into existence The Merry Wives of Windsor. The haste in composition will explain the play’s lack of that merit both in substance and style which otherwise we might expect from Shakespeare at this period of his development, and also the numerous discrepancies to be observed in the plot. Possibly, too, it explains why the story is placed at Windsor, for Elizabeth’s residence there would render this setting highly pleasing to her and her ladies; as Gildon notes: “The fairies in the fifth act make a handsome compliment to the Queen and her palace at Windsor.” The title-page expressly states that the play had been presented “before Her Majesty,” and tradition adds that she was “very well pleased at the representation.” It was also, of course, acted before the public during the winter and spring of 1598. The form in which it was advertised in the players’ bills posted throughout the city is possibly indicated by the title-page of the pirated edition which shortly appeared: “A Most pleasant and excellent conceited Comedie, of Syr John Falstaffe, and the merrie Wives of Windsor. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humors, of Syr Hugh, the Welch Knight, Justice Shallow, and his wise Cousin M. Slender. With the swaggering vaine of Auncient Pistoll and Corporall Nym. By William Shakespeare.” A playbill promising so many attractive features as this would surely fill the Theatre to its capacity.

After completing The Merry Wives for the Queen,
Shakespeare turned his attention to *Henry V*, already announced as in contemplation. But he did not carry out his promise of representing Falstaff once more in action. Indeed the Knight gets no nearer the stage than an adjoining room, where, we are told, he lies "shaked of a burning quotidian tertian, that it is most lamentable to behold." And from a comic he has been changed into an almost tragic figure; for his illness was due to the King’s harsh renunciation of him—"his heart is fracted." With this slight preparation we are suddenly informed in the next scene that he is dead and gone to "Arthur's bosom." The hostess with language at once amusing and pathetic says: "After I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and 'a babbled of green fields." So the greatest comic creation of the drama "went away an it had been any christom child."

*Henry V*, carrying the life of Prince Hal to its logical triumph, and burying Falstaff under the green fields of which he babbled, was placed upon the stage in the earlier half of 1598.¹ It marks the end not only of Sir John, but also of Shakespeare’s great series of historical studies.² In this matchless series, which the editors of the First Folio arranged in chronological order—*King John, Richard II, I Henry IV, II Henry IV, Henry V, I Henry VI, II Henry VI, III Henry VI*, and *Richard III*—Shakespeare doubtless felt a justifiable pride. Perhaps this pride is indicated by his refurbishing *I Henry

¹ Scholars have almost unanimously dated the play 1599, on the strength of an allusion to the Essex expedition, March, 1599, contained in a chorus prefixed to Act V. But we may easily regard the allusion as a six-line insertion designed to take advantage of the popular excitement attending Essex' departure for Ireland (see p. 315). The history of Falstaff as sketched above makes the date 1598 inevitable.

² With, of course, the exception of *Henry VIII*, mainly the product of Fletcher, and composed at the end of Shakespeare's dramatic career.
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VI, in 1598–99, so as to make it more worthy of its place in the sequence.¹

After Henry V, as though weary of Falstaff and the disreputable crew that had grown up about him, Shakespeare turned to tragedy, with the hope, we may suppose, of repeating the success of Romeo and Juliet. In North’s translation of Plutarch, whence he had recently drawn material for A Midsummer Night’s Dream, he found the story of Brutus, Cæsar, and Antony told in a beautiful and effective way; and this story he worked into the first of his Roman plays. That Julius Cæsar was composed in the later half of 1598 or the earlier half of 1599 is shown by several bits of evidence. John Weever’s Mirror of Martyrs, written in 1599 ² as a counterblast to the defamation of Oldcastle in I and II Henry IV, contains an unmistakable allusion to the famous orations of Brutus and Antony:

Ben Jonson, who was notoriously slow at composition, in Every Man out of his Humor, produced at or soon after the opening of the Globe Playhouse in the summer of 1599, makes Buffone exclaim “Et tu Brute!” and has Clove utter this fustian: “Then coming to the pretty animals — as Reason long since is fled to animals, you know.” Obviously Jonson was making capital of a play well known to the London public. Finally, we have an actual record of a performance of Julius Cæsar at the

² Though not published until 1601, the author states in the Dedication that the poem was made ready for the press “some two years ago.”
Globe in September, 1599. A German traveler, Thomas Platter, noted in his *Reisebeschreibung*:

On the twenty-first of September [1599], I with my companions, after dinner, somewhere about two o'clock, were rowed across the river to see in the straw-thatched house there the tragedy of the first emperor, *Julius Cæsar*, acted extremely well [gar artlick] with scarcely more than fifteen persons.¹

The tragedy was in striking contrast to those studies in boisterous humor with which Shakespeare had just been amusing the public; yet Brutus and Cæsar seem to have met with success hardly less than that attained by Falstaff and Shallow. Leonard Digges thus describes the effect the play produced on the audience:

So have I seen, when Cæsar would appear,  
And on the stage at half-sword parley were  
Brutus and Cassius — oh, how the audience  
Were ravish’d! With what wonder they went thepace!

¹ *Julius Cæsar* marks the close of the first period of Shakespeare’s labors for the Chamberlain’s Company. Before his next group of plays appeared, he and his fellow-actors had moved to the Bankside, where in their new and splendid playhouse, the Globe, they began an even more brilliant career as the leading dramatic company of London.

¹ Quoted by Gustav Binz, in “Londoner Theater und Schauspiele im Jahre 1599,” *Anglia*, xxii (1899), 458.
CHAPTER XIII

RISE IN FAME AND IN SOCIAL DIGNITY

Shakespeare had been working hard for his fellows, producing on the average three plays a year, besides revamping old manuscripts. As a result of his efforts he had enabled the Chamberlain’s Company to rise above its rival, the Admiral’s Company, and stand undisputed as the leading troupe in London. He had rendered Burbage immortal in the titular rôles of Richard III, Romeo, and the like, and had increased the fame of Kempe as the leading comedian of the age. The names of these two actors were now household words throughout England. In a play written at Cambridge University, we read: “Who of more report than Dick Burbage and Will Kempe? He is not counted a gentleman that knows not Dick Burbage and Will Kempe. There’s not a country wench . . . but can talk of Dick Burbage and Will Kempe.” 1 Finally, he had made his fellow-sharers in the company rich through the throngs that daily flocked to see his plays. Yet only four years had elapsed since he gave up his career in pure letters and threw in his lot with the theatre.

What had he earned for himself? First of all let it be observed that, in spite of the general notion of plays as mercenary and ephemeral products, he had won frank recognition as England’s chief man of letters. John Weever, who set himself up as a critic, writes in his Epigrames (1599):

Romeo, Richard, more whose names I know not.
Their sugred tongues and power-attractive beauty
Say they are Saints, although that Saints they shew not,
For thousands vowe to them subjective duty.

