THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THOMAS DEKKER

PAMPHLETEER AND DRAMATIST

BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE
OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUISITES
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

By

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PART II

"The crucial period is the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most important arena is England, because it is in England, with its new geographical position as the entrepôt between Europe and America, its achievement of internal economic unity two centuries before France and two and a half centuries before Germany, its constitutional revolution and its powerful "bourgeoisie" of bankers, ship-owners and merchants, that the transformation of the structure of society is earliest, swiftest, and most complete."

R. H. Tawney Religion and the Rise of Capitalism.

"O London, thou art great in glory, and envied for thy greatness: thy Towers, thy Temples, and thy Pinnacles stand upon thy head like borders of fine gold, thy waters like frindges of silver hang at the hemmes of thy garments. Thou art the goodliest of thy neighbors, but the prowdest; the welthiest, but the most wanton. Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest; for thou art altia' de like a Bride, drawing all that looke upon thee, to be in love with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes."

Thomas Dekker The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London.

INTRODUCTION

There is a constant reciprocal influence between man and his environment. Men create a society, and the society in turn moulds their personality. It has been the same in every age. It is this fashioning of the social creature, as a child of circumstance, that fascinates us in the study of history; it is the development of individual personality, concurring or clashing with society, which forms a major part of dramatic presentation.

In this thesis I want to take a penetrating look into the life and work of Thomas Dekker. He is always considered the "little man" among the giants; his pamphlets have been written off as journalism, not to be valued too highly; his plays, with the exception of the "Shoemaker's Holiday", have been judged severely and found wanting, by critics who lament that this is not another Shakespeare or another Ben Jonson. For one moment, I want to lift Dekker out of the grouping of his illustrious, overshadowing contemporaries, and I wish to present his work in a new light.

Thomas Dekker was a man deeply influenced by circumstances around him. He lived in London at a time when the city was the heart of world trade, when it was cosmopolitan in every sense, when the power of capitalism was beginning to revolutionize the old framework of society and the ordinary Londoner was caught up in a maelstrom of social change. Dekker reflects minutely the many aspects of this transition; by direct comment in his non-dramatic works, by the dramatization of character and situation in his plays, he brings to

life, the London of Elizabeth and James I.

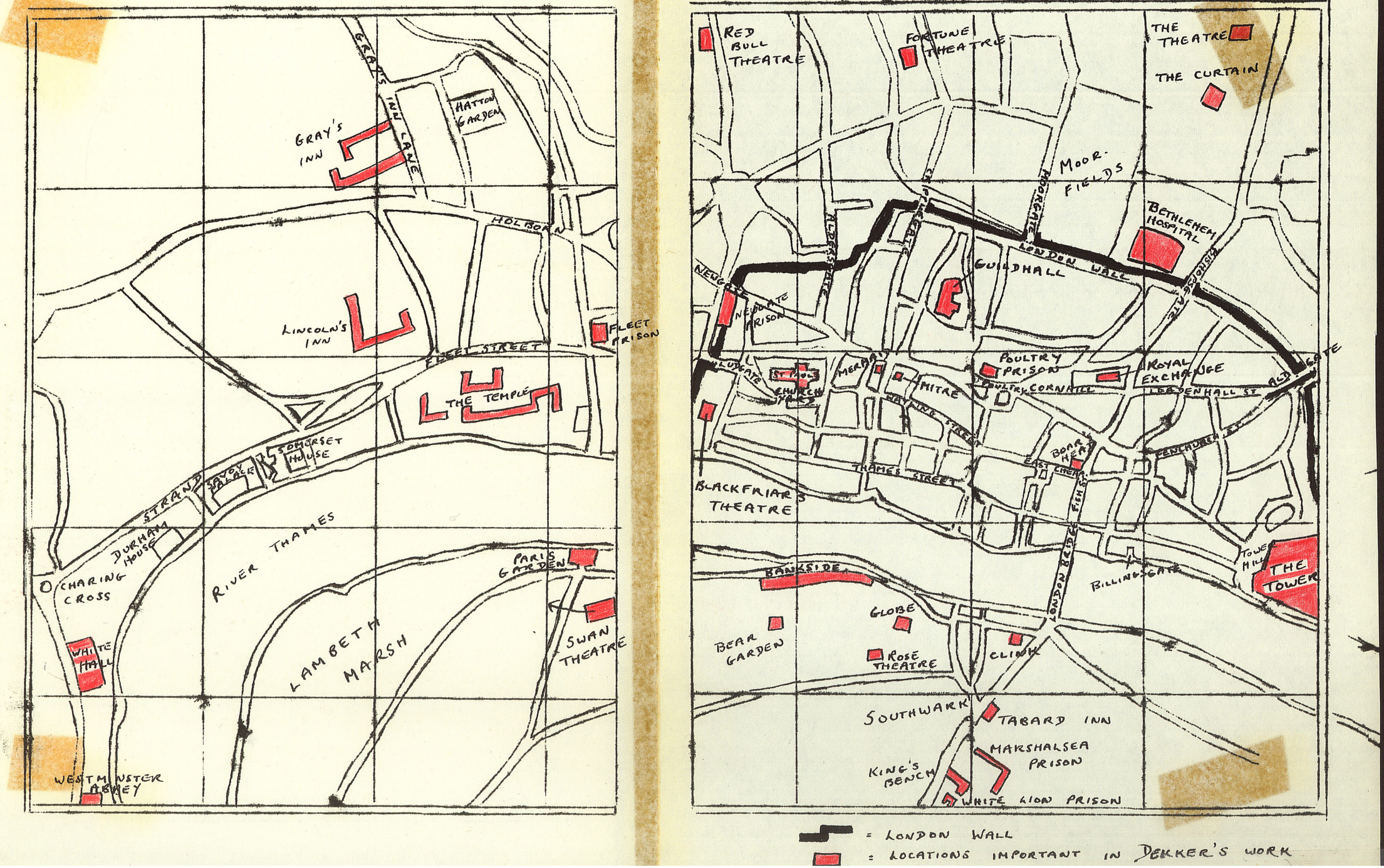
He has captured and crystallized the social problems and attitudes of those years, and with generosity and detachment peculiar to himself, has made a very great contribution to the development of comedy. It is the endeavour of the following thesis to analyse and evaluate this contribution.

D. M. B.

LONDON

from

1400 .... 1666.


GRAY'S INN LANE
HATTON GARDEN
GRAY'S INN
HOLBORN
LINCOLN'S INN
FLEET PRISON
FLEET STREET
THE TEMPLE
SOMERSET HOUSE
SAVOY PALACE
STRAND
DURHAM HOUSE
CHARING CROSS
RIVER THAMES
PARIS GARDEN
SWAN THEATRE
LAMBETH MARSH
WHITE HALL
WESTMINSTER ABBEY
RED BULL THEATRE
FORTUNE THEATRE
THE THEATRE
THE CURTAIN
MOOR-FIELDS
MOORGATE
LONDON WALL
BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL
ALDERSGATE
GUILDHALL
NEWGATE
NEWGATE PRISON
LUDGATE
ST. MAG'S CHURCH YARD
MERCERY
MITRE
POULTRY PRISON
POULTRY
CORNHILL
ROYAL EXCHANGE
LEADENHALL ST
ALDGATE
HAYWARD STREET
BOAR'S HEAD
EAST CHEAP
FENCHURCH ST
THAMES STREET
BLACKFRIARS THEATRE
FISH ST
LONDON BRIDGE
BANKSIDE
BILLINGSGATE
TOWER HILL
THE TOWER
GLOBE
BEAR GARDEN
ROSE THEATRE
CLINK
SOUTHWARK
TABARD INN
MARSHALSEA PRISON
KING'S BENCH
WHITE LION PRISON
= LONDON WALL
= LOCATIONS IMPORTANT IN DEKKER'S WORK

PART I

CHAPTER I

Dekker's London

" . . . In every street, carts and coaches make such a thundring as if the world ranne upon wheeles: at every corner, men, women and children meete in suche shoales, that postes are sette up of purpose to strengthen the houses, least with justling one another they should shoulder them downe. Besides, hammers are beating in one place, tubs hooping in another, pots clinking in a third, water tankards running at tilt in a fowth: here are Porters sweating under birdens, there merchant-men heaving bags of money. Chapmen (as if they were at leape-frog) skippe out of one shop into another. Tradesmen . . . are lusty of legges and never stand still: all are busie as countrie Atturneys at an Assises."(1)

With a few strokes of his artistic pen Thomas Dekker sets the scene of his life and work, and by characteristic touches recreates the noise and bustle of a flourishing Seventeenth century city. This city was perhaps the most interesting of all at the turn of a magnificent century, for here in London was concentrated the centre of world trade and commerce. Slowly, the orbit of power created by money exchange was moving into the northern countries. The days of Mediterranean greatness were over, Venice no longer drew merchants from near and far; even Antwerp had lost the magnetism which had placed her foremost in early Elizabethan days. Now the mecca for trade and intellectual concourse was London, and particularly the London of one small square mile, enclosed by a high wall and protected by seven gates, the little

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(1) Thomas Dekker The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London, p. 37 and 38. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

area of land known as the City.

London began its existence in Roman times. Here was the lowest and most satisfactory fording place across the River Thames, the point where Roman ships could dock in safety, the place where all routes from north, south and west could most easily meet, and so Londinium became the focus of Roman England. It remained so for nearly four hundred years, and during that time, the Romans built a huge wall around the heart of their settlement. It enclosed approximately a square mile of territory, and was created as a fortification against English rebels, and also the Picts and the Scots. To the south flowed the River Thames, a natural boundary and commercial life line; the wall hemmed in the other sides in a wide arc, and this little area became a small city state. The London Wall had seven approaches, seven gates which were closed at night and guarded, and these became known as Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Moorgate, Cripplegate, Aldersgate, Newgate and Ludgate.

The Tudor Wall set the boundary of the City of London for hundreds of years, and within, congregated a very lively population. By the end of the Sixteenth century, in Dekker's time, the city was beginning to overflow its limits and spread into suburbs outside the wall, and to meet, by expansion, the City of Westminster which had grown up so near, and which was the seat of the English monarchy.

There were good reasons why this expansion had not occurred before. Firstly, the flow of population into London before the reign

of Henry VIII had been quite small, agricultural changes due to enclosure of land, had been persistent but slow moving, the development of handicrafts in country districts was a flourishing means of livelihood, and thus people were not driven to the city in search of work. Yet with the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries in England, drastic changes became inevitable, and they had far-reaching effects on the City of London. Previously, most of the lands surrounding the city had belonged to the Church, and were in the possession of monasteries or nunneries. The Carmelites had a house at Whitefriars, the Preaching Friars were at Holborn, in Clerkenwell was the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem and a Benedictine nunnery, and in Smithfield was Charterhouse.

However, after the dissolution of the monasteries, these lands were redistributed among secular lords, who growing impoverished, often resold them to lesser men. London was receiving a floating population of dissatisfied country-folk, craftsmen seeking advancement, irresponsible young gentry and criminal "riff-raff". They were moving outside the city walls and thus were created the "suburbs", which nurtured so many of the colourful characters presented by Dekker.

To open a volume of Thomas Dekker's pamphlets and to read about the London he knew and loved so well, is to open the door upon a vital, pulsating scene. Nobody was better qualified to be our guide through this noisy, bustling city than the dramatist himself, for one fact at least was definite about this man, he was a Londoner by choice

and affection, and never ceased to be fascinated by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of London life. Little more is known about the writer's birth or upbringing, except that he was probably born in 1572 and may have lived in the Southwark area.

Dekker's world was the busy hub-bub of London, a world he lived amidst and regarded minutely. He was part of it in every aspect. He had intellect enough to be forever conscious of its robust vitality; he knew only too well that deep social changes underlay many of the surface contentions.

In our imagination we watched Thomas Dekker as he made his way down to the river side in the company of a friend from the County of Essex. This man was desirous to tour the City, and Dekker had several days' sight-seeing planned for him. Dekker was a well-known personality on the London streets and had friends among men in every walk of life. He was a "hail-fellow, well met"character, and was always stopping to salute a friend or call out a cheery greeting to a passer-by. Every now and then he would halt on the corner of a cobbled road and appear to be lost in thought, yet, in fact, Dekker was just taking in the scene, watching with that ever curious, ever critical eye that registered all the details of this human comedy of the streets. As he jostled in the crowd, he could pick out the prosperous merchant, the striving apprentice, the dallying gallant, the quick-eyed thief, and he not only recognized their type but he knew them individually, for when one was a playwright, often out of work and down at heel, one came face to face with the problem of survival, and for so many on the London streets of the time, this was a struggle for survival.

Nothing brought a man closer to his fellows than real need, and Dekker had been in dire necessity many times during his life. When the going was good, he would dash off a play for Philip Henslowe, or pen a comedy in collaboration with Middleton or Marston . . . then, the money would roll in for a while, and he would eat at the Ordinary and drink with his friends; but bad times would soon come again when the plague raged and the theatres shut, when nobody had time for his work or his message, then Dekker would wander the streets looking for a cheap place to live, and when his money ran out, would find himself in the debtor's prison amidst the rogues and the prostitutes, the wicked and the weak of the society in which he lived.

There he learned a great compassion for humanity, compassion which is evident in nearly everthing he wrote. He knew the outcasts intimately; he had talked with them, slept and eat with them, had learned their "canting" language, had shared their hardships and humour. He grew to know them from the inside by close experience and thus could tell what motivated their actions. The more he found out about them, and about the circumstances that had shaped their lives, the deeper his understanding became. Unlike Ben Jonson, he knew too much and felt too much to castigate harshly. Dekker did not dip his pen in gall; he did not possess the ~~omnipotent~~ overweening pride of the real satirist. He remonstrated gently against crimes, and put the blame evenly upon the various facets of society -- the unfeeling aristocracy, the new grasping merchant class, the prodigal gentry, the lazy unemployables . . . all had contributed to the undoing of so

many innocent people.

Dekker also watched these people with an eye for the comic situation. He appreciated the tragedy of many of their lives, but it was not the sad side that appealed to him. An ~~inevitable~~ inveterate optimist, Dekker could conjure humour out of almost any situation. He managed to do so by acquiring a certain detachment, an equilibrium within himself, and thus could contemplate the world in a calm manner. Such was the personality of the man chosen to be our philosopher and friend in this town of London.

