The Role of the Junior English Schools in the Development of the Drama

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THE ROLE OF THE JUNIOR ENGLISH SCHOOLS
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
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# The Role of the Junior English Schools in the Development of the Drama

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CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF THE JUNIOR ENGLISH SCHOOLS
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA

The day does not start at noon, nor does the Nile begin at Cairo. Neither does a consummate work of art spring full-panoplied from the inspired brow of some favorite of the Muses, unsung, unheralded, uncultivated. In like manner, without detracting in any way from the halo that scholars, tradition, and the "general" have woven about the brow of Shakespeare, we can safely say that the genius that was his in the field of drama did not burst forth in full bloom before his public with the suddenness of a cut and polished diamond being turned over by a farmer's spade. Unquestioned as is his supremacy among dramatic poets, still we must not look upon him as some lofty, sun-tipped summit, hanging, as it were, in mid-air. His is not an isolated grandeur, but rather the culmination of decades - we might even say of centuries - of slow, painstaking development and perfection. He, of course, touched a spark to the materials he had on hand and brought them to a brilliance that has been both the ambition and the despair of all succeeding dramatists; but if scholars, poets, playwrights before him had not nurtured and fostered the seedling that
was the drama of their day, there might not have been any material for him to ignite, and that spark might have spent itself in barren obscurity.

To see Shakespeare, then, in the proper perspective, we must know the forerunners of the drama of his day. To appreciate fully a climax, we must see the steps that led up to it. The purpose of this thesis is precisely to inquire into one of those steps. It is a step about which not too much is known and little is said. Volumes have been written about the more important dramatists who were the immediate predecessors or contemporaries of Shakespeare. The life and works of men like Marlowe, Kyd, Lyly, Peele, and others have been thoroughly searched and evaluated; their names are known and their position recognized. Our investigation goes back a little further, for we wish to determine just what position the English schools hold in the development of drama before these men; and in particular, our consideration will deal with the development of the drama in the hands of the boy actors, the members of the Junior Schools in England, as distinguished from the students of the big Universities. While the part played in the gradual evolution of the English drama by the Universities, the Public Schools, and the Inns of Court has been generally accepted and universally appraised, the
purpose of this thesis is to show that the Junior Schools, with their boy actors, had a prominent share in this development, and that, moreover, their contributions were equally as important as those of the larger and better known institutions of learning.

It seems surprising that so little has been said about this phase of the development of English drama. There are many authors - Symonds, Boas, Schelling, Collins, to take only a few as examples - who make but the barest references even to the fact that there were such things as children's companies, much less consider their possible literary influence. Then there are other writers, such as Chambers, Collier, and Fleay, who have a more extensive account of the activities of the boy actors; but even in the works of such authorities as these the youthful actors are not given too serious attention and the records concerning them, especially in Collier, are incomplete and confusing. In the Cambridge History of English Literature,

1 Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama.
2 Cf. both Shakspere and His Predecessors, and University Drama in the Tudor Age.
3 Elizabethan Drama.
5 The Elizabethan Stage.
6 The History of English Dramatic Poetry.
7 A Chronicle History of the London Stage.
while there are many articles dealing with the forerunners of Shakespeare, and several on the Universities and their writers, there is only one treating specifically of the junior schools; and even in that article, only indefinite allusions are made to the importance of the boy actors in the century preceding Shakespeare. And finally, there are even such drastically abrupt dismissals as that to be found in Gofflot, who, while granting some importance to the University drama, resolves his whole consideration of the younger actors into just one footnote.

Yet it is becoming increasingly evident that such summary treatment of this branch of English dramatic history is quite unjustified. As more and more evidence is gradually brought to light, the position of the "children of the Chapel" and the "boys of Powle's" assumes a proportionately greater importance. The later the writer, the more definite he is on this point; and this is particularly noticeable in such men as Fleay, Schelling, Ward, and Boas, who wrote not only in the early years of this century but also in more recent years on the same subject of Elizabethan drama. The reason for slighting this aspect of the drama

9 Ibid., p. 71.
in their earlier writings is undoubtedly founded on the lack of documentary evidence, or rather the lack of sufficient consultation of that material. For the evidence has always been there and, for the most part, its existence known. The history of the boys' companies, though scattered and elusive, is contained with sufficient clearness when compiled in such documents as the Accounts of the Revels, The Kings Books of Payments, and the entries in the Public Record Office concerning the performances of plays. Little by little, however, these records have been brought to light, with particular efforts to compile and synthesize being made by men like Fleay (*Stage*, 1890), Feuillerat (*Revels Office Records*, 1908), and Murray (*English Dramatic Companies*, 1910). Their work, together with the findings, both prior and subsequent, of other leading scholars in this field, has caused scholars to cease looking on the boy actors with an indulgent smile as though they were interesting little oddities of a bygone day and to look on them instead as potent factors in the preservation and development of one of the great branches of literature. The boys were definitely not just a passing fad, and we have at least an external indication of this in the fact that Shakespeare makes one of the few contemporary notices to be found in any of his writings when, in Hamlet's talk with the players,
he has them complain bitterly about the too successful competition the children put up against the adult groups. Surely if even at a date when their tenure of histrionic eminence was on the wane, the greatest dramatist of them all found them annoyingly important, their position and influence should command our attention; and it should be both interesting and profitable to know the elements and the extent of that influence.

It would be well at the very beginning to point out that in this paper we shall consider principally the boy actors, the members of the Junior Schools and not the Universities. We shall focus our attention on the "little eyases" and endeavor to see why they were so "tyrannically clapped for it." There was, of course, a great deal of dramatic activity in the institutions of higher learning. Research has brought to light the names and dates of the interludes, comedies, and tragedies produced at Oxford, Cambridge, and the Inns of Court; but these plays seem to have developed and pursued a path of their own, having very little contact either with the people or with the popular drama. The Universities, of course, were seques-

11 Cf. especially F. S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age.
tered and aloof; their entertainments had a very scholarly tone and their purpose was not merely to entertain but to instruct. For this end, they were written in the classical tongue of Latin and Greek, obviously intended only for presentation before those who had mastered these languages - the faculty and students of the Universities. So universal was this practice that when Queen Elizabeth announced her intention of visiting Cambridge in 1564 and requested that a play be put on in the "English tongue," she received the reply that there was no such play at hand, it being their custom always to have their plays in the classical languages. Not only were the University plays strictly limited as to audience, language, and form but the schools' authorities were also violently opposed to the so-called "popular drama." While this opposition was most probably due to the crudities and irregularities attendant on such public performances, it did serve to forestall any connection between the two types of drama and hinder any influence that one might have had on the other. The two streams ran side by side for a while, until finally the drama of the Universities was superseded by that of the Junior Schools, the Court, the public theatre, and eventually dropped in to oblivion.
It is, then, to the youthful actors in the Court, in the schools, and finally upon the public stage that we must look to discover what kept the dramatic pot boiling during the sixteenth century. As we shall see, it was their efforts, their crude attempts and beginnings, that paved the way for the polished Shakespearean product that appeared at the end of that century. The traditional view has been that modern drama came from the classic, refurbished and modified by the Renaissance; but with the new evidence that has come to light, we see that our drama more properly should be traced to a different source. While those who wrote for the children's companies were scholarly and versed in the classics, they were sensitive to the public demand for something different from the older dramatic style, and were able to develop their own technique, methods, and characterizations to meet that demand. It was this aim that put them in line more with the Miracles and Moralities than with the classic drama; for while they changed the form and subject matter, they did keep the old spirit of the religious plays - a dramatic spirit that catered to the people and not to the past, to recreation, not to study. The deep and fundamental instinct that underlies all true drama - the love of struggle and conflict, be it on the playing field, the canvas ring, or the thea-
ter's boards - is one that will never die; and the importance of these playwrights and their child actors is that they found an acceptable outlet for that instinct and kept the love of drama alive and flourishing in the hearts of the people. It was undoubtedly that love, that demand, that encouraged men to work, to devote their lives and talents to the perfection of dramatic writing, and thus to attain the heights of Marlowe and Shakespeare. It is only natural that the form and subject matter would change. In the early days of the religious dramas, the lives of the early English were more placid and provincial, and their religion was of paramount importance in that scheme of life. With the advent of Henry and Elizabeth, however, the great extension of the empire and its industrial activities made them more conscious of themselves as a nation, more interested in history, in historical personages, in life itself as they knew it. Then the brutal forcing of Protestantism upon them, especially by Elizabeth, left them with a religion that was cold, uninspiring, formalistic. No longer was their faith a warm and living part of their lives but rather a cold, confining, external ritual that they had to accept to get along in business and politics. Quite naturally religion dropped to the background as a subject for dramatic writing; as a matter of fact, it was only sturdy
resistance to the Protestant spirit that saved sixteenth century drama at all. The early playwrights, such as Medwell, Heywood, Cornish, Rightwise, and others, were all Catholic, imbued with the spirit of the old religious plays, and determined to find an answer to that very human need for dramatic entertainment. That they did find an answer, through the medium of the child actors, will become apparent, I trust, in these pages.

Though I believe it is already evident, it would be well to point out that we will consider specifically the history and influence of the children actors only from the early part of the sixteenth century to the time of Shakespeare. It was during this period that they enjoyed their most flourishing prominence and exercised almost sole dominion over the English stage. While this was the time of their greatest influence, it is not to be supposed that they were unknown or unheard of before. Their history, as a matter of fact, goes back several centuries. There can be no doubt that boys took some part, at least, in the earliest recorded dramatic productions - viz., the "Quem Queritis" trope in the ninth century and the "Winchester Trope" in the tenth. Since these productions took place

in church, the parts were played by choir boys or young clerics, particularly when women were to be represented. In the twelfth century, our earliest record of a stage performance was a boy production at Dunstable, "The Play of St. Catherine." The grammar school connected with St. Paul's Cathedral, founded in the twelfth century, records a play of the "History of the Old Testament" in 1378. From the very beginning of the fifteenth century we find increasingly frequent notices of sums paid to the Masters of the Children by the Court to cover expenses either for impressment or for the production of plays. Finally, with the appointment of William Cornish in 1509 by Henry VIII as Master of the Chapel Royal, we enter the golden age of the child actors, not only of the Chapel, but of the schools of St. Paul, Eton, Westminster, Merchant Taylor, and others. It is, then, of this period that we shall treat in our consideration of their influence on English dramatic history.

14 I.e., the right to gather children suitable for the choir.
Even as we enter this period we find signs of the evolution that drama was about to undergo. It becomes apparent that a new type of dramatic production was about to make its appearance; and it would be well in this introductory chapter to point out the difference between the new drama, which we shall call the "art drama" and the older types of religious dramatic production, and to sketch briefly its rise. As Symonds points out, the short but vigorous evolution of English dramatic literature falls conveniently into three stages. The first, and longest, is one of preparation and tentative endeavor. The second is that of maturity, fixed by one great master and perfected by another immeasurably greater. The third is one of dissipation and decadence, brought about by futile attempts to revise and refine. The years we are about to consider represent the culmination of the first stage, for it is during this time that the art drama makes its first bid for popular favor. By art drama we mean that drama intended solely for pleasure, for the people, for entertainment. It is a drama whose chief purpose is not to point a moral but to represent life as it is. For two hundred years the stage had been principally a means

16 J. A. Symonds, Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama, p. 3.
of religious and moral education via allegorical personification, and its transition to a medium of popular entertainment involved a three-fold change - viz., in language, in form and subject matter, and, most important of all, in point of view on the part of the people attending the plays.

The change to the vernacular was perhaps the easiest and most natural and occurred quite early in the ecclesiastical plays produced by and for the common people.17 In the schools, and particularly in the Universities, the change was much slower because of the didactic nature of their stage performances. The earliest plays in the Junior Schools were all in Latin or Greek but there was always a tendency towards the use of the vernacular,18 a tendency which, by the early years of the sixteenth century, had become common practice.19

The second step in the rise of the new drama was the change in subject matter. Already in 1514 it is noticeable that the Moralities were on the wane. As Henry VIII remarked, "The fool's part was the best."20

19 Cf. Of Gentleness and Nobility, The Pardoner and the Frere, The Four Elements, et al., all produced by Cornish or Heywood between 1517 and 1540.
20 Wallace, Evolution of the English Drama, p. 46.
words, the people had begun to concentrate their attention and their favor on the comic elements in the old drama - those parts which in a crude, stiff, and rather abstract way did give the spectators a little cross-section of real life. The extensive pageantry, "masking," and dancing which had formerly comprised the greater part of the dramatic entertainments were further curtailed by a plague in 1518, which limited the length, the frequency, and the cost of the displays. Since the audience was seeking to be diverted and entertained, the lavish non-essentials (dramatically speaking) were lopped off and the play became the thing. 21 These factors together with the rise of the "empire spirit" and the religious conflict mentioned above gradually retired the old religious drama to an inconspicuous corner whence it never again emerged either in Court, School, or University. 22

Naturally the most important element in the change to the new drama was the change in taste on the

21 Ibid., p. 53.
22 We must note a sudden revival of fantastic, almost childish pageantry during the reign of Edward VI in an effort to cater to his youthful tastes; and a similar return to favor of the Miracles and Moralities during Mary's reign. But these sporadic flurries left the broad stream of dramatic development practically unruffled. They were merely the last glow in the dying embers of the old type of drama. Cf. Boas, Shakespere and His Predecessors, p. 17; Wallace, op. cit., pp. 91, 102.
part of the spectators, which in turn was reflected in the efforts of the playwrights. In an external way, we can trace an indication of this development in the very names used from time to time to designate the plays performed at the schools. We find that the designation passes from "ludus" in 1486 to "interludia" in 1512 to "comedia" and "tragedia" after 1535. The dates, of course, are not mutually exclusive, but they do show some sign of the change that the stage was undergoing. Perhaps the first indication of this new trend of the drama was the insertion of the lyric or art-song, with words and music to be sung, frequently to the accompaniment of dancing. This was not the old folk song or religious ballad, but a deliberate attempt to amuse and entertain, put in here and there to lighten the interludes and comedies. They began with the earliest Court poets of this period, Cornish and Heywood, who, as Masters of the Children, either at Court or at one of the Schools, were the chief composers of music and songs for the royal entertainment. This practice continued through the succeeding Masters until Lyly.

23 Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age, pp. 11-12.
and was a very important step toward the production of plays meant mainly to amuse.

It was, indeed, this attitude that brought about the change in the themes of the drama. Life and love became the subjects of the dramatists' attention, as we can see as early as 1514, when at the Twelfth Night entertainment Cornish and his children of the Royal Chapel "devised" an interlude called "The Triumph of Love and Beauty."

Thereafter Cornish continued entertainments in the same spirit, for the old extravagant pageantry was about gone. The Moralities, as we noted, were in disfavor, even though shortened in form. The older players, such as the King's Players and occasional outside companies, were discarded by Henry VIII; the Lord of Misrule, a long-standing adjunct of the Christmas and Twelfth Night performances, fell into desuetude. Drama, which formerly had been based on spectacular appeal to which dialogue had been added as a grace-note, gradually dropped the pageantry and became a compound of dialogue, acting, and dancing. With Cornish and his successors the drama was based on life, conceived as a reflection of life, a play, a recreation. Forced by popular approval, the stage during the sixteenth century

turned from teaching to amusing, from mysteries to mundane affairs. For this purpose, dialogue was not only more apt and appealing, but also far less expensive, a fact that would naturally appeal to the parsimonious Elizabeth.

The transition, of course, was gradual. The one fundamental tendency was ever constant and growing: to represent the abstract by the concrete. Even up to the time of Lyly, however, there were still relics of abstractions in the new comedies, and even the concrete representations were often more farcical than real. In trying to represent such abstractions of the old Moralities as Truth and Beauty and Sensuality and the like, these early dramatists created characters embodying these qualities; but such delineation cannot be said to be real, because human nature is too complex to be represented by one quality. The secularization of the drama, nevertheless, progressed apace with these two noticeable results: the presentation of human character as its proper end and the subjection of that character to the author's will and imagination. Like all things in a state of evolution, there remained throughout this period a certain amount of confusion. The drama was part sermon, part story, part spectacle. The necessity of a real plot, a complete story, careful characterization was not clearly recognized. The literary form progressed through the rough
doggerel of the "Four Elements" and "Ralph Roister-Doister" to the poly-syllabic Alexandrine of "Gorboduc" to the ten-syllable rhyme of "Campaspe" to the blank verse of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

This brief sketch of the development of sixteenth century drama would not be complete without making clear one final distinction. Besides the gradual change from the old religious pageantry to the newer "art" drama, there was noticeably present in the sixteenth century a double stream of dramatic endeavor. There was on the one hand the polished classic of the upper schools and on the other the native English of the Court and junior schools. We could indicate this distinction by terming one academic or classic and the other popular; but we must point out that "popular drama" does not mean drama written for and inspired by the common people or the lower classes of society. The use of the word popular here merely indicates the drama written principally to entertain people and to represent real life on the stage. This drama was, after all, written for the Court by men educated in the Universities and the Court, courtiers in occupation and training.27 The academic and the popular drama differed greatly in their basis and spirit. The former began with the rise of humanism and was

stimulated by the extension of the college system and its internal consolidation in the sixteenth century. Since the college was the home of the student from early age, some entertainment had to be provided; and the formal, didactic dramas of the classic writers were chosen to fill this need, providing excellent literary and linguistic exercises as well as a modicum of entertainment. The popular drama, however, was based purely on a native instinct, a desire for fun that found its expression in mimicry. It didn’t bury itself in the past or tie itself down to hidebound norms. It was a surging, spontaneous expression of the age-old, natural desire for stage plays; and it was this popular drama, sprung from the Moralities, touched here and there by the classic drama, that developed into the drama of Shakespeare. The classic drama was studious, didactic, pedagogic - based on duty and intellectual obligations; the Court drama was light and pleasurable - based on beauty, life, joy. Just how these two streams affected each other will be discussed later; enough now merely to indicate their existence.

Though this introduction has been rather lengthy, it was necessary to give the background of sixteenth century

dramatics in order to make clear the point of our thesis. Even this rough outline has shown the importance, the changes, the developments of the drama in this period. We don't mean that the stage produced any great work, outstanding in itself, during this period; but the perfection of later artists was made possible by the bungling efforts of these early attempts. In the succeeding chapters, then, we shall attempt to show how large a part the boy actors and their playwrights played in these formative years and thus prove their importance to the stage of Shakespeare. The Junior Schools are important because the writers who effected the changes we have indicated wrote for them; and just what these writers and their youthful players did for the drama will be shown in the following pages.