1 II Return from Parnassus, 1601, ed. by W. C. Macray, p. 139.
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In the three Parnassus plays, written and acted by the students of Cambridge University between 1597 and 1601, we find not only quotations from Shakespeare's poems, and scraps from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry IV*, but also specific mentions of him by name, showing that the young men of the university then recognized him as the most popular writer in England:

Ey, marry sir, these have some life in them! Let this dunci-fied world esteem of Spenser and Chaucer, I'll worship sweet Mr. Shakespeare.¹

And one of the students in his enthusiasm exclaims:

O sweet Mr. Shakespeare! I'll have his picture in my study at the court.²

Francis Meres, scholar and critic, who describes himself as "Master of Arts of both Universities," in attempting in 1598 to evaluate English literature in comparison with classical literature, unhesitatingly placed Shakespeare in the front rank of literary artists, and indicated his position as the greatest living English man of letters.³ He writes:

As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare; witness his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugared *Sonnets* among his private friends, etc. As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love's Labour's Lost*, his *Love's Labour's Won*, his *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; for tragedy, his *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo and Juliet*. As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak

¹ *I Return*, 1600, ed. by Macray, p. 63.
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with Plautus’ tongue if they would speak Latin, so I say that
the Muses would speak with Shakespeare’s fine filed phrase
if they would speak English.

It is hard to see how Meres could have used stronger
language to express the esteem in which even at this early
date Shakespeare was held. He further mentions the
poet in six special categories as among those who have
“mightily enriched” the English tongue, who have ren-
dered themselves immortal in verse, who are “our best
for tragedy,” “the best for comedy,” “the best lyric
poets,” “and the most passionate among us.”

Did space allow, more witnesses could be cited to the
high fame in letters which Shakespeare had achieved by
the close of 1598. Those who are interested should con-
sult The Shakespeare Allusion-Book, where references to
the poet are arranged in chronological order.

At the same time, of course, Shakespeare was attaining
wealth. From his position as a full-sharer in the Cham-
berlain’s Company he derived a large and steady income,
and from the sale of his plays, from his benefit perform-
ances,¹ and from his appearances at Court and elsewhere,
he gained not a little in addition.² Thus he was now a
man of affluence, able to live in the style his tastes dic-
tated. Yet his tastes, we may suspect, were simple, and
his manner of living frugal. The author of Ratsies Ghost
seems to have him specially in mind when he writes of
players: “I have heard indeed of some that have gone to
London very meanly, and have come in time to be ex-
ceeding wealthy”; and he implies that the accumulation
of this wealth was the result of careful husbandry:
“There thou shalt learn to be frugal, for players were
never so thrifty as they are now about London.”

But, however simply or frugally he lived, his recog-

¹ See pp. 442–44.
² For an estimate of his annual income, see pp. 441–45.

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nized position in letters would bring him the acquaintance of distinguished men, and his attractive personality would everywhere win him friends and admirers. As early as 1592 Chettle had been impressed by his gracious demeanor, as had "diverse of worship" with whom Chettle had talked. Ben Jonson bears witness not only to the brilliancy of his intellect, which needed no comment, but also to the essential refinement of his manners:

Look, how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turnèd and true-fileèd lines.

The old theatrical manager Beeston tells us that "he was a handsome, well-shapt man, very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit." Ròwe observes that "Besides the advantage of his wit, he was in himself a good-natured man, of great sweetness in his manners, and a most agreeable companion." Affability was indeed a striking characteristic of his nature. John Davies of Hereford addresses him as "Good Will," Anthony Scoloker calls him "friendly Shakespeare," William Barkstead refers to him as "so dear lov'd a neighbor," his actors speak of him as "such a fellow as was our Shakespeare," and even the envious Jonson declares, "I did love the man this side idolatry as much as any."

Gifted with a charming personality, and famed as a poet, he must have been welcome to the society of those gallants of the law Inns and young noblemen of the Court who haunted the theatres and eagerly sought the acquaintance of actors and playwrights. Rowland Whyte, in a letter to Sir Robert Sidney, 1599, wrote: "My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland came not to the Court.

¹ On Shakespeare's friendships with eminent men in London, see C. M. Gayley, Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty, 1917.
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The one doth but very seldom. They pass away the time merrily in going to plays every day." It was customary for these young gentlemen to entertain the players with expensive tavern suppers, at which wit flowed as freely as the wine. Dekker notes that it was the special ambition of young dandies who would like to be thought men of fashion to give banquets to the actors;¹ and Jonson, writing of courtiers, says: "Their glory is to invite players to suppers" — adding that the players were by no means bad company, for they have wit "both at drinking and breaking of jests."² No doubt Shakespeare often was a guest at tavern entertainments given by Southampton, or Rutland, or Pembroke, or Sir Walter Ralegh, or Sir John Salisbury. And that he enjoyed these occasions we may well believe, for we have abundant evidence that the creator of Falstaff was convivial in his disposition. Fuller states that "his genius generally was jocular, inclining him to festivity." The tradition of his bout with the Bidford tipplers, ending in a night under the crab-tree, though doubtless apocryphal, testifies to his reputation for conviviality; nor should one overlook the statement that his death was occasioned by his drinking too much with Drayton and Jonson.

Yet he must also have been frequently present at more serious gatherings where literature was the common interest that brought men together. The most famous of these gatherings were those associated with the Mermaid Tavern,³ reputed by tradition to have been inaugurated by Sir Walter Ralegh. There, "the first Friday of every month, at the signe of the Mermaid in Bread Street,"⁴ came together young noblemen, litérateurs from the Inns of Court, playwrights, eminent actors, and other

¹ The Gull's Hgrnbook, Dedication. ² Poetaster, III, i.
³ Other taverns were also used, especially The Sun, The Dog, The Three Tuns, and The Mitre.
⁴ So writes Thomas Coryat.
persons interested in the fine arts, to drink and smoke and to discuss plays and poetry. In these meetings the dominant figure (certainly at a later date) was Ben Jonson, who, with his vast learning in the classics and strong assertive personality, usually overshadowed the gentler and more retiring Shakespeare. Bishop Fuller, however, represents Shakespeare as able to attack the ponderous Jonson, and escape by the nimbleness of his wit:

Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances; Shakespeare with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.

Beaumont and Fletcher were also numbered among the guests of the Mermaid; and the former has left us a glowing description of the meetings there:

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one, from whence they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolv’d to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

Robert Herrick, who in his younger days was admitted to these gatherings, bears similar testimony to the brilliancy of the conversation:

We such cluster had
As made us nobly wild, not mad.

And Keats, in imagination, contemplated the pleasure the poets must have found in each other’s company:

Souls of poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
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These diversions, we may suppose, were typical of Shakespeare's social life in London. Yet he must have reserved to himself many evenings for quiet reading and composition. The wide knowledge of books which incidentally he reveals in his plays is shown by H. R. D. Anders' monograph *Shakespeare's Books*; and the frequency with which he delivered new plays to his company evinces the "copious industry" of his Muse.

As his fame increased, and as his acquaintances multiplied in both literary and fashionable circles, it was natural for him to seek to lift himself in the social ranking of the day. In such a light we must view his efforts to secure a coat of arms. A dignity of this sort was the more necessary in his case because he belonged to the then despised tribe of actors. As has already been pointed out, the profession was new, and in its beginnings had been recruited from the lowest elements of society—from strolling tumblers, jugglers, minstrels, bear-leaders, ropewalkers, and such like itinerant entertainers. And the players, thus recruited from "vagabonds," were at first deemed little better than "rogues." Moreover, their plays were not only crude, but, in order to please the vulgar rabble of the inn-yards, often deliberately obscene; and their performances stirred up the wrath of those interested in the moral welfare of the nation. Thus from the very outset the professional actors acquired a bad reputation. In Elizabeth's reign they were still looked upon as belonging to one of the most disreputable of the professions. In the *II Return from Parnassus* (1601), certain impeccable students, when advised to write for the London actors, indignantly protest: "And must the basest trade yield us relief?" Shakespeare in his *Sonnets* seems to reveal his humiliation at being a player: "Thence comes it that my name receives a brand," he complains; and to his friend, who enjoyed a higher social rank, he says:

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I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame;
Nor thou with public kindness honor me,
Unless thou take that honor from thy name.