CHAPTER 2

Beginning the Tour

Dekker took his turn at the corner of the road and was in full view of the great River Thames. He paused and gazed down on the blue water, and let his eyes drift slowly over the shipping idling gently at anchor in its flow. This was probably the most important commercial water way in the world. Here rode merchant vessels from all over the seven seas. Never a day passed without movement on the river. Merchants of the Hanseatic league were constantly plying their trade in London, and bringing into the shops, goods which many Elizabethans and Jacobeans had never seen in their lives before; new fabrics for fashionable dresses, new spices for foods, new shipments of this strange substance called tobacco, which everybody in all walks of life was arguing about, from nobleman to pauper. John Earle, for instance, had plenty to say -- detrimentally -- about the tobacco seller,

> "He is the only man that finds the good in it which others brag of, but do not, for it is meat, drink, and clothes to him. No man opens his ware with greater seriousness, or challenges your judgement more in the approbation. His shop is the rendezvous of spitting, where men dialogue with their noses, and their communication is smoke."(1)

With this opinion King James concurred. Never before, in his estimation, had there been such a filthy custom as the blowing out of smoke at the

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(1) John Earle. Micro-cosmographie. Edited by E. Blount, Section 43, London, Methuen 1904.

dining table! Dekker smiled when he thought about the controversy. For whatever people said, the custom had increased and the "habit of the weed" looked like coming to stay.

Dekker took his friend firmly by the arm and led him down the narrow cobbled lane to the river-side. There drawn up beside the wooden piles of the quay was the boat of the waterman. It was not too often that the watermen came as far down river as East Smithfield as most of their livelihood was gained by ferrying people across from the city to Southwark. They supplied the main traffic link for fording the river -- two thousand boats in very close competition for custom. Dekker knew the watermen well, and he knew their problems. He had often heard their grumbles and pleas when they argued against the fixed rate for which they had to work -- one penny to go straight across the river and sixpence to go between other parts of the town, if it was against the tide. They said this rate was fixed by statute in the reign of Queen Mary and was no longer in proportion to the cost of living. They were always voicing their opinions, often in abusive language, and the Watermen's Company had much trouble in keeping its members under control. Yet Dekker sympathized with their claims, many had to live almost wholly on tips, and could hardly be blamed for arguing in abusive language with many frugal citizens. He had another reason also for understanding their position, for in many ways watermen and actor and playwright had much in common. Their livelihoods

were connected, for whilst the theatres in Southwark flourished, so did the ferrying trade across the river, but when the theatres were shut and actors ate but sparely, so too did the watermen. The nobility treated their profession with indignant contempt. Sir Thomas Overbury remarked of the watermen,

> "He keeps such a bawling at Westminster, that if the lawyers were not acquainted with it, an order would be taken with him. When he is upon the water he is fine company: when he comes ashore, he mutinies, and contrary to all other trades is most surly to gentlemen, when they tender payment. The play-houses only keep him sober; and, as it doth many other gallants, make him an afternoon's man. London Bridge is the most terrible eye-sore to him that can be. And to conclude, nothing but a great press make him fly from the river, nor anything, but a great frost, can teach him any good manners."(1)

It was certainly true that the waterman's language was tempered for no one -- not even for the Queen Elizabeth on her many trips down river by Royal barge. However, this waterman had been expecting Dekker and his friend and with a shout of "sculls", brought his boat to the foot of the steps and helped the two gentlemen into their seats. They sat side by side, on embroidered cushions, and made ready to relax and enjoy the scenery.

In a few minutes the boat was in close proximity to the huge grey walls of the Tower of London, and Dekker spoke earnestly to his friend explaining how William the Conqueror had originally built it to prove his mastery over the people, and how ever since this great

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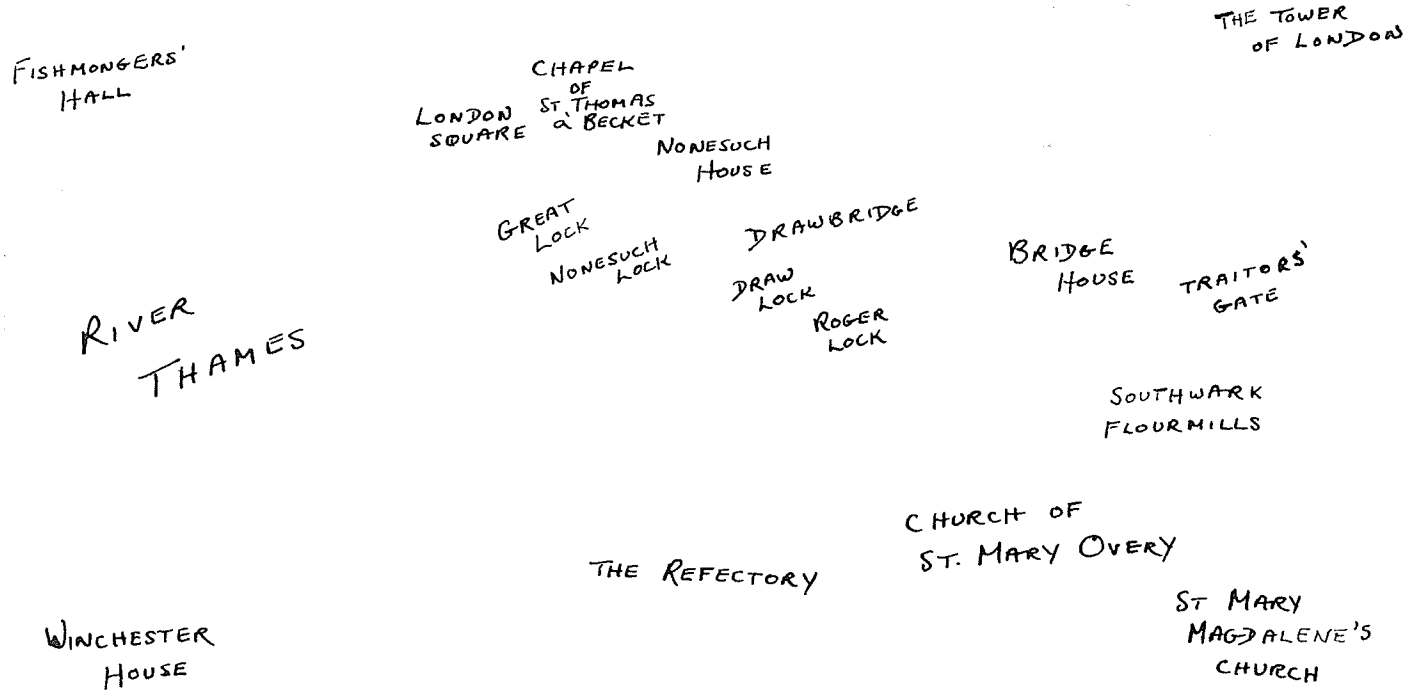
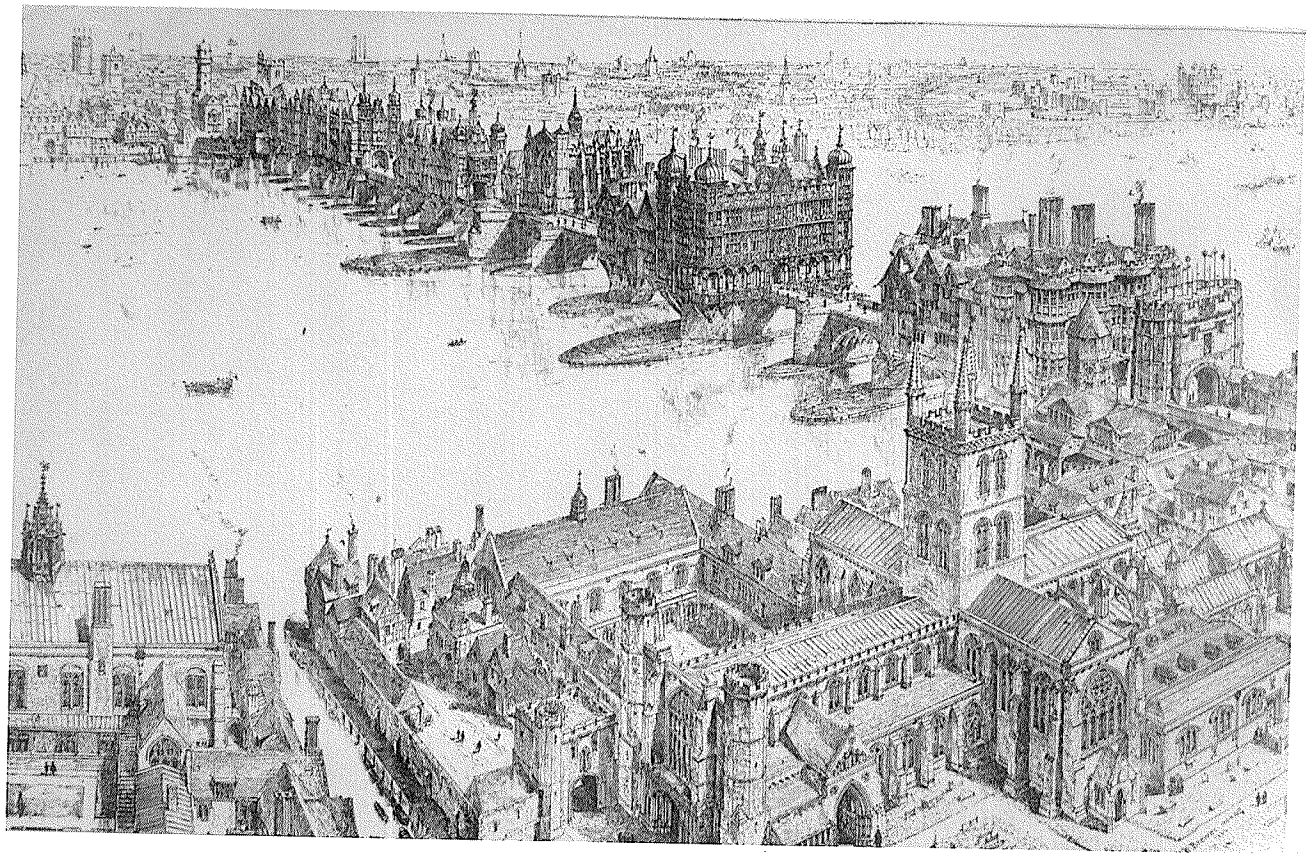
(1) Sir Thomas Overbury. Characters, Edited by R. Withington, p. 167. New York: Macmillan, 1933.

fortress seemed to symbolize the power of monarchy. He described how all distinguished prisoners to be lodged in the Tower were taken there by water, and when they stood trial in Westminister Hall and were brought back to the Tower, great crowds of people would gather on the river bank to learn the verdict. Their eyes would seek out the grim figure of the Yeoman Gaoler, and if he stood with the edge of his axe towards the prisoner, it meant another execution; and if he held it away, then the person was to be spared. Only six persons were said to have been beheaded at the Tower Block -- five of those, women; most prisoners were executed on Tower Hill -- the other side of the fortress. For a moment Dekker cast his mind back to the long line of fearful souls who had found their way to the execution block, and he was troubled at the terrible bill of massacre, and the awful inhumanity man showed to man. Ninety Protestants a year had ended up on the gallows or at the block in Mary Tudor's reign; Elizabeth had taken a far lesser toll of Catholics, but some, all the same. To Dekker's experienced eyes, death was an everyday event in one part of the city or the other. It had to be accepted like poverty and the plague.

Before long the boat was past Billingsgate and the Lion Quay, and both men were caught up in a bustle of passing wherries and yelling boatmen. They were nearing the heart of the city, they were drawing close to London Bridge, and could look above their heads and see the immense wooden piles and staves that supported the only structure



OLD LONDON BRIDGE
(from the south)



traversing the river. In a moment they were out of the boat and up the stairs, and amidst the roar of life on the Bridge. It seemed like a busy trading street for everywhere were shops and houses. The way across was often only twelve feet wide, and at its broadest only twenty. "The overhanging houses made the bridge dark for most of its length, and frequent arches of timber from roof-top to roof-top kept the rickety old houses from toppling into the water."(1) Here was carried out an immense shopkeeping trade. An inventory of merchants was made in 1633 after a big fire and read --

> "eight haberdashers, six hosiers, one shoemaker, five hatters, three silk mercers, one male milliner, two glovers, two mercers, one "distiller of strong water", one girdler, one linen draper, two wollen-drapers, one salter, two grocers, one scrivener, one pin-maker, one clerk, and the curate of St. Magnus the Martyr."(2)

Dekker stood back a moment and contemplated the throng . . . the jostling crowd: - fine ladies in fashionable gowns, lawyers bent on business, (engaged in constant quick talk)and merchants bargaining), pick pockets with beady eyes and dexterous hands, and there, leaning idly against a book-seller's stall reading a penny pamphlet, he saw the prodigal gallant. He watched him carefully and took in every detail of his appearance and attitude. How well Dekker knew this character!

> "a fether for his head, gilt rapier for his sides, and new boots . . ."(3)

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(1) H.V. Morton. In Search of London, p. 88. London: Methuen, 1951.
(2) H.V. Morton. In Search of London, p. 87. London: Methuen, 1951.
(3) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 325. London: Routledge, 1930.

The younger son of rich parents who had been sent to London to study law at the Inns of Court, and had become the "cony" of so many knaves in the city; and now spent his livelihood drinking and dicing.

> "through the City, what a number of Lord Mayors, Aldermans and rich Commoners sonnes and heyres kept a hallowing out at Taverne-windowes . . . every roome of the house was a cagefull of suche wild fowle . . . not a Woodcocks difference among twenty dozen of them, every man had before him a bale of dice, by his side a brace of Purles, and in his fist a nest of bowles . . . dicing, drinking and drabbing were the civil plagues that very uncivilly destroyed the Sonnes (but not the Sinnes) of the Cittie."(1)

When one such gallant could speak out in truth about his life he would say -- we "are like houre glasses turn'd up, though we be never so full, we never leave running, till we have emptied ourselves."

Yet despite their impoverishment, these young men still drew heavily on their allowances for dress and entertainment. There was no end to their ways of wasting money.

> "For in Terme time, my Cavaliero Carmuto runnes sweating up and downe betweene Temple-barre and Westminster Hall in the habite of a knight errant, a swearing knight, a knight of the Poste: All the vacation, you may eyther meete him at dicing Ordinaries, like a Captayne; at cocke-pits like a young countrey gentleman, or else at a bowling alley in a flat-cap, like a shop-keeper: Every market day you may take him in Cheape-side, poorly attirde like an Ingrasser, and in afternoones, in the twopeny roomes of a Playhouse, like a Puny, seated checke in Jowle with a Punke."(2)

Dekker watched the young fop turn over the pamphlets idly, as he gleaned oddments of news. There were so many of these papers on every controversial subject of the times. This was where a citizen

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(1) Thomas Dekker. News from Hell. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. II, p. 104. The Huth Library.