One thing it seems most desirable to avoid is that perennial weakness of research workers - i.e., the tendency to claim too much for one's brain-child. We do not wish to create the impression: sans boys, no Shakespeare. But, Shakespeare did perfect the drama as he found it, and that drama had been kept alive and developed by the boy actors. The most important writers up to 1590 and many of them after that wrote for the boys, and they wrote in such a way as to make the stage popular. They were dependent on popular favor; some companies toward the end
of the century were formed strictly for profit; all the boy performers, whether of the Chapel Royal, the Schools, or the commercial companies, strove to maintain their position and popularity at Court. It was their efforts that brought people to love drama, that created the need to which Shakespeare's genius responded. Hence, what they put into the drama must have some value and certainly is worthy of consideration. It is to their contributions that we now turn our attention.
CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF DRAMA IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOLS

A: BACKGROUND

To discuss the importance of any group, whether its influence be social, political, or literary, necessarily commits one to a review of its history. Particularly is that review important in a case such as this one, wherein the mere presentation of facts proving a widespread and popular presence of dramatic activity on the part of boy actors necessarily connotes a correspondingly weighty influence in the development of drama itself. I say "necessarily," because in the period we are to consider in detail - the sixteenth century - tremendous changes were manifest in the development of English drama; and it would hardly be possible for that group into whose hands principally was entrusted the dramatic life of that century to have been devoid of great influence in the shaping and nurturing of that life. Though we shall concentrate principally on the preponderance of the boys' dramatic activities during that particular period, and trace the history of drama in the various schools and under the more famous masters, it is necessary at the offset to give a general idea of the historical background - to sketch rapidly the
growing position and popularity of the young actors through the three or four centuries preceding this one.

With the gradual return to peace after the Norman conquest came a great influx of monasticism, with its customary emphasis and insistence on education. In the early twelfth century there were schools founded at St. Albans, Dunstable, Reading, Gloucester, and - in the city - St. Paul's and Westminster. These schools being schools for boys, and boys, I imagine, not having changed too radically through the course of centuries, we should expect to find some record of recreation and entertainment necessarily being presented for and by them. References, however to dramatic activity are quite sparse and scattered, partly because in such records accounts of plays and pageants were probably felt to be too inconsequential for notice. From earliest tradition, of course, we have reports of the Boy Bishop - The Episcopus puerorum, who playfully usurped the prerogatives of a prelate from the feast of St. Nicholas to Holy Innocents' Day. Although our first extant record in England of this custom dates from York in the early thirteenth century,¹ we know the custom dates much further back, and no doubt was responsible in large measure for accustoming

boys to plays and acting and thus had its influence on the development of drama.\(^2\) We know, too, that in public processions and later in the production of "pageants" growing out of the cycle plays, boys had their part;\(^3\) and and while these were not strictly dramatic productions, they yet had a part in the progress of the boy actors.

It is only natural that we should expect to see boys interested and involved in the art of acting, what with their natural love of fun and gift for mimicry. In the very beginning of the development of modern drama, when the trope and the miracle play were being evolved, it was necessary to use boy actors because the presentations demanded parts for women and for youths and because they were put on in the Church and by the Church. Later it was realized that the dramatic instinct supplied an easy and natural means not only for recreation but for study, and as such the drama was fostered by both student and master.\(^4\) Many centuries later, when the practice of using boys as actors was being attacked and held up to scorn, one of those who wrote for them, Thomas Heywood,\(^5\)

\(^5\) In his *Apologie for Actors*, 1612.
adduces these two reasons for the use of juvenile players:

a) it emboldened them so that they could face the public, e.g., in teaching or lecturing; and b) it taught them not merely to speak but to do so with judgment, grace, and poise. In other words, the presence of the boys on the stage was spontaneous and natural, and was intelligently encouraged by those who were in charge as being beneficial both to actor and audience. Certainly the widespread rise and popularity of the children's companies could hardly have been due to mere accidental discovery of talent and then greedy promotion by church and school authorities for profit, as one author would have it.

Most probably the very earliest records we have of the "Winchester trope" in the tenth century and the "Quem quaeritis trope" in the previous century entailed the services of the young clerics in the monastic school. The first actual account of a school drama is c. 1110 at Dunstable, when the Norman Geoffrey, while waiting for his appointment as Abbot of St. Alban's, trained the boys of Dunstable in the Play of St. Catherine. While this play is not extant, it is most probably similar in form and content to the three plays written for students by Hilarius

6 Cf. L. V. Gofflot, Le Theatre au College, p. 70.
7 Appleton Morgan, Shakespeariana, IX, 3, p. 137.
in Latin and French about the year 1125. Further explicit reference to plays and juvenile actors seems to be lacking until notice of an entertainment by the "boys of Paul's" - students of the school attached to St. Paul's - in 1378. It is in the next century, though, that the role of the boy players begins to emerge from the mist of conjecture and historical neglect and to assume some signs of the importance it was to have in the days of Henry and Elizabeth. Particularly is this true in the case of the children of the Chapel Royal. Here we find definite reference to the children as early as 1420, and frequent references to the boys and their masters in the years that follow. It may be observed that in these earliest notices no mention is made of the boys as actors; but we can conclude from occasional previous mention of their participation in dramatics and from their subsequent wholesale share in that sphere of activity - a situation which naturally must have come about little by little - that the boys and their masters must have taken part in the entertainments presented at Court. It is only natural that choir-boys, trained to

9 C. W. Wallace, Evolution of the English Drama, p. 11.
appear in public, should double as actors; and that they should be permitted to practise and to devote much of their time to such frivolous pursuits may be understood in the light of the sacred origin of the drama, which was still fresh in the minds of the people. Their continued appearance on the stage even after the complete secularization of the drama was undoubtedly the result of the two or three centuries of histrionic tradition that was their heritage. If it be further objected that the Court maintained certain "gentlemen" whose function was to entertain the King and his guests, it must be pointed out that the nature of their activities is even further shrouded in uncertainty than that of the boys; and it is known that during the fifteenth century they were mere feed retainers, and that with the accession of Henry VII in 1485 there was little more than a nominal position on the royal payroll that they still retained. Naturally, with this source of entertainment decadent or defunct, and with only a few minstrels, individual singers, and occasional appearances of oddities like the Lord of Misrule and the Boy Bishop to enliven the Court, we may be sure that the major share of entertainment fell to the lot of the boy actors.

13 Wallace, op. cit., p. 35.
As we indicated, there seemed to be a resurgence of dramatic activity after 1485. Perhaps it was due to a more lively, pleasure-seeking Court; perhaps it may be attributed to increased scholastic activity in all fields under the spur of such men as Linacre, Grocyn, Erasmus, More, and Colet. At any rate, it is with that year that the royal accounts take notice not only of the presence of the children and their masters, but of the fact that they acted before the Court. Again in 1490 a similar notice appears; and in 1497 we have the first secular drama in English, Fulgens and Lucres, written by Henry Medwell, chaplain for Cardinal John Morton of Canterbury and one of the first writers of plays in English whose names have been preserved. Because of his position as chaplain, because of the nature of his audience, because he wrote other plays presented at Court by boy actors, we may conclude that this play was written for and produced by the boys of the cathedral choir. It is a serious play with a comic under-plot; and it is important not merely because it antedates Gorboduc and Ralph Roister Doister, commonly accepted

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14 Ibid., p. 13.
16 Ibid.
"firsts" in English drama, but because it opens up a century of intense dramatic activity on the part of the boy actors and points the way to their share in the development of modern drama.

B: DEVELOPMENT IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY:

At the beginning of our consideration of the burgeoning of juvenile histrionics in the course of the sixteenth century, it seems only fitting that we digress for a moment to pay tribute to that scholar, statesman, and saint, whose name, through ignorance or prejudice, is so often ignored in the field of literature - Sir Thomas More. Beyond a passing nod to his Utopia by literary historians, little attention is accorded him; but a study of these early years of English drama has made it apparent that he, his family, and his lively wit and humor were closely woven into the fabric that made up that early picture. We know from his biography that he wrote a little and acted a little, and we know that he was a page in the service of Cardinal John Morton, and there he must have met Henry Medwell, the author, as we have seen, of the first secular play, Fulgens and Lucre. John Rastell, the printer who published most of the dramatic literature remaining to us from the first half of this century, married More's sister, Elizabeth; and their daughter Joan (More's
niece) married John Heywood, who, with Cornish, was one of the two chief dramatists for the boy actors at that period. Because of his position and high esteem in the court of Henry - i.e., before Anne Boleyn - he must have known well the Master of the King's Chapel and the King's chief entertainer, William Cornish; and hence we can see that both the performance and the publishing of plays in that part of the century was something in the nature of a family affair for Thomas More. No doubt his quips and his effervescent merriment found their way into many of those productions and contributed their part to the enjoyment of the plays.18

We can say in general of sixteenth century drama that drama belonged to the child actors. From Henry VIII till 1580, the theater was almost solely in the hands of the school-boys.19 Because of a lack of a permanent theater and financial backing, there was no organized and consistent dramatic endeavor outside the Court and the schools,20 and there, as we shall see, the entertainment was solely by the children of the chapel and the boys from

the various schools. Between 1580 and 1590 (you will note that the first permanent theater was built in 1576) the men's companies began to grow and flourish, not to the detriment of the boys' companies, but despite them. Then, after a lull during the next decade, they sprang into the limelight again in 1600; but it was a decadent prominence, which they maintained against superior odds for about fifteen years, after which, to all intents and purposes, their activities ceased.

Soon after the beginning of Henry's reign, it could be seen that the Moralities and the old religious pageantry was waning; this spirit was perhaps best expressed in the words of Henry himself: "The foolys part was the best." The progress of new dances, "meskelers" (maskings), and plays taken from life was rapid after the first decade of his reign. In 1514 we have the first clear record of this new drama, in which life and love were the themes, in a Twelfth Night entertainment staged by Cornish, Master of the Chapel Royal, and his boys. In 1516 we have his first Chaucerian play, "The Story of Troylous and Pandor," again on Twelfth Night; and two years later for the same occasion he presented his "Pardon and the Frere." From that year on, because of the

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21 Ibid., p. 46
plague and recurrent restrictions to prevent its return, 22 expensive pageantry was curtailed and the play became the thing - simple, straightforward representations of life, requiring a small complement of actors and a minimum of costuming.

After Cornish retired in 1523, he was succeeded by Crane, Bower, and Heywood, all writers and producers of drama for the children. These men, however, encountered difficult and depressing temporal conditions that tended to vitiate and deter the development of the lusty infant drama sired by Cornish, but progress was by no means completely halted. There was a digression for a time to extravagant trivialities, and even, to please the boy king, Edward VI, a descent to such exaggerated pageantry as Ferrers' "asinary." 23 These were but temporary delays on the road to the drama of Shakespeare, slowing drama up, perhaps, but having no lasting effect; the progress of real drama continued despite these obstacles. Not only was this development evident among the plays written for the Chapel Royal but it was to be found among the productions of other groups of boys as well, even in the early

22 Ibid., p, 53.
23 A procession of Venus and Mars, with 26 canvas hobby-horses (1551 and 1553).
part of the sixteenth century. From 1521 on there are records in the college audit books of payments made for plays, especially at Eton, Westminster, Paul’s and Winchester. At Eton, there are entries as early as 1525-6. Under Nicholas Udall many plays were presented both at Eton and at Westminster, where he was successively Master from 1534-41 and from 1553-56. At Hitchin, Ralph Radcliff built a stage and put on ten plays from 1538 on. But it is at the school connected with St. Paul’s - the "boys of Powle’s" - that we find the earliest and clearest records. Beginning as early as 1520, we find it the custom to entertain important visitors with dramatic selections in Latin; and for this purpose, of course, the school-boy was eminently fitted. The boys of Paul’s were called upon for these plays; and most noteworthy of their efforts in this line was their first appearance before the King in 1527. This particular production has received more notice than almost any other single play in this whole period because we have not only a record of the fact but a direct description of the event and its recep-

26 Ibid., p. 18.
tion by the audience. It is memorable for several reasons. First, it is the first public appearance of a Latin interlude in English style. Based on Plautus and Terence, it is a satire on Luther, called the "herrytyke Lewtar." It is, moreover, the first appearance of Paul's boys before the King, the first public notice of their master, John Rightwise, and about the only play in this century outspokenly against the Protestant Reformation. This last circumstance arose from the fact that it was presented before Cardinal Wolsey and French nobles, and its express purpose was to exalt and flatter that eminent churchman.

Although this play received attention out of proportion to its importance in the development of the drama, its principal significance for us at the moment is its indication of the custom of presenting annual Christmas entertainments at the various boys' schools. For we know that schools like Eton and Merchant Taylors (under Mulcaster) appeared yearly at Court for many years; and other schools, such as Canterbury (King's School), Shrewsbury, Beverly, and Hitchin, were noted for their plays.

We have further proof of this constant dramatic activity if we look at the long list of playwrights during this period whose names are known to us. With the exception of Skelton and Bale, whose plays may or may not have been written for the boys, we find that the others were Masters either of the Chapel Royal or of some school, whose plays definitely were written for their youthful charges.

We come now to one of the surest indications of the predominance of the boy actors during this century, and that is the record at the Court of payments made each year for the entertainments staged there. We select the Court records because they are most complete and clear, and because it was there that the Children of the Chapel put on most of their plays, and furthermore, because Elizabeth, through her influence and avid interest in the drama, encouraged most of the other schools to make their appearance at the Court also. There are general references to this situation, such as that of Hillebrand, who in summarizing the list of royal entertainers lists primarily the Chapel Royal, the Children of Paul's, and the school com-

30 There were, for example, Cornish, Crane, Bower, Heywood, Edwards, and Hunnis at the Court; Udall at Eton, Westminster, and the Court; Rightwise, Jones, and Westcott at St. Paul's; Mulcaster at Merchant Taylors, etc.

panies of Eton, Westminster, Shrewsbury, Merchant Taylors, and Windsor. More specific is the record of payments made over a span of years - the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign. There were fifteen to the Chapel Royal, over twenty to the boys of Paul's, and almost as many again split up among various schools. Eton, for example, appeared at Court several times after 1572; Westminster, five times between 1566-73; Merchant Taylors, six times between 1573-83. Nor would these records be complete without observing that besides all this Elizabeth frequently visited the schools and the usual reception was the presentation of a play. In addition, there are preserved to us many other references to single performances, as will become apparent when we speak later of the schools and authors individually.

Almost as important as the Court records is the story of the children's performances at Blackfriars. This was a theater about which a tremendous amount of interesting, but very involved, litigation was carried on for a quarter of a century; and the real truth is still shrouded in mystery, though year by year more documents are being preserved.  

32 Ibid., pp. 254-5.  
33 Cf. Motter, The School Drama in England, p. 19 and p. 240. See also similar lists in Wallace (appendix), E. K. Chambers (Elizabethan Stage), and Boas.
discovered which may eventually enable us to pass judgment on the respective claims of Giles, Evans, Farrant, Hawkins, and Burbage, the chief litigants. 34 Because of its unsettled state and because of its lack of relevancy to our purpose, this controversy we will omit. What does bear on our point is the fact that here were produced not merely a great number of plays by the boys but plays of great importance in the development of the drama. Besides the uncertainty in regard to ownership, rental rights, and profits, we find the dramatic history of this institution surrounded by doubts and surmises as well. Just what groups of boys acted there and how they happened to get there at all is not too certain. There was, of course, at that time no public theater permitted within the City limits by the Council Chamber of the City of London. The existence, therefore, of this theater could only have been the result of royal favor; and their continued, though sometimes harassed, presence in the City was only because the authorities winked at the law and because of the demand in high places for the entertainment they afforded.

It seems that both the children of the Chapel and the boys of Paul's presented plays there. The former probably came as the result of the commission held by Nathaniel Giles to "impress" - i.e., command by royal decree - boys for service in the Chapel choir. He delegated Evans to take care of the task and Evans merely overshot the mark and took the boys not needed for the royal service to Blackfriars and started a commercial company for profit. Then Lyly, who had a major share in arranging entertainments both at Court and at Paul's received permission from his friends to bring the boys of Paul's over and aid in swelling the profits. To the Council Chamber's and Puritans' complaints about this procedure their defense was that the boys needed polishing and practice if their appearances at Court were to be satisfactory, and at Blackfriars they were receiving that necessary training. However specious the grounds may have been for this exploitation, it was highly successful. There Farrant and Hunnis, Masters of the Chapel, put on twenty-five plays; and there Lyly produced all but one of his great dramas. Practically all the major dramatists before Shakespeare at one time or another, taking advantage of the publicity and profit-making afforded them there, wrote and produced plays
for the boys at Blackfriars. 35 The advantage that this theater enjoyed over other stages on which the boys appeared was that this one did not have to await some festival or royal command; all they needed was a playwright and a suitable vehicle for their talents; and thanks to their success and popularity, these they never lacked.

As a final indication of the growth and widespread development of the practice of using the boys as actors, we might consider a few indirect signs, the argumentative force of which will be mainly cumulative. Already noted has been the Queen's extensive, almost exclusive use of school boys for entertainers, a fact that would not have obtained had she had other sources equally as capable. Nor would all the playwrights from 1515-1590, practically without exception, have devoted their time and talents to the juvenile Thespians, except that they recognized in them their sole medium of success. Mention has been made of the term "impressment" - i.e., a royal commission to the Master of the Chapel "to take throughout England such and so many boys as he or his deputy shall see fit," etc. - a practice established by records as early

as 1440 (Master John Croucher),\textsuperscript{36} repeated in 1483 (John Melyonek),\textsuperscript{37} and continued after that by all the Masters up to the time of Giles in 1597. When complaints were made to the Queen that he and his men had taken up "children in noe way able or fitt for singing, nor by anie of sayd confederates taught to sing," he was sufficiently sure of his right to take up boys for acting alone to tell the Queen that she could get someone else for the job if she objected to his methods. He knew, of course, nothing would come of it; and he was right.\textsuperscript{38} Another indication of the boy actors' position is the fact that other groups of actors, in the struggle to survive, had to "travel" - i.e., stroll from place to place much after the fashion of the "players" who arrive at the Court of Hamlet.\textsuperscript{39} Again, chroniclers would hardly have bothered to describe in detail the costumes, the food, the living conditions, and the hardships of the young actors unless they were rather prominent and deemed worthy of such attention.\textsuperscript{40} And finally, we can only conclude that the Masters of the children were looked on with respect and

\textsuperscript{39} A. Morgan, "The Children's Companies," \textit{Shakespeariana}, v. IX, n. 3, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{40} T. H. V. Motter, \textit{School Drama in England}, p. 23.
were recognized as powerful influences, when we see one of them, not too well known to posterity, praised to the skies in a sonnet addressed to him. Such is the distinction of Richard Edwards, as shown by Barnaby Googe's sonnet, "Edwardes of the Chappell." 41

It was undoubtedly popularity of the type that we have described - widespread, consistent, and profitable - that touched the practical, business-minded Shakespeare in a very tender spot - the pocketbook - and occasioned his outburst against them in Hamlet in 1601. In one of the very rare instances in which he permits his art to relax enough to refer to a purely local and contemporary situation, he calls them an "eyrie of children, little eyases that cry out on top of the question and are most tyrannically clapped for it." Surely one of Shakespeare's stature would not have lashed out at the "little eyases" unless their position and noisome popularity warranted it. Shakespeare's friend, Ben Jonson, alarmed at the same phenomenon, not only on the commercial stage but in the private school as well, penned this complaint: "Is't not a fine sight to see all our children made entertainers? Do we pay our money for this? We send them to learne their

Grammer (sic) and their Terence and they learne their playbooke.