Abundant evidence of this general scorn of players is to be found in a comedy by Ben Jonson, who had himself begun as a player, and was still a dramatist, though now writing for the children of Her Majesty’s Chapel Royal. In his *Poetriaster* (1601), he attacks his former friends, the public actors, and in particular the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. One specimen of the abuse he heaps on their profession, put into the mouth of Captain Tucca, will be sufficient:

2 Pry. ’Tis a player, sir.

Tucca. A player! Call him. Call the lousy slave hither. What, will he sail by and not once strike or vail to a man-of-war? ha! — Do you hear! you player, rogue, stalker, come back here!... You slave... you rascal... you two-penny tear-mouth... you stiffard... rogue... slave... gulch... you presumptuous varlet... vermin!

To this abuse, and more of the same sort, the representative of the Chamberlain’s Company is forced weekly to submit.

The frequent use of the word “rogue” in this scene, as well as throughout the whole play, had a specially vicious significance that was not lost on the public. Jonson knew, possibly from experience, where the actors were most sensitive. In the statutes of the day players were classified under the legal heading “Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars.” Thus, in the Proclamation of Henry VIII, 1545, *For Punishment of Vagabonds, Ruffians and Idle Persons*, occurs the phrase: “All such ruffians, vagabonds, masterless men, common players, and evildoers, where again players are put in the same disreputable category: “Which said fencers, bearwards, common players in in-
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terludes, minstrels, jugglers, peddlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen, shall wander abroad and have not license from two justices of the peace at the least... shall be taken, adjudged, and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars.” The better grade of players were able to escape the punishment designated for rogues (public whipping and branding) by placing themselves under the protection of some nobleman, but they were not able wholly to escape the odium given by the statutes of the realm to their profession. Even so late as 1598, in An Act for Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, the old classification is maintained, although players patronized by a nobleman are exempted from arrest: “All fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes, and minstrels wandering abroad (other than players of interludes belonging to any baron of the realm, or any other honorable personage of greater degree, to be authorized to play under the hand and seal of such baron or personage)... shall be taken, adjudged, and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars.”

We can readily understand that the wealthy and dignified actors of London resented this classification of their profession, and that their enemies found peculiar delight in taunting them with it. Philip Stubbbs, in his attack upon players, demands: “Are they not taken by the Laws of the Realm for rogues and vagabonds?” And Jonson, in his Poetaster, does not let slip the opportunity of more than once twitting them with it:

Go, thou art an honest shifter. I'll have the statute repealed for thee.

Methinks if nothing else yet this alone, the very reading of the public edicts, should fright thee from commerce with them.

Throughout the play Jonson constantly applies to the players the epithets “rogues” and “common players” to remind them of their legal status. Shakespeare, it is
interesting to observe, did not allow Jonson's ill-mannered
attack to pass without rebuke; in _Hamlet_, II, ii, he makes
his retort, good-naturedly as we should expect, but firmly.
Yet he could not help realizing that as a "common actor"
he was looked down upon. Even his warm friend, John
Davies of Hereford, in a poem addressed to Fortune,
scornfully refers to "stage-players," though taking pains
to exempt Shakespeare and Burbage:

Yet some (W. S., R. B.) she [Fortune] guerdoned not to their deserts,
But other some were but ill-action all,
Who while they acted ill, ill stayed behind,
By custom of their manners, in their mind.  

These lines bear an obvious relation to Shakespeare's
Sonnet III:

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

Davies elsewhere writes:  

Players, I love ye, and your quality,
As ye are men that pass time not abus'd:
And some (W. S., R. B.) I love for _painting, poesie,_
And say fell Fortune cannot be excus'd
That hath for better _uses_ you refus'd . . .
And though the stage doth stain pure gentle blood,
Yet generous ye are in _mind_ and _mood._

In the same apologetic vein Davies addresses a poem —

_To our English Terence, Mr. Will. Shake-speare._

Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
Had'st thou not played some kingly parts in sport,
Thou had'st been a companion for a king.

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1 In _Humor's Heaven on Earth_, ed. by Grosart, p. 37. A marginal note to
the word "some" reads "W. S. R. B." — clearly Shakespeare and Burbage.

2 _Microcosmos_, 1603, p. 215.

3 Burbage was famous as a painter as well as an actor; "poesie" refers to
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In the face of this general contempt for their profession, the London actors made such efforts as they could to acquire better social standing. Unfortunately some, as was inevitable, sought to rise by a display of their wealth:

England affords those glorious vagabonds,
That carried erst their fardels on their backs,
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,
Sooping it in their glaring satin suits,
And pages to attend their masterships.¹

"Slid, other men have wives as fine as players, and as well dressed."²

Some with better taste, and more shrewdness, sought to escape from the category of "rogues" by the acquisition of a coat of arms and the right to affix "gentleman" to their names. This was comparatively easy for them to do, since the Heralds' Office was lax in the bestowal of the honor, and a little influence and a liberal use of money might reasonably be counted on to secure the coveted dignity.

Whether or not Shakespeare was the first of the players to make use of this device for improving his social status we do not know; but that it became a common practice with actors is shown in the case of the Chamberlain's Company itself. Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, Richard Cowley, John Heminges, and Richard Burbage, besides Shakespeare, all sooner or later secured the right to display arms. William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant, a soured critic of the College of Heralds, complains that "Phillips the player had graven in a gold ring the arms of Sir William Phillip, Lord Bardolph, with the said Lord Bardolph's coat quartered."³ Lord Bardolph

Shakespeare. The general allusion, of course, is to Simonides' statement, more familiar in Horace's "Ut pictura, poesis."

¹ II Return from Parnassus, V, i; ed. by Macray, p. 144.
² Bartholomew Fair, I, i.

³ Cited from his manuscript attack on the College entitled "A brief Discourse of the causes of Discord amongst the officers of arms," page 9, verso. The manuscript is now in the library of Mr. W. A. White, of Brooklyn. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. White for placing this manuscript, and many other treasures, freely at his disposal.
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had won fame at the battle of Agincourt.¹ The same critic, Smith, further writes: "Pope the player would have no other arms but the arms of Sir Tho. Pope, Chancellor of the Augmentations." This Sir Thomas Pope was a distinguished courtier and Privy Councillor; after founding Trinity College at Oxford, he died without issue in 1559. Still another critic of the Heralds' Office, Ralphe Brooke, reveals the fact that Richard Cowley, the original actor of Verges in Much Ado, had secured from the College a coat of arms that was open to suspicion. Possibly Jonson had in mind this general desire on the part of the actors for heraldic honors when in his Poet-aster (1601), with the Chamberlain's troupe specially in view, he wrote:

They forget they are in the statute, the rascals. They are blazoned there! There they are tricked, they and their pedigrees!² They need no other heralds, i-wis.