(2) Thomas Dekker. News from Hell. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. II, p. 96. The Huth Library.

learned what was going on in the heart of London. Then, the writer watched him take up a book, give it a cursory glance, smile contemptuously and toss it away. Like so many readers of the time he thought, "You stand sometimes at the Stationers stal, looking scurvily (like Mules champing upon Thistles) on the face of a new Book, bee it never so worthy, and goe mewing away."(1) Dekker knew the fickle ways of the reading public; he had learned from bitter experience. He pointed out this fellow to his friend and then fell to discussing what happened to many of these younger sons once they reached the City. He explained how so many became the dupes of criminals, and although Dekker sympathized with their inexperience, nevertheless, he blamed them for their folly. Yet, Dekker felt and rightly, that the best way for his friend to see a gallant to advantage, would be to take him to Paul's Walk. In no other part of the city, could one see such a characteristic cross-section of society. So they turned and left the bustle of London Bridge behind them; also the row of human heads that decorated the gateway, and reminded all the citizens of the traitor's penalty. Away down Fish Street and Cannon Street they went, and along the old Roman built road Watling Street, until they had reached the great business "mart" of Paul's Churchyard. Dekker's friend looked from right to left. Never had he seen so many Stationers' shops, never had he heard

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London, p. 5. Edited by H. Brett-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

TRIFORIUM
(NORMAN)

CLEARESTORY
(EARLY ENGLISH)

LANTERN
TOWER
(EARLY ENGLISH)

NAVE
(NORMAN)

"THE NEW
WORK"

ROSE
WINDOW

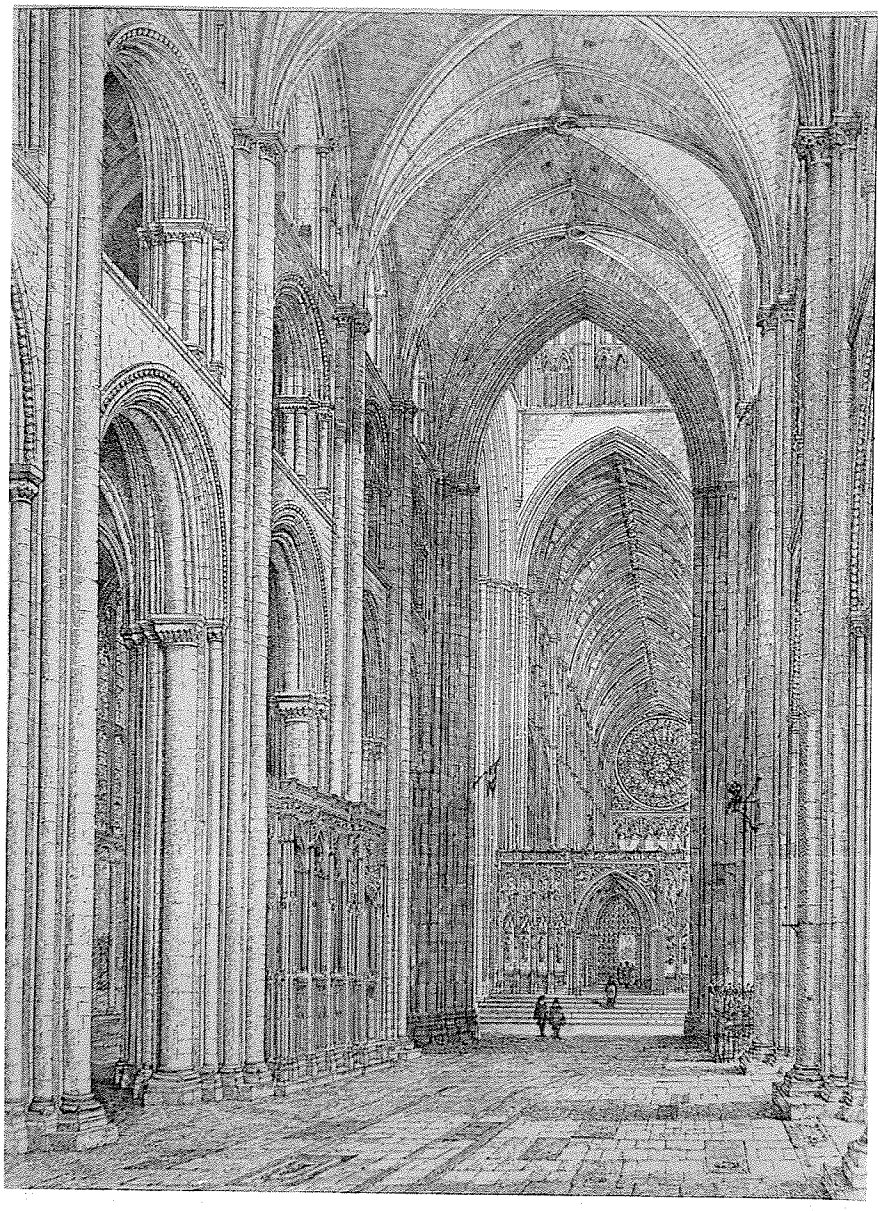
CHAPEL OF
THOMAS
KEMPE
BISHOP OF
LONDON
(d 1489)

ROOD SCREEN
(EARLY PERPENDICULAR)
ENTRANCE
TO
CHOIR

STEPS TO CHOIR

TOMB OF
ST. JOHN BEAUCHAMP
(d 1360)

THE NAVE OR "PAUL'S WALK"



such a babel of arguing and bargaining . . . and there at Paul's Cross ranting wildly, and waving his arms was the morning's preacher, -- shouting that the Day of Judgment was at hand, soon the End of the World would come . . . therefore, Repent ye! Repent ye! A few stopped to listen, and while they hesitated a wily pick-pocket would cut a purse; and a fiendish grin would pucker his lips. Yes indeed! the Devil was abroad in Paul's Churchyard. Dekker saw his friend's astonishment and laughed, for this was but the beginning . . . a few steps inside Paul's door and into the nave of the Church, and there was the infamous Paul's Walk. It was crowded with people, laughing, bargaining, arguing, questioning, stating, soliciting, cajoling.

> "for at one time, in one and the same ranke, yea, foote by foote, and elbow by elbow, shall you see walking, the Knight, the Gull, the Gallant, the upstart, the Gentlemen, the Clowne, the Captaine, the Apple-Squire, the Lawyer, the Usurer, the Citizen, the Bankerout, the Scholler, the Begger, the Doctor, the Ideot, the Ruffian, the Cheater, the Puritan, the Hye-men, the Low-men, the True-men and the Thiefe: of all trades and professions some and of all Countreyes some."(1)

The two friends took a point of vantage and watched . . . watched their fellowman pursuing the earnest business of living, and listened to the rumble of conversation. At last Dekker began to wonder just what the Old sacred Paul's Church must think of this blasphemy within it's very heart, his imagination was afire, and soon he could hear the sad voice of the building echoing in his ears.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Dead Terme. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 51. The Huth Library.

> "What whispering is there in Terme times, how by some slight to cheat the poore country Clients of his full purse that is stucke under his girdle? What plots are layd to furnish young gallants with neadie money (which is shaved afterwards in a Tavern) thereby to disfurnish him of his patrimony? What buying up of oaths, out of the hands of Knights of the Post, who for a few shillings doe daily sell their soules? What layinge of heads is there together and sifting of the braine, still and anon, as it moves towardes eleven of the clocks (even amongst those that wear guilt Rapiers by their sides) where for that noone they may shift from Duke Humphrey, and bee furnished with a Dinner at some meaner man's Table? What damnable bargaines of unmercifull Bookery, and unmeasurable usury are there clept up? What swearing is there, yea, what swaggering, what facing and out-facing? What shuffling, what shouldering, what Justling, what Jeering, what byting of Thumbs to beget quarrels, what holding uppe of fingers to remember drunken meetings, what braving with Feathers, what bearding with Mustachoes, what casting open of cloakes to publish new clothes, what muffling in cloakes to hyde broken Elbows, so that when I heare such trampling up and downe, such spitting, such halking, and such humming (every mans lippes making a noise, yet not a word to be understood,) I verily believe that I am the Tower of Babell newly to be builded up, but presently despaire of ever being finished, because there is in me such a confusion of languages."(1)

This was the male fashion house of Elizabethan England. Here was displayed the newest materials, the latest cut in clothes, the most exaggerated of "hair dos"; and here they were modelled to perfection, for the gallant had a constant critical, attentive audience, and would swagger and pose to be foremost in the public eye. Whether of nobility or not, the young fop would appear familiar with the rich aristocrat, and call him "Ned" or "Jack"; so that onlookers imagined he was a lord himself. Certain characteristics were essential for his being "accepted" in Paul's Walk, and these included "good clothes, a proportionable

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Dead Terme. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 50-51. The Huth Library.

legge, white hand, the Persian lock, and a tollerable beard."(1)

As Dekker and his friend watched the parade, the dramatist could hear ringing in his ears, the sarcastic words of Thomas Middleton summing up the dandy of the day. Here

> "enters our young landlord, so metamorphosed into the shape of a French puppet, that at the first we started, and thought one of the baboons had marched in in a man's apparel. His head was dressed up in white feathers like a shuttlecock, which agreed so well with his brain, being nothing but cork, that two of the biggest of the guard might very easily have tossed him with battledores, and made good sport with him in his majesty's great hall. His doublet was of a strange cut; and to show the fury of his humour, the collar of it rose so high and sharp, as if it would have cut his throat by daylight. His wings, according to the fashion now, were as little and diminutive as a puritan's ruff, which shewed he ne'er meant to fly out of England, nor do any exploit beyond sea, but live and die about London, though he begged in Finsburg. His breeches, a wonder to see, were full as deep as the middle of winter, or the roadway between London and Winchester, and so large and wide withal, that I think within a twelvemonth he might very well put all his lands in them; and then you may imagine they were big enough when they would outreach a thousand acres. Moreover, they differed so far from our fashioned hose in the country, and from his father's old gascoins, that his back part seemed to us like a monster, the roll of the breeches standing so low, that we conjectured his house of office, sir reverce, stood in his hams. All the while his French monkey bore his cloak of three pounds a yard, lined clean through with purple velvet, which did so dazzle our coarse eyes, that we thought we should be purblind ever after, what with the prodigal aspect of that and his glorious rapier and hangers all bossed with pillars of gold, fairer in a show than the pillars in Paul's or the tombs at Westminster . . .
>
> I beheld a curious pair of boots of king Philip's leather, in such artifical wrinkles, sets and plaits . . . but that which struck us most into admiration, upon those fantastical boots stood huge and wide tops, which so swallowed up his thighs . . .

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Gull's Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 60. London: Chatto and Windus, 1907.

> lastly, he walked the chamber with such a pestilent gingle that his spurs over-squeaked the lawyer . . . but after we had spied the rowels of his spurs, how we blest ourselves! they did so much and so far exceed the compass of our fashion, that they looked more like the forerunners of wheel-barrows. Thus was our young landlord accoutred in such a strange and prodigal shape that it amounted to above two years' rent in apparel."(1)

Dekker noticed that not only was this the place to see fashions in clothes but also the stylish dressing of coiffure and beard.

> "I will say nothing of our heads, which sometimes are polled, sometimes curled, or suffered to grow at length like women's locks, many times cut off, above or under the ears, round as a wooden dish. Neither will I meddle with our variety of beards, of which some are shaven from the chin like those of Turks, not a few cut short like to the beard of Marquess Otto, some made round like a rubbing brush, others like a pique de vant (O! fine fashions) or now and then suffered to grow long, the barbers being grown to be so cunning in this behalf as the tailors. And therefore if a man have a lean and straight face, a Marquess Otto's cut will make it broad and large; if it be platter-like, a long, slender beard will make it seem the narrower; if he be weasel-beaked, then muchhair left on the cheeks will make the owner look big like a bowdled hen, and so grim as a goose."(2)

Often the older the man, and the less hair he had on his head, the longer would he grow his beard. The reason?

> "Is it because these long besoms, their beards, with sweeping the soft bosoms of their beautiful young wives, may tickle their tender breasts, and make some amends for their masters' unrecoverable dulness?"(3)

asked Dekker.

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(1) Thomas Middleton. Father Hubbard's Tales. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 168. London: Penguin 1948.
(2) William Harrison. Description of England. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 164. London: Penguin, 1944.
(3) Thomas Dekker. The Gulls Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 37, London: Chatto and Windus, 1907.

Yet the fashion was, nevertheless, long hair, if it could be grown, and Dekker added -- his tongue in his cheek --

> "Long hair will make thee look dreadfully to thine enemies, and manly to thy friends: it is, in peace, an ornament; in war, a strong helmet; it blunts the edge of a sword, and deads the leaden thump of a bullet: in winter, it is a night-cap; in summer, a cooling fan of feathers."(1)

(1) Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER III

The Gulling of the Gallant

This was the beginning of the gallant's day. Maybe, if he had not been long in London, he would still have money jingling in his purse . . . if so, it would be turned inside out before the morrow, for already, a little group of high spirited gentlemen were gathered at the end of the nave, with lots of time and no particular, apparent occupation. Dekker knew them so well. Never were there such a brace of partridges waiting to be snared!

He knew what would happen before five minutes had passed. A certain "cony-catching" gentleman would suggest to the gallant, a day filled with rounds of pleasure. One does not snare at once, the trap must be carefully prepared. First, to the Ordinary, for a "cony" must be "mellowed" before he can be caught, and what does the job better than good food, good wine and hilarious company?

Dekker touched his friend lightly on the shoulder and motioned that they would slip out of the side door and follow this party unnoticed, and as secret spectators would enjoy every minute of the fun. They watched them go gaily ahead until they came to a halt beside a gabled doorway, and a heavy wooden sign. A smell of food emanated from the room within, and the party went hungrily inside to enjoy the good fare of the Ordinary.

> "An Ordinary was the only Rendezvous for the most ingenious, most terse, most travaild, and most phantastick gallant: the very Exchange of newes out of al countries: the only Booke-sellers shop for conference of the best Editors; that of a woman

> (to be a Lady) would cast away herself upon a knight, there a man should heare a Catalogue of most of the richest London widowes: and last, that it was a schoole where they were all fellowes of one Farme, and that a country gentleman was of as great comming as ye proudest Justice that sat there on a bench above him."(1)

The Ordinary was a social club. Here all the London gossip was discussed, the latest news and state decisions were talked over; here a man could give his opinions on the new plays produced at the Globe or the Fortune, and he would be sure of a pleasing argument. It was the warmth, the good food, the "bonhommie" of the place which drew its customers.

In appearance, it was usually a gabled house and had one long dining room. A narrow table was placed in the centre, covered with a white cloth, and as every guest came in he was served with a clean napkin, a knife, and a loaf of bread. Whenever a new-comer entered, the company would stand up until the visitor had found a place to sit.