Strange to say, at the very time these words were spoken, the curtain of oblivion was descending upon the stage of the boy actors. Their fate was sealed, and the threatening clouds of public disfavor engulfed them swiftly and completely, leaving not the slightest trace of their former prominence and prosperity. As has been mentioned, there was a lull in their activities for about ten years, between 1590 and 1600, due principally to difficulties with censors on religious questions. In 1600 they began to flourish again, but it was a mere spurious, surface vitality they manifested. In 1606 James forbade impressment for anything except strict choral and chapel work. The boys of Paul's and the children of the Chapel were not strictly commercial companies with hired writers and a board of directors; and finding they could hold their own only by competing on equal footing with the men's companies, they vied with one another in sensationalism and personal satire. Naturally, being ill-adapted for such vehicles, they soon found themselves out of favor and abandoned by public and playwright alike. In 1609

Paul's boys were bought out, to tour the provinces in humiliating obscurity until they disappeared from the boards entirely. The Chapel Revels Co., as the children were then known, hung on, sweating out a precarious existence until about 1616, when they too passed into the limbo of forgotten actors. And thus we drop the curtain on one of the most vigorous, unusual, and important phases of English dramatic activity.

C: DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA AT THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS:

The section just completed has attempted to present a composite picture of the wealth of dramatic activity on the part of the junior schools and the boy actors, an effulgence long ignored and little suspected. Since this consideration covered most of the sixteenth century and a number of different boys' companies, it was necessarily general and perhaps overlapping here and there. It will be the purpose of this section to organize and systematize those facts in connection with the individual schools in order to give credit where credit is due and to see precisely which groups of actors contributed most to the dramatic development of this period. Again we must point out the literary significance of this historical consideration. We may take the beginning and the end of the sixteenth century as opposite extremes. In the year 1500 we
have no theater, no organized drama, no modern drama split into acts, with a closely knit plot, characters drawn true to life, and a steady surge of dramatic action designed not to instruct but to entertain the spectator, such as we know it today. In 1500, Miracles, Moralities, and lavish pageantry were the order of the day. In 1590, we have the brilliant, clear-cut, polished genius of Shakespeare, finding expression through the definite mediums of dramatic form that we know as tragedy and comedy today. Shakespeare and his plays didn't just happen. Somewhere between these two extremes there lies the story of slow, steady transformation and development. Great as Shakespeare's genius may have been, it could not have sprung alone and unaided from the dramatic milieu of the year 1500; it must have found at hand the form and the medium which it seized on, polished, and perfected. Now if we can show that during these important decades of advancement and perfection most, if not all, of the stage activity was in the hands of the juvenile actors, we have at once proven the fact of their great influence on Shakespeare. In precisely what this influence and contribution consisted we will consider in our next chapter. We are concerned now in substantiating the fact that the boys did play a vital part in the evolution of the Shakespearian
drama - a process which seems quite pertinent in view of the fragmentary and confused records and the persistent failure of literary history to recognize that fact.

In considering the boys' companies individually, we must first point out that there was some dramatic activity in all the schools. The difficulty lies in the fact that in most cases no record was kept either as to dates or subject matter of these plays. The best recorded evidence, as we pointed out, lies in the indirect revelations of the Court account books, with their lists of payments to the Masters, the children, and the costumers. Because of the established fact of widespread dramatic activity in the junior schools, we may, then, surmise much from what little we do find recorded in regard to the lesser institutions. In our consideration we shall make no attempt to touch upon all or even the greater number of those schools whose boys are known to have interested themselves in dramatics, and this for the simple reason that it does not suit our purpose. We are interested not in the history of junior dramatic activity as such, but rather its influence on the development of drama; and it was the drama of the Court, the schools of London, and those adjacent institutions favored by royal requests and visits that really determined the progress of the theater. The drama in the
lesser schools may have contributed a small share in the sense that they, too, served to keep the dramatic spirit alive and active; but it would be safe to assign real influence and importance only to the more important schools and companies for these three reasons. First, because only they played before really large public audiences, and hence were in constant contact with shifting public opinion, sentiment, and tastes. Secondly, they alone played before those influential people whose will was law, and whose likes and dislikes could very easily determine the trend of public performances. And thirdly, because of public prestige, royal favor, and financial advantages accruing to the directors of the boys' companies, these actors attracted and made worth while the efforts of the best playwrights of the time, men who, for the lack of a permanent theater, might have otherwise found their genius wasted on the desert air.

We shall consider first the records of three lesser schools, Eton, Merchant Taylors, and Westminster, and then proceed to the two major groups of actors, the boys at Paul's and at the Chapel Royal. As usual, we shall concentrate principally on the century immediately preceding Shakespeare. We know that Eton was one of the
schools that Elizabeth frequently called upon for entertainment, and that it is frequently mentioned in the lists of schools that performed for the Court. Eton was one of the schools at which Elizabeth commanded the presentation of plays in English, whether translations or originals; and it was at Eton that plays based on Plautus Terence were performed. The earliest record of performances at Eton are found in the College Audit Books for the Christmas season of 1525-26, but just what this play was is not recorded. Nicholas Udall was Master at Eton from 1534-38, and so most probably his Thersites, an adaptation of a dramatic dialogue by Ravisins Textor, written about 1537, was performed by his boys. This may be substantiated by the fact that of the two recorded public performances by the boys of Eton, one was in 1538 and one in 1573. The final notice we have of the boys in this period is a Court performance in 1572. Undoubtedly there was not a cessation of dramatic activity between 1540 and 1573 and in the years following; but the

46 F. S. Boas, cf. note 45.
47 C. W. Wallace, op. cit.; p. 88.
49 Ibid., p. 21.
records of that activity either never existed or have not yet come to light. Until they do, we are only logical in concluding that along with the other schools they continued their presentation of plays, and participated, at least by imitation, in the evolution of the drama.

A school which was quite prominent, both scholastically and dramatically, in the sixteenth century was that founded by the Merchant Taylors. We have no early records of dramatics at this school; but, like Eton, it is one of the schools always mentioned in the lists of royal entertainers. It first attained dramatic prominence under Richard Mulcaster, and beginning in 1565 he and his boys put on plays every year for the Court for several years in a row. Between 1573-83, there are records of six performances at Court, besides performances in their own hall, known to us by reason of a prohibition forbidding plays there because of the rowdy crowd they attracted. As to the nature of the plays put on, we have only the slight indication that beginning in 1572-73 they put on plays in English based on Plautus and Terence.

53 C. W. Wallace, op. cit., pp. 88, 89, 123.
Another school mentioned almost as often as Eton and Merchant Taylors in the King's Household Accounts was the school at Westminster. It is certain that the Queen called upon the boys there as early as 1564, when, as had been done earlier at Paul's, they were asked to help entertain visiting dignitaries. This they did at Christmas time both in 1564 and 1565. 54 The plays they put on at that time were probably translations and adaptations of Latin comedies such as had also been presented at other schools. 55 There is a possibility, that to this school must be attributed a very singular honor because of the presentation of one of the most important plays of this period. Nicholas Udall was Master here from 1553-56, and as the date of the much talked of "Ralph Roister Doister" is subject to serious debate, it is certainly possible that it was one of the plays put on by Udall for the Queen or for the boys themselves at school. Be that as it may, it can be ascertained that between 1566-73 the boys appeared five times at the Court; 56 and from these records we may again legitimately assume a certain amount of additional activity on the boards of Westminster and

54 F. S. Boas, op. cit., p. 18.
the royal theater that has escaped the ken of the historian.

We turn now to the history of that group of boy actors whose lengthy career, brilliant success, and great influence stamp them as outstanding in any consideration of the position of youthful actors in English drama, namely, the Children of the Chapel Royal. The Chapel Royal was an integral part of the King's household from the time soon after the Norman conquest. It probably existed before that, but the earliest notices date from the reign of Henry I (1100), appear again in the fourteenth century, and describe it quite precisely in the middle of the fifteenth century. It was a choral group designed to sing at sacred functions primarily, to minister to the spiritual well-being of the king and his household, which progressed by gradual and quite natural steps to entertaining the royal household through semi-sacred and finally secular performances. It was composed of a Dean, a number of "gentlemen," varying from twenty to thirty-eight, a group of boys (eight to twelve), and a Master. The first recorded reference to the children was a commission to John

57 H. N. Hillebrand, Child Actors, p. 41.
59 Cf. Liber Niger Domus Regis quoted by Manly (n. 58, supra); Wallace, op. cit., p. 11; Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 41.
Pyamour, a clerk, to secure by impressment as many boys as he needed to fill out the chapel in the royal household. This notice in 1420 is followed at frequent intervals thereafter by similar patents to John Croucher (1440), John Plummer (1444), Henry Abyngdon (1465), and Gilbert Banaster (1479), the last three of whom are specifically designated as Masters of the children. Then came Sir Lawrence Squier (1486), William Newark (1493), and William Cornish (1509), the first great Master to bring the children into dramatic prominence. Under the first of these the Children of the Chapel appeared in their first known dramatic performance (1490), and in 1501 and 1506, the Children are mentioned under Newark's direction. It was under the regime of Cornish, however, that there came a marked decline in the number of outside entertainers at the Court and a gradual supplanting of the "gentlemen" of the Chapel by the children in the presentation of plays, pageants, and masques.

In the records published by Wallace for the first time from the Household Book of Henry VIII, supplementing, correcting, and completing a similar list by Collier (v. I, 76-79), we see the great number of times the King's Chapel entertained the royal household, and note with interest the

increasingly frequent mention of the children, first with others, and then alone. From 1509-1521, when those particular records fail, there are ten or twelve mentions made of payments to the children or to their Master for various entertainments. Besides these formal plays, pageants, and interludes, the children are mentioned many times in the records for the rendering of lesser favors, such as singing on certain festivals. The names of the plays have not always been preserved, but we know that in 1516 Cornish put on his first Chaucerian play, "The Story of Troyous and Pandor," and in 1519 he presented an "interlude" which was termed a "goodly commedy of Plautus" in Hall's Chronicle (p. 597). His last recorded presentation was of a political nature, devised to acquaint the Emperor of Rome, then on a diplomatic visit to Henry VIII, with the English attitude towards certain difficulties with France.

To these plays may perhaps be added, if we accept the reasoning of Wallace, three other plays of a distinctly Chaucerian flavor; "The Pardoner and the Frere," "The Four P.P.," and "Johan Johan." Wallace goes even further and

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62 This was about the middle of 1522; cf. Wallace, pp. 57-58; and H. N. Hillebrand, p. 57-58.
63 Wallace, op. cit., pp. 50-52; R. N. Hillebrand and A. W. Reed take violent exception to his claims, however, the former in Modern Philology v. XIII, No. 5, Sept., AIS, and the latter in Library, ser. 3, v. VIII, 1917.
ascribes three other plays to Cornish - namely, "Of Gentleness and Nobility," "The Four Elements," and "Calisto and Maliboea." Most of these are attributed to Heywood or one of the successors of Cornish, but the question of authorship lies beside the point at issue here. It is of interest to us that these plays were all written in the first half of Henry's reign, were presented at the Court and were enacted by the children.

Cornish died in 1523 and was succeeded by William Crane, who was Master until 1545, and who in turn was succeeded by Richard Bower, who held that position until 1561. These two Masters of the Children are unusual in the fact that neither has left us a single clearly authenticated product of his pen. The only possible claim to authorship by either of these men is the initialing of the title-page of "Apius and Virginia" with a not too distinct "R. B." Though the play is commonly attributed to Bower, Wallace shows how the "R. B." could easily have been "R.E.", and for this and sundry textual reasons assigns it to Richard Edwards. This assignation is tersely rejected by Hillebrand, who merely leaves the matter on the horns of a dilemma. But whether or not any works of theirs have survived, we know that the tradition started by Cornish was carried on and that with the help of men like John Heywood
and Nicholas Udall the children continued to play their role in the development of the drama. In the remaining years of Henry's reign there was, as a matter of fact, considerably less dramatic activity because he had less craving and fewer opportunities for lighter entertainment. The days of his lusty, joyous youth were past; and his troubles, political, religious, and personal, were ample to keep him occupied and distracted most of the time. From the Household Books of Henry VIII, however, it is evident that there were plays given at Christmas time from 1527-31, and from 1538-40. 64 Besides these plays, there were the revels and "meskelers" - elaborate masques and pageants - in which the children probably had some part, together with visits from outside performers such as that of Paul's boys in 1527 and a group of children under Heywood in 1538. 65 It was during this period, too, that Heywood produced his "Wether," "Love," and "Wytty Wytless," most probably put on by the Children of the Chapel, although Heywood's position at the Court just then is none too clear.

Continuing on through the reign of Edward VI and of Mary, we find the children maintaining their status

64 H. N. Hillebrand, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
65 Cf. Wallace, op. cit., p. 84; and Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 62.
as the chief Court entertainers. Of Edward's reign there are extant records only for the first two years (1548-50). There were plays at Christmas time each year, and one of these - "the playe of yeowthe at Crystmas" - was probably Heywood's "Interlude of Youth." At the end of his reign (1553), there are several notices of an elaborate pageant called "The Triumph of Cupid" and of a "playe of childerne sett owte by Mr. Haywood." Under Mary, several plays were presented whose names have come down to us, and about the only difference of note in the two reigns is the substitution of Nicholas Udall as Master of the Court's entertainments for John Heywood. In view of Heywood's prominent position, his staunch Catholicism, and his former successes on the stage, it seems strange that Udall should supplant him in the favor of one whom Heywood had admired and served for so many years. Somewhere between his dismissal from Eton (1541) and his appointment as Master at Westminster (1553), Udall found opportunity to exercise his dramatic talents at the Court, and finally attained the most sweep-

66 Among these were "Respublica," "Ralph Roister Doister," "Ezechias," "Jacob and Esau," "Jack Juggler;" there were also others whose names were not recorded.
ing powers ever granted anyone in a similar position in 1554. 67

After Bower's death in 1561, the chief poet and musician of the realm at that time was appointed his successor, one Richard Edwards. Despite the brevity of his tenure of office (he died Oct. 31, 1566), he enjoyed a reputation such as few poets and dramatists of that century even approached. Lauded to the skies by contemporaries, he was ranked among the chief dramatists of the age by critics twenty and thirty years after his death. The basis for this extravagant praise lies in his "tender tunes and rimes . . . (that) eche princely Dame of Court and towne shall beare in minde alway," 68 and in his plays that won the palm from Plautus and Terence. 69 While several of the former are extant, of his plays we have notice of only three definitely his and a copy of only one. His "Damon and Pythias," presented in 1564, was preceded, as the Prologue tells us, by a comedy that had given

67 This was in the nature of a warrant dormer granting him the right to call on Cawarden, Master of the Revels, for any and all supplies needed for the presentation of his plays, said supplies to be purchased without delay if not on hand; see Wallace, p. 98.
68 Thomas Twine in his long Epitaph; see lines referring to Edwards in Wallace, p. 115, note 3.
offense; and hence he was turning his hand to tragedy. This play was followed in 1566 by "Palaemon and Arcyte," in two parts, presented before the Queen by the boys, not of the Chapel, but of Christ Church, Oxford. The name of the play that had given offense remains unknown, and must be included among the many plays Edwards produced before 1564 that merited the accolades of praise that were heaped upon him as early as 1563 (date of Googe's sonnet). 70

The death of Edwards in 1567 was followed by the immediate appointment of William Hunnis as Master of the Chapel, and this position he retained until his death in 1597, the end of the period in which we are interested in the Children's activities. As a matter of fact, our interest in the Children of the Chapel ceases in 1584 for the simple reason that in that year they ceased to exist, at least in the world of drama. They were quite actively back on the scene by the year 1600 (and probably as early as 1598), but by that time they were mere decadent imitators of the now firmly established

70 Fleay ingeniously strives to prove this earlier play to be "Like Will to Like" in a paper read in London in 1898 and reviewed by Hillebrand (pp. 78-80), thus retracting his earlier designation of "Misogonus" as the play (History of the Stage, p. 59).
men's companies, and they had lost completely their position as a primary formative influence on English drama. Hunnis's tenure of office holds two special phases of interest for us, first because of the amazing legal and literary tangle involved in the first Blackfriars Theater, and secondly because of the queer "interregnum" of 1576-80, when Farrant was apparently Master of the Chapel, although Hunnis was neither discharged in 1576 nor reappointed in 1581 when he took over after Farrant's death.

But to get back to the dramatic presentations following the appointment of Hunnis, we find we are confronted again with a man in whose capable hands lay the direction of dramatics at the Court for many years and yet of whose pen not one certain line remains extant. Like his predecessors, he was undoubtedly chosen for his proficiency in the way of entertainment, and surely the parsimonious Elizabeth would have chosen someone who could spare her the added expense of a playwright (just as she was anxious later to bring Lyly into the Court service), and he very probably did write and produce works of his own, but identify them we cannot. With the Children he presented a

72 For a very scholarly and exhaustive treatment of his life, we have Mrs. C. C. Stopes's, William Hunnis and the Revels of the Chapel Royal, in Bang's Materialen, v. XXIX, 1910.
tragedy at Shrovetide, 1568, most probably the "Tragedie of the kinge of Scottes," for we know from one source that the boys played a tragedy that night, and from another that of the eight plays put on that season only one was a tragedy.

Indirect testimony of the widespread practice of using the children of various schools and choirs as actors is afforded us in an odd little brochure appearing in 1569 and entitled "The Children of the Chapel Stript and Whipt." It was seen and quoted only by Warton, for shortly afterwards it disappeared from the Bodleian Library and has not turned up again since. Its burden was a Puritanical outburst against the evils of permitting young boys to perform 1) in public! 2) in chapel!! and 3) on Sunday!!! Merited or not, the attack at least offers proof that sufficient amount of youthful dramatics was being presented to the public to constitute a state that had to be "viewed with alarm." Had such presentations been isolated instances or restricted to a few members of the royal household, the unknown author had not dared to make such an issue of it. As might have been expected, with such a

73 Declared Accounts of Treas. of Chamber; Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 85.
74 Feuillerat's Documents Relating to the Revels, p. 119.
preponderance of royal and noble patronage on their side, the boys continued blithely on their histrionic course and were as far as ever from being "whipt."

Hunnis and his children played before the Court on Twelfth Day in 1570, in Shrovetide of 1571, and on Twelfth Day of 1572. Of these we have the name only of the third - viz., "Narcissus." In 1573, the Children again appeared at the Court, and twice they played before the Queen in 1575. Besides these appearances, it must be pointed out, the children were also called upon, as they had been for well nigh a century, to take parts in the pageants and masques that were also frequently presented at the Court. The occasions we have listed have referred only to the plays - the comedies and tragedies that were gradually being developed and that were drawing further and further away from the old religious pantomimes and allegories.

In the following year, we suddenly find ourselves in the midst of the two unusual features referred to earlier. At Christmas time (1576-77) the "History of Mutius Scevola" was played, about which nothing is known but the name.

76 Feuillerat, Revels, p. 145.
78 See Wallace's very thorough table of plays and masks from 1558-85, op. cit., p. 206.
The real point of interest, though, lies in the fact that the play was put on by the combined chapels of the royal household and of Windsor, and payment was made solely to a Richard Farrant. That is point number one. Point number two is the fact that just about this time Farrant set in motion the complicated procedure that resulted in the brief but glorious reign of the boys at Blackfriars.