In the light of all these facts we see that it was natural enough for Shakespeare to seek a coat of arms. In the earlier half of 1596 he made his application to the College of Heralds. Since his father was still alive, he had to enter the application in his father's name; but this was a mere technicality, and we may suppose that for all practical purposes the officers of the College regarded the application as coming from the distinguished poet.

In the draft prepared by the heralds, four separate reasons are advanced in support of the application.

¹ Since Phillips was a comedian we are tempted to wonder whether Shakespeare created for him the rôle of Bardolph in Henry IV as a laughing satire on his supposed ancestor. But we do not know when Phillips secured his coat of arms.

² Cf. Histriomastix (1599), II, 243, 272: "Proud statute rogues! ... Blush not the peasants at their pedigree?"

³ This seems to have been required; at any rate it gave added dignity to the grant. Moreover if issued to his father it would restore to Mary Arden the right to the Arden arms, and allow Shakespeare to quarter his coat with hers.

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The first is that John Shakespeare's "antecessors" had, "for valiant and faithful and ... service," been "rewarded by the most prudent prince, King Henry the Seventh." Scholars have been unable to discover any records verifying this statement, and it may have been a pleasant fiction on the part of the Heralds' Office. Harrison, writing about 1580, declares that a man who is not engaged in a trade "shall for money have a coat and arms bestowed upon him by heralds, who in the charter of the same do of custom pretend antiquity and many gay things." Whether the statement about the poet's "antecessors" was merely a gay thing pretended, or whether it was based on fact, we are unable to say. However, we should not entirely overlook the possibility that Shakespeare in his interview with the officer of the Heralds' College may have mentioned the circumstance that his ancestors on his mother's side had been honored and rewarded by Henry VII. This was true of two of the brothers of his maternal great-grandfather: Sir John Arden had been made Esquire of the Body to Henry VII; Robert Arden had been appointed Yeoman of the Chamber, and had also received from Henry three patents.¹ Shakespeare may not have intended to mislead the herald by obscuring the fact that these ancestors were on his mother's side; or the herald, with his easy conscience, may have deliberately ignored the fact, especially since the coat of arms was in reality to be granted to Shakespeare himself, though technically to his father. Still another possibility is that the "antecessors" referred to in the draft may have been on John Shakespeare's maternal side; but, since we do not know even the name of his mother, we cannot investigate this interesting possibility.

The second reason advanced in favor of the application was that John Shakespeare had married "the daughter,

¹ For details see C. C. Stopea, Shakespeare's Family, pp. 26 ff.
and one of the heirs, of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote,” who is described as “a gentleman of worship.” The accuracy of the statement is obvious, and need not here be further discussed.

The third reason was that, twenty years before, John Shakespeare had applied for a coat of arms by virtue of the fact that he was then “a Justice of Peace, and was Bailiff, officer, and chief of the town of Stratford upon Avon,” and that Robert Cook, then Clarenceux King, had actually submitted a “pattern” or sketch of a proposed coat. It is not asserted that the matter went further than the submission of the tentative sketch, although it is distinctly said that John still had this sketch in his possession. That Shakespeare’s father held the offices named, and was on that score entitled to a coat of arms, cannot be questioned; and the possibility of his actually having made application to Clarenceux Cook for the dignity has already been considered. There seems to be no substantial reason for doubting the truth of the herald’s assertion.

The fourth reason advanced in behalf of the petition is that John Shakespeare “hath lands and tenements, of good wealth and substance £500.” John Shakespeare certainly had land and tenements in Stratford, but the estimate of his substance at £500 is an obvious exaggeration. Such exaggerations, however, were conventional with the officers of the College, and we need not suppose that Shakespeare himself was responsible for the statement. What the heralds meant to imply was that the person to whom the grant was made was able to support the dignity. It may be that Shakespeare himself was worth £500, or at least that the heralds thought so; and since they were really making the grant to him, “they added this necessary assurance of his pecuniary standing.

Two drafts of the grant have been preserved, each
Shakespeare

To all and singular

We send forth

30

of our full arm

and armor

Make and do

private notice

drawn and made

and publish

A section from the second draft of a grant of arms to Shakespeare, 1596
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accompanied by a rough sketch of the coat of arms, and a verbal description: the shield "in a field of gold, upon a bend sable, a spear of the first, the point upward, headed argent"; the crest, "a falcon, with his wings displayed, standing on a wreath of his colors, supporting a spear, armed, headed, and steeled silver"; the motto, "Non sans droict." The use of a falcon in the crest, according to the eminent authority, George Russel French, deserves special notice, "the falcon being one of the badges of Edward the Fourth, father of Henry the Seventh's Consort; no person, therefore, would venture to adopt such a cognizance except by special favour." It may be added that Anne Boleyn had used the falcon, and Queen Elizabeth later had adopted it as her device. The motto, Non sans droict, would seem to declare that Shakespeare was entitled to the dignity of arms by clear right.

Neither of the two extant drafts is fully executed; yet there is reason to believe that the grant to Shakespeare was actually made at this time.\(^1\) Three years later, in 1599, he made application, again using his father's name, for the right to quarter his coat of arms with that of his mother, Mary Arden, which by virtue of the previous grant had been restored to her.\(^2\) The College of Heralds, after stating that the applicant had duly "produced" his coat of arms, acknowledged the justice of his present request, and gave him formal permission to quarter his arms "with the ancient arms of the said Arden of Wilmecote." In the margin the clerk roughly sketched the arms of Shakespeare impaled with the arms of the Ardens of Park Hall. But the Ardens of Wilmecote, being descended from a younger branch of the family, had no right to that coat of arms. Either the officers of the

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\(^1\) See S. A. Tannenbaum, Was Shakespeare a Gentleman? 1909.
\(^2\) She had forfeited her right to bear arms through her marriage to "one who was no gentleman."
College discovered the mistake, or Shakespeare himself called their attention to it, and in place of the arms of the Ardens of Park Hall, crossed out, were correctly substituted the arms of the younger branch of the family.¹

After receiving his coat of arms, Shakespeare, as if properly to support his new dignity, purchased a handsome estate in Stratford. On May 4, 1597, he secured possession of New Place, the largest and possibly the finest mansion in the town; indeed only one other dwelling in Stratford could pretend to vie with it in magnificence, namely the College House, once the seat of the clergy connected with the parish church, and recently, in 1596, acquired as a home by one of the wealthiest and most aristocratic gentlemen of the county, Thomas Combe. New Place had been erected in the latter half of the fifteenth century by Sir Hugh Clopton as his own residence. He refers to it in 1496 as his “great house,” and it was regularly called in Stratford, even down to 1767, by the suggestive title “The Great House.” Leland, author of the Itinerary, writing in 1540, states that it was built of “brick and timber” (i.e., with beams showing for ornamental effects), and that it was “a pretty house.” It stood in the heart of the town just opposite the fine old Guild Chapel. Its spacious grounds, almost an acre in extent, included two barns and two gardens. That it was rightly called by the citizens “The Great House” is shown by the fact that it had a frontage of more than sixty feet, while its breadth in some parts was at least seventy feet, and one of its gables was over twenty-eight feet in height. Moreover, it had no fewer than ten fireplaces, and that at a time when fireplaces were a taxed luxury provided for relatively few

¹ For an illuminating discussion of the problems involved, see C. C. Stopes, Shakespeare’s Environment and Shakespeare’s Family.
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rooms in a mansion.¹ In still another way its size and importance as a dwelling are revealed. When in July, 1642, Queen Henrietta Maria, on her triumphant march to Kineton, accompanied by two thousand foot, a thousand horse, a hundred waggons, and a train of artillery, was joined at Stratford by Prince Rupert at the head of a second body of troops, she held her Court for three days in New Place.