This was a shilling Ordinary, and the food there was always good and in season. At midsummer, beef and beans were on the menu; at Michaelmas, fresh herrings, at All Saints, pork and soused sprats, in Lent, parsnips and leeks to soften the saltness of the fish; at Easter, veal and bacon, and tansy cake, and in Martinmas, salt beef.

> The diner "shall fare well, enjoy good company, receive all the news ere the post can deliver his packet, be perfect where the best bawdy-houses stand, proclaim his good clothes,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 325. London: Routledge, 1930.

know this man to drink well, that to feed grossly, the other to swagger roughly . . ."(1)

Life was merry and bright at the dining tables, even if one was eating a "borrowed" dinner; the pleasure of wine and fumes of tobacco enhanced the joys of good company. Here one could relax, put off the mask . . . the rattle of dice and the ~~ringing~~ jingling of money changing hands, added the zest of gambling to the other pleasures of living. As the gallant pursued his "heady happiness" the subtle cony-catcher plied his trade.

The chief cony-catcher and his friends would seek out the likely gull, entertain him with wine and good company, and then interest him in a very harmless game of cards. At first the bets would be small, and our friend the cony would begin to win. Not just once, or twice, but over and over again, Lady Luck would seem to favour him, until he was afire with confidence for higher stakes, and bubbling with good humour that comes with success. Still the "catchers" would smile and bide their time. They enjoyed every moment of setting and baiting the trap, which carefully tilted, would possibly land them with a catch of hundreds of pounds. It was an "art" with them which they studied assiduously, and they knew the very subtle point in human psychology when a rash man, with gain at his finger tips, may be ready, safely, for the downward track. He would roar with

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Gull's Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 57. London: Charto and Windus, 1907.

laughter at his first loss. Oh! he would win it back in the next throw. Double the stakes! Another loss. Well, he would try again, this time he'd be lucky; another loss! -- not to worry, he had plenty left . . . but, how can one back out now? Another loss! That is the end of his gains, now he must play his own money . . . and so on, until the gull-groper had stripped another country bumpkin of his hard cash, of his investments, often of his property, and soon he would be another of the old weather beaten gallants who haunted the apothecaries' and the tobacco shops.

Usually the gulling of the gallant would not be done all in one or two hours, but would take the best part of the day. The final dispossessing would take place at night in the home of the chief catcher. However, between the hours of dinner at the Ordinary and the evening fleecing, the gallant must be entertained, and how better than by a visit to the Fortune Theatre?

> "By the time the parings of fruit and cheese are in the voider; cards and dice lie stinking in the fire; the guests are all up; the gilt rapiers ready to be hanged; the French lackey and Irish footboy shrugging at the doors, with their masters' hobby horses, to ride to a new play: that's the rendezvous: thither they are galloped in post."(1)

The flag flying from the mast-head of the theatre denoted a play about to begin, and the afternoon performance was most popular. As Thomas Nashe said:

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Gull's Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 57. London: Chatto and Windus, 1907.

"Whereas the afternoon, being the idlest time of the day wherein men that are their own masters (as gentlemen of the court, the Inns of Court, and the number of captains and soldiers about London) do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasure, and that pleasure they divide . . . either into gaming, following of harlots, drinking or seeing a play. . ."(1)

The Fortune was an unroofed square theatre situated in Golden Lane, Cripplegate. It was built in 1600 by the famous actor Edward Alleyn, and was one of the most popular places of entertainment in London. There had never been a previous occasion in London when such a variety of plays were presented to an audience -- tragedy, history, comedy, tragi-comedy, romantic comedy -- all were performed. Stephen Gosson, a stern critic of the theatre analysed the themes of many plays in 1582 in his "Playes confuted in five actions . . ."

"The argument of tragedies is wrath, cruelty, incest, injury, murder, either violent by sword or voluntary by poison; the persons gods, goddesses, furies, fiends, kings, queens and mighty men. The ground work of comedies is love, cozenage, flattery, bawdry, sly conveyance of whoredom; the persons -- the cooks, queans, knaves, bawds, parasites, courtezans, lechrous old men, amorous young men . . ."(2)

"All the world's a stage" said William Shakespeare,
"And all the men and women merely players."(3)

Our party of cony-catchers with their prey reached the Fortune just before the performance and paid their fee at the entrance. Dekker and his friend, laughing to themselves, were hot in pursuit, and

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(1) Thomas Nashe. Piers Pennilesse. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 233. London: Penguin, 1944.
(2) Stephen Gosson. Playes confuted in five actions. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 205. London: Penguin, 1944.
(3) William Shakespeare. As You Like It. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 200. London: Penguin, 1944.

determined not to miss any part of the beguiling. The catchers had paid dearly because it was their intention to flatter the gallant and seat him in the position he liked best. This was a seat on the stage.

> "On the rushes where the comedy is to dance, yea, and under the state of Cambyses himself, must our feathered ostrich, like a piece of ordnance, be planted valiantly, because imprudently, beating down the mews and hisses of the opposed rascality.
>
> For do but cast up a reckoning, what large comings-in are pursued up by sitting on the stage? First a conspicuous eminence is gotten, by which means the best and most essential parts of a gallant are perfectly revealed.
>
> By sitting on the stage you have a signed patent to engross the whole commodity of censure, may lawfully presume to be a guider, and stand at the helm to steer the passage of scenes; yet no man shall once offer to hinder you from obtaining the title of an insolent overweening coxscomb.
>
> By sitting on the stage you may, without travelling for it, at the very next door, ask whose play it is; and by the quest of enquiring the law warrants you to avoid much mistaking. If you know not the author, you may rail against him, and peradventure so behave yourself, that you may enforce the author to know you.
>
> By sitting on the stage, if you be a knight, you may happily get you a mistress, if a mere Fleet-street gentleman, a wife: but assure yourself, by continual residence, you are the first and principal man in election to begin the number of 'We three'".
>
> By spreading your body in the stage, and by being a justice in examining of plays, you shall put yourself into such time scenical authority, that some poet shall not dare to present his muse rudely upon your eyes, without having first unmasked her, rifled her, and discovered all her bare and most mystical parts before you at a tavern; when you most knightly shall, for his pains, pay for both their suppers.
>
> By sitting on the stage you may, with small cost, purchase the dear acquaintance of the boys; have a good stool for sixpence; at any time know what particular part any of the infants present;

> get your match lighted; examine the playsuits' lace, and perhaps win wagers upon laying it is copper, etc. And to conclude, whether you be fool or a justice of the peace; a cuckhold or a captain; a lord-mayor's son or a dawcock; a knave or an undersheriff; of what stamp soever you be, current or counterfeit, the stage, like time, will bring you to most perfect light, and lay you open. Neither are you to be hunted from thence, though the scarecrows in the yard hoot at you, hiss at you, spit at you, yea throw dirt even in your teeth; 'tis most gentlemanlike patience to endure all this and to laugh at the silly animals. But if the rabble with a full throat cry: 'Away with the fool!' you were worse than a madman to tarry by it; for the gentleman and the fool should never sit on the stage together."(1)

There were other reasons why a gallant enjoyed a position on the stage. He could detract from the play by making a fool of himself; by laughing at the most serious times in a tragedy, and by getting up from his seat and mocking the actors. Often if the dramatist had ridiculed this fellow in some way, he would retaliate by getting up in the middle of the performance, saluting his acquaintances on the rushes or the stools and by trying to get them to leave. Sometimes he would "mew at passionate speeches; blare at merry; find fault with the music, whew at the children's action; whistle at the songs."(2) A menace to playwright and actor alike, yet a very colourful figure in the theatre.

The rest of the audience, the "nut-cracking Elizabethans" occupying the main floor of the theatre at the cost of one penny were a turbulent crowd. They had come to be entertained, and would

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Gull's Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 60-62. London: Charto and Windus, 1907.
(2) Ibid., p. 66.

get their desire, or know the reason why! They generally sat, smoking throughout the performance, and constantly ate fruit and nuts or imbibed wine and ale. Paul Hentzer in his "Travels in England" tells how a visit to the theatre in 1598 appeared to the foreigner.

> "At these spectacles and everywhere else, the English are constantly smoking the Nicotine weed which in America is called Tobaca -- others call it Paetum -- and generally in this manner; they have pipes on purpose made of clay, into the farther end of which they put the herb, so dry that it may be rubbed into a powder, and lighting it, they draw the smoke into their mouths, which they puff out again through their nostrils like funnels . . . along with it plenty of phlegm and deflucion from the head. In these theatres, fruits such as apples, pears, nuts according to the season, are carried about to be sold, as well as wine and ale . . ."(1)

Not only was the theatre a place for public entertainment but for private entertainment too. There were grounds for Stephen Gosson's claim to immorality in the theatres -- but where in London at this time was there not immorality? He claimed that the theatre was a centre for pick-pockets and prostitutes. Both took your gold. Here every wanton and paramour, man and mistress were first acquainted

> "and cheapen the merchandize in that place, which they pay for elsewhere as they can agree."(2)

Gossen describes how this soliciting was carried out.

> "In the playhouses at London it is the fashion of youths to go first into the yard, and to carry their eye through every gallery,

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(1) Paul Hantzer. Travels in England. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 208. London: Penguin, 1944.

(2) Stephen Gosson. School of Abuses. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 215. London: Penguin, 1944.

> then like unto ravens, where they spy the carion, thither they fly, and press as near to the fairest as they can. Instead of pomergranates they give them pippins, they dally with their garments to pass the time, they minister talk upon all occasions, and either bring them home to their houses on small acquaintance, or slip into taverns when plays are done . . ."(1)

Many claimed that the inner stage rooms and changing rooms were sometimes "sold out" to nobility to practise the "sweete sin". To Gosson a visit to the theatre or to the Paris Gardens to watch the audience, was as much a comedy as any play itself -- for nothing about them escaped his eagle eye.

> "In our assemblies, at plays in London, you shall see such heaving, and shoving, such itching and shouldering to sit by women: such care for their garments, that they be not trod on: such eyes to their laps, that no chips light upon them: such pillows to their backs, that they take no hurt: such masking in their ears; I know not what: such giving them pippins to pass the time: such playing at foot-count without cards: such tickling, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home, when the sports we ended, that it is a right comedy to mark their behaviour."(2)

It was also a well-known fact that the theatres were often the rallying place of malcontents. In 1597 the authorities of the City of London were trying to get the Queen to close the theatres. They complained that the plays presented only "profane fables" and "lascivious matters"(3) and here too apprentices met together "in their designs and mutinous attempts, being also the ordinary places for

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(1) Stephen Gosson. Playes confuted in five actions. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 215. London: Penguin, 1944.
(2) Stephen Gosson. School of Abuses. Edited by J. D. Wilson, p. 214. London: Peguin, 1944.
(3) Letter from Lord Mayor to the Privy Council. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 230. London, Penguin, 1944.

masteless men to come together and to recreate themselves."(1) As the theatres were in the suburbs and outside the Liberties of London they were beyond the jurisdiction of the city, yet the Mayor and Aldermen felt they were a constant source of trouble. On July 28th of the same year a letter was sent from the City Fathers to the Privy Council which summed up their feelings on the matter. The Lord Mayor called for the theatres to be closed and based his argument on these factors -- that the plays contained corrupting material, that they taught corruption, that here "contrivers of treason and dangerous persons" met together, that plays induced idleness, they "draw apprentices and other servants from their ordinary works and all sorts of people from the resort unto sermons and other Christian exercises to the great hindrance of trade and profanation of religion . . .,"(2) and finally, that in times of the Plague, which visited the City regularly every summer, the playhouses were places of contagion.

The chief critics of the theatres were Stephen Gosson, Thomas White, John Stockton and Philip Stubbes; the retaliating group of supporters, -- John Webster, Thomas Nashe, George Whetstone, ~~Philip Sidney~~ and Thomas Heywood. Their justification lay in the fact that playhouses or no playhouses, immorality and discontent

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(1) Letter from Lord Mayor & Aldermen to Privy Council. Edited J.D. Wilson, p. 231. London: Penguin, 1944.
(2) Letter from Lord Mayor & Aldermen to Privy Council. Edited J.D. Wilson, p. 232. London: Penguin, 1944.

would exist in London; and on the credit side of the balance, plays were good entertainment -- they helped to refine the language of an audience and to instruct the ignorant by teaching a moral lesson. Then too, the playwrights and players were versatile artists to be respected, and most of them, sober men and useful to society.

> "In plays, all cozenages, all cunning drifts over gilded with outward holiness, all stratogems of war, all the cankerworms that breed on the rust of peace, are most lively anatomized. They show the ill success of treason, the fall of hasty climber, the wretched end of usurpers, the misery of civil dissension and how just God is evermore in punishing of murder . . . They are sour pills of reprehension, wrapped up in sweet words."(1)

> "so bewitching a thing is lively and well-spirited action, that it hath power to new-mold the hearts of spectators."(2)

Spenser

Speaking of Tarleton, Will Kempe, Gabriel, Singer, Pope, Phillips, Sly, and Edward Alleyne, Thomas Heywood said

> "Many amongst us I know to be of substance of government, of sober lives, and temperate carriages, house-keepers, and contributary to all duties enjoyned them."(3)

And John Webster speaking of the actor added, that by his actions he fortified moral precepts with example and added grace to the Poet's labours.

The result of these arguments was that plays were prohibited during Lent, and in the time of the Plague; after 1574, theatres were

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(1) Thomas Nashe. Pierce Pennilesse. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 234. London: Penguin, 1944.
(2) Thomas Heywood. An Apology for Actors. Edited by F.E. Halliday in A Shakespeare Companion. London; p. 30, Duckworth: 1952.
(3) Ibid.

closed during time of Divine Service on Sunday, and on other holy days; and after 1583, were shut on Sunday altogether. The Council also prohibited plays during the illness of Elizabeth and the death of Prince Henry, and theatres were occasionally closed if the play was considered seditious. However, outside these regulations, every day of the week, a Londoner could enjoy good entertainment at any of the many theatres.

. . . . . .

At the close of the performance, the groups of cony-catchers and their gallant, made their way out of the Fortune, and Dekker and his friend followed closely behind. They had increased their number by one now, for a certain "lady" who had occupied a very public position in the gallery had joined the group. They intended entering the City again by Cripplegate, and from thence by Wood Street to go to the Mermaid Tavern. This tavern was a customary haunt of Dekker's, and whenever he made a visit there, it was generally to enjoy the very good company of his fellow playwrights, and to talk with actors about the theatre world. The sounds of music could be heard coming from the tavern even before they had stepped inside. Someone was strumming a guitar and others were giving chorus to a favorite drinking song.