To take these points in order, we shall glance briefly at Farrant's background in the field of drama. He had been a "gentleman" of the Queen's Chapel when she came to the throne, and apparently he had shown some proficiency in the line of dramatics, for in 1564 she appointed him Master of her chapel at Windsor. He really led a complicated existence, for entries in the Cheque Book of the Chapel Royal show that he continued to receive an income as one of the "gentlemen," while at the same time entries in the Revels' Books show that he presented the boys of Windsor almost yearly at the Court, and then suddenly they reveal that he has complete charge of the Children of the Chapel Royal as well. Shortly after his arrival at Windsor he had organized the Choristers there into an acting group; and, beginning in 1567, he and the
Windsor boys put on plays for the Queen every year. Then came the play in 1576, referred to above, in which he collaborated with the Chapel Royal, and that is the last we hear not only of the boys of Windsor but of Hunnis as well until Farrant's death in 1580. Wallace very smoothly glides over this period by assuming that the two friends collaborated and that the term "boys of the chappell" in the record books meant a combination of the two groups under their direction. If this assumption were true, Hunnis would certainly have been mentioned as payee of their productions because he was the royally appointed Master and Farrant would only have been an assistant. Then, too, how could the boys at Windsor have spent half their time travelling to and from London for the rehearsals, practice, training, and actual performances that such collaboration would necessitate? Hunnis himself, in writing to the Queen in 1583 for an increase in fee, lists the Masters in chronological order and places Farrant on the list as succeeding Hunnis. Again, when the Earl of

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79 As we see from the records published by Wallace, op. cit., pp. 213 sqq. Three plays whose names have been recorded are: "Ajax and Ulysses," (1571-2), "Quintus Fabius" (1573-4), and a play about King Xerxes (1575).
80 Wallace, op. cit., p. 148.
82 Note that at the time he was writing, Hunnis was again in full charge as Master of the Children.
Leicester wrote asking More to permit Hunnis to take over Farrant's lease of the Blackfriars Theater, he speaks of the latter as Hunnis's predecessor in the training and directing of the Queen's chapel.

The fact, then, seems quite evident; the explanation is distinctly to the contrary. Wallace's theory of mutual collaboration is convenient, but is based on a decided lack of evidence, bolstered by too many obstacles. Hillebrand rejects the idea that Hunnis may have been sick, as that seems too free a conjecture, and just lets the matter hang. To one unhampered by a deep love of the English throne and cognizant of the violent whims and fancies of the "Virgin Queen" first towards one gentleman and then towards another, I think an apt explanation lies at hand, based on what we know of Elizabeth's character and of the consistent vagaries of human nature in general.

Farrant, after the experience in diplomacy gained through almost a dozen appearances at the Court, must suddenly have pleased Elizabeth exceedingly, and she indicated her pleasure at having Farrant direct the Court entertainments so strongly that Hunnis diplomatically retired to the background rather than make an issue of it and perhaps "lose face" altogether. This gracious accession to the Queen's current fancy would leave him free then to reassume
his position once the object of that fancy had ceased to exist. This we know he did in 1581, without any Court order reappointing him or calling him back from some other office. This, of course, is just a theory; but it is of such a nature that, if true, it would necessarily be devoid of any recorded evidence; and since the other explanations more naturally would be supported by some kind of evidence, the very absence of such support lends weight to our side.

We turn now to the second interesting phase of Farrant's tenure of office - the question of the Blackfriars Theater. It might be well to point out at once that this is not the Blackfriars that Shakespeare made famous - i.e., the revamped rooms of Rocco Bonetti's fencing school - but a prior establishment in rooms adjacent to that one, founded by Farrant as a profitable adjunct to his Court activities. A great deal of research and a great many disputes revolve around the exact topographical location of Farrant's lease; but since our interest lies chiefly in the plays and the playwrights connected with that theater, we shall turn our attention at once to them. Here, too, the facts are involved in a confusing maze of fragmentary records, lawsuits, and the like. Little by little, more of these documents have been brought to light; and as they can be read in full in the works of Wallace,
Fleay, Chambers, Hillebrand, and others, each adding a little to the picture, we shall attempt here merely to synthesize the findings as they stand to date.

Since Court performances were not too frequent, and the plays, though rehearsed and polished as though they were to be presented for many weeks, were dropped once they appeared before the Queen, Farrant decided to capitalize on the dress rehearsals and on repeated performances for other audiences by providing a private theater of his own. Whether he was urged on by the current success of James Burbage and his Theater (1576), or whether he turned to an outside theater because Puritan opposition had forced the Court to refuse permission for extra performances in the Chapel Royal, 83 we cannot be sure; one thing is certain and that is that the alleged reason in his appeal for the lease - viz., to have a place to rehearse the Children "for the better trayning them to do her Majestie service" 84 - was strictly a legal fiction. At any rate, in 1576, Farrant appealed to his friend, Sir Henry Neville, to intercede for him with

83 Cf. discussion of this point in Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 96.
84 Letter of Earl of Leicester to Sir William More asking him to renew lease in favor of Hennis just as he had done for Farrant; v. Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 91.
Sir William More, owner of the Blackfriars property, that he might rent certain rooms there for the above mentioned purpose. He obtained permission to remodel it to a certain extent (the removal of certain walls to make one large hall out of several smaller rooms), and shortly thereafter revealed his real purpose in securing the site when he began the long and successful series of performances by the Chapel boys on its stage. More was displeased, as were the people in that district, at the use made of his property, but he did nothing about it; and when Farrant died in 1580, his widow, left with ten children and no means to carry on the activities at the Blackfriars, rented the site to William Hunnis, who once again was in charge of the Chapel Royal. Hunnis was aided in his appeal to sub-let from the widow by his friend, the Earl of Leicester; and as soon as he obtained possession, he and his aide, John Newman, began to use the theater as his predecessor had. Then the troubles and complications began.

The Widow Farrant was slow in paying the rent stipulated by More, and he sued for eviction. She in turn

85 "Fferrant pretended unto me to use the howse onlie for the teachinge of the Children of the Chappell but made it a Continuall howse for plays . . . ." From More's summary of complaints against incumbents of his property; v. Wallace, p. 175.
claimed Hunnis and Newman were dilatory, and brought suit against them, and they, not to be found wanting in the matter of confusing the issue, filed a separate suit for relief in equity. Then the pot was brought nicely to a boil when Hunnis and Newman passed the ball to a young clerk named Henry Evans by subletting their lease to him. By this time the Blackfriars' legal status was more complicated than the long form of the income-tax return, and More had recourse to the legal fiction of leasing his property to a Thomas Smalpeece and in his name bringing suit against the current incumbents. Apparently he was successful against Evans, but when he went on to take care of the Widow Farrant he found out that in the meantime Evans had passed the legal football on to the Earl of Oxford, who had bought the lease for John Lyly (1583). But the Evans-Oxford-Lyly chicanery merely served to delay More's efforts; and finally in 1584, his appeals were granted and his tenants forced to surrender possession to him once and for all.

So much for the legal squabbles over the theater; what now of the plays in whose interest all these efforts were made? It would seem from Stephen Gosson's complaint, 86

86 *Playes Confuted in five Actions* (1581): "But in Playes either those things are fained that never were, as Cupid and Psyche plaid at Paules; and a great many Comedies more at ye Blacke friers."
that a fairly large number of plays were put on at the
Blackfriars Theater; unfortunately not a one of them has
come down to us even secondhand, and of the total number
played we have a strict record only of those that were
also presented at the Court. That Farrant and Hunnis were
the authors of most of them we cannot doubt. We know that
it had been the tradition for many years, particularly un-
der Edwards, their immediate predecessor, for the Masters
of the Children to write as well as produce the plays their
boys presented. The Revels Accounts, moreover, directly
attributes authorship of the plays to Farrant on several
occasions, 87 and Gosson must have had these two in mind
when he described "Neede" and "Flatterie" as chief serv-
tors of the Court in this regard and disciples of Aristip-
pus, a thinly veiled allusion to Edwards. 88 Hunnis was
praised by Thomas Newton in 1578, when he referred to "thy
Enterludes, thy gallant layes . . ."; 89 and in 1591 Sir
John Harrington, in his Briefe Apology for Poetrie, speaks
warmly of a "Play of the Cards," most probably a reference
to a comedy presented by Hunnis in 1582. Besides these

87 Wallace, op. cit., p. 150.
88 Aristippus was a prominent character in Edwards'
"Damon and Pythias," and was considered to be a
sketch of the author himself; cf. Hillebrand, op.
cit., p. 101.
89 Prefatory poem to The Hive Full of Honey.
more or less direct references, I believe a strong claim for authorship on the part of these two Masters can be based on the mute testimony of the popularity of the Blackfriars. Surely if the theater whose activities were the focal point of entertainment in London and at the Court for these seven years was being supplied with its material by some other playwright, the name of that very popular man would be bound to appear somewhere in our records of those times. Since it doesn't, Farrant and Hunnis must have been the theater's mentors as well as managers.

Briefly to review the actual performances after the combined presentation of the Chapel and Windsor boys that began Farrant's rule of the Chapel, we find Farrant and the Chapel appearing on St. John's Day in 1577 and again in 1578. The "History of Loyaltie and Bewtie" was presented at Shrovetide of 1579; and during the Christmas season of the same year "A History of Alucius" closed Farrant's career at the Court. Upon Farrant's death (Nov. 30, 1580), Hunnis resumed his position as Master, and appeared

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90 There is a reference, found nowhere else, in Fleay's *History of the London Stage*, p. 25, to a play on Mar. 12, 1578, "By the children of Windsor." He indicates no sources, and his singular reference to Windsor may be a mistake or a careless acceptance of an entry by Collier, whom all later scholars seem to take pleasure in ridiculing. Fleay himself says of one of Collier's statements; "but he forgot in this instance to provide a preliminary forged document in justification." (p. 27).
at Shrovetide and Christmas of 1581 and on the same occasions in 1582. Twice again he appeared with the Chapel Children in 1584 (before More was granted possession of Blackfriars), and on one of these occasions, perhaps Twelfth Day, he presented Peele's "Arraignment of Paris," a basely adulatory tribute laid at the feet of the Queen. This terminated the appearances of the Children of the Chapel as far as we are concerned. With the passing of the theater that had been their home and chief field of endeavor, passed also their hey-day at the Court. There are no records of any appearance in London after 1584 until they were resurrected as a group of actors under Henry Evans and Nathaniel Giles about 1600; and the scattered reports of performances given here and there in the provinces are too indefinite and uncertain to merit the assumption that the boys mentioned are really the Children of the Chapel. There were other plays in which the Chapel Royal

92 Perhaps in a last minute effort to stem the legal tide about to engulf the very profitable venture at Blackfriars.
93 Apparently it devolved upon the Master both to lodge and board his young charges, as we learn from Hunnis's desperate appeal to the Queen for an increased allotment for that purpose when he saw his revenues from the Blackfriars about to be cut off (Nov., 1583).
took part; but these were as a part of the Earl of Oxford's company, a combination of the Chapel and the boys of Paul's under the guidance of John Lyly; and these we shall consider as part of the story of that latter group, to which we shall now turn our attention.

In surveying the activities of this second great group of boy actors - the members of the choir school at St. Paul's it is necessary at the outset to distinguish between the two schools connected with that institution. Much confusion has resulted through the failure to make this distinction; and as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century one writer, after long and thorough research on the very point of the choir-boys at St. Paul's still confused these two separate groups. It is evident now, after the work of A. F. Leach, M. F. McDonnell, T. H. Motter, along with Hillebrand, Chambers, and others, that there were two schools, the choir school and the grammar

95 Maria Hackett, Documents and Authorities Respecting the Ancient Foundation for the Education of St. Paul's Choristers (1812).
school. The latter is the famous one and the one generally intended when referring to the Renaissance and the revival of classical studies under the great educators of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was begun under Henry I by a gift to canon Durandus and was re-organized in 1512 by Dean Colet. Separate from this was the group of charity boys - pueri eleemosynariorum - who were identical with or constituted the nucleus of the choir. These boys had their school, too; and at its head was not the dean or chancellor of the grammar school, but an almoner, whose duty it was to supervise the boys and see that they received the necessary training and education. The duties of the Master of this school - called the song school to distinguish it from the grammar school - were generally fulfilled by the almoner himself, although the offices were distinct and were separately remunerated. Although the early history of this school is thoroughly shrouded in that impenetrable haze attendant upon a lack of documentary evidence, it does seem that the choir school was in existence by the end of the twelfth century, at which time it consisted of eight boys; later (c.1358)

this number was raised to ten, and there it remained fixed through the period we shall consider. There was, of course, much interrelation between the two schools with resultant confusion in the records; but all along a distinction was made, particularly in the question of the fees owed by the almoner to the grammar school for the education of his boys. Our interest lies with this lesser school, for it was this group which suddenly blossomed forth into a full-fledged group of juvenile actors competing for royal favor with their young rivals in the Chapel Royal.

I say "suddenly" because the histrionic background of the boys at Paul's is as much of a mystery as the rest of their history. In dealing with this school, we haven't the regular, systematized documents and records available in regard to the activities of those connected with the royal household. Their earliest appearances as players are quite uncertain. They did petition in 1378 to prevent the theft of the miracle play they had labored to perfect for the following Christmas, but this one reference hardly affords sufficient grounds to draw any kind of a conclusion as to the frequency of their theatrical efforts. It merely indicates that even at that early

date the boys participated in dramatic performances; barring further evidence, we can make no further conclusion. The appearance, mentioned before, of Paul's boys in 1527 before a distinguished audience of nobles was a presentation of the grammar school under John Rightwise. Although there is no evidence recorded, the grammar school probably had been accustomed to giving plays (though not for so important an audience), else they had not been entrusted with the entertainment for such an important occasion. And it was no doubt this custom that had its share of influence in leading the Paul's players into the dramatic spotlight. We don't know just when this phase of their activity began, but we can assume that they were spurred on by the example of those about them - i.e., their own grammar school and, above all, the boys of the Chapel Royal. Because of the preeminence of St. Paul's among the churches of London, it figured quite frequently in royal affairs, and the boys of Paul's had ample opportunity to observe the successes of their confreres in the Chapel Royal. Love of mimicry, a spirit of rivalry (jealousy?), assurance of success and royal favor, all of these must have prompted the Master and his charges to launch the

dramatic career that resulted in a triumph far beyond their fondest dreams.

Be the motive force what it may, we find the first notice of the boys' public appearance in a performance before the Princess Elizabeth in the Household Accounts for the year 1551-2. Both Heywood and Westcote are mentioned in the same entry, but only the latter seems to have been paid for the efforts of the children. Just what Heywood's connection with the affair was is hard to determine. We know he was a Court entertainer of long standing and of a superior order. He may have assisted in the production of the boys' play and also taken one of the adult parts in it, a practice that was customary when a play called for a role played by an old man.

At any rate, it is certain that at that time Westcote was Master of the choristers at St. Paul's, and it was indeed most probably his presence that, more than any other factor, led to the initial appearance and subsequent success of that group of boys. Sebastian, as he is often referred to in the royal records, was a gifted and unusual man, of outstanding moral integrity and firmness. It is significant that he got his start at the Court, where in 1545 we have a record of his being paid as a yeoman of the King's Chamber. There he undoubtedly wit-
nessed the entertainments presented by the Children of the Chapel and was inspired by them, when, in 1550, he was made Master of Paul's, to imitate their example. Whether the boys of the choir had appeared in dramas under previous Masters is problematical. Little is known of them, and the records are very unsatisfactory. Perhaps they, too, might have wished to enter the field of drama, but they had not the talent, and the boys perforce had to await the coming of a man who had such ability. Sebastian had it. It is interesting to note, also, from our point of view, that he had the courage to be a "recusant" despite his high official position, and a recalcitrant one at that, to judge from the records on the subject. From 1561 to 1563 he was in continual hot water by reason of a persistent investigation by Bishop Grindal. His friend Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, interceded valiantly for him, and somehow or other the difficulty was patched up, though it probably involved some kind of subterfuge; for in 1575 he was again "gyven notyce of that dysorder," and for three months of 1578 he was in prison "for papistry." That he weathered these storms and still maintained his office until his death gives evidence

104 Cf. Simpson, Gleanings from Old St. Paul's, p. 190.
105 Hillebrand, op. cit., pp. 120-3.
of great tact, or powerful influence, or perhaps a combination of both.

The next authentic record of Westcote and his boys at Court comes in 1559, when he entertained the new Queen at Nonsuch House in Surrey. From then on their appearances are regular and frequent. They appeared at least ten times at Court between 1559-66, generally at Christmas and Shrovetide. In the first three Christmas performances (1560-62), Lord Dudley's players also appeared, a connection which may explain his warm support of Westcote in the trouble with Grindal. With one exception - two plays by the boys of Westminster in 1565 - the Children of the Chapel and the boys of Paul's were the only juvenile actors to appear at the Court till 1566. After that, others appeared at intervals, but the choristers under Westcote continued to be most popular. They played twice in 1567-8, and once every year then till 1573. They played again 1575 and 1576, three times in 1577, and once each


year after that till St. Stephen's day of 1581, which represented their last appearance as the boys of Paul's either at the Court or at St. Paul's until 1587.

I say "as the boys of Paul's" because they did continue to play at the Blackfriars and elsewhere under the Evans-Oxford-Lyly management, but came to be known as the Earl of Oxford's boys. After Westcote's death in April, 1582, his successor, Thomas Gyles, did not carry on the dramatic tradition of his school for some unknown reason. A "deere friende" of Westcote's, however, one Henry Evans, distraught at seeing such opportunity going to waste, bought up Hunnis' lease of the Blackfriars and prevailed upon the Master of Paul's choristers to permit him to present his boys at that theater. Then in conjunction with Lyly and with the help of Hunnis and his Children, the "Campaspe" and "Sapho and Phao" of Lyly were put on in 1583. On Jan. 1, 1584, this resuscitated company of St. Paul's appears at the Court as the Earl of Oxford's children, with Evans and Lyly both recorded as

109 So mentioned in Westcote's will; v. Hillebrand, op. cit., pp. 119, 137.
110 Such financial arrangements were not impossible in those days, as can be seen some years later in Shakespeare's paying Gyles' successor, Pierce, twenty pounds a year to keep the boys of Paul's off the stage; v. Wallace, "Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theater," Century Magazine, Sept., 1910.
payees. It is disputed whether this new company was really the Chapel, assisted by the boys of Paul's, a formal combination of the two companies, or the boys of Paul's occasionally supplemented by their friends of the Chapel Royal. It would seem that the last explanation covers the facts best, not only because during this time Hunnis appeared with the Chapel boys alone both at Court and the Blackfriars but because he would hardly have been forced to a frantic appeal for funds in 1583 if he were still a partner in the Evans-Oxford-Lyly set-up. It also explains better Evans's presence in the picture, the disappearance of the "boys of Paul's" at the Court, and the recording of Evans and Lyly as payees.