The Reverend Joseph Greene has recorded a description of the house by an aged resident of Stratford named Richard Grimmitt: “This Richard said he in his youth . . . had been often . . . in the Great House, near the Chapel in Stratford, call’d New Place; that, to the best of his remembrance, there was a brick wall next the street, with a kind of porch [i.e., a gatehouse] at that end of it next the Chapel, when they cross’d a small kind of green court before they enter’d the house, which was bearing to the left, and fronted with brick, with plain windows consisting of common panes of glass, set in lead, as at this time.”²

It has been suggested that Shakespeare’s ability to return to his native town, which he had left a few years before in poverty, and purchase one of its handsomest mansions was due to the bounty of the young Earl of Southampton. Rowe, in his life of the poet, 1709, writes: “There is one instance so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakespeare’s that, if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William Davenant, who was probably very well acquainted with his affairs,³ I should not have ventured to have inserted; that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a

¹ See Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, ii, 110.
² Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, i, 132.
³ Davenant was named for Shakespeare, and the poet probably was his godfather. In his youth Davenant lived as a page in the household of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, seven miles from Stratford.
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thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to.”¹ And according to a resident of Stratford, writing in 1759, “the unanimous tradition of this neighbourhood is that by the uncommon bounty of the Earl of Southampton he was enabled to purchase houses and land in Stratford.”² This so-called “tradition,” however, may be merely an echo of the statement in Rowe’s widely-read life of the poet. The notion that Southampton made Shakespeare a generous gift of money in return for the dedication of Venus and Adonis and Lucrece is well within the bounds of probability. It was customary for a person accepting the dedication of a book to give the author a pecuniary reward,³ and Shakespeare himself speaks of “the warrant” he had received of the Earl’s “honourable disposition.” But that the sum amounted to £1000 can hardly be believed. Nor is it necessary to suppose that at this date Shakespeare had to look to his patron for money with which to effect the purchase of a home. The profession of acting was very lucrative, and Shakespeare was a full-sharer in the most successful troupe in London. He would have little difficulty in carrying out unaided a transaction involving only £60.

The small sum he paid for New Place suggests that at the time of the purchase it was in a state of decay. Nor is supporting evidence of this entirely lacking. At some date after 1549⁴ the statement is made that the mansion was “in great ruin and decay, and unrepairoed, and it doth still remain unrepaired.” In 1597 it may have been in an even worse condition.⁵ Theobald was informed by

¹ Oldys also records the tradition; see British Museum Addit. MS. 12523, p. 127.
² The minimum reward expected by an author was £2, but this amount was often exceeded by generous patrons.
³ When Dr. Thomas Bentley, President of the College of Physicians, died, who had occupied New Place on a long lease.
⁴ The owner, Clopton, was in pecuniary embarrassment so serious that he
THE SITE OF NEW PLACE

Remains of the old foundations are outlined in the picture. The structure in the background is the Guild Chapel.
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Sir John Clopton, a descendant of the original builder of the house, that Shakespeare "repaired it to his own mind." Possibly the load of stone which the Corporation of Stratford purchased from the dramatist in 1598 to mend the old Clopton Bridge 1 was left over from the work done on New Place.

Henceforth this beautiful mansion served as his country residence. 2 Some scholars have inferred that Shakespeare and his family did not occupy the house until 1611, basing the inference on the fact that in 1609 Thomas Greene is mentioned as residing there. This Thomas Greene was Shakespeare's cousin, who moved from London to Stratford in 1601. He may well have had lodgings for a time at New Place, for the building was too large for Mrs. Shakespeare and her two young daughters, and Shakespeare's absence in London for the better part of each year made the residence of his Cousin Greene at New Place desirable as a protection for the family. Moreover, in a return dated February 4, 1597-98, Shakespeare is actually described as a householder in Chapel Street, and is declared to have then had at New Place a large quantity of corn and malt. 3 How much time he could spend each year with his wife and children we do not know; but Aubrey records that "he was wont to go to his native country once a year," and doubtless he found occasion for numerous shorter visits. Certainly from

found it necessary to sell some of his estates; he was hardly in a position to repair New Place. He sold the house to William Bott in 1563, who was soon in trouble; Bott sold it in 1567 to William Underhill for £40.

1 On January 24, 1598, Abraham Sturley writes to Richard Quiney: "Wm. Wiat is mending the pavement of the bridge"; Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, ii, 57.

2 The house was pulled down about the year 1700 by Sir John Clopton. No picture of it has come down to us. At present the old foundations are the only relics of the building.

3 Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, ii, 58. It is worth noting also that before 1602 there were added to the place two orchards (ibid., ii, 105), traditionally said to have been planted by Shakespeare.

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this time on the poet regarded New Place as his home, and henceforth he describes himself, and is commonly described, as "William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, gentleman." ¹

Nor was Shakespeare, now that he had become a country gentleman, satisfied with this one piece of property in his native county; at once he sought to regain possession of the valuable Arden estate of Asbies which should have come to him from his mother, and which was unjustly held by Lambert. In the autumn of 1597 he brought suit, in the name of his father and mother, to recover the property. Formal complaint was made in London to Sir Thomas Egerton, requesting a writ of subpoena ordering Lambert to appear in the Court of Chancery. Lambert engaged lawyers, and made reply; Shakespeare's lawyers made counter-replies; but nothing came of the effort, save delay. Twice in 1598, and again twice in 1599, steps were taken by the lawyers on both sides, and by the courts; but without result. In October, 1599, the court ordered that, "If the defendant shew no cause for stay of publication by this day sevennight, then publication is granted." Apparently, however, a further stay was allowed to Lambert. The case dragged along until Shakespeare in despair abandoned the suit, and included "the law's delay" in Hamlet's famous list of justifiable reasons for suicide.