"There was a Ewe had three lambs,
And one of them was blacke;
There was a man had three son --
Jeffrey, James, and Jack.

The one was hanged, the other drown'd;
The third was lost and never found;
The old man he fell in a sound --
Come fill us a cup of Sacke."(1)

Everybody was in excellent humour. Clouds of tobacco smoke filled the room, and wine was flowing freely. Already the cony-catchers and their gallant had joined a party of hilarious young men and an argument was about to ensue. This was hardly surprising for in the midst of the company was the belligerent Ben Jonson, and he was a man of uncompromising views, and he didn't fail to give them voice. Not only did he feel strongly about certain matters, he also felt strongly about certain people and was always flaying both friend and foe with bitter sarcasm. Dekker and Marston knew only too well what it was like to "fall out" with Ben Jonson for both his tongue and his pen were touched with gall. Still, nobody could but deny he was a wonderful writer, and when he stated an opinion, everybody listened. Here too was Master Will Shakespeare -- a quieter man, but one who enjoyed the cut and thrust of a good argument. Thomas Fuller writing in later years, described these two "giants" of the theatre in one of their sparring moods.

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

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(1) Walter Besant. London. p. 243. London: Chatto & Windus, 1912.

and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."(1)

Dekker introduced his country friend to a whole party of his own acquaintances, and they sat laughing, talking and arguing over the latest news and gossip. While they conversed familiarly, Dekker's friend contemplated the scene before him. As a stranger to London everything about the place registered vividly upon his memory. He thought to himself.

> "The rooms are ill breathed, like the drinkers that have been washed well overnight, and we melt to fasting next morning . . . It is a broacher of more news than hogsheads, and more jests than news, which are sucked up here by some spongy brain and from thence squeezed into a comedy . . . 'Tis the best theatre of natures, where they are truly acted, not played, and the business, as in the rest of the world, up and down, to wit, from the bottom of the cellar to the great chamber. A house of sin you may call it, but not a house of darkness, for the candles are never out . . . To give the total reckoning of it: it is the busy man's recreation, the idle-man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the Inns of Court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness and the citizen's courtesy. It is the study of sparkling wits, and a cup of canary their book."(2)

Then he looked at the many characters around him. The Mermaid was filled with gallants, some displaying finery of dress, others showing the signs of poverty; there were merchants, the new rising moneyed class, bargaining in their true London dialect and filled with self-confidence brought about by their acquired riches; there were actors -- loud-voiced, -- who played a part both on and off the

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(1) Thomas Fuller. English Worthies. Edited J.D. Wilson, p. 146. London, Penguin, 1944.

(2) John Earle. Micro-cosmographie. Edited by E. Blount, Section 18. London: Methuen, 1904.

stage, and the women were there too, the dolls and marts of the so-called "easy life," who had their own seductive way of enticing gold from a man's pocket.

There were card games and dicing afoot, and already the cunning "sharpers" were busy.

> "They have such a sleight in sorting and shuffling of the cards, that play at what game ye will, all is lost aforehand."(1)

They tried all kinds of tricks -- including the cutting of certain cards, placing a mirror behind the cony, and finally devised a new shift. "A woman would sit sewing beside him (the cony); and by the shift or slow drawing of her needle, give a token to the cheater what was the 'cousin's game'."(2) The gallant, Dekker and his friend had been watching so carefully, was already drawn into the net, and money was constantly changing hands. Dekker knew if they were to see the full gulling of the gallant they would be at the Mermaid some time, so he settled down to enjoy drink and good company.

His friends were already urging him to tell a story. They all knew Dekker could recount a merrie jest -- there was nobody better at a tavern tale, unless it should be the master, Dan Chaucer himself.

"Bring wine! bring wine!" they cried, "Is that not payment

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(1) Gilbert Walker. A Manifest Detection of Dice-play. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p.156. London: Penguin, 1944.
(2) Ibid., p. 157.

enow, Master Tom?"

At last Dekker was pursuaded to spin a yarn, and he began on a favourite subject "a medicine to cure the Plague of a woman's tongue".

> "'A Merry Cobler there was (dwelling at Ware) who for joy that he mended mens broken and corrupted soles, did continually sing, so that his shop seemed a verie bird-cage and he sitting there in his foule linnen and greasie Apron, shewed like a blackbird."(1)

Then he married rashly, a woman with a scorpion-like tongue, and very soon she 'drew on a paire of yellow hose' and began to suspect him of unfaithefulness. So the Cobbler went to a doctor, after weeks of unhappiness, thinking he was suffering an illness. The doctor studied him but could find no sign of a disease, and asked him to show him signs of the Plague. So the Cobbler went away and

> 'comes back againe with his wife borne on his back like a Sowe new scalded on the backe of a butcher, and for all her kicking, rayling, cursing and swearing.'(2)

The neighbours collected around to see the sight of the "shrew" raging and struggling, and listened intently to the doctor's prescription.

> "A crabbed cudgell fits a forward whore,
> Beate her well and thriftily . . ."(3)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. A Raven's Almanacke. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 197. The Huth Library.
(2) Ibid., p. 200.
(3) Ibid., p. 222.

All the way home the woman, in a fury of temper, hurled mud and stones at her husband, and also at the small boys who were trooping along behind imitating and jeering. But, no sooner was he home than the good husband found himself a heavy cudgel and "thrash'd out all the chaffe in his wife . . ."(1)

A roar of applause went up, at the conclusion of the story, not only for the teller, but for the seemly moral that appealed to the male mind. All shrews should be tamed!

As soon as Dekker had taken a swig of wine, his friends clamoured again. "Another! Another! One fit for the tavern Master Tom!"

Dekker thought a moment, then smiled. One fit for the tavern: what better story than that of the lecherous friar? It even had a moral, if one bothered to think about it! So he began again, using all his skill for creating humour, by expression, voice and action.

-- This lecherous friar had a very fine position as Father Confessor to a House of nuns. Every day, the ladies would come to him to admit their sins, and the innermost longings of their hearts, and he would listen with compassion and advise certain guidance. One day the very beautiful Sister Barbardora came in great sadness and admitted her suffering of the "green sickness." Father Pedro had his

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(1) Thomas Dekker. A Raven's Almanacke. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 203. The Huth Library.

own special remedy for that.

Now this sister, rather foolishly, told another of the nuns of the Father's "remedy", and she too sought his relief in confessional time. This went on until fifteen of the twenty nuns found themselves with child. As the months went by, Barbardora, worried lest the five 'virgin' sisters should notice some change in the others, told the Father he must get them out of this predicament. The Father thought, and finally decided he would speak to the Abbess in strictest confidence, suggesting that the five 'virgin' nuns had been "indiscreet" and should be sent home at once. The good Abbess did not wish dishonor to come upon her house, so she did as the Friar advised.

All went well until the beautiful Barbardora was stricken with labour pains in the middle of "quire" and the Abbess herself was forced to perform the most successful birth of Barbardora's son! Now she learned the truth of the matter -- that Father Pedro was the father of the child. She called in all the other nuns to warn them of the Confessor, but too late! -- all fourteen of the sisters were with child!

> "What (qd she) 15 at a clap all with child & onely by one Fryer! Then I see the devill is growne devout when Friars deale their almes so franckly."(1)

Then the nuns admitted the truth that Father Pedro had found them each a lover from the House of Friars close by, and told how he had arranged

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(1) Thomas Dekker. A Raven's Almanacke. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 224. The Huth Library.

these many meetings in confessional time.

The Abbess was a subtle woman and she was determined to get her revenge. So she devised a plan, and went to the Abbot's and invited over to the Convent, Father Pedro and the fourteen offending friars. They promised to come "all laughing in their sleeves that she should give the faire Nuns and them leave to have one merry supper together, seeing in secret they had so many nights lodging with them."(1)

She had the nuns hide themselves away in their cells, and invited the friars into the Convent parlour. There she had arranged for many stalwart countrymen from the district around to deal with them. Each friar was bound to a block and a three-forked nail transferred his reproductive organs to the board. Then the Abbess commanded the countrymen to light a fire, and these unhappy friars could have a choice -- either burn to death or geld themselves with a knife "and heereafter endevour to keepe chastitee."

The friars, in terror of the leaping flames gelded themselves and ran out of the convent. On their way to the Friary they met the Abbot's, coming to see why the Nunnery was afire. When he arrived the Abbess proudly showed evidence of her revenge, and told him the story -- and they laughed heartily at such a subtle remedy for lust. And thus the story ends, for the wayward nuns and friars were sent

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(1) Thomas Dekker. A Raven's Almanacke. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 224. The Huth Library.

out into the world they could not leave, and the five innocent sisters were reinstated. --

The party roared with laughter. "A fine tale, Master Tom! A fine tale! Come, drawer, more wine for our story teller. Who can spin another to beat that? Who knows our Mister Chaucer's "Miller's Tale?" There's one for fine mirth, gentlemen . . ."

Again the group fell to listening and carousing, but Dekker's interest was elsewhere now, for he was watching the final gulling of the gallant. At the far table he was sitting disconsolately, his pockets turned inside out, his rings missing from his fingers, even a diamond ruff pin taken from his neck. A little more than tipsy with wine, he was looking miserably at the group of "cony-catchers" who having stripped him of cash and credit had cast him one one side, while they fleeced another unfortunate country gentleman.

When they had played themselves out for the evening, the party rose unsteadily from the table, and Dekker and his friend gathered up their cloaks, ready to meet the nippy London night air. One of the "cony-catchers" party had already loped off on the arm of his "doll" to the upper chambers, to spend the night in sweet oblivion. The others, with the gallant stumbling behind, bid a cheery "goodnight" to the drawer, and gave rowdy salutations to their friends before staggering out on to the cobbled roadway of Chepeside. It had been a good night, a prosperous night.

Dekker and his friend watched the party leave, with the

gallant tagging behind. Once out on the street, they moved in and out of the lantern lights which hung in doorways; and stood warming themselves at the bonfires that burned at street corners. All through the summer these bonfires were lighted -- they helped to burn the rubbish and seemed to keep down the Plague. The gallant still tottering on his feet was no longer of use to the catchers and the sooner they lost him the better; so as they turned down Bread Street where they knew two constables of the watch would be standing, they gave their unsteady companion a push and sent him sprawling across the road. Then craftily, they nipped round the next corner, and left him to his fate, yelling abuse at them in a thick voice. The Constables of the watch picked up the fellow and hauled him to his feet. They found him penniless and drunk, surlily protesting that he had been robbed; and like one of many they would deal with in one evening, they dragged him bodily to the gateway of the Poultry Prison and threw him inside.

CHAPTER IV

By Lantern and Candlelight

The Regiment of Rogues

The night world of London was indeed strange and interesting, and Dekker had spent most of the years of his life in close contact with the sly and cunning characters who moved abroad after dark. He knew the underworld of London minutely because he not only roamed the streets, but he visited the taverns and haunts of these social misfits, and he had shared their lives during his own periods of imprisonment. He did not castigate them, because Dekker was wise enough to know that every social ill has a cause, and although there were the idle and the unemployable, there were also, many more who drifted into crime because social change had dislocated their lives, and the cities were not paved with the gold they had expected.

The sixteenth century was a period of transition, when the values of mediaeval society were disappearing, and were being replaced by those of a new, ever-striving acquisitive element. There was movement from the countryside towards the towns, particularly to London. This was brought about by numerous factors. In the early years of this century the policy of enclosure of land had been hastened. This was not a new policy, it had been pursued throughout the fifteenth century, ever since the estate owner realized that he could make more money by raising sheep for the wool industry than he could by following the old paternal system of agriculture. As the wool industry prospered, enclosure was stimulated, and the

scapegoats of this movement were the small farmers who lost their lands, because they couldn't pay exorbitant rents to keep and maintain them. These stalwart country fellows were not skilled in any other job, but in the city there might be a chance of employment; in the country, very little.

The Tudor period was also one of autocracy, and after the terrible searing Civil Wars, the Wars of the Roses, -- the ordinary Englishman was only too willing to endure a strong government as long as it was peaceful. There were few real uprisings to trouble Elizabethan nobility, with the result, that the usual large company of retainers who were kept to protect an estate were no longer needed, and as money became shorter, they were dismissed to find a livelihood as best they could.

The dissolution of the monasteries had unleashed more wanderers on the country, seeking a living. Not only were monks and nuns and other clergy disbanded and sent into the world, but also the vast number of servants who were employed by religious estates were also out of a job. They came to London to join the unemployed.

Another source of trouble was the soldiers, who were banded together to meet a national emergency. The Tudors did not have a large standing army, with the result that when men were needed, as in the Low Country campaigns, mercenaries had to be raised at a moment's notice. Many were "press-ganged" into service, shipped abroad, sent into battle; some were killed, but many more were maimed or wounded so that they would be a liability on their return

to England. There was very little help given to these men, and most were left to beg on the streets for survival. However, not only were the wounded a cause of trouble. Of even greater concern, were those able-bodied fellows, who had been estranged from their homes and families, and were no longer in settled employment. Nothing was done to resettle the soldier after his time at war, with the result that he came back disillusioned and discontented; and finding himself treated as a criminal, very quickly became one.

> "I called to minde the unfortunate condition of soldiers, and old servitors, who, when the stormes of trouble are blown over . . . are compeld (by the vileness of the time) to follow ye heeles of asses with gay trappings, not daring so much as once to open their lips in reprehension of those apish, beastly and ridiculous vices, upon whose monstrous backes, they are carried up and downe the world."(1)

Then too the law of the land did not help to remedy these evils. The Government found itself faced with crime on a huge scale, and the measures taken vacillated. They were cruel at all times, but as matters grew worse, they became more stringent, and when things improved, they were relaxed. For instance, in 1547 all able bodied men, who were not working were called vagabonds; if they were offered work and refused, they would be whipped at the cart's tail or have a hole burned in their ears. On a second offence, of being without employment, they could be charged with felony and suffer the death

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Work of Armourers. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 99-100. The Huth Library.

sentence unless they could find an employer for the next two years. For a third offence a man automatically received the death sentence and there was no benefit of clergy.

By the 1593 Act -- a laxer act -- vagabonds without licence (this, by the 1572 Statute, included fencers, bearwards, players, minstrels, jugglers, pedlars, etc.) would only receive a sound whipping. This was followed by the 1597 Act in which there was a swing to harshness once more. Dangerous rogues could be banished from England, or sent to the galleys, all other vagrants were whipped and sent home either to their place of birth or to a place of a previous twelve months' residence.

And yet again by the laws of 1597 and 1601, Elizabeth tried to establish some kind of poor relief, and work houses were founded.

The Government Acts seem to have been a matter of trial and error; and corruption within the administration of justice only appeared to stimulate harsh punishment, but there was no resultant decrease in crime.