The two companies of children did act together, though, as is evident from the title pages of "Campaspe" and "Sapho and Phao." And when the Earl of Oxford's children appeared at Court, they were assisted by Hunnis's boys, especially for the plays of Lyly which demanded a larger cast than either could supply alone. Although the dissolution of the Blackfriars in the middle of 1584

111 As they did on Jan. 1, Mar. 3, Dec. 27 of 1584, and possibly Jan. 1 of 1585; Declared Accounts, quoted by Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 133.
112 Wallace, op. cit., p. 171.
did not terminate the performances of the Oxford boys and although the last recorded appearance at the Court was St. John's Day (Dec. 27, 1584), there is no further evidence of Court appearances by the boys of Paul's until Shrove Sunday of 1587. Already in 1584 Lyly seems to have severed connections with the company for the time being, because Evans alone is mentioned as payee and because the two first plays of his had already been published. 113

113 It might be an interesting literary aside to note the attitude of the playwrights of those days towards the publication of their plays. They never published them before they were played, nor even after that if they thought there might still be a chance of putting them on again and reaping further financial harvest. Apparently the publishing of a play meant for them the abandoning of all rights to it and the relinquishing of all hopes of realizing any further profit. I suppose this was due to the lack of any copyright protection and to the practice of wholesale plagiarism among lesser playwrights eager to make use of anything that had already been proven popular. Even Shakespeare, we know, borrowed here and there, and since there was apparently no stigma attached to such a procedure, we can only conclude that in those days anything published was considered open country, and aspiring authors could forage at will if they so elected. Lyly, for instance, seeing the imminent dissolution of the Blackfriars venture, decided he might as well publish the two plays he had put on there. A third, "Gallathea," he had partially finished; and knowing the two principal children's companies were no longer functioning, he finished that up and sent it to the printers in 1585 (Stationers Register, Apr. 1, 1585, edit. Arber, v. II, p. 440). Yet it was not actually published till 1592 (title page: "Printed by John Charlwoode for the Widdow Broome, 1592"); and the only explanation I can see (though not mentioned specifically
When the boys of Paul's appeared again in 1587, however, Lyly was once more prominently in their midst as chief dramatist. They presented for him at least five, possibly six, of his plays—namely, "Gallathea," "Loves Metamorphosis," "Endimion," "Midas," "Mother Bambie," and "The Woman in the Moon." The exact dates of presentation of the first five are inexact and dependent upon an involved consideration of text, context, and topical allusion, which would neither suit our purpose nor further our cause; what is important is that they were presented by the boy actors. The difficulty about the last named play is that it seems very definitely to have been put on in 1591 or shortly thereafter, and by that time the boys of Paul's had been "put down." The only way to explain

113 Continued:

by any of the authorities on the subject) is that on Apr. 27, 1585, the Queen granted to Thomas Gyles, Master of Paul's, the very unusual privilege of "impressment," frequently granted to Masters of her own choirs, but never before in favor of an outside group. Lyly must have sensed that Gyles was preparing to reorganize the dramatic company of Paul's—and, as it turned out, he was—immediately got in touch with the printer, and withheld publication until he could use the play himself. This he did, presenting it at the Court, most probably on Jan. 1, 1588 (cf. Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 140).

this performance after their "inhibition," as it is called, is that it occurred at a private showing in one of the nobles' palaces. This we may conclude because of the similar history of another play, "Summer's Last Will and Testament" by Thomas Nash, the last recorded performance of this group until their revival about 1600 or 1601. Fleay and Murray assign this play to the Children of the Chapel, but references in it to recent and serious set-backs for the boy actors seem much more logically to point to Paul's boys, since we know they had been silenced only a year before and we can only conjecture as to the cause of the Chapel Royal's cessation back in 1584.

This, then, closes our consideration of the boys of Paul's. At some date, currently unknown, between the last recorded payment to them in the fall of 1590 and the licensing of the quarto edition of "Endimion" on Oct. 4, 1591, this company was banned completely from public

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117 Cf. the excellent reasoning on this point in Baker, ed. of "Endimion," introd., p. CXXIX, and Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 148, n. 98.
118 In a notice to the reader, the printer begins, "Since the Plaies in Paules were dissolved . . ." The ban still existed in 1596, since Nash, in "Have with you to Saffron Waldon," says: "We neede never wish the Playes at Powles up again . . ."
performances in London. There can be little doubt that it was occasioned by their connection with the Marprelate Controversy, a violent and hectic interchange of satire between certain high-ranking Puritans, led by the self-styled Martin Marprelate, and certain ecclesiastical authorities. The fray was launched by a tract known as "The Epistle," and at first was jocose and bantering, but soon lapsed into vicious attacks and slanders on both sides. The theater rallied to the cause, partly through a dislike for Puritans but mostly because of the unexcelled opportunity for satire it presented. In this struggle, in which the dignity of both Church and State was sadly battered and besmirched, it was only natural that of the three companies involved - the "Theater," the "Curtain," and St. Paul's - the boys should suffer the most in the censures levied against these abuses, first because they were children and as such more subject to discipline, and secondly, because they were very closely related to one of the parties of the fight - the Church - and as such suspected of being the tool and voice of the bishops. At any rate, their meddling in this somewhat shameful affair was considered unseemly; and, whether at the request of the special commission set up to judge these offenses or at the command of their own superiors, they were effectively dissolved as an acting company. With the exceptions
noted above, they appear no more as actors until some indefinite date in the middle of the year 1600. Then "they produce such mustie fopperies of antiquity and do not sute the humorous ages backs" (from "Jack Drum," Act V, l. 111), and their career is naught but a miserable struggle for existence against the established men's companies, involved in many law-suits and enlightened only by a few appearances at the Court in 1604. In 1607 they made their last appearance and in 1609 they were definitely dissolved; but we have no interest whatever in these last days, for, as with the Children of the Chapel, their period of possible influence on the drama ceased with their inhibition in 1590.
CHAPTER III

THE POPULARITY OF THE JUNIOR SCHOOLS:
THEIR CONTACT WITH THE PEOPLE

A play that runs repeatedly to a scantily filled house is shortly doomed to oblivion. A play that draws a temporarily large attendance only because it is "packed with paper" - free passes - soon folds up its scenery and steals silently away into the provinces, where its failings, mayhap, may be less marked. In other words, a play without an audience is like a banquet with no guests, a gun with no ammunition, a Stradivarius with no strings. An audience is as integral a part of drama as are the actors and the stage; true drama must be written with that in mind - to be played by actors before an audience. Dramatic composition is one of the very few types of art intended for mass enjoyment; and just as it is true that audiences have always played an important role in determining the nature and popularity of the drama, so, too, is it true that a drama which fails to reach the public can have very little effect either upon the people or upon the future course of dramatic history. For that purpose it seems essential, in considering the possible influence of the junior schools and the boy 85.
actors upon the drama of Shakespeare, to begin by inquiring into their position in the minds of the people, by establishing the fact of their popularity and widespread reception by "the general," else a discussion of their influence would be fruitless.

As one author says,¹ the period we are considering (1500-1590) is the one in which true drama emerges out of the confusion of medieval conditions, and that emergence was multiform, for nearly every kind of play that flourished during the reign of Elizabeth may be found already presaged in interlude or morality form. While the second part of that statement may be open to dispute,² the first is a plain fact of history and to show what part in that fact was played by the boy actors, we must show not merely that they acted but that they affected and were affected by the people of their day. In this matter we find they had a rather hard row to hoe. The transmutation of drama from the crude pageantry and abstractions of the Moralities to drama as we know it, and the progress of creative genius from the masques and

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dumb-shows to the heights of true dramatic literature was one fraught with many obstacles. That great literary geniuses did finally turn to the field of drama as a medium of expression for their art is a tribute to the unflagging efforts of those beginners in English drama who strove at the same time to improve that art and to please their public. At the beginning of this century, the lusty enthusiasm of the people and the Court for the older types of stage presentations was beginning to wane and this loss of interest was hastened when the involved religious difficulties of Henry and Mary and Elizabeth made plays of a religious nature distasteful or politically precarious. Dramatic entertainments came to be regarded as toys of the hour, something to relieve the tedium of fashionable amusements. Dramatic performances, especially at the Court, were merely parts of the entertainment scheduled for big feast days. Later, when the London playhouses began to appear, they became the resort of idlers, the gathering place for the least sober-minded elements of the population. Civic authorities looked with dislike upon the drama; clergymen condemned it along with dicing, dancing, and other idle pastimes; "reformed" playwrights, such as Gosson, hurled pages of righteous abuse at it.  

Yet, despite these handicaps, it was inevitable that because of royal favor, noble patronage, growing public taste, and consequently growing drama, these difficulties should be surmounted and a connection established between the drama and the highest aims of contemporary literature. Perhaps as prominent as any other factor in this progress, and one as yet unmentioned, is the very humble yet important consideration that: authors must eat. By this we mean that, lacking certain physical adjuncts, it is quite improbable that dramatic art should thrive. Without a permanent place to perform in, an established company, and a reasonably certain audience, there will hardly be any great dramatic writing, because no one would be able to devote himself to it. It would be intriguing and seemingly more natural for drama to develop among the people, and independent of such crass considerations as playwrights' welfare and wallet gradually develop into a truly "popular" theater; but it is not practical. In preceding centuries it had been the Church and the guilds that had afforded the necessary impetus and support for dramatic efforts; now it becomes the part of the Court and the schools to furnish the necessary physical aids for the

4 Cf. expressions of this truth in Wallace, op. cit., pp. 5-8, 118, 128.
progress of the drama. There playwrights found a place for acting, groups of actors for putting on their plays, and audiences eager to receive them. Thus they were inspired to devote their time and talents to the difficult art of the theater and enabled to reach the public, without whom their efforts would be of little avail.

And reach that public we know the drama of the sixteenth century did. It was definitely "that powerful medium of public instruction, hallowed by the usages of two hundred years." Even that it reached a considerable number of the people must certainly be deduced from the frequent censures and condemnations levied against the stage not only by the Puritans but by royalty itself. Plays, unless licensed, were forbidden on religious and political grounds by Henry VIII in 1543; by Edward VI, for political reasons, in 1552; and for the same reasons by Mary in 1554. Because of their meddling in controversial matters, Elizabeth likewise issued a temporary inhibition of plays at the beginning of her reign, for the purpose, it would seem, not of stifling dramatic activity but merely of

5 F. E. Schelling, *English Drama*, p. 27.
6 Ibid., p. 28.
8 Ibid., pp. 155-6.
securing complete control of it. Some years later, in 1574, the City Council of London, alarmed at the number of imitators of Court and school drama that were springing up, forbade all plays in the city of London. As we saw previously, the disturbances occasioned by the Martin Marprelate controversy were so serious as to necessitate the erection of a special commission with extraordinary powers to deal with offending companies. So absolute was their authority that they were able not merely to silence temporarily the Theater and the Curtain but to "put down" completely the very popular company of the St. Paul's boys. There can be no possible explanation of this frequent and rigid control of the drama other than that the theater affected the lives and thought of a goodly portion of the populace and that control of it was deemed essential to the well-being of the state.

Merely from a consideration of the type and nature of the plays the boys put on we can see that they must have been "popular" - i.e., written for and appealing to the people. The drama developed by these juvenile actors and their dramatists differed from the old religious

9 W. C. Hazlitt, English Drama and Stage, p. 19; and Collier, op. cit., p. 166.
10 Wallace, op. cit., p. 128.
plays as well as from the strictly classical revivals that were being presented in Latin and Greek at the higher institutions of learning. 11 Both of these latter types were studious, didactic, pedagogic. 12 Although they did afford entertainment and they must have satisfied the inclination to the drama innate in human nature, their primary purpose was not to amuse but to inculcate a doctrine, present a truth, or revive an interest in the classics. Principally on this basis, the new drama differed in purpose, structure, and characterization. It was light, pleasurable, a bit of life, aiming at mere entertainment. As such, it came into more immediate contact with contemporary society and contemporary history. 13 Since it was no longer confined to set forms and predetermined subjects, the playwrights were more free to use their imagination and ingenuity, to bring the drama to the people, to ally themselves with the awakening national spirit. All these things merely serve to indicate the mutual effect of audience upon play and play upon audience, an effect that would have been impossible had the children's drama not been in

11 For a complete study of these presentations see F. S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age; we shall discuss their importance later on.
12 Wallace, op. cit., p. 89.
constant contact with the people of their age.

Lest we seem to emphasize unduly this interrelation of audience and drama, we might point out the interesting fact that it was precisely the difference in audience that led to the differentiation in the play. There were concurrent in the sixteenth century three streams of dramatic development — namely, the Morality, the strict classic, and the fusion and improvement of these two in the new, native drama developed by the boys. The beliefs, pleasures, diversions of the common man are those staunchly rooted in tradition, and as a result the old religious type of drama persisted in popularity among the people well into the reign of Elizabeth, despite the unfavorable royal attitude towards it. In the schools such as Oxford and Cambridge we find the strictly classical revivals presented in Latin and Greek and intended only for the faculty and students, plays that had very little contact with the people and correspondingly slight influence on the development of the drama. For the Court, however, and the nobles and merchants and others who imitated it, the old drama was out of style, and the classical

14 Ibid., p. 125.
presentations were too stilted and boring; and to entertain them playwrights sought new forms and modes of drama, proceeding from the simpler interludes of Heywood to the comedies of Udall, the tragie-comedies of Edwards, and highly entertaining tragedies and comedies of Farrant, Hunnis, and Lyly. It was truly this contact with the people that urged along the development of the drama that culminated eventually in the drama of Shakespeare.

This change in the audience and in its likes and dislikes may be traced to the changing spirit of the age. Manifestly the age was one of activity. The calm of insular peace was being shattered by marked increase in international commerce, diplomacy, and discovery. This was no time of brooding or introspection, but a time when external affairs filled the lives of men. The coldness of Protestantism had effectively dampened any religious fervor, not only barring that fertile field as a source of inspiration but tending in general to cut down the ordinary sources of entertainment. There was no particular worship of

15 "Quamvis nonnulli, vel somno assueti, vel Latini sermonis imperitia, aegre ferebant tot horarum jacturam ..." From the account of the Queen's visit to Cambridge (1564), in Nichols, Progresses of Elizabeth, v. III, p. 59. See also many years previous, the abrupt departure of Henry VIII in the midst of one of Medwell's moralities, though it had been shortened in an effort to make it less tedious; Collier, op. cit., v. I, p. 69.
Nature, and hence MAN was center of interest in sixteenth century life. His actions, his failures, his loves and hates, the composite picture of his life and emotions, these were what drew and held the Tudor audiences, and these were thus, of necessity, the subject matter for the new dramatists. As Thomas Heywood expressed it:

No Drum nor Trumpet nor Dumbe show,  
No Combate, Marriage, not so much Today  
As Song, Dance, Masque, to bumbaste out our Play. 16

The old devices, in other words, no longer satisfied the public taste; they were interested in change, particularly that change as reflected in the life of man; and that life was what the new drama brought upon the stage. 17

I think we have established clearly enough the fact as well as the explanation of the popularity of the sixteenth century drama; it did reach and please the people at large; but there remains for us the far more pertinent consideration of why the boy actors, the juvenile performers, were accepted so whole-heartedly. In our own day, we have children upon the stage and screen, but they are just a novelty, a toy. They are generally cast in minor roles, but even if an occasional prodigy reaches the

16 From the Prologue to "The English Traveller."
heights of stardom, he is here today and grown tomorrow; and we hear no more of him until he comes of age and begins to squander the funds earned in his infancy. We have no real children's stage today, nor has there been one since the final dissolution of the children's companies in 1616.¹⁸

The children's stage of Henry and Elizabeth, however, was distinctly not a fad, an ephemeral curiosity. In the last years of their organized existence they became rather exotic and more or less objects of curiosity; and any later appearances may be justly termed passing fads; but in the period we are considering, they were far from being a mere novelty - unless you wish to call a tradition of over four hundred years a fad! The best writers wrote for them, and their acting was praised on many occasions,¹⁹ and so common was the practice that Ben Jonson was moved to complain "Is't not a fine sight to see all our children made entertainers? Do we pay our money for this? We send them to learne their Grammer and their Terence and they learne their playbooke."²⁰ We know in the beginning boy

¹⁸ Despite the meteoric vogue - and equally meteoric vanishing - of children like Master Betty, a product of the early nineteenth century noted by Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁹ Witness the Queen's unwonted generosity to the lad that played Lady Emilia in Edwards's "Palemon and Arcite" (1566, Oxford), and Ben Jonson's sincere praises of Salathiel Pavy.

actors were called upon because the plays were held in the church proper by the clerics and the boys were needed for the women's parts. When it became the custom to present elaborate pageants and masques, diversions especially favored by the Court, the boys again were in demand because of their trained voices. It was a quite natural step, once the tradition of having the boys appear in public was firmly established, to have them move on to the presentation of interludes and plays. These dramatic efforts, crude though they may have been, demanded actors of intelligence, training, public presence, with a command of language, a cultivated voice, and, often enough, a knowledge of French and Latin. Many of these qualifications were quite evidently beyond the scope of the poor strolling professional; and while they might have been found among the sons of the nobles and men of wealth, there was little inclination or opportunity for them to enter the field of drama. On the other hand, here were the boys from the schools, particularly the choir schools, who were organized, trained, and supported by at least a couple centuryed of tradition in that very field.

21 Ibid., p. 2.
Another reason, on the very practical side, for using boy actors in these early presentations was the practice of using elaborate stage "devices" - i.e., structural representations of castles, boats, animals, and the like. At times these consisted of flimsy structures of two or three different levels with groups of characters placed here and there throughout the whole affair. Quite naturally the much lighter weight of the boys would be a factor to be considered in these instances; and, secondary though it may have been, it undoubtedly had some share in determining the boys' fitness for these productions. A similar reason for rendering the boys peculiarly apt for these activities may be seen in their very state in life. They were students; they were being trained, whether in the grammar schools or the choir schools, and it was only natural that their masters should seek to liven up and further their instruction by having the boys put on plays. As for the children themselves, they loved it; their curriculum was full and rigid and these plays gave them a bit of a holiday and very probably constituted the high spots of the year in entertainment value for them as well as for their audiences.

And that brings up an interesting point: what of those audiences? Did they really enjoy these young
actors? Were they childish or child-like? Would we term them simple or ignorant, unsophisticated or unintelligent? To begin with, it seems they sincerely liked the boy actors and their plays. It would be very difficult otherwise to account for their continued vogue and for the unrestrained encomiums heaped upon their plays and playwrights. Trained actors, of course, were few in those days because the profession was looked down upon and not many had the time or the inclination to go on the stage. The theater was not a career as it is now or as it was by the end of the century when the successes of the boys of Blackfriars and the company of Shakespeare's proved it could be both honorable and lucrative. Outside of the schools and the royal chapels, the art of playing was rather a tradition among certain groups or the refuge of shiftless souls who sought no more than the carefree and exciting life of a Thespian. The only competition the children had was to be found in these groups of strolling players or in the traditional presentations of the artisans of some trade guild; they could certainly do as well as or better than the latter, and for the somewhat technical superiority of the former they could substitute refinement, vivacity, and freshness.