But if he could not regain his lost inheritance of Asbies, he secured by purchase other properties in and about Stratford, until ultimately he became one of the important land-holders of the community. His desire to purchase land seems locally to have been well known. On January 24, 1598, Abraham Sturley, a well-to-do citizen

¹ As Halliwell-Phillipps observes (Outlines, i, 134), henceforth "in none of the indentures is he described as a Londoner, but always as 'William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gentleman.'"
of Stratford, High Bailiff in 1596, wrote to his brother-in-law, Richard Quiney,\textsuperscript{1} then in London:

Most loving and beloved in the Lord, — in plain English we remember you in the Lord, and ourselves unto you. I would write nothing unto you now but come home. I pray God send you comfortably home. This is one special remembrance from your father's motion. It seemeth by him that our countryman, Mr. Shakespeare, is willing to disburse some money upon some odd yard land or other at Shottery, or near about us. He [your father] thinketh it very fit pattern to move him to deal in the matter of our tithes. By the instructions you can give him thereof, and by the friends he can make therefore, we think it a fair mark for him to shoot at, and not unpossible to hit. It obtained would advance him indeed, and would do us much good. \textit{Hoc movere, et quantum in te est permovere, ne negligas, hoc enim et sibi et nobis maximi erit momenti. Hic labor, hic opus, essel eximie et gloriae et laudis sibi.}\textsuperscript{2}

The letter shows that the people of Stratford were aware of Shakespeare's ambition to advance himself in the social scale; the purchase of the tithes would indeed confer upon him special dignities and privileges. They also were aware of the fact that he had acquired wealth, and were ready to seek from him pecuniary assistance. Nine months later, in the autumn of 1598, Quiney was again in London looking after the affairs of the Corporation of Stratford, particularly the securing from the Court of a new charter for the town, and a relief from the payment of the year's subsidy. In conducting these negotiations he was forced to stay longer in London than he had expected, and having accumulated debts in the city, he made this an excuse to borrow from Shakespeare the large sum of £30. The poet, with characteristic shrewd-

\textsuperscript{1} Quiney was a prosperous draper of Stratford, prominent in civic affairs, being twice elected High Bailiff. His son later married Shakespeare's younger daughter Judith.

\textsuperscript{2} The use of Latin by Sturley in writing to Quiney shows the effectiveness of the training in the Stratford grammar school. For this interesting letter in full see Halliwell-Phillipps, \textit{Outlines}, ii, 57–58.
ness, did not make the loan himself, but negotiated a loan for Quiney from some money-lending friend on the offer of proper security. Quiney's letter to Shakespeare regarding the transaction is of special interest as the only extant letter addressed to the poet. The inscription on the back of the folded sheet reads:

To my loving good friend and
countryman, Mr. Wm. Shakespeare,
deliver these.

The letter itself, neatly written in a small hand, runs as follows:

Loving countryman: I am bold of you, as of a friend, craving your help with xxxli., upon Mr. Bushell's and my security, or Mr. Mytton's with me. Mr. Roswell is not come to London as yet, and I have especial cause. You shall friend me much in helping me out of all the debts I owe in London, I thank God, and much quiet my mind, which would not be indebted. I am now towards the Court, in hope of answer for the dispatch of my business. You shall neither lose credit nor money by me, the Lord willing; and now but persuade yourself so, as I hope, and you shall not need to fear, but with all hearty thankfulness I will hold my time and content your friend;¹ and if we bargain further,² you shall be the paymaster yourself. My time bids me hasten to an end, and so I commit this to your care, and hope your help. I fear I shall not be back this night from the Court. Haste. The Lord be with you, and with us all, amen!
From the Bell, in Carter Lane, the 25 October, 1598.
Yours in all kindness,

Ryc. Quyne.

The letter, however, seems not to have been delivered; Quiney took it back with him to Stratford among his papers, and since he died there in the year of his office as

¹ I.e., the friend of Shakespeare who was to make the loan.
² Apparently Shakespeare was bargaining with Quiney about the purchase of "some odd yard land or other" near Stratford. If this purchase was consummated, Shakespeare himself could pay his friend and subtract the sum from the amount due to Quiney for the land.
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High Bailiff, it was preserved in the corporation archives. The reason why the letter was not delivered can readily be guessed. On that same day, October 25, Quiney got into direct communication with Shakespeare — either he thought it wiser to see him in person about so important a matter, and wrote the letter to leave in case he found the dramatist not at home,¹ or Shakespeare paid a visit to Quiney at his inn. By whatever means they met, Shakespeare good-naturedly agreed to secure the money for Quiney, for before the day was over Quiney had written the news to his brother-in-law. On November 4 Sturley wrote back to Quiney:

Your letter of the 25 of October came to my hands the last of the same at night per Greenway,² which imported ... that our countryman, Mr. Wm. Shak[espeare], would procure us money; which I will like of as I shall hear when and where and how; and I pray let not go that occasion if it may sort to any indifferent conditions.³

Quiney's father, Adrian Quiney, writes to him about this time:

If you bargain with Wm. Sha., or receive money therefor, bring your money home that you may; and see how knit stockings be sold; there is great buying of them at Aysshome. Edward Wheat and Harry your brother's man were both at Evyshome this day sennight, and as I heard bestowed 20li. there in knit hose; wherefore I think you may do good, if you can have money.⁴

The outcome of these proposed transactions is unknown to us; but the letters show the high respect the

¹ It will be observed that the letter has no address, as it probably would have had if sent by a messenger.
² Greenway was the Stratford carrier who delivered letters from London.
³ Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, ii, 59. It is generally assumed that Sturley is referring to some loan that Shakespeare was to make to the Corporation of Stratford. But the evidence, I think, shows that Shakespeare was making a personal loan to Quiney and Sturley so as to enable them to carry out some private speculation.
⁴ Halliwell-Phillipps, Outlines, ii, 59.
citizens of Stratford had for the pecuniary standing of Shakespeare, and the confidence they felt in the willingness of their "loving countryman" to help them in their need.

But from those persons who had no occasion to experience his kindness, his rise to social dignity through his coat of arms and his purchase of lands did not escape caustic comment. The following quotations may have been intended to refer to actors in general, yet at this early date, so far as we know, they fitted Shakespeare more aptly than any other.

Ben Jonson, in his savage attack on the Lord Chamberlain's Men in Poetaster (1601), says to Histrio: "What, you are proud, you rascal, are you proud? ha? You grow rich, do you? and purchase?" And here we may again quote his bitter reference to actors seeking heraldic honors: "They forget they are in the statute, the rascals. They are blazoned there! There they are tricked, they and their pedigrees! They need no other heralds, i'wis." It is not to be wondered at that in return for this attack Shakespeare gave Jonson "a purge that made him beray his credit." ¹ The anonymous author of The Return from Parnassus (1601) says of London actors:

With mouthing words that better wits have framed,
They purchase lands, and now "Esquires" are named.

Henry Crosse, in Virtue's Commonwealth (1603), writes: "And as these copper-lace gentlemen grow rich, they purchase lands." And the ghost of the famous highwayman Gamaliel Ratsey, according to the pamphlet entitled Ratsie's Ghost (1605), advises a poor strolling actor to hurry to London: "And when thou feelest thy purse well lined, buy thee some place of lordship in the country,

¹ So we are informed in II Return from Parnassus (1601), ed. by W. C. Macray, p. 138.
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that growing weary of playing, thy money may there bring thee to dignity and reputation.” ¹

Even if these remarks were not aimed directly at Shakespeare, they included him in their purview, for at this early date he was perhaps the most conspicuous example of a player who had come to London in poverty, had grown rich, had tricked himself out with heraldic honors, and had purchased lands in the country. He must have felt the edge of all this satire; yet, when troubled by his “disgrace with Fortune and men’s eyes,” he could find ample consolation in his friends, and in his esteem with those whose good opinion, he knew, was most to be desired.