The Rich were told "not to negotiate any longer with those beggars that flocke dayly to her kingdome (Money's kingdom), strong guards were planted at every gate, to barre their entrance into Citties, whipping postes and other terrible engines, were advanced in every street to send them home, bleeding new, if they were taken wandering out of their own liberties: Constables were chosen of purpose that had marble in their hearts, thornes in their tongues,

and flint stares (like pearles) in their eyes, and none could be admitted into the office of a Beadle, unless he brought a certificate from Paris Garden, that he had beene a Beare-ward, and could play the Bandog bravely in baiting poore Christians at a stake . . ."(1)

. . . . . .

As Dekker and his friend made their way along the dimly lit streets, on their way to Southwark, the south side of the river, the playwright tried to explain these many factors that had created such a huge Elizabethan underworld. He did this because he wanted to show his friend as many of the rogues and vagabonds as he ~~could~~ possibly could, but he wanted him to know too, what had motivated their lives of crime, so that he could see both sides of the picture and make a fair judgement. It was a matter one could only consider in retrospect, for the underworld itself was so absorbing and exciting that the spectator would seek only to satisfy his curiosity. Every night at the going down of the sun this bustle of life would begin; just as "darknes like a thief out of a hedge crept upon the earth," a certain

> "Tallow-facde Gentleman (cald Candle-light) would enter the City at Aldersgate -- then the mysteries of the night world would be enacted.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Work of Armourers. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 109. The Huth Library.

What expectation was there of his coming? setting aside the bonfires there is not more triumphing on Midsommer night. No sooner was he advanced up into the moste famous Streetes but a number of shops for joy beganne to shut in: Mercers rolde up their silkes and velvets: the Goldsmithes drew backe their Plate, and all the City lookt like a private Play-house, when the windowes are clapt downe . . . Scarce was his entrance blown abroad, but the Bankrupt, the Fellon, and all that owed any money, and for feare of arrests, or Justices warrants, had like so many Snayles kept their houses over their heads al the day before, began now to creep out of their shels, and to stalke up and down the streets as uprightly, and with as proud a gate as if they meant to knock against the [illegible] with the crownes of their heads.

The damask-coated Cittizen, that sat in his shop both forenoone and afternoone, and lookt more sowerly on his poore neighbours, then if he had drunke a quart of Vinegar at a draught, sneakes out of his owne doores, and slips into a taverne, where either alone, or with some other that bakkes their money together, they so plye themselves with penny pots, which (like small shot) goe off, powring into their fat pounches, that at length they have not an eye to see withall, not a good legge to stand upon . . .

Yong shopkeepers that have but newly ventured upon the pikes of marriage, who are every houre shewing their wives to their customers, plying their businesse harder all day than Vulcan does his Anvile, and seeme better husbands than Fidlers that scrape for a poore living both day and night, yet even these if they can but get Candle-light, to sit up all night with them in any house of Reckning (thats to say in a Taverne) they fall roundly to play the London prize, and that at three severall weapons, Drinking, Dauncing and Dicing . . .

What villanies are not abroad so long as Candle-light is stirring? The Serving-man dare then walke with his wench: the Private Puncke (otherwise called one that boords in London) who like a Pigeon sits billing all day within doores, and feares to steppe over the thresholde, does then walke the round till midnight, after she hath beene swaggering among pottle pots and Vintners boyes. Nay, the sober Perpetuance suited Puritane, that dares not (so much as by Moone-light) come neere the Suburb-shadow of a house, where they set stewed Prunes before you, raps as boldly at the hatch, when he knows Candle-light is within, as if he were a new chosen Constable . . .

> From them (about the houre when Spirits walke, and Cats goe a gossipping) hee visits the Watch, where creeping into the Beadles Cothouse . . . and seeing the Watch-men to nodde at him, hee hydes himselfe presently, (knowing the token) under the flappes of a gowne, and teaches them (by instinct) howe to steale nappes into their heades, because hee sees all their cloakes have not one good nappe upon them: and uppon his warrant snort they so lowde, that to those Night-walkers (whose wiltes are up so late) it serves as a Watch-warde to keepe out of the reach of their browne Billes: by which meanes they never come to aunswere the matter before maister Constable, and the Bench uppon which his men (that shoulde watch) doe sitte: so that the Counters are cheated of Prisoners, to the great dammage of those that shoulde have their mornings draught out of the Garnish.
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> How many lips have beene worne out with kissing at the street doore, or in the entry (in a winking blind evening?) how many odde matches and uneven marriages have been made there betweene young Prentises and their maisters daughtes, whilst thou (O Candle-light) hast stood watching at the staires heade, that none could come stealing downe by thee, but they must bee seene . . ."(1)

With the going down of the sun, these night characters crept out of their tenements and hovels, to perpetrate crime and licentiousness all over the city. They were greatly feared by the London citizens, but there was no force of order strong enough to exercise control, and the circumstances of the time only seemed to add to the swelling ranks of ne'er-do-wells. William Harrison in his description of England alludes to the poor as being of three kinds -- the thriftless poor, such as the vagabond and rioter, the poor by impotency including the aged, blind and lame, and the poor by casuality, as the wounded soldier and the decayed householder. Before

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 30-34, Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

the night was through Dekker hoped to reveal all kinds of human vermin to his good friend, amidst the surroundings of their breeding.

Soon they had crossed London Bridge with its many flickering lights reflected in the moving waters, and were entering the heart of the underworld -- Southwark. Only one who was known as well as Dekker, and who had experienced as much as Dekker, would dare enter this area after night-fall. There were few constables abroad here, for already they were outside the Liberties of the City, and the murky suburb had a law unto itself. The unwary traveller to London would not linger in Southwark after dark unless he was asking for attack. Here the King of Misrule reigned supreme and unrestrained. It was the "dormitory" area for most criminals, thieves, felons, gipsies, prostitutes, bankrupts and traitors in the city of London. By day and night they would swarm abroad to carry out their livelihood, but sooner or later, they would return to Southwark to congregate, one with the other, and laugh at their successful flouting of the law. Here they would strip off their masks and rejoice at the sheer cunning of their activities.

Dekker guided his friend through the many narrow streets of the Liberty of the Clink, until the lanterns became fewer and the darkness more profound. He was taking him to a very special tavern on the outskirts of Southwark, for he wished to introduce him to

the "Ragged Regiment" -- "villains by birth, varlets by education, knaves by profession; beggers by the statute, and rogues by Act of Parliament."(1)

He had chosen this night, because he knew they would witness a strange and very special ceremony, namely one of the secret quarter dinners which were held by these rogues "in four several seasons of the year at least, and in several places to avoid discovery."(2) Usually no outsider would be tolerated at so clandestine a gathering, but Dekker was well-known in Southwark, well-known for his tolerance and good-humour and constant state of pennilessness, and there was a special code of honour among thieves and beggars which included the many less fortunate playwrights and actors who occasionally found themselves in the debtor's prison. So Dekker felt no fear at being a witness here.

All day long the tavern had been a very hive of activity for a great number of the "Ragged Regiment" were expected and much good food and wine was needed to satisfy such a gathering.

> "the turn-spits, who were poor tattered, greasy fellows looking like so many he-devils, some were basting, and seemed like fiends pouring scalding oil upon the damned; others were mincing of pie-meat, and showed like hangmen cutting up of quarters, whilst another whose eyes glowed with the heat of the fire, stood poking in at the mouth of an oven, torturing souls as it were, in the furnace of Lucifer. There was much

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 307. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 311. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

> chopping of herbs, such tossing of ladles, such plucking of geese, such scalding of pigs, such singing, such scalding, such laughing, such swearing, such running to and fro, as if Plato had that bidden all his friends to a feast, and that these had been the cooks that dressed the dinner."(1)

When Dekker and his friend arrived and took their places at a small table, lost almost from sight in an alcove, the rogues were already assembled. They had arrived in groups of twos and threes carrying bag and baggage. Their usual attire was "odd and fantastic, though it be never so full of rents. The men wear scarfs of calico or any other base stuff, hanging their bodies like morris -dancers with bells and other toys, to entice the country people to flock about them, and to wonder at their fooleries, or rather rank knaveries. The woman as ridiculously attire themselves, and, like one that plays the rogue on a stage, wears rags and patched filthy mantles uppermost, when the undergarments are handsome and in fashion."(2) This night of the dinner, however, all were quite transformed, and resplendent in clean linen and good clothes.

As soon as all flagons were filled with wine, the leader called the roll, and every man and woman answered 'Ay' to his name. One younger brother of the rogues had yet to undergo full initiation into the Regiment, and he was called up before the Captain of the Ragamuffins and put through his paces. First, he had to take off his

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 305, London: G. Rutledge, 1930.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 345, London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

best garment, take it to the "bousing Ken" -- the tap-house and pawn it for ale; then this done, he was called before the grand signor, made to kneel down, and a full pot of ale was poured over his head -- accompanied by the words.

> "I, -----, do stall thee -----, to the rogue, by virtue of this sovereign English liquor, so that henceforth, it shall be lawful for thee to cant, that is to say, to be a vagabond and beg, and to speak that Pedlar's French, or that canting language, which is to be found among none but beggars."(1)

At this the whole assembly rose with a cheer. It took some minutes before the half-drunk gathering could be quieted, but at last the leader raised his hand, and silence fell. He then addressed the new initiate in this manner.

> "Brother beggar" quoth he, "because thou art yet but a mere freshman in our college, I charge thee to hang thine ears to my lips, and to learn the orders of our house which thou must observe upon pain either to be beaten with our cudgels the next time thou art met, or else to be stripped out of any garments that are worth the taking from thee. First, therefore, being no better than a plain ordinary rogue, marry, in time thou mayest rise to more preferment amongst us. Thou art not to wander up and down all countries, but to walk only, like an underkeeper of a forest in that quarter which is allotted unto thee. Thou art likewise to give away to any of us that have borne all the offices of the wallet before thee, and, upon holding up a finger, to avoid any town or country village, where thou seest we are foraging to victual our army that march along with us. For, my poor vigliacco, thou must know that there are degrees of superiority and inferiority in our society, as there are in the proudest company.
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> We have amongst us some eighteen or nineteen several offices for men, and about seven or eight for women. The chiefest of us are called upright-men; (Ay my dear sunburnt brother, if all those

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 308. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

that are the chiefest men in other companies were upright-men too, what good dealings would there be in all occupations!); the next are, rufflers. Then have we anglers, but they seldom catch fish, till they go up westward for flounders. Then there are rogues (the livery thou thyself now wearest). Next are wild rogues; then priggers, then palliards; then fraters; then Tom of Bedlam's band of madcap, otherwise called Poor Tom's flock of wild-geese, whom there thou seest by his black and blue naked arms to be a man beaten to the world; and those wild-geese, or have-brains, are called abram-men. In the next squadron march our brave whip-jacks. At the tail of them come crawling our counterfeit cranks. In another troop are gabbling dummerers. Then curtals follow at their heels; and they bring along with them strange engineers, called Irish toyles. After whom follow the swigmen, the jarkman, the patricoes, and last the kinchen coes. These are the tattered regiments that make up our main army. The victuallers to the camp are women, and of those some are glimmerers, some bawdy-baskets, some autem-morts; others walking morts; some dopers, others are dells. The last and least are called kitchen morts. With all which comrades, thou shalt in thy beggarly peregrination meet, converse, and be drunk, and in short time know their natures and roguish conditions without the help of a tutor."(1)

When the leader had finished speaking Dekker leaned across the table and whispered confidentially in his friend's ear. He told him that they had just heard recited the "hierarchy" of knaves and tried to give a little further explanation. The Uprightman was the leader of the Regiment, -- usually a beggar; the ruffler, often seen walking with a cudgel, -- an ex-soldier or serving man who now preferred idleness to work; the angler would usually carry a rod with a hook on the end, and after dark would steal from open windows any useful object he could get hold of; the rogue generally lived by begging, and painted on his body hideous wounds; the wild rogue,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 308-9. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

was a horse-stealer, and great wanderer from county to county; the prigger of prancers was also a horse-stealer and could always be found at the Fairs, or else trespassing on pasture land looking for a likely "catch"; the palliard, also painted sores on his body and begged alms from door to door; the frater, would pretend he was collecting money for charity and would carry a black box or wallet, but the proceeds were pocketed by himself; a quire bird, already an ex-prisoner from gaol, would pretend to act as servant to a household, but having acquired money and clothing from his master, he would then disappear.

The Abraham Man would appear to be mad, and like Tom a' Bedlam would have a wild aspect. He would dance and sing for money, but after dark he was a cunning poultry stealer; a whipjack, would beg from place to place with a counterfeit licence. He would pretend to be an ex-sailor, and was always "spinning the yarn" about pirates and sea-fights; the counterfeit-cranke, would enveigle money from kind-hearted people by running about half-naked and by appearing to be an epileptic. A piece of soap in his mouth helped to create the foam! The Drummerer too would use this subterfuge.

Then came the tribe of women rogues. The Kinching Mort was a young girl, the dell -- an "untouched maiden" -- the dopies were the "deflowered ones"; the doxies, the accustomed prostitutes and rogues; the walking mort was much the same as the latter, only she protested she was a widow; the autem mort was a married woman, and

was generally followed by a tribe of children who were quickly learning the art of thieving.

Dekker then explained how the counterfeit sores were created on the bodies of these knaves. They

> "take unslaked lime and soap, with the rust of old iron. These mingled together and spread thick on two pieces of leather which one clap upon the arm, one against the other, two small pieces of wood, fitted to the purpose, holding the leathers down, all which are bound hard to the arm with a garter; which in a few hours fretting the skin with blisters, and being taken off, the the flesh will appear all raw. Then a linen cloth being applied to the raw blistered flesh, it sticks so fast, that upon plucking it off, it bleeds: which blood (or else some other), is rubbed all over the arm, by which means, after it as well dried on, the arm appears black, and the sore raw and reddish, but white upon the edges like an old wound."(1)

The regiment of the rogues was a very strong brotherhood, and all had to vow themselves body and soul to perform ten special articles.

(1) "Thou shalt my true brother be keeping thy faith to thy other brothers as to myself if any such thou have.

(2) Thou shalt keep my counsel, and all other my brother's, being known to thee.

(3) Thou shalt take part with me, and all other my brothers in all matters.

(4) Thou shalt not hear me ill-spoken of without revenge to thy power.

(5) Thou shalt see me want nothing, to which thou canst help me.

(6) Thou shalt give me part of all thy winnings whatsoever.

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(1) Thomas Dekker (?). O per se O. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 373 and 374. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

(7) Thou shalt not but keep true 'pointments with me for meetings, be it by day or night, at what place soever.