In this same regard, it is interesting to compare the lists of plays put on by the children with those
presented by the men companies later in the century, when these latter began to increase in popularity. While it is hard at times to tell clearly just which were the men's plays and though our knowledge of both lists is confined almost wholly to their titles, we find a striking similarity between them. To go back a little earlier, the "Nice Wanton," played by the boys, differs but slightly from "Mundus et Infans," apparently written for men. "Ralph Roister Doister" is not essentially different from "Gammer Gurton's Needle." And Udall's "Respublica" is a political morality unmatched by any contemporary effort. In other words, the boys were not handicapped by any marked difference between their productions and those of the men; and apparently there was nothing in the drama of their day that exceeded their histrionic capacities. Besides all this, it is well to note again the very important fact that among the known dramatists up to 1580 not only the greater number but the most important wrote exclusively for the children. Muster what names you will on the other side, they fall far short

of the list that includes such masters as Cornish, Heywood, Udall, Westcote, Edwards, Hunnis, and Lyly. Together, these factors counted largely in the genuine appreciation the Tudor audiences accorded the efforts of the children.

It must, of course, be admitted that those audiences were unsophisticated; they were simple, eager, anxious for entertainment, and not too critical as long as they were relaxed and entertained. Playing before them was like serving food to a hungry man; they wanted song, dance, wit, dialogue, and whoever served it to them was welcomed, even though they betrayed a simplicity of standard and a content with the trivial far below our standards today and even below those of the period after 1600. Not much is demanded if the audience is eager to be amused; and so easily were they pleased and aroused that on one occasion, at the end of a performance, before Henry VIII, the common people burst the barriers, restraining them at one end of the hall and stripped souvenirs from the nobles and even from the King himself.

If there be any doubt that the children pleased their audience, we have only to recall the expressed commendations of King, commoner, and critic alike in their own day. After all, if we fail to understand or appreciate the almost fanatic adulation paid to Richard Edwards on the basis of what has come down to us as certainly his, we must remember that that basis is extremely slight and that our judgment in no way nullifies the fact of their deep appreciation. That same evaluation is manifest in the great number of times the various children's companies appeared at the Court; naturally the Court could command the best, and if the Court saw fit to bring the boys back time and time again we can only conclude that their efforts were truly appreciated. Elizabeth was especially fond of the juvenile drama, as is shown by her frequent insistence on their presence in Court, by her unaccustomed gift of eight "angels" - four pounds - to one actor, and by her extravagant praise of Edwards on the same occasion. 27 We know that this favor of the Court found imitators elsewhere, for early in Elizabeth's reign we find Edwards presenting the Children of the Chapel at Lincoln's Inn on two

27 Cf. F. S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age, p. 103; also, Wallace, op. cit., pp. 113-14.
occasions; and it seems quite probable that the Queen was not averse to having her Masters of the Children augment their income by these outside presentations for the public. We have a definite example of this in Farrant's use of the Blackfriars' theater, mentioned above; and there is evidence, too, that the children were called upon to play privately in the houses of noblemen. Finally, there is evidence in the accounts of at least three other boys' companies that their performances were avidly received by a large number of the populace. First we have the record by Bale of Ralph Radcliffe at Hitchin, who in 1538 constructed a theater where yearly he presented "merry and honest plays" to the general public (plebi). A little later we find Thomas Ashton, first headmaster at Shrewsbury (founded 1552), presenting plays at Whitsuntide that "lasted all the holydays" and were attended by a "great number of people of noblemen and others." Still later (Mar., 1574),

27 Wallace, op. cit., p. 110.
the plays given by Richard Mulcaster at Merchant Taylor's in London were forbidden in their own hall (apparently not at the Court or elsewhere) because of the rowdy crowd they attracted. 33

Though we may not be able to understand why these actors reached such a large public and though with our advanced standards, we cannot appreciate the enthusiasm accorded their crude presentations, at least we must admit the fact: they reached and pleased a widespread audience. The drama, of course, in those days was in a formative stage; depth of characterization, complexity of plot, intensity of emotion, these were elements that yet awaited introduction to the boards. Hence the limitations necessarily attendant on the children's voice, immaturity, and size were not too great to prevent their handling well the material they had. With a slight indulgence for their age, the simple, eager audiences of that day, anxious to be entertained and accustomed by age-old tradition to juvenile actors, could look upon these boys as real actors and derive from them the same pleasure we find in the adult stage of our day. In view of all these considerations, we are necessarily led to these two conclusions: first, the child

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33 F. S. Boas, Tudor Drama, p. 21
stage of the sixteenth century was not a mere fad or curiosity; and second, such a broad contact with the people must have resulted in a certain amount of influence in the development of the drama itself. Just how great that influence was we shall attempt to indicate in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCE OF THE BOY ACTORS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

PART ONE: FIRST STEPS TOWARD THE NEW DRAMA.

In discussing the position of the boys of the junior and choir schools in development of the drama of Shakespeare's day, we apparently are entering a field that, either through ignorance or trepidation, most writers have carefully circumvented. Of contemporary criticism there seems to be but a solitary instance; and in the centuries that followed, little, if any, consideration was paid them, even after research was seriously begun on the subject in the last century by men like Collier, Ward, and Fleay. It was only after new documents, brought to light in the early part of this century, forced scholars to reappraise the boys' contributions that real effort was made to give them their due; and even yet most authors are content with a general affirmation of their importance without a too detailed consideration of the reasons for that statement. J. M. Manly, for instance, after his

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1 Sir Walter Raleigh, in English Men of Letters, p. 120, makes the extravagant claim, "With the disappearance of the boy players the poetic drama died in England, and it has had no second life;" pointed out by Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 253.
extended consideration of the Children of the Chapel, abruptly summarizes their importance in one sentence by saying they were pioneers in more than one interesting movement and produced plays by some of the foremost dramatists of their time. Motter and Bond are content with saying that the junior schools and boy actors were an important ancestor of English drama, out of which grew our present forms of entertainment. E. K. Chambers, in his very exhaustive treatment of the boys' companies, hasn't a line on the question of their influence; and another scholar quite interested in the boys' activities merely says modern drama largely owes its origin to such plays and to the Christmas performances connected with the ceremonial of the Boy Bishop. Meager though these tributes may be, they are at least better than the complete indifference of many authors dealing with early English drama, and certainly closer to the mark than the unjust dismissals

4 The Works of John Lyly, v. I, p. 37; later on, as we shall see, he goes more thoroughly into the effects of Lyly's works.
5 The Elizabethan Stage, v. II.
6 A. F. Leach, Educational Charters and Documents, p. LXVI.
7 Notably the articles in Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.
of earlier writers 8 who brushed them off as a strange but unimportant incident in English dramatic history. Even Wallace, the doughty champion of the children and their writers, does not give any synthesis of their influence on the drama, but when he says on p. 3 that the Chapel Royal was the center of the evolution of the drama he is striking the keynote of his book and speaks of their influence in two or three places as he goes along.

It might be well to point out, though it should be evident, that it will be impossible in tracing the influence of the boy actors to show individual instances of direct influence on Shakespeare all the way through the sixteenth century. Naturally Shakespeare's plays are vastly superior to the crude efforts of the early part of the century and there will be seen very little resemblance between the two products, but those early efforts were steps leading to the heights he occupied; and our aim will be to show the boys' position in the gradual development of the drama and point out precise instances of direct influence at the end, when the drama was at the Shakespearean threshold. I say "gradual" development, because it would seem more natural that dramatic form and excellence

progressed step by step rather than by a sudden burgeoning, as one author seems to picture it. According to Collins, the student of English dramatic poetry is confronted, in the first part of this century, by a dearth and desert of no literary value whatsoever and then suddenly "as by magic" surrounded by the lush, mature fruits of Shakespeare and his immediate predecessors. Such a view of the matter not only seems contrary to the ordinary course of human progress in any field but also completely negates the efforts of the children in the dramatic development during the century. His explanation is quite simple: it was entirely due to the Italian drama of the Renaissance. This point, as well, seems on the very face of it to be open to serious doubt, because anything as thoroughly English as the drama of the sixteenth century would much more naturally have a native source than an Italian source. This is the opinion thoroughly subscribed to by such writers as Wallace, Hillebrand, Boas, and Ward, as we shall shortly see.

As the first step in our discussion of the boy actors' influence, we must discuss this native spirit or

10 Ibid., p. 116.
interest that was so largely responsible for the development of the new drama. By it we mean that desire for something new, the rejection of the hide-bound shackles of classicism, the interest in life, love, adventure, particularly with an English background, that was so strong in sixteenth century audiences that it practically forced dramatists to acknowledge it. The political and historical situation in the decades before Shakespeare showed clearly the tendency for a national drama to arise; and indeed so strong was this native instinct that it became the real spirit on which the classic form of drama fashioned itself and one of the two great forces influencing the development of the drama. So great was this force that later in the century at least three writers whose works have come down to us were moved to complain bitterly - albeit fruitlessly - against it. Prominent among these was George Whetstone, who complains that the English playwright "first grounds his work on impossibilities; then in three hours runs he through the world;"

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11 Ibid., pp. 132-3.
13 F. S. Boas, Shakspere and his Predecessors, p. 36.
14 George Whetstone, In his prologue to Promos and Cassandra, (1578); Stephen Gosson in his School of Abuse (1579); and Sir Philip Sidney in his Defense of Poesy (1583).
marries, gets children: makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder monsters, and bringeth gods from heaven, and fetcheth devils from hell." Similar complaints come from the other two, especially in regard to the violations of the classical writers. But such as these strove in vain against the stream; the native dramatic instinct for vigor, realism, life was not to be denied; and it engulfed and transmuted into an English product whatever it took in from alien sources.¹⁵

Granting, then, the existence of that spirit, we might inquire whence it arose. What was it that led to these "extravagances" that so upset these lovers of the classic? The trend might be quite simply attributed to the desire of the audience to be entertained, amused. That may seem so component a part of drama to us that we may forget that up to the sixteenth century the primary purpose of most plays was to instruct or to inspire; they entertained, of course, too; but that was not their principal aim. Now, however, the spirit was different; the people wanted recreation, relaxation; they wanted dialogue and wit;¹⁶ popular taste had changed.¹⁷ As Henry VIII said

¹⁶ Wallace, op. cit., pp. 59, 125.
of an interlude by Henry Medwell on the "Fyndyng of Troth," "The foolys part was the best. It was this spirit that the boy actors caught and served up to the people because they knew it would win them favor. It takes no great psychologist to realize that nothing so pleases people as to see themselves, their friends, or people like them, put into a play. They love to see the faults and failings of those around them exposed, or satirized, or bandied about. In our own school days, if we but recall, we must remember the shouts of delight as we recognized some classmate or school official thinly parodied upon the stage. That same love of fun was an integral part of this new audience, not that satire was their only source of amusement, although the boys became most adept at it and in fact were finally "put down" because of it. Plays dealing with the foibles of man and human nature would quite naturally develop in Court circles bent on being amused, for in such an atmosphere gossip, flattery, intrigue, petty rivalries, and the like would tend to spur interest in the lives, actions and motives of others. Whatever the source, we know this native spirit did exist, was caught by the boy actors and their

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writers, and formed a major influence in the broad stream of sixteenth century drama.

This native spirit, as we mentioned above, made its appearance early in the century, and led to the development of the new drama dependent upon it. Its effects may be seen in the productions of the first of the Masters of the Children in the period we are considering, one William Cornish, appointed by Henry in 1509. He is a man little known, hitherto ignored, but yet deserving of a preeminent position among the masters of English drama for the initial steps he took on the long road towards dramatic perfection. Slight though it may seem to us, one of his first steps toward drama for pleasure was the introduction of the art song - the true lyric, not the folk song - as a part of the interlude, followed shortly by the addition of the dance, accompanied by poem and music. The old drama had been based principally upon spectacular appeal; under Cornish dialogue began to assume major proportions, and it was discovered that these new entertainments were not only more stimulating but far less exacting on the royal exchequer. As pointed out above, life and love be-

19 V. supra, n. 18.
21 Ibid., pp. 15, 44.
22 Ibid., p. 122.
came the themes of drama, and it was the Children of the
Chapel who became its chief interpreters. With the advent
of Cornish upon the dramatic horizon, the Moralities, even
shortened fell into disfavor; the "King's Players" were
used only three times in fourteen years; outside companies
were discarded by Henry VIII, and the use of the Lord of
Misrule was quite limited. It was in 1516 that Cornish
and his Children made the first momentous break with the
past in the production of a thoroughly English play based
on Chaucer, "The Story of Troylous and Pandor," to be
followed two years later by a similar effort entitled "The
Pardoner and the Frere." A few years later (1522) he
presented the first political allegory, a really daring
step for a Court poet and one made possible only because
of Cornish's absolute favor in the eyes of the King;

23 E. K. Chambers, Medieval Stage, v. II, p. 201
24 Wallace, op. cit., p. 59.
25 Ibid., pp. 48, 50; concerning the latter play and
others credited by Wallace to Cornish serious doubts
are cast by Hillebrand, Modern Philology v. XIII,
n. 5, Sept. 1915; by A. W. Reed in his series on Hey-
wood in The Library, 3rd. series, vv. VIII, IX; cf.
also Schelling, English Drama, pp. 32-3. These dis-
putes, however, concern us only secondarily; whether
the plays mentioned were written by Cornish or his
successor, Heywood, they establish the fact of a
definite break with the past and an introduction of
a new trend in the drama.
26 Witness the frequent and substantial grants made to
him and his family right up to the time of his death;
cf. Wallace, op. cit., p. 60.
undoubtedly this play served as a fore-runner of the excellent "Respublica" presented before Mary by Nicholas Udall. In other words, before "Calisto and Meliboea," considered by some as the first presentation of a romantic nature to be made on the English stage, and long before the first classic transplant, "Ralph Roister Doister," we find Cornish turning from the pageant and the Morality andaiming at purely romantic entertainment. The classics, too, were gradually being introduced, for in the "Triumph of Love and Beauty," Venus was a character, and a few years later the interlude "Love and Riches," probably by Heywood, brought Mercury, Jupiter, Plutus, and Cupid upon the stage.

How, then, may we summarize the influence of Cornish? It may be that Wallace, in the enthusiasm over his new discoveries, is too lavish in his claims for Cornish; but there certainly seem sufficient grounds for his somewhat playful assignment of that Master as the "grandfather" of the English drama (p. 37, n. 2). As early as 1512 we see him introducing little bits of realism when he

27 Published about 1530 by John Rastell, Heywood's father-in-law, and as usual, credited solely by Wallace to Cornish.

has Mr. Kyte, the sub-dean of the Chapel, dressed as a baron of the Exchequer, and himself and Crane dressed "in shipmen's garments." With the introduction of the new lyric, dialogue, acting, and "maskeling" (dancing), he changed the whole spirit of the old pageant and religious play and turned the aim of the stage from pedagogy to pleasantry. Year after year the dramatic instinct took shape and form in his hands and became a play, with its first faint touches of farce and realism and life. More important still for the future of the stage, he organized the boys into a regular acting company and set the custom that was to be followed so extensively by his successors. Because trained actors were rare and not too popular and because he pleased his audience so thoroughly with his Chapel Children, he transformed them into entertainers of the first rank and started them on their very fruitful career. To him goes the credit for sensing what the people wanted, for daring to break with the past, for giving his audiences wit and dialogue and life, and for presenting them with a regular troupe of actors capable of fulfilling their wants. Truly his contribution to the progress of the drama could scarcely be labelled slight.

29 Hall's Chronicle, pp. 518-19.
In turning to the next step in the influence of the children upon the stage, we are confronted with a species of lull or time-marking rather than with any startling advance. As we mentioned above (Ch. II), the end of Henry's reign was one of turmoil and strife; the old spirit of light-hearted gayety was gone, and hence the stage filled a less important role in Court activities. Little is known and nothing extant of the two Masters, Crane and Bower, who succeeded Cornish. The leading known dramatist appears to be John Heywood, who from his earliest youth was a favorite at the Court and for thirty-five years a most prominent figure in the entertainments there. In the common acceptance, it is his name that is associated with the type of play known as interlude, and it might be well at first to try to define just what is meant by that term. I say "try" because the word is used loosely and vaguely to cover almost any kind of production on the early sixteenth century stage. Collier would wish to limit the word strictly to that type of play popularized by Heywood. A. W. Ward rejects this narrowing of the term and with the New English Dictionary defines it as a light play interpolated between the pauses of longer entertainments and

30 Until his uncompromising Catholicism forced him into exile upon the accession of Elizabeth.
banquets. There is no authority for the claim that the interlude was a ludus that came inter the acts of the long mystery plays or moralities. The word itself came into use as early as the fourteenth century, when on the one hand it was used to refer to religious plays, and on the other to indicate a type of folk drama. In the following century it was frequently used to indicate a miracle play, and it was only in the sixteenth century that it was confined definitely to the lighter type of entertainment associated with the name of Heywood. As Schelling points out, the use of the word interlude generally emphasized the element of diversion for its own sake, and on that basis he wishes to label as such even the comic sequences of Mak and Noah's wife in the cycle plays, but this seems too far-fetched because those scenes are integral parts of the plays. The idea, however, is sound, because it was the spirit of pure entertainment that came to be the characteristic note of the interlude; and for that

34 "How thanne may a prist pleyn in entirlodies?" from a "Tretis on Mirkilis" quoted by Hazlitt, English Drama and Stage, p. 80.
35 Chambers, Medieval Stage, v. I, p. 93.
36 Ibid., v. II, p. 182.
reason Chambers defines the interlude as a ludus not between other acts but between two or more performers. Since it was dialogue that specifically differentiated the interlude from the older types of play, his interpretation, a dramatic dialogue, would seem to be about the best.

Enough for the nomenclature; what of the plays themselves that Heywood and the Children put on? As might be expected in dealing with the fragmentary documentation of the early sixteenth century, there is considerable dispute regarding the authenticity of several of the interludes commonly attributed to him, but from this concern we can abstract. We know they were written for and produced by the children in the first few decades of the century, and our interest lies not so much in their author as in their influence on the drama. Three of these plays - namely "Love," "Wytty and Wytless," and the "Play of the Wether" - are definitely his and show a continuation if not an advance on the Cornish pageant dialogue. Of about the

37 There is some dispute as to whether these were from the Chapel or St. Paul's; his long association with the Court and the lack of any record assigning him to Paul's seems to indicate the Chapel (v. Wallace, p. 85); but a case for the other side is built up by A. W. Reed, "John Heywood and his Friends," Library, ser. 3, v. VIII, p. 300.
same stamp are three others, "Of Gentleness and Nobility," "The Four Elements," and "Calisto and Meliboea," although the struggle between the romantic and the didactic is most visibly present in the last named, especially if we compare it with its source, the Spanish "Tragi-comedia de Calisto Y Melibea" of Rojas. In the original, Calisto falls desperately in love with Meliboea and with much intrigue endeavors to ascertain whether his love is returned. The lovers finally arrange clandestine meetings and the play ends when Meliboea commits suicide after the accidental death of Calisto, returning from one of these meetings. The English version, however, uses only four of the sixteen acts and does not even get as far as the secret meetings. The heroine's father discovers the intrigue via a dream; his daughter interprets it, confesses, repents, and receives a lengthy harangue on the duties of children and the wisdom of parents. Such an ending was, of course, more gentle and edifying, but it certainly passed up the dramatic possibilities of the original.