¹ Some of these passages have been thought to refer to Edward Alleyn, who purchased a splendid estate at Dulwich for about £10,000. But Alleyn made his initial purchase there on October 25, 1605. Shakespeare’s fellow actor, Augustine Phillips, bought an estate at Mortlake in Surrey in 1604–05. Richard Burbage also “purchased,” for at his death in 1619 he was said to be worth £300 in land. Although the dates of these purchases are later than Shakespeare’s, they show the general tendency among actors to acquire estates.
CHAPTER XIV

THE ERECTION OF NEW PLAYHOUSES; THE GLOBE

Since Shakespeare’s life was now centred in the London playhouses, and since both his personal and his literary career were bound up with the fortunes of his troupe, we must turn next to certain events in the theatrical world deeply affecting the Chamberlain’s Men: the construction of the Blackfriars Playhouse, later occupied by them; the building of the Swan Playhouse to compete with them; and, finally, the erection of the Globe to serve henceforth as their permanent home.¹

It will be recalled that James Burbage instead of purchasing the land on which he built the Theatre in 1576 merely leased it for a term of twenty-one years. Unless renewed, the lease would expire in April, 1597, he would lose his profitable investment, and the Chamberlain’s Men would be driven from their playhouse. For ten years he had been pleading with the owner of the land, Gyles Alleyn, for an extension of the demise, but without success; and when at last his tenure was entering upon its last year, he realized that he must at once do something to safeguard his interests and the interests of the Chamberlain’s Company. He resolved, therefore, to build a theatre elsewhere, and to have it ready for the actors on or before the expiration of the lease.

But his fertile mind, which had already created the existing type of playhouse — a circular tower-like structure, with the centre open to the sky — now conceived of a new type of theatre, better adapted to the comfort

¹ For a complete and fully-documented account of these events, see my Shakespearean Playhouses, 1917.
of actors and audience alike. Experience had revealed to him at least three objections to the playhouses then in existence. First, they were at too great a distance from the centre of London's population. Difficult of access under the best of circumstances, they were at a serious disadvantage in bad weather, when audiences sometimes shrank to a mere handful. This is why the troupes persistently tried during the winter months to secure the use of an inn-yard, which, though smaller and more poorly equipped, was at least accessible to the public. But permission to act in the city was hard to get, for the Common Council took the position that, "if in winter... foulness of season do hinder the passage into the fields to plays, the remedy is ill conceived to bring them into London." 1 Secondly, all the playhouses were in localities associated with immorality, for now the suburb to the north of the city, as well as the Bankside, was recognized as the home of the London stews. This naturally reflected unfavorably upon the players, and upon the drama itself. In view of the constant attack on theatrical performances, business insight suggested the desirability of moving playhouses to more respectable communities. Thirdly, the buildings, being open to the air, were exposed to all the inconveniences of the weather. So long as the audience could not be protected from the rain and heat of summer, or the snow and cold of winter, there would necessarily be a diminution in the profits of both the actors and the proprietor.

With characteristic energy and originality, Burbage laid plans for a new theatre that would be free from these objections. His mind turned to the liberty of Blackfriars, "scituated in the bosome of the Cittie," within a short distance of St. Paul's Cathedral, the centre of London life. At the dissolution of the monasteries the

1 The Malone Society's Collections, i, 172.
land belonging to the Blackfriars passed into the possession of the Crown, and hence, though in the city, was not subject to the ordinances of the Common Council; as Stevens observes in his *History of Ancient Abbies, Monasteries*, etc.: “All the inhabitants within it were subject to none but the King. . . . Neither the Mayor, nor the sheriffs, nor any other officers of the city of London had the least jurisdiction or authority therein.” Thus Blackfriars being, on the one hand, in the very heart of London, and, on the other hand, wholly free from the annoying ordinances of the Mayor and Aldermen, was an ideal site for a playhouse.

Furthermore, the precinct was one of the most fashionable in the city. Here, in various buildings of the old monastery, resided many distinguished noblemen, including: Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports; Sir Thomas Cheney, Treasurer of the Queen’s Household; George Carey, Lord Hunsdon, Chamberlain of the Queen’s Household; Sir William More, Chamberlain of the Exchequer; and others. Obviously a playhouse in this aristocratic district would escape the odium that attached to the playhouses in the disreputable sections of Shoreditch and the Bankside.

But there were drawbacks. A playhouse here would prove a costly undertaking. When in 1576 Burbage erected the Theatre he was a poor man, and could not have stretched his lean purse so far; now that he was no longer a poor man he could, though not without running “far into debt,” meet the greater expense demanded. A more serious difficulty lay in the fact that the land in Blackfriars was entirely covered with buildings (except for the small garden-plots attached to the residences of a few wealthy inhabitants), so that the erection of a new structure specially designed as a theatre was impracticable; it was necessary to make use of some building already
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in existence. Burbage visited the district, and inspected the available structures. Among these he found one that he thought would be suitable for his purpose, the ancient Frater, or dining-hall, of the monks. The hall was of great size, built of solid stone, with walls three feet thick, windows "wrought as a chirche," a flat roof covered with lead, and a ceiling lofty enough to admit of the construction of galleries.¹

On February 6, 1596, he purchased this excellent building for £600, and quietly set about converting it into a theatre. By tearing out a partition he was able to secure an auditorium sixty-six feet in length by forty-six feet in breadth, including a stage at the southern end; and around the sides and back he was able to erect one or more galleries. He also provided facilities for heating the building with sea-coal fires; and he furnished illumination for the actors by means of chandeliers hung over the stage, and, possibly, by footlights. The German traveler, Gerschow, specially noted that at Blackfriars "alle bey Lichte agiret, welches ein gross Ansehen macht"; and the obvious advantage of artificial light for producing beautiful stage-effects must have contributed not a little to the charm of the plays there presented.² No money seems to have been spared in making the theatre sumptuous in all its appointments. The Frater alone, before any changes were instituted, cost £600, and the alterations and equipment must have called for an outlay of at least £300 more. In every respect the building was made the finest, as it was unquestionably the most fashionable, theatre known to Englishmen before the Restoration.


² See Pepys' *Diary* under the date March 19, 1665-66.

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But trouble was in store for the unsuspecting Burbage. As soon as the aristocratic inhabitants of the district discovered that he was planning to operate a "public" theatre in their midst, they were outraged, and promptly took steps to prevent it. In particular they prepared and sent to the Privy Council late in 1596 a strongly-worded petition against the undertaking, pointing out that a "common playhouse" would be "a very great annoyance" to "all the noblemen and gentlemen thereabout inhabiting." Among the signatures to the petition were the names of the Lord Chamberlain, the patron of Shakespeare's troupe, and Richard Field, Shakespeare's printer friend. This need not surprise us, however, for Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Company were not directly concerned with the enterprise. The erection of the theatre was a business speculation on the part of an individual, James Burbage, who alone had invested money in it. But it is more than likely that in preparing this "common playhouse" at such cost he expected the Chamberlain's Men, under the leadership of his son Richard, to occupy it after they were driven from the Theatre. Without such an expectation he would hardly have ventured on so costly a project, for the only other public troupe regularly acting in London, the rival Admiral's Company, was comfortably housed in Alleyn and Henslowe's Rose.