(8) Thou shalt teach no householder to cant, neither confess anything to them, be it never so true, but deny the same with oaths.

(9) Thou shalt do no hurt to any maunder but with there own hands; and thou shalt forbear none that discloses these secrets.

(10) Thou shalt take clothes, hens, geese, pigs, bacon and suchlike for thy winnings, wherever thou canst have them."(1)

They also had special libkens or meeting places, and after a successful "stealing" expedition, they would retire to these places to count their gain and feast well. Their strange language called the Canting Language or "Pedlars French" came into being, so that all rogues could converse and write, and yet avoid the danger of anyone understanding them. Dekker believed that canting was not based on rules, but some words had a close likeness to latin originals, and he pointed out that the canting "togeman" meaning "cloak" was like the Latin "toga", and the word "cassan" meaning "cheese" was like the Latin "Caseus". Dekker had studied their language closely and was able to make a dictionary of their words, and could translate easily. More important, however, was the understanding, which this special knowledge gave to him because nothing escaped his ear and eye.

At last the victuals were brought into the hall and set on the table. The uprightmen had places at the end of the board but otherwise they did not sit in order. Instead of grace "one drew out a knife, rapped out a round oath and cried, 'Profane, you madd

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(1) Thomas Dekker (?). O per se O. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 377. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

mad rogues:' and so fell to. They ate heartily and drank heavily until the whole room "showed like a Dutch piece of drollery" (A Brueghel painting).

> "for some did nothing but weep, and protest love to their marts, anothers wove daggers and knives to cut the throat of his doxy, if he found her tripping; some slept, being drowned so deep in ale dregs that they slavered again; others sung bawdy songs."(1)

Finally, when all had wined and dined to their utmost, one worthy rogue stood up unsteadily to speak, and told of the life of the beggar.

> "The life of a beggar is like of a soldier. He suffers hunger and cold in winter, and heat and thirst in summer, he goes lousy, he goes lame, he's not regarded, he's not rewarded. Here only shines his glory; the whole kingdom is but his walk, a whole city is but his parish; in every man's kitchen is his meat dressed, in every man's cellar lies his beer, and the best men's purse keep a penny for him to spend."(2)

He then called them to renew their efforts in the ancient profession, and dismissed the gathering. They rose confusedly, and having decided where they would next meet, and having received their orders "what ale-bush to tipple . . . where to strike down geese, where to steal hens"(3) the company raggedly disintegrated leaving Dekker and his friend to view the ravages.of the feast.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 310. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 311. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.
(3) Thomas Dekker. The Bellman of London. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 311. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

The "Stews" of Bankside

The whole suburb of Southwark was "crawling" with night-life. The dim lights of tavern and shop revealed the characters going about their murky business. At every street corner would be a group of revellers and drunkards, ready to laugh in mockery at passers-by, or to call abusive language after them. Here every conceivable crime and sin was perpetrated and not least -- prostitution. Along the river side were a number of old houses built on platforms, they were the Bankside "Stews" famous in Elizabethan London. Dekker was determined that his friend would experience every aspect of underworld life, and so, as the night progressed he brought him to see the notorious whore-houses. This money-making "trade", for a trade it was, was organized by astute men or women called "bawds". They would rent a house of sin, furnish it luxuriously, and acquire the services of prostitutes. The reasons for women taking to prostitution were many. To some it was the answer to physical abnormality; to others it offered a life of idleness and ease, at least at first; others were born into the "profession", being the children of prostitutes; many, only young and innocent girls, were inveigled into it by older women who saw a chance of making money; others, coming to London, alone and destitute, found it the only way to earn a livelihood.

Prostitution was a trap. Once started, a woman found it exceedingly difficult to escape. The woman was marked in appearance, and in manner, and often contracted some disease, almost impossible

to cure in Elizabethan times; and yet, despite these many factors, prostitution increased.

> "The setting up of a whore-house", said Dekker, "is now as common as the setting up of a Trade; yea, and it goes under that name. A stocke of two beds and four wenches is able to put a Lady Panderesse into present practise, and to bring them into reasonable doings" . . .
>
> "Men and women as familiarly goe into a chamber to damme one another on a feather bedde, as into a Taverne to be merrie with wine."(1)

This night the Bankside Stews were all lit up and agog for business. Already the prostitutes were soliciting the passer-by.

> "the door of notorious carted bawds like Hele-gates stand night and day wide open, with a pair of harlots in taffeta gowns, like two painted posts garnishing out those door, being better to the house than a double sign."(2)

Dekker was always troubled by the rapacity of prostitution in London, and the failure of any authority to curb it. Nobody seemed to care. It was treated as a huge joke. People either discussed the situation, and laughed at it, or pretended to be most concerned, and then "winked at" taking any definite action. The difficulty lay partly in the fact that so many law-abiding citizens were compromised; and whatever they might say in public, were not adverse, in private, to drive into the suburbs under cover of night to indulge in the "sweet sin".

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Dead Terme. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 58. The Huth Library.

(2) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 347. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

Dekker felt that the Devil walked abroad incarnate along Bankside.

> "Beelzebub keeps the register-book of all the bawds, panders and courtezans; and he knows that these suburbs sinners have no lands to live upon but their legs: every 'prentice passing by them can say, "There sits a whore." Without putting them to their back they will swear so much themselves. If so, are not constables, churchwardens, bailiffs, beadles and other officers, pillars and pillows to all the villanies, that are by these committed? Are they not parcel bawds to wink at such damned abuses, considering they have whips in their own hands, and may draw blood if they please? Is not the landlord of such rents the grand-bawd, and the door-keeping mistress of such a house of sin, but his under-bawd, sithene he takes twenty pounds rent every year for a vaulting school, which from no artificer living by the hardness of his hand could be worth five pound? And that twenty pound rent, he knows must be pressed out of petticoats. His money smells of sin; the very silver looks pale, because it was earned by lust."(1)

Dekker was of the opinion that prostitution was not only a major sin in itself but also the cause of so many other crimes in the city. His criticism was penetrating, and he did not hesitate to speak his mind. In the suburbs, on Bankside, were hired the monsters "to devour the city themselves. . ."(2)

> "Would the Devil live a villain to spill blood, there he shall find him; one to blaspheme, there he hath choice, a pander that would court a matron at her prayers, he's there; a cheater that would turn his own father a-begging, he's there too; a harlot that would murder her new-born infant, she lies in there!
>
> What a wretched womb hath a strumpet, which being for the

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 348. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

(2) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 348. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

most, barren of children, is notwithstanding the only bed that breeds up these serpents! Upon that one stalk grow all these mischiefs. She is the cockatrice that hatcheth all these eggs of evils. When the Devil takes the anatomy of all damnable sins, he looks only upon her body. When she dies, he sits as her coroner. When her soul comes to Hell, all shun that there, as they fly from a body struck by the plague here.

She hath her door-keeper, and she hereself is the Devil's chambermaid. And yet for all this, that she's so dangerous and detestable, when she hath croaked like a raven on the eaves, then comes she into the house like a dove. When her villanies, like the moat about a castle, are rank, thick and muddy,with standing long together, then, to purge herself is she drained out of the suburbs, as though her corruption were there left behind her, and as a clear stream is let into the City."(1)

The Stew Houses of Bankside had a considerable history. John Stow in his Survey of London traces some very important events in their government. As early as the reign of Henry II, these houses of prostitution were flourishing and were recognized as a necessary evil "for the repair of incontinent men to the like women". Therefore, an act of parliament laid down a number of rules, to which the owners were expected to abide. Dekker knew these regulations well, and had read John Stow's summary.

"That no stew-holder or his wife should let or stay any single woman, to go and come freely at all times when they listed.

No stew-holder to keep any woman to board but she to board abroad at her pleasure.

To take no more for the woman's chamber in the week than fourteen pence.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 348. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

Not to keep open his doors upon the holidays.

Not to keep any single woman in his house on the holidays but the bailiff to see them voided out of the lordship.

No single woman to be kept against her will that would leave her sin.

No stew-holder to receive any woman of religion, or any man's wife.

No single woman to take money to lie with any man, but she lie with him all night till the morrow.

No man to be drawn or enticed into any stew-house.

The constables, bailiffs, and others, every week to search every stew-house.

No stew-holder to keep any woman that hath the perilous infirmity of burning, not to sell bread, ale, flesh, fish, wood, coal or any victuals, etc."(1)

By these rulings, prostitution was legalized and condoned and the sins of Bankside could be indulged in peacefully. They were followed by other patents confirming these points in 1345, the reign of Edward III; and in Richard II's reign Stow mentions that he finds the Bankside Stews belonging to William Walworth -- then mayor of London, who farmed them out to Froes of Flanders. Even public men were not adverse to receiving money from this line of business. In Henry VI's reign, were further ordinances confirming the above rulings, and Stow quotes one Robert Fabian writing in 1506, as saying,

"the said stew-houses in Southwerke were for a season inhibited, and the doors closed up, but it was not long (saith

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(1) John Stow. A Survey of London. Edited by H. Wheatley, p. 360-361. London: Dent. Everyman Library.

> he) ere the houses there were set open again, so many as were permitted, for (as it was said) whereas before were eighteen houses, from thenceforth were appointed to be used byt twelve only. These allowed stew-houses had signs on their fronts, towards the Thames, not hanged out, but painted on the walls, as a Boar's head, the Cross-keys, the Gun, the Castle, the Crane, the Cardinal's Hat, the Bell, the Swan, etc. I have heard of ancient men, of good credit, report that these single women were forbidden the rites of the church, so long as they continued that sinful life, and were excluded from Christian burial, if they were not reconciled before their death. And therefore there was a plot of ground called the Single Woman's churchyard, appointed for them, far from the parish church."(1)

However, in 1546, during Henry VIII's reign came a change of policy and,

> "this row of stews in Southwerke were put down by the king's command, which was proclaimed by sound of trumpet, no more to be privileged, and used as a common brothel, but the inhabitants of the same to keep good and honest rule as in other places of this realm, etc."(2)

This was the official situation during Dekker's life time, but it was a mockery in reality, because few Londoners had any real desire to see these old established "institutions" closed down. Some made use of them, some made money from them, to nearly all, they were the excuse for a good joke.

Yet to Dekker prostitution was no laughing matter. He saw it as the breeding ground of criminals, and as the home of disease. Most members of the underworld amused and interested him, but not so

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(1) John Stow. A Survey of London. Edited by H. Wheatley, p. 361. London: Dent. Everyman Library.
(2) John Stow. A Survey of London. Edited by H. Wheatley, p. 362. London: Dent. Everyman Library.

the harlot. He stated his opinion on this matter in no uncertain terms.

> "But for all this it goes under the name of 'the sweete sin,' and of all, they are counted 'Wenches of the old religion,' and for all their dancings in Tavernes, ryots in Suppers, and ruffling in Taffities, yet a cloyster of such nunnes standes like a Spittle, for every house in it is more infections then that which hath a Red Crosse over the dore. Such as Smithfield is to horses, such as a 'House of the Sisters' to women: It is as fatal to them, it is as infamous. The Bawds, Pettie Bawds, and Panders are the Horse-coursers that bring Jades into the market: where they swear they are free from diseases, when they have more hanging on their bones than are in a French army; and that they are but Coltes of halfe a years running, when they have scarce a sound tooth in their heades.
>
> There shall you find beastes of all ages, of all colours, of all prices, of all paces, yet most of them given to false gallops: hardly among twenty one that is good; for everyone that proves so, a hundred continue bad . . . Such is the quality of the Smithfield nags, such the property of Suburbe Cortizans. In briefe, their beginning is bravery, their end beggery, their life is destestable, and death (for the most part) damnable."(1)

The only aspect of the harlot that did amuse Dekker was her accustomed cunning when going into the City to gull the gallant to her trade. Then she would dress herself as a puritan and take lodging in some respectable part of the City, usually in the house of a reputed citizen; or she would stay at a scrivener's house, where she had ample excuse for the comings and goings of men. She always had a story to tell which would suit her customers.

"If merchants resort to her . . . she is wife to the master of a ship, and they bring news that her husband put in at the Straits . . . if shopkeepers come to her with "What do you lack?" in their

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Dead Terme. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 59. The Huth Library.

mouths, then she takes up such and such commodities . . .

She would act in this manner until nobody suspected her of evil-doing, then she would change her tactics a little and go out on the hunt for her prey.

> "The first man that she meets of her acquaintance, shall, without much pulling, get her into a tavern, out of him she kisses a breakfast and then leaves him . . . the next she meets . . . she cogs a dinner, and then leaves him . . . the third man squires her to a play, which being ended, and the wine offered and taken . . . she leaves him too. And being set upon by a fourth, him she answers at his own weapon, sups with him and drinks upsy-Freeze till the clock strike twelve, and the drawers being drowsy, away they march arm in arm, being at every footstep fearful to be set upon by the band of halberdiers that lie scouting in rug-gowns to cut off such midnight stragglers; but the word being given, and 'Who goes there?' with 'Come before the constable' being shot at them, they vail presently and come, she taking upon her to answer all the billmen and their leader, between whom and her suppose you to hear the sleepy dialogue:
> 'Where have you been so late?'
> 'At supper forsooth with my uncle here (if he be well bearded), or with my brother (if the hair be but budding forth), and he is bringing me home.'
> 'Are you married?'
> 'Yes forsooth.'
> 'What's your husband?'
> 'Such a nobleman's man, or such a Justice's clerk.' And then names some alderman of London, to whom she persuades herself one or other of the bench of brown bills are beholden.
> 'Where lie you?'
> 'At such a man's house.'
>
> And thus by stopping the constable's mouth with sugar plums, that's to say, whilst she poisons him with sweet words, the punk vanisheth."(1)

Dekker had studied the harlot minutely, in the same way that he studied every other London character; he had visited the tenements

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Lantern and Candlelight. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 350. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.

of Bankside; he had watched the prostitute in the darkened streets of the city, he had followed her "techniques" as she plied her trade in the many Taverns and inns all over London; no one was better qualified than he to show this side of the Underworld to a spectator; no one could make more pertinent or well-informed comment.

. . . . . .