Three more plays must be pointed out. "The Pardoner and the Frere" is another Chaucerian effort that lifts bodily sections of the "Pardoner's Tale," the "Somnour's Tale," and "Frere's Tale" in developing a scandalous but amusing altercation set in church. Another play
called "The Four P.'s" (Pardoner, Palmer, Pedler, and 'Poticary) amounts to a rather long-winded liars' contest, which is surprisingly won by the judge when he happens to say that he never saw or knew a woman out of patience. A third, rather heavy-handed piece of satire called "Johan Johan" portrays a bit of scandalous intrigue between Johan, a timid husband, Tyb, his shrewish wife, and Sir Johan, the priest. Whether or not the author found his source and inspiration for these in the soties or farce of the French Court, as Boas holds, or in the native drama developed by Cornish, as seems more probable, these plays are truly English, sketched from life as he saw it about him and faithful in its picture of the humor and failings of that life. Gone once and for all are the abstractions of the morality; the old allegorical machinery and didactic aim give way to a realistic representation of contemporary types. This step may be justly termed merely a continuation of the change initiated by Cornish; but to Heywood must go the credit for advancing and perfecting this "human comedy," for establishing it as the accepted form

40 F. E. Schelling, English Drama, p. 34.
41 F. S. Boas, loc. cit. in n. 38.
of entertainment, and for furthering the career of the Chapel Children as a company of actors, a tradition that might have met an abrupt end had it been left to the businessman, Crane.

The next great step forward taken by the children's plays came in the first real five act plays written in English by Udall. These and the plays that follow them show very definitely the influence of the classics, and since this was a very important element in the development of the drama, it seems well to pause at this juncture and investigate the nature and extent of the debt the English drama owes the classics. To begin with, what is meant by "classical drama?" First, it is divided into five acts, or at least capable of such a division, and possesses a regular plot unravelling on definite principles. Secondly, imagination and fancy enter largely into its composition. Thirdly, its diction is studious of the beauties of poetry and rhetoric. Not only does classical technique insist on scene and act divisions and choerence of plot but it concerns itself as well with the unities of time and place, the careful motivation of entrances and exits, and similar

matters of dramatic decorum. It is quite evident that the English drama absorbed certain of these characteristics, and it has been the traditional view that therefore it must have sprung from its classic model; but that opinion needs serious modification. That the classics enjoyed a vogue not only in the Universities but in the grammar schools as well there is abundant evidence. After all, the "popular" nature of the drama, as described in the preceding chapter, does not mean that the plays of the sixteenth century were written for or inspired by the lower classes of the populace. They were written principally for the Court, the nobles, and their followers by men educated in the schools and the Court, courtiers in occupation and training. With the newborn interest in classic literature, the plays of Plautus and Terence assumed a place in the scholastic curriculum. We saw (Chapter II) that Dean Colet's boys presented the "Phormio" of Terence in 1528 before the same audience that witnessed the "Menaechmi" and a Latin play of "Dido." A translation of "Andria," called "Terens in English" was published

43 J. Q. Adams in his prefatory note to the edition of "Ralph Roister Doister" in Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, p. 423.
44 Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 254.
45 W. P. Eaton, The Drama in English, p. 63.
by John Rastell before 1530, and in 1537 was played
"Thersites," a translation of a play adopted from the
"Miles Gloriosus" of Plautus by Ravisius Textor. 47

There can be no question of the widespread
presence of these classic plays, and that the influence
they had came from the schools is attested by every
authority on the subject. Plays had their part in in-
struction 48 in the classics, not only in the upper schools
but in the junior schools as well. 49 The classic influ­
ence in the schools, in fact, can be traced as far back as
the establishment of the monasteries after the Norman Con­
quest in the eleventh century. In the period we are con­
sidering, we find evidences of this influence, as mentioned
above, in the earliest interludes of Cornish and Heywood,
and a gradual flourishing of that tradition under the
guidance of the school masters, who sought to inspire
their young charges with the plays of Plautus and Terence
and the neo-classicists Ravisius Textor, Macropedius, and
Gnapheus. Tragedy, which made its appearance long after

47 F. E. Schelling, English Drama, p. 35.
48 F. S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age, introd.,
p. V.
49 Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 260.
599, cf. similar statements in Schelling, English
215; Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 16; W. P. Eaton, The
Drama in English, p. 63.
comedy on the English stage, found similar influence in the works of Seneca. 52

Granting this veritable flood of Latin and Greek models in the schools of the day, we naturally inquire: what were its effects on the popular drama that developed into the drama of Shakespeare? Were the revived classics the fertile soil whence sprung our modern drama? On the very face of it we are constrained to say no, for the very simple reason that those dramas never reached the people and hence could hardly have been a major factor in the development of the drama, much less its principal source. They were purely scholastic exercises, sugared over with novelty and the excitement of a stage performance to make them attractive. They had no literary ends (i.e., as far as English drama was concerned) nor did they aim to give pleasure; their sole purpose was to inspire love of the new learning in the hearts of the pupils. From its very nature we can see how this drama would fail to please the ordinary person (who for the most part would find difficulty in even understanding the classic tongues) or to inspire any dramatist to artistic heights. On the one hand, this drama which flourished in the schools was studious,

didactic, pedagogic, inspired by intellectual obligations; on the other hand, the drama of the Court and the people was light, pleasurable, diverting, inspired by a love of life and beauty. It is for these reasons that we feel they claim too much who designate the academic drama as the real link between the old drama and the new and as the source supplying the impulses for the beginnings of English tragedy and comedy. As a matter of fact these humanists did not produce a single public theater drama in the whole century; there was not even one great dramatist developed among those who wrote solely for the school stage; and by 1585, even at the highest institutions, such as Cambridge, Plautus and Terence were no longer found. The school drama had served its purpose; it had run its course concomitant with that of the native drama but entirely distinct from it; and while the lusty spirit of the one flourished and bloomed, the other withered and died and was heard of no more.

Although the stream of the classic drama died, nevertheless it did not pass without leaving its stamp on the native drama. The connection, of course, came through

53 Cf. Wallace, op. cit., p. 89.
55 Wallace, op. cit., p. 183.
the plays of the children; for their playwrights were poets trained in the schools, scholars versed in classical development. They knew and respected the excellence of the classic technique. As Edwards said in his oft-quoted prologue to his play "Damon and Pythias:"

If this offend the looker on, let Horace then be blamed,
Which hath our author taught at school, from whom he doth not swerve,
In all such kind of exercise decorum to observe.

They knew, too, the spirit and tastes of their audience, and while they knew they could not foist upon them the old classic drama, still their training and background had certain effects on their handling of the new drama. It gave to the stage standards of regularity and dignity that were sorely needed. The division into act and scene, the more careful construction of the plot, true character development, all these were added to the structure of the drama; while certain features, such as the ghost and revenge motive, philosophical reflections, highly polished lyrical passages were acquired as part of the standard materiel of the new drama. The young English drama moved in, as it were, on the classic, and used the latter's form and structure to grow in but supplied that growing force from its own inexhaustible source of energy.
To conclude this consideration, then, we have only to remark once again that the English stage was not a slave of the classics. For a time, perhaps, the fate of the English drama hung in the balance; it faced the danger which had become a reality in Italy and France—a fanaticism for the works of the ancients so intense and absorbing that it practically stifled intellectual and artistic activity. But the intensity of the native instinct in England prevented that outcome, for though the classic influence kept the playwrights from being as lawless as they might have been without it, in practice they departed widely from their models. This we can see not only from the plays themselves but from the complaints levelled against them. Besides those of Whetstone mentioned above, we find Sir Philip Sidney in his Defense of Poesy (1583) complaining that, "You shall have Asia on the one side and Afric of the other . . . Now shall you have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and bye we hear news of a shipwreck in the same place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock." These diversions from the classic models seem quite natural, for a truly national drama should have

its own native source as its inspiration; and in England we know there was no stronger strain than that of simple realism. This contemporaneousness, the quality by which all things are transmuted into immediate terms, was behind the success of Cornish, Heywood, and the other early dramatists, and enabled the native stream of drama to engulf any other influence or passing fashion that may have overlaid it at times. 57

57 F. E. Schelling, *English Drama*, p. 103.
PART TWO: THE APPEARANCE OF THE MODERN DRAMA.

It was this spirit, then, that characterized the drama when "Ralph Roister Doister" made its appearance on the scene. Its author, Nicholas Udall, is a rather shadowy character whose history is difficult to follow. We know he was a scholar and steeped in the classic tradition, for he was a Master at Eton from 1534-1541, when for some unknown reason he was dismissed, and from 1553 till his death in 1556 he was Master at Westminster. In the meantime he seems to have migrated to the Court, where evidence of his success is shown in the sweeping nature of the grant permitting him to call upon the Master of the Revels for any supplies he might need. For a number of years he seems to have been in complete charge of the Court entertainments, and hence a figure of importance in the field of drama. Of the five plays claimed for him by Wallace, two at least are definitely his and both these were put on by the Children of the Chapel. They are "Respublica" and "Ralph Roister Doister." It is the latter that constituted such an important step

1 Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 71.
in the history of the drama. The importance lies not so much in the fact that he used the classics as a background for his play. The classic spirit, as we have seen, had already permeated the schools, and as a Master of one of them, he undoubtedly had put on several classic plays himself. So in turning to them in his "Ralph," he was doing nothing new. Yet it was a momentous step, for he used them not to write a classical play but to produce a thoroughly English drama with certain classical features. Despite the claims of Boas for Medwell's "Fulgens and Lucres" of which only a fragment is extant, Udall's play was the first real five act drama in English. Though the date of its composition is disputed, it seems sure that it was presented at the Court in 1553. At the time Udall was the leading Court poet, and so, anxious to please, he dropped the Latin language and manner of the school; and though his "Ralph" is based on a classic model, it is not an outgrowth of the classic drama but rather the attempt of a humanist to adapt himself to Court standards. Although borrowed from the "Miles Gloriosus" of Plautus and

4 Tudor Drama, p. 5; v. also, Motter, School Drama in England, p. 2.
displaying that influence in its technique and character drawing (especially in its organic plot, with acts and scenes instead of the loose texture of the interludes before it), it has withal real humor, scenes from real life; it is a play English to the core and not a mere revival of Plautus. It is classic in form, perhaps, but Tudor in garb and setting. In its fusion of the classic and native tendencies it blazed a new trail, struck a new note, and truly constituted one of the major contributions of the child actors to the development of the drama.

Before we go on to a consideration of the influence of Edwards and his "tragical comedy," as he termed it, it seems only right to point out very briefly the influence of what one author describes as "fustian" - i.e., propaganda plays. We saw above (Ch. III) how the drama lent itself quite readily to the disputes occasioned by the religious and political unrest in the days of Henry and Elizabeth, and how aptly the children took to satire; the frequent prohibition of plays by each of the sovereigns in turn must have been due in large part to the presence of this element in their plays. We cannot be too sure just

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8 T. H. Motter, School Drama in England, p. 64.
9 E. G. Clark, Elizabethan Fustian.
how much of it there was because most of these works have perished. They were probably suppressed and then deemed unfit or perhaps unsafe for publication, but the titles that remain to us are, to say the least, provocative. Plays like "Christus Redivivus" and "Archipropheta," presented by the students of Oxford, might have been merely edifying; but certainly of a controversial nature were such as "De Sectis Papisticis," "Perditiones Papistorum," "De Imposturis Thomas Becketi," and others. It is not certain just who put these plays on; but, as regards the children, we know that even the great Edwards had displeased his audience by one of his comedies (cf. Prologue to "Damon and Pythias"), that the Children of the Chapel suddenly ceased to appear in 1584, and that Lyly and his boys were completely "put down" for their part in the Marprelate Controversy. They did, in other words, take a part in controversies; and this introduction of current problems cannot be ignored as a factor in making plays more realistic and pertinent to the times. It is, of course, a minor factor, and one whose influence cannot justly be measured because of the dearth of extant materials, but it is one that at least deserves mentioning.

The next advance in the development of the drama in which the children figured came at the hands of one of
their Masters whose worth and value has come down to us largely second-handed. Richard Edwards is most certainly a man to be reckoned with in the story of the English drama; yet the only extant work of his about which we are sure is the not too admirable "Damon and Pythias." Our judgment of his importance and influence must necessarily be colored by the unconditioned adulation he was accorded by his contemporaries, who thought that if he wrote any more such wonderful plays he would certainly go mad; but there are certain conclusions we can draw from the Prologue and the one play we do have. It is of this period in the drama that is said it would be difficult to over-estimate the influence of the Queen and the Court, and this, of course, means the influence of Edwards, the chief Court poet at the time. The reason for such importance, of course, lies in the fact that as the Court went so went the country. When the Queen visited the castles of noble-men or the seats of learning, she looked for the entertainment to which she was accustomed; the boys of Paul's, West-

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11 Wallace, with his customary largesse, credits him with the "Appius and Virginia," ceded by all others to Bower, and the anonymous "Misogonus," for which he is roundly berated by Hillebrand, op. cit., pp. 83-4.

12 As his "Palemon and Arcite."

minster, and Eton, and the other acting companies that appeared before her were quick to adopt the modes invented and established by the Court poets. It is thus that any advance made by Edwards assumes an aspect of major proportions.

Hence it is that the lines quoted from his Prologue a few pages above acquire an importance beyond the ordinary. He was the first to proclaim publicly his allegiance to the decorum of the classics and undoubtedly this sent many a playwright scurrying to his text-books to find out just what this meant. We can see from his play, however, that his allegiance was more or less nominal and that he dispensed with the restrictions and limitations it should have involved, as his predecessors had done, and produced plays as his audience desired them. In this he did nothing new, for that limited acceptance of the classic form had already been established. More important in his Prologue is the notice of a previous play which had displeased his audience and "forced his pen against his kind no more such sports to write." He turned then from the comedies which had already won him great renown to a different type of writing, which he labeled

"tragic-comedy." It is this "tragicomedy," born among the Masters imbued with the humanism of the schools, that constitutes Edwards' chief contribution to the English stage. Whether he conceived it as an introduction of comic elements in a tragic theme (as did the author of "Appius and Virginia") or as the happy outcome of tragic materials, he produced a play with tragic and comic elements happily mixed in a rising tide of suspense to the climax. It won for him the reputation of an unmatched genius; and though that praise may seem exaggerated to us, he did build the bridge that led from the farce and comedial interlude not only to historical plays but to the fully developed comedy and tragedy. We can see the effect of this in the fact that a few years later (1567) Hunnis, Edwards' successor, produced the "Tragedy of the King of Scottes," and not long after that Farrant, at Court with the boys of Windsor, put on "Ajax and Ulysses," "Quintus Fabius," and "King Xerxes," all of them tragedies. Nor was Edwards's influence limited to the children's companies, for after 1571 the outside companies of both men and boys who appeared at the Court show a distinct trend towards the tragedy and tragicomedy.

16 Wallace, op. cit., p. 110.
17 Ibid., p. 124.
introduced by Edwards. Though the importance of this playwright may have been exaggerated by his contemporaries, we cannot deny him a prominent position among the men who influenced the development of the English drama.

Partly because of the tastes of the public and partly because of the inexperience of the juvenile actors, the appearance of the tragic drama on the English stage was long delayed. Its coming, however, was inevitable, for the Masters who had so long dealt with the tragedies of the Greek and Latin writers in the private theaters of the schools were certain eventually to attempt something similar for the Court and the public theater. Because of their advance in age, the students of the Universities turned to tragedy long before their younger conferees, but even in this field, when it came to the public stage and not mere academic exercises, the boy actors played their part, though not as marked a one as in the field of comedy. It is well known the role that "Gorboduc," presented by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple before the Queen in 1562, played in the development of modern tragedy. But long before Sackville and Norton made their epic step, the children had made some beginnings in that direction in the tragedy "Appius and Virginia." It lacked the classic mold and it was not written in the blank verse of
"Gorboduc," but at least it was a start. Furthermore, in the production of the first real tragedy in English, granting the outside influences that determined its form and subject matter, I think we can trace a very definite influence of the children's stage as well. Why did Sackville and Norton make that step? Why did they feel they should get away from the pedantic drama of the class-room? Why did they think that if they were to present a tragedy that would be acceptable to their audience they must make it thoroughly English and clothe it in the vernacular? The only possible answer is that they were going to play before the Court, and they were striving to follow the model set there by the boy actors, to imitate the kind of drama made popular by them, and to give the Queen the sort of entertainment she was evidently so fond of. No one ever seems to have raised this point, but it would appear one worth considering. In one sense, these young authors were real leaders; but we can just as truly say that in another they were following the lead set by the juvenile actors. Tragedy, of course, would have come to the English stage eventually; its appearance was tardy, as it was; but even this late arrival may be credited to the spur supplied by the successes of the children's companies and the desire of playwrights to win similar royal favor by emulating them.
"Gorboduc" did not have any immediate imitators, but a few years later under Hunnis (1567) we find them putting on a "Tragedy of the King of Scottes;" and the boys of Windsor under Farrant presented "Ajax and Ulysses," "Quintus Fabius," and "King Xerxes" before the Queen. All of these were tragedies, and whether they were in imitation of the Inner Temple's success or of the pattern introduced by Edwards or a combination of both, they show that the children were doing their part in popularizing this form of drama just as they had done for comedy. Because the Court and its activities were the cynosure of all, particularly in matters of entertainment, a few such plays put on by the boys would have far more effect in establishing them in popular favor than any number played in the private halls of the upper schools. We have evidence of this in the fact that shortly after the presentations of Hunnis and Farrant (i.e., from 1571 on), tragedies began to be presented by the men's companies who appeared at the Court and elsewhere in London. Again the boys were leading the way, though this time in a more modest role.

19 Wallace, op. cit., p. 124.
In contrast to this, we find them at the peak of their influence and popularity when we turn to the last of the great writers who supplied them with plays, John Lyly. It is true that after the children's companies were revived in 1600 men like Jonson, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, Beaumont and Fletcher, and others wrote for them; but, barring Jonson's "Epicoene," not one great play was written for them and the day of their influence on the drama was gone. With Lyly, in the decade from 1580-90, it was different. He was the only great writer who wrote solely (and copiously) for the children. Fortunately most of his works have survived, at least the worth while ones; several of his lighter satires - the ones that brought the heavy hand of censure down upon him and the boys of Paul's - have perished; but judging from the general tenor of the controversy for which they were written, it is probably just as well for the reputation of Lyly that they did disappear. 20

There is not a writer on this period of the drama who does not concede a role of great importance to the works of Lyly and their influence, from the sweeping

adulation of Bond to the more sober judgment of Hillebrand. Lyly was distinctly a children's playwright; he wrote solely for them and perhaps could not have written for any other group. His plays manifest a remarkable cooperation between author and actor, for he found in them players peculiarly suited to his talents, and they found in him a writer who could give them better than anyone else the thing which they could do well. Nevertheless, in writing for them he developed a style radically new and brought in elements which were an important formative influence on the great playwright to come. Particularly important was his influence because of his association with the Blackfriars' venture, which meant a much larger audience and a direct contact with the public stage of his day.