In response to the petition of the fashionable inhabitants of Blackfriars, the Privy Council issued an order by which they flatly "forebade the use of the said house for plays." This was a sad blow to Burbage, who had invested a small fortune in the building, and had even run "far into debt" in order to equip it as a playhouse. To the Chamberlain's Men, too, the order must have brought keen disappointment, for with the prospect of early expulsion from the Theatre, they could not look forward
THE SWAN PLAYHOUSE
(From Visscher's 'View of London, 1616.')
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to establishing themselves in the splendid roofed-in Blackfriars, "scituated in the bosome" of the metropolis.

In the midst of his difficulties, possibly in a measure overcome by them, James Burbage died in February, 1597, just two months before Alleyn's twenty-one year lease expired, bequeathing his troubles to his sons. To his elder son, Cuthbert, he left the Theatre,¹ which was abandoned by the actors within a few months, and to his younger son, Richard, he left Blackfriars, which could not be used for plays at all.

The Chamberlain's Men, however, had other things to disturb them besides the impending loss of their playhouse and the dissipation of their hopes of being able to move into Blackfriars. Hitherto a virtual monopoly of acting in London had been enjoyed by themselves and the Lord Admiral's Men; but now this monopoly, it seemed, was to be challenged by a third great city company, with the largest playhouse in England, the best of noble patronage, and liberal pecuniary backing.

A London goldsmith, Francis Langley, having become aware of the profits being made at the playhouses, decided as a speculation to erect a theatre of his own. In the Manor of Paris Garden, situated on the Bankside to the west of the Rose, he selected a site near the river, and there set up "the largest and the most magnificent playhouse" in London, to which he gave the name "The Swan." Aside, however, from its greater size and its more splendid appearance, it differed in no essential respect from the three open-air theatres already in existence. A Dutch traveler, Johannes de Witt, who visited London in the summer of 1596, has left the following description of the city's playhouses:

There are four amphitheatres in London [the Theatre, Curtain, Rose, and Swan] of notable beauty, which from their di-

¹ Unless Cuthbert's purchase of it from Hide in 1589 was bona fide.
verse signs bear diverse names. In each of them a different play is daily exhibited to the populace. The two more magnificent of these are situate to the southward beyond the Thames, and from the signs suspended before them are called the Rose and the Swan. The two others are outside the city towards the north on the highway which issues through the Episcopal Gate, called in the vernacular Bishopsgate.\(^1\) . . . Of all the theatres,\(^2\) however, the largest and the most magnificent is that one of which the sign is a swan, called in the vernacular the Swan Theatre,\(^3\) for it accommodates in its seats three thousand persons, and is built of a mass of flint stones (of which there is a prodigious supply in Britain),\(^4\) and supported by wooden columns painted in such excellent imitation of marble that it will deceive even the most cunning. Since its form resembles that of a Roman work, I have made a sketch of it above.

Langley, the goldsmith, however, was not familiar with theatrical affairs, and after completing his splendid playhouse he seems to have had difficulty in finding a troupe of actors to occupy it in successful competition with the two famous companies at the smaller and less pretentious Rose and Theatre. Doubtless he derived very little profit in letting the Swan to occasional or inferior troupes, that would draw small audiences, or would spend the better part of each year in travel.

But at last, early in 1597, he secured the organization of a new city company under the leadership of the eminent Gabriel Spencer. In addition to Spencer, some of the best actors of London were induced to join the organization, including Robert Shaw, Richard Jones, William Bird, Thomas Downton, and Ben Jonson. Pos-

\(^1\) *Vid quod itur per Episcopalum portam vulgariter Bishopsgate nuncupatam.*

\(^2\) *Theatrorum.*

\(^3\) "Id cuius intersigniun est cygnus (vulgo te theatre off te cijn)." Mr. Wallace proposes to emend the last clause to read: "te theatre off te cijn off te Swan," thus making "cijn" mean "sign."

\(^4\) De Witt was certainly wrong in stating that the Swan was built of flint stones. Possibly the plastered exterior deceived him; or possibly in his memory he confused this detail of the building with the exterior of the church of St. Mary Overies, which was indeed built of "a mass of flint stones."
THE INTERIOR OF THE SWAN PLAYHOUSE
Roughly sketched by Johannes de Witt in 1596.
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sibly Jonson had already, like Shakespeare, shown ability in refurbishing old plays, and was counted upon to help in writing as well as in acting. The company thus formed secured the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke. Gabriel Spencer certainly, and possibly other members of the troupe, had been connected with the old Pembroke’s Company, and probably were ambitious of re-establishing that once-famous organization in the esteem of London playgoers.

The new Pembroke’s Company entered into an agreement with Langley (each sharer becoming bound for the sum of £100) to play at the Swan for one year, beginning February 21, 1597. Langley thereupon “disbursed and laid out for making the said house ready, and providing of apparel fit and necessary for their playing, the sum of £300 and upwards.”

Here was a troupe with a name once illustrious in the theatrical world, comprising some of the ablest actors in England, enjoying the patronage of no less a nobleman than the Earl of Pembroke, occupying the largest and handsomest playhouse in London, and managed by a person of wealth who was disposed to be liberal and even extravagant in supplying them with costumes and stage-equipment. The Chamberlain’s and Admiral’s companies could not but have been disturbed by the prospect of serious competition.

All went well with the Pembroke’s Men until near the end of July, when they put on the boards a satirical play entitled The Isle of Dogs. The plot was conceived and partly written by Thomas Nashe, the “young Juvenal” of the age; but the satirical portions were heightened and added to by Ben Jonson and one or two other members of the troupe described as “inferior players.” The title was taken from a foul, marshy island just below London called the Isle of Dogs. Apparently, for the play is not
extant, on this little island Nashe created a kingdom of
and by dogs, and under a thin disguise attacked the
English government, or at least certain persons high in
authority. The exact nature of the offense cannot now
be determined, but Nashe himself informs us that "the
troublesome stir which happened about it is a general
rumor that hath filled all England." The Queen seems
to have been highly incensed. On July 28 the Privy
Council ordered the arrest of the authors of the play, and
of the actors who had taken part in its performance.
Nashe saved himself by precipitous flight, but his lodg-
ings were searched, and his private papers turned over
to the authorities. Gabriel Spencer and Robert Shaw,
as leaders of the troupe, and Ben Jonson as one of the
"inferior players" who had a share in writing the play,
were thrown into prison. The rest of the company fled
into the country, the speed with which they moved being
indicated by the fact that we find them in Bristol a few
days later, with the Privy Council vainly asking where
they are.

A special commission was appointed by the Council to
examine the players and mete out to them condign pun-
ishment. Among other things the commission was di-
rected to discover "what copies they have given forth of
the said play, and to whom," and to destroy all such
copies. They did their work so well that no text of The
Isle of Dogs has been preserved. The Council further
ordered that "no plays shall be used within London, or

1 Possibly a copy was formerly preserved in a volume of miscellaneous
manuscripts at Alnwick Castle, though we cannot be sure. If it ever was
there it has since disappeared. On a blank page still remaining in the vol-
ume is written "By Thomas Nashe and inferior players." This page is fur-
ther interesting because some contemporary has idly scribbled over it the
name of Shakespeare, with a quotation from Lucrece, and the title of two of
his plays, Richard II and Richard III. Apparently no significance is to be
attached to these scrawls; they merely indicate the general fame of Shakes-
peare as a writer.