What in detail were some of these elements initiated into the drama by Lyly? His plays stand on the threshold of the self-conscious, fully developed dramatic art in England; in fact his "Campaspe" and "Sapho and Phao" were the first five act dramas put on in the public

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22 Bond, op. cit., v. II, p. 231.
theaters.\textsuperscript{23} Being a college man like most Court poets, he was familiar with the classics, yet he was writing for the Court and followed the stream the native drama had taken, retaining only the order and the form of the classic drama. His break with the past, whether classic or morality, was even more complete than that of his predecessors. There was no Chorus between or during the acts; neither was there a "Nuntius" or a dumb show or the Senecan "stichomythia." The prologues and epilogues were not parts of the plot but mere flattery of the Queen or show of modesty.\textsuperscript{24} He may have taken his material from the classics, but he handled it in a way uniquely his own; the comedy and the dialogue were all his own, as was the introduction of such features as the disguising of a woman as a man, the narration of dreams, the ballet, and the lavish use of songs. Others, who wrote for the inn and the public court-yard, had to cater to the vulgar element in their audience; but Lyly, writing primarily for the Court and the educated, could sharpen his dialogue, refine his language, and raise the general level of his plays.

This is exactly what he did. His chief con-

\textsuperscript{23} Wallace, op. cit., p. 180.
\textsuperscript{24} Bond, op. cit., v. II, p. 263.
tributions to the development of the drama were in the field of language and of material. As to the first, he introduced prose for the comic scenes and not only established it as the proper vehicle for comedy but made it clear, charming, sparkling. As Ward says, the flow of wit, the flash of repartee, the dialectic brilliance of many of the famous scenes of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher are merely highly polished reflections of Lyly's earlier efforts; they indeed outshone him, but he opened the path along which they trod. In his use of prose he had a fore-runner in Gascoigne and his "Supposes," but Lyly made it a thing alive, brisk, vivacious. Point, vivacity, wit, and grace on the stage can be traced to him; and his word-play and badinage raised comedy to the domain of pure fancy. And that leads us to his second great contribution; his improvement in the very nature of comedy itself.

He raised comedy to a new high level by refining it and producing what Bond calls the "ideal-comic" and Baker "high comedy." His plays deal with cultivated

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27 Collins, op. cit., p. 190.
people, in whom education and refinement have bred subtler feelings. Their thoughts, actions, speech are polished and gentle; love is not an intense passion or physical appetite, but a quiet, sublimating motive force behind events. Lyly's comedies, with their sharp dialogue and classic allusions, demanded thought on the part of his audience; they soared in imagination and introduced the fairy-land stage that was to develop into the enchanted land of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Merry Wives." He developed the comedy of situation and opened the possibilities of which Shakespeare was to make so much use in his early plays. He was the first to turn to Plutarch via North for historical matter; he revived the witty, rascally servant of Plautus and Terence, and he favored the free mingling of farce and the serious or "high" comedy.

In all these ways he raised comedy to Shakespeare's very threshold, and as we shall show a little further on that great genius gave them the benefit of a very thorough perusal and the honor of frequent imitation. In the interests of justice, though, we must point out the weaknesses in Lyly's efforts. While his plays repre-

sent the heights of the children's drama, they show too, just as clearly, a certain decadence. There more than in any other group of plays is the break between the children's and the men's plays marked. Lyly excluded strong passion and subtle characterization not merely because it was his natural bent but because he had to. His juvenile Thespians could not bear a heavier load. As a result his plays have a certain superficiality; his figures are somewhat like puppets he is manipulating with a string, endowed with beautiful speeches but little vital action. The boys were sprightly, pert, charming; and on these qualities Lyly capitalized. He had the sense to see that they were incapable of portraying deep and serious emotions and he wisely refused to ask them to portray that which lay beyond their powers.

Despite this weakness, almost inherent in the very nature of the circumstances in which he wrote, Lyly was a potent force in the development of the drama. The English public stage had become virile to the point of crudeness; he, almost single-handed, refined it and made it more intellectual. He brought to it, as we have pointed out, two great benefits: besides the matter of

29 Bond, op. cit., v. I, p. 36
establishing prose as the vehicle for comedy, he introduced the elements of "high" comedy to the English stage, and he raised that drama to the level of true literature. Truly he broke the way for Shakespeare and proved a fitting culmination to the long and arduous path the boy actors had carved from the crude drama of Cornish to the door of our stage's greatest genius.

Lest our claims for Lyly and his influence seem too strong, we shall conclude this chapter with a few instances of Shakespeare's leaning upon his inferior, but successful, predecessor. A great deal has been written on this subject, and since this by no means purports to be a dissertation on Lyly, I shall just indicate a few instances as cases in point. The children may have been laughed off the stage when they attempted to compete seriously with the adult companies after 1600, but nevertheless the masque and song of their drama lived on in Shakespeare. The comedy of situation was amplified and developed by Shakespeare in his "Love's Labour's Lost," "Two Gentlemen from Verona," and "Comedy of Errors."

32 Wallace, op. cit., p. 185.
And these plays were but intermediate experiments for him leading to the perfection of "Much Ado About Nothing" and "As You Like It." The talk of Viola and the duke in "Twelfth Night" (II, iv) certainly parallels that of Phillida and Galathea in "Galathea" (IV, iii). The witty interchange between Portia and Nerissa and between Rosalind and Celia is based on Lyly, as are the wit contests of the two gentlemen from Verona and of Romeo and Mercutio. The song of the bird's notes in "Campaspe" gave Shakespeare his start for "Hark, hark, the lark." His extension of comedy into the realm of pure fancy finds its counterpart in Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream." These and other examples already indicated above are sufficient to give some idea of Shakespeare's early dependence on Lyly and his consequent debt to the boy actors, for whom Lyly wrote.

To sum up and conclude this fourth chapter, then, we have traced as far as possible the influence of the junior and choir schools and their boy actors. If at times we have seemed halting or not too precise, it is not alone a question of the lack of full records for this period; it is a task difficult by its very nature because

of the tenuous thread that links the product of one mind with that of another when there is no expressed acknowledgment. We are probing the minds and motives of men many centuries removed, and there is a tendency frequently to read too much into the facts at hand, but we have tried earnestly to avoid that pit-fall. It seems rather that more credit ought to be given the children than we have, because succeeding discoveries in so far unknown documents will probably prove even more conclusively what our present fragmentary documentation reveals. But even limiting ourselves to the facts available in the documents thus far brought to light, we must concede that the influence of the boy actors is considerable. If it seems we have been too partial to them, it is only because heretofore such slight notice has been given their efforts that the tribute paid to them now seems exaggerated. Exaggerated though it may seem, if the documents bear it out, it should not be withheld; it is rather that our picture of the sixteenth century drama must be modified than that those facts should be mitigated or ignored.

Shakespeare and his dramatic art might have sprung up anyway, without the earlier types of plays and the long period of transmutation; but as a matter of fact, those plays were there and they hastened the development
of the drama, which, if delayed, might have come too late for Marlowe and Shakespeare and hence missed the genius it needed to raise it to the heights of true dramatic literature. While not too much in this period of development is directly traceable to a counterpart in some play of Shakespeare's, it is a question not so much of Shakespeare's leaning on this play or that as it is of his being dependent on the type of drama he found, on the stage as it was in his day. It is to this gradual development of the drama itself that the children's companies made their important contribution, and it is because of that that Shakespeare is indebted to them. Though there may not be even one part in the two machines alike, the flier who has just safely negotiated the North Atlantic owes just as much to the little box the Wright brothers coaxed off the ground as he does to the magnificent machine that has carried him across. Without the foundation of Cornish, Heywood, Udall, Edwards, and Lyly, Shakespeare might have been an outstanding poet, but not our greatest English dramatist.
CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

Like a traveler who traces the tiny rivulets that rush forth from the glaciers of Mont Blanc, freed, as it were, by the sun's darts, who watches the rushing torrents as they twist and turn and grow in their course down the Alps, who sees the lusty current hurtle the barriers at Schaffhausen, and who marks the full, deep flow of the mighty Rhine as it winds past Baden-Baden and moves majestically, almost conscious of its epic destiny, on to distant Cologne and the still more distant ocean, we have traced the early course of the English drama. We have seen the tiny stream of modern drama, released by the pen of Cornish from the mass of traditional drama that preceded him, grow in the hands of Heywood, swell and develop in the hands of Udall and Edwards, become a well defined current in the hands of their successors, and evolve finally, under the inspired touch of the Bard of Avon, into the mighty stream that represents the peak of English dramatic literature. But while the source and the beginnings of the broad, dynamic Rhine are clearly marked and no traveler with even a spark of imagination could fail to be conscious of them,
in this case the story is entirely different. Not only has the influence and position of the boy actors been long ignored but until quite recently their story has not even been known.

The fact that the children and their plays dropped out of sight for a while and are now being exhumed from their literary oblivion is not in itself too unusual. The fluctuating posthumous fortune of poets, prose-writers, and dramatists is a curious but well-established literary phenomenon. A writer may enjoy a wide vogue in his day and then be abruptly forgotten because of the strictly contemporary basis of his fame. A poet, too advanced for his time, may lie misunderstood and ignored for many years, until finally his worth is acknowledged and due appreciation is accorded him. A dramatist may be quite popular for a time, then drop out of sight, and then quite as suddenly enjoy a renewal of popular favor. In the case of the children's companies, however, there are two or three distinctive factors. One is that the drama itself which they developed and popularized is not returning to vogue; it is merely that that drama is now being properly evaluated. A second is the extended length of time - well over three centuries - between their abrupt and complete disappearance and the
current revival of interest in them. And a third is that even with the renewed interest in their career and the fresh appraisal of their importance the complete story is not only unknown but perhaps unknowable!

This latter condition is, of course, due to the fact that the records of the royal household and of the various schools are scattered and incomplete and to the fact that historians of their day, blinded perhaps by the preeminence of Shakespeare and his immediate predecessors, did not deem the efforts of the children worthy of even passing consideration. That phase of English literary history was a closed book until persistent mention of the boy actors and their writers forced research workers to consider them seriously; and it was only then that their true importance began to emerge. That book, once opened, has grown to sizeable proportions, and still is far from being complete. If we were to speculate on the future and ask ourselves just what the possibilities were of further findings and of additional clarification of the boys' status, we would say they are excellent. When we consider the first inexact, uncertain beginnings made by Collier and Ward, the advances made by Fleay, the additions by Middleton, the extensive work by Wallace and Chambers, with further criticism and refine-
ment by Hillebrand, we can see a growth that has not yet reached its prime. Our knowledge of sixteenth century drama has advanced considerably, and though there are undoubtedly many documents that will be brought to light to add to that knowledge, much has already been accomplished. We have only to compare the scant and almost negligible notices of the boy actors given by early writers on the drama\(^1\) with the well-established assumption by later writers\(^2\) not only of the fact but of the importance of the boy actors to see that research on this question has already borne fruit. The juvenile actors have progressed from the status of mere oddities, lifeless marionettes, to the stature of full-fledged influences on the course of English drama. They are no longer a factor to be ignored but rather a challenge to be explored, a problem to be solved or at least further determined.

From what has already been discovered it seems certain that any further information turned up on this subject will only prove more conclusively the importance and the

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1 For example, Schelling, Boas, Collier, and, for the most part, the contributors to Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit., for this period.

2 Besides Wallace, Chambers, and Hillebrand, we could add also Walter Eaton, The Drama in English (1930); B. Brawley, A Short History of English Drama (1921); A. Nicoll, British Drama (1933), and many others.
influence of the children's companies indicated in the previous chapters of this paper.

There remains now but to give a final summary and analysis of the facts we have seen. A mere glance at the facts and the records we have seen is sufficient to prove the tremendous popularity of the children's companies. Unusual, even unwarranted, though this success may seem to us, it becomes a little more understandable if we consider the conditions in which it existed. Everything that was necessary for the flourishing of a juvenile stage obtained at that time. First, there was an audience that had a keen appetite for all drama. The courts of Henry and Elizabeth were gay and lively; they were insatiable in their desire for entertainment; and because they loved life and joy and recreation they sought that entertainment in the drama, particularly the new drama that was light, amusing, and relaxing. Secondly, there existed in that audience a critical sense demanding little. Eager and anxious to be entertained, they were no problem to please. They had no norms whereby they might discern the crudities of the drama of their day; critical appreciation grew with the development of the drama, and since

3 Hillebrand, op. cit., p. 275.
the young actors were presenting what was then considered the highest expression of dramatic art, their audiences were completely satisfied. Finally, and perhaps most important, there was the familiarizing effect of a long tradition. Practices that seem strange or startling to one person may be quite readily accepted by another because he is accustomed to them. Certainly there was a well-established tradition of juvenile participation in public performances and plays by the early part of the sixteenth century, and hence to those audiences the boys' appearance on the stage was quite natural and easily acceptable. The fortuitous conjunction, then, of these three circumstances, never again to be realized, provided a milieu into which the boys fitted as naturally as a hand slips into a glove.

As the time was propitious for them, so too were they advantageous to the age. They thrived and flourished, and the importance they attained may be credited to many reasons. Without a doubt they were the bridge that spanned the dramatic evolution of the sixteenth century from the old moralities and pageants to the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare. No matter what we may say of their capacity to entertain or of the nature of the plays they produced, we must admit that most of the dramatic
activity of the sixteenth century was in their hands and hence to them must be attributed the development of that drama. They alone enjoyed the favor of royalty and nobility, without which the existence of an acting company was precarious and its popularity doubtful. While the men's companies were having trouble with the Puritans and the University stage was having difficulty with the civil authorities, the children's companies, with their innocence, freshness, vivacity, and charm, were sweeping aside all obstacles, weathering all storms, and practically forcing the stage into a position of importance. The adult companies might have eventually become popular and risen to success, but it would have been much later, perhaps too late for them to be an instrument at the disposal of Marlowe and Shakespeare. We know that the men's companies, at least in the beginning, gained prominence by tagging along in the wake of the popularity gained by the children. They began to flourish only in the middle of Elizabeth's reign, after the boys had made the drama so popular that the demand for stage plays was strong enough to overrule even the prejudice of the disapproving civil authorities. Even then, while the older actors had to contend with restrictions as to time and place that hampered their activities, their juvenile prototypes went right on in the Court and public theater
until the growing audacity of their satire brought down the heavy hand of official sanction.

Another indication of their eminence in the dramatic field is seen in the fact that the men used the dramatic forms evolved by the boys' writers, put on the same type of plays, strove to entertain the people of the middle and lower classes as the boys were entertaining the better educated, refined upper classes. The adult companies basked in the reflected glory of the children till the advance in the drama and dramatic taste gave them the upper hand and placed them in the limelight and the boys in the shadows. This change, of course, was the advent of masculinity, maturity, profundity to the English stage. The juvenile actors had been quite competent for the earlier types of play and capable of handling any of the dramas of their day because dramatic form then was light and immature. What was at their disposal was not beyond their powers. But the medium of dramatic expression they had developed, consonant with their abilities in its infancy, outgrew them in its maturity, and overwhelmed them in the splendor of its perfection. The children were a satisfactory medium of dramatic portrayal while the drama was simple, unsophisticated, light; but they were unable to keep their heads up when the dramatic
current became the broad and mighty stream bearing Shakespeare on its crest.

Nevertheless, in admiring the exquisite tracery of a mighty cathedral pile, we cannot forget the humble excavation that was its start nor the solid foundation on which its beauty rests. If we were to analyze the boy actors' chief contribution to Shakespearean drama, to go beyond the fact that they introduced new types of drama, that they developed the type of play Shakespeare found when he turned to writing, that they were the chief, if not the sole, dramatic artists during the most hectic century in the career of the English stage, we would find these two important factors directly and solely traceable to them: 1) they catered to the native spirit of the people and their love of life; and 2) they saved the stage and the profession of acting from becoming hopelessly identified with the crude, coarse, and more objectionable elements of the populace. As a result of the former, we have seen how the young actors and their writers turned from the old forms of drama, which were beginning to pall, and sought new ways to please their public, to respond to the spirit of the age. By thus keeping pace with the demands of their audience, they not only saved the drama of their day from innocuous desuetude but stirred interest
in the stage to a white heat, capable of drawing the best there was from the latent talents of their dramatists. At the same time their vigorous spirit and lusty love of experimenting saved the English drama from the deadening formalism of a purely classical revival. As a result of the second factor, they raised the general level of the theater and its actors both in fact and in the minds of the people. Because of the conditions of their youth, training, and education, they dignified the histrionic art, brought drama to the level of literature, attracted the best dramatic writers to their cause, and made it possible for a man of talent to devote his time and genius to the writing of plays. It was a type of vicious circle. The children's popularity made writing for them an aim worth aspiring to; in turn the good writers increased the popularity of the stage, and that again attracted more and better playwrights; and so the English stage progressed and flourished.

From our study, then, we can see perhaps a little more clearly the origins of the modern drama and the position of the children's plays in that picture. Their plays quite evidently did not spring from the old classic tradition, though through Udall, Edwards, and the other University men that influence made itself felt.
On the other hand we cannot simply state that they sprang directly from the old moralities and religious plays, although the connection is much closer than in the case of the classics. Credit must be given to the robust native spirit that led to the innovations, trials, and advances of sixteenth century drama; but the new drama, different perhaps in form and subject matter from the old, is in the same line as the old. The new drama was inspired by the same spirit; in fact it was a continuation and a development of the spirit that lay behind the earlier types of drama - viz., a drama for the people, catering to their tastes, striving to give them what they wanted. It was written, moreover, by men steeped in that Catholic tradition; and that spirit no doubt was with them as they launched out into new seas of dramatic endeavor.

The drama came a long way; and though the final expression far outshone the beginnings, that later development might have come too tardy for the genius of Shakespeare and Marlowe without those earlier models. Who can tell what irreparable loss might have been incurred had Cornish and Heywood not struggled with a new form of drama, had Udall and Edwards not curbed and checked its rampant spirit, had Farrant, Hunnis, and Lyly not refined and polished it till it lost its crudity and became
truly a work of art and literature? Shakespeare might have come anyway; his genius might have been great enough to surmount even the difficulty of an undeveloped medium for his art; but perhaps it might not have. Speculation be what it may, it is a matter of fact that he found at hand the materials he needed to work with; and in the perfecting of those materials he owed a tremendous debt to the efforts of the boy actors.

Though it may seem incongruous to grant a position of great prominence in a matter of such literary importance to mere children, we must at least be fair to them. If recognition of the boys' influence has long been denied them, it is not because of a lack of merit but because of a want of documentary evidence to prove it. If our claims for the song-schools and the junior schools seem to have unduly magnified their literary stature, we might temper them with the appeal Lyly makes in one of his plays. In the prologue to "Campaspe," he says, "As Theseus, being promised to be brought to an eagles neast and travailing al the day, found but a wrenn in a hedg, yet said, 'This is a bird': so we hope, if the shower of our swelling mountaine seem to bring forth some eliphant and perfourme but a mouse, you will gently say, 'This is a beast'." The boy actors may not have been eliphants
nor their plays mountains in the history of English drama; but they were actors, and their plays constituted a not negligible prominence up which later Thespians would have had to toil had not these led the way. Fortunate it was that the noble rage of Shakespeare was not spent thus in the foothills of dramatic form and evolution, but was free to soar from the level the children had attained, humble though that may have been as viewed from the heights of his perfection.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by the Reverend Roger T. Jones has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

December 11, 1944

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