The Administration of Justice

If harsh punishment had been the answer to the tremendous Elizabeth crime wave, it would very soon have been crushed; for never was there a time in English history when such stringent retributive measures were taken. Members of the nobility found guilty of treason were destined to lose their heads either within the Tower walls or on Tower Hill; others guilty of the same crime would suffer being dragged through London on a hurdle to the famous Tyburn (the present Marble Arch) where they would be hanged, and whilst living, carefully dismembered until their heads were chopped off and placed on pikes to decorate either Temple-Bar or the gateway of London Bridge. Whenever a rebellion was quelled, execution within the city would be increased. Sir Henry Machyn, in his Diary, tells of the crushing of Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion and of his return to London, and then states,

> "The XII day of February was made at every gate in London a new payne of galous and set up, two payne in Chepesyde, 2 payr in Fletstreet, one in Smythfyld, one payre in Holborne, one at Ledyn-hall, one at Saint Magnus, London (Bridge), one at Peper allay gate, one at Saint Gorgeous, one in Bar strett, one on Tower hylle, one payre at Charying crosse, one payre besyd Hyd parke corner."(1)

A man stealing any object worth more than two shillings was likely to be hanged, for theft of a lesser nature he would be tied

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(1) Henry Machyn. Diary. Edited by J.G. Nicols, p. 55. Camden Society, 1848.

to the cart's tail and whipped along Cheapside; beggars would be whipped or be put in the pillory. Prostitutes were either beaten at the cart's tail or ducked in a pond for their sinfulness. This was considered a huge joke by the Elizabethan riff-raff. The pillory was also the retribution for fraudulency -- for says Henry Machyn in his Diary.

> "The first day of July, there was a man and a woman on the pelere in Chepe-syd. the man sold potts of strawberries, the whiche the pott was not al full but fyllyd with ferne . . ."(1)

Highwaymen would be hanged, if they could be caught; certain hardened criminals who would not reform, and beggars who would not mend their ways, were either sent to the galley ships or banished altogether from the country.

The gallows, pillories, stocks and long leather whips became the symbols of the Elizabethan system of justice. They were exercised by "unpaid" civil servants who did their best to wield authority. The Privy Council of the realm was the supervisory body and they acted in two ways. They would appoint "ad hoc" officers to deal with a certain difficult situation, and they would order a "round up". The "round up" was a "privy search" into all the tenement and slum areas within the Liberties of London. It would be done suddenly and by night, and in this way, many unsuspecting criminals were ousted from their holes and brought for trial at the Quarter Sessions.

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(1) Henry Machyn. Diary. Edited by J.G. Nicols, p. 21. Camden Society, 1848.

William Fleetwood who was Recorder in London for twenty years (1571-1591), tells of one such series of "round-ups", in a letter to Lord Burghley 1582.

> "Upon Thursday at even her Majesty in her coach near Islington taking of the air, her Highness was environed with a number of rogues. One, Mr. Stone, a footman, came in all haste to my Lord Mayor and after to me and told us of the same. I did the same night send warrants out into the said quarters and into Westminsters and the Duchy; and in the morning I went abroad myself, and I took that day seventy rogues, whereof some were blind and yet great usurers and very rich; and the same day towards night I sent for Mr. Harris and Mr. Smith and the governors of Bridewell, and took all the names of the rogues and sent them from the Sessions Hall unto Bridewell, where they remained that night . . . The chief nursery of all these evil people is the Savoy and the brick kilns near Islington.
>
> Upon Friday last we sat at the Justice Hall at Newgate from 7 in the morning until 7 at night, where we condemned certain horse-stealers, cutpurses and such like to the number of ten, whereof nine were executed and the tenth stayed by a means from the Court. These were executed upon Saturday in the morning . .. The same day, my Lord Mayor being absent about the goods of the Spaniards, and also all my Lords the Justices of the Bench being also away, we few that were there did spend the same day about the searching out of sundry that were receptors of felons, where we found a great many as well in London, Westminster, Southwerk, as in all the other places about the same. Amongst our travels this one matter tumbled out of the way, that one Wotton, a gentleman-born and sometime a merchantman of good credit, who falling by time into decay kept an alehouse at Smart's Quay near Billingsgate, and after that, for some misdemeanour being put down, he reared up a new kind of life, and in the same house, he procured all the cutpurses about this City to repair to his said house. There was a school house set up to learn young boys to cut purses. There were hung two devices; the one was a pocket, the other a purse. The pocket had in it certain counters and were hung about with hawks' bells and over the top did hang a little sacring-bell, and he that could take out a counter without any noise was allowed to be a public foister, and he that could take a piece of silver out of a purse without the noise of any of

the bells, he was adjudged a judicial nipper . . ."(1)

Such was the "surprise" method of attack whereby the authorities managed to round up criminals and put them into the prisons.

Part of the weakness of Elizabethan justice lay in the lack of paid administrators. It was difficult to get men of the right calibre into public service; although it is true that most of the men taking on these duties were from the growing middle-class, the products of Grammar School education, and the new intelligentsia. The Sheriffs of the counties were the royal representatives; but by the end of the sixteenth century, they had lost much of their power, because they no longer had private means, nor did these men have any personal military force behind them. Also, they were only appointed for one year, so that often there was little continuity of policy. Their duties included the collecting of debts, in which they were assisted by a "paid" under sheriff; and the execution of royal justice. For the latter job, they employed a host of bailiffs and minor officers, who received remuneration from the money exacted from their victims.

Two high sheriffs acted jointly for London and Middlesex and they had control of law enforcement, and the maintenance of prisons. They employed Justices of the Peace to carry out the rulings of the Elizabethan Poor Law, and the exercise of criminal jurisdiction. There were unpaid servants too, usually chosen from knights and

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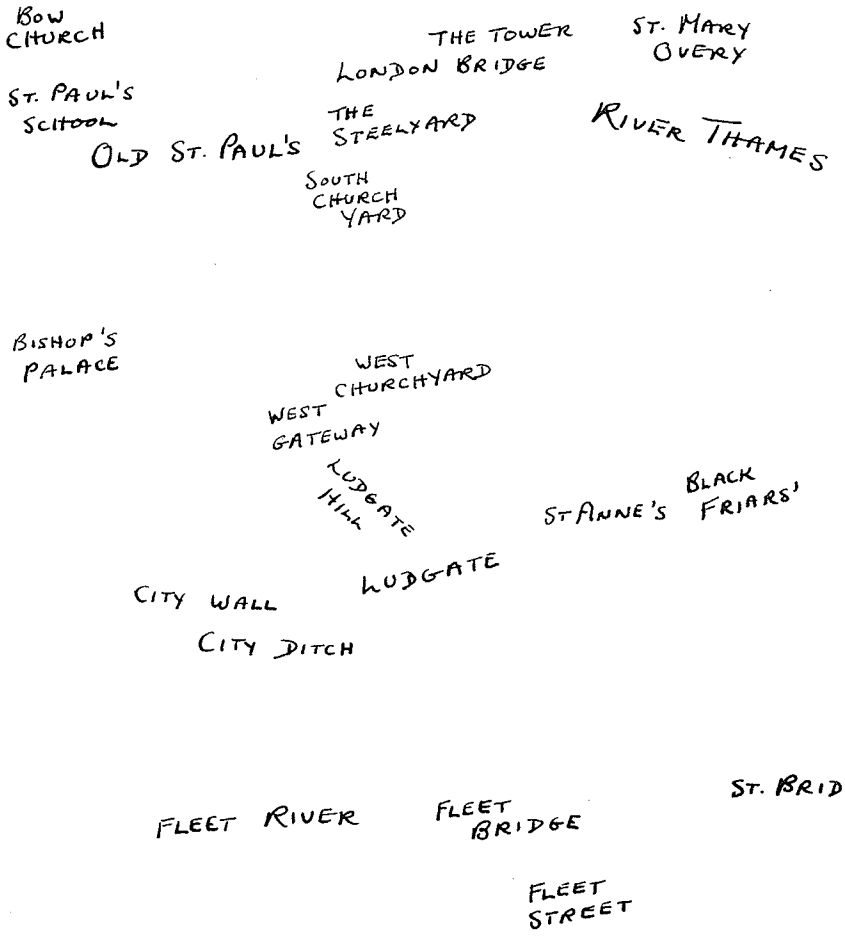
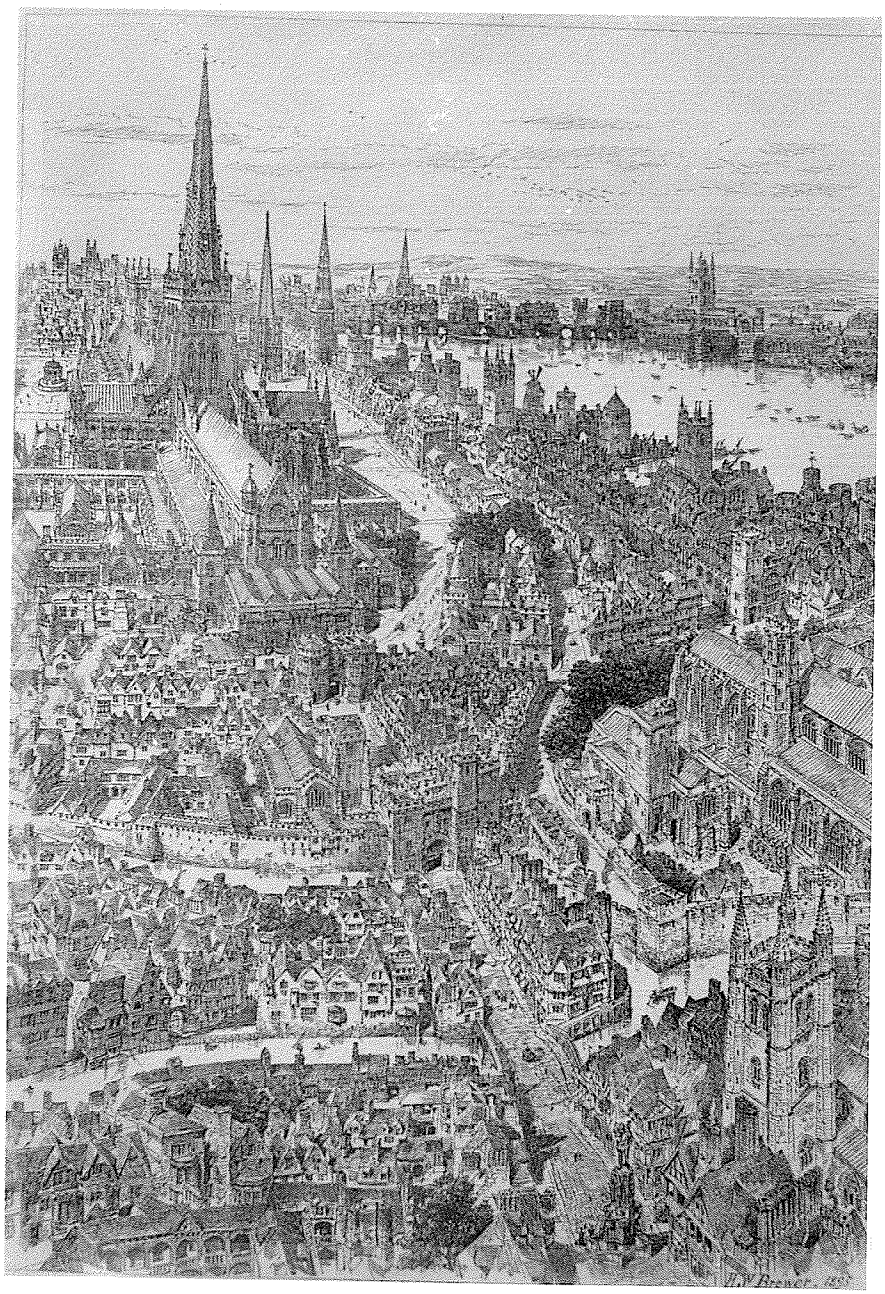
(1) R. Tawney and E. Power. Documents II. Fleetwood to Burghley, 14th Jan. 1582.


BOW CHURCH
THE TOWER
ST. MARY OVERY
LONDON BRIDGE
ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL
THE STEELYARD
RIVER THAMES
OLD ST. PAUL'S
SOUTH CHURCH YARD
BISHOP'S PALACE
WEST CHURCHYARD
WEST GATEWAY
LUDGATE HILL
ST ANNE'S
BLACK FRIARS'
LUDGATE
CITY WALL
CITY DITCH
ST. BRIDE'S
FLEET RIVER
FLEET BRIDGE
FLEET STREET

LUDGATE



gentlemen of the county. The extent of their duties was constantly being changed and during Elizabeth's reign there were seventy-eight Statutes concerning this matter. Mostly, they dealt with petty offences such as drunkenness, petty theft, vagrancy, and non-attendance at church and the punishments they meted out were whippings, or a period in the pillory or stocks. However, they would deal with preliminary hearings of major cases, and then would have the person confined to one of the city prisons until the Quarter Sessions. A man taken before the County Justices of the Quarter Sessions would be tried before a Grand Jury and would receive sentence quickly. The only time that a trial was deferred for the royal justices, "oyer and terminer" was in a case of treason. It was quite usual for the County Bench to inflict the death penalty.

The matter of enforcing the law was handled administratively by the High Constable, and executively, by the many Sergeants and Petty Constables who had to carry out the letter of the law. In London, most of these officials were paid, because they had such a difficult job to do. The main problem in London was lack of co-operation between the various counties. Apart from the area of the city, the suburbs, where so many of the criminals lived, were either in the counties of Surrey or Middlesex. Also, Westminster was autonomous and was only persuaded into reorganization by Lord Burghley, High Steward of the City, in 1585. The Privy Council alone had supervision over all these areas. It was all too easy for a

criminal "on the run" to get out of one jurisdiction into another. Then too, actually within the Liberties of the City of London, were certain "bastard sanctuaries." These areas in pre-Tudor times had been outside royal jurisdiction, usually due to special eccliastical charters, but authority was disinclined to act stringently here, and thus places, such as Westminster Abbey and St. Martin-Le-Grand became the residence of foreigners, debtors and criminals. Henry Machyn tells, in his Diary, of certain wicked offenders, who received sanctuary.

> "The 6 day of December (1556) the abbot of Westminster went a procession with his convent. Before him went all the sanctuary men with cross-keys upon their garments, and after went three for murder. One was Lord Dacre's son of the north, was whipped with a sheet about him for killing of Master West, esquire, dwelling beside, . . . and another thief that did long to one of Master Comptroller . . . did kill Richard Egglyston, the Comptroller's tailer, and killed him in the Long Acres, the back-side Charing-Cross; and a boy that killed a big boy that sold papers and printed books, with hurling of a stone, and hit him under the ear in Westminster Hall."(1)

The lack of co-ordination between the various authorities in London made the job of sergeant and constable doubly hard. He was not given sufficient power by the men above him, and he was generally hated by those he had to punish. His was not an enviable position, and there were too few honourable men willing to take on the task. As a result, the force of law and order was insufficient, and many within its ranks were corrupt. John Earle, in his portrait of the

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(1) Henry Machyn. Diary. Edited by J.G. Nicols, p. 121. Camden Society, 1848.

sergeant or catch-pole has this to say.

> "He is the properest shape wherein they fancy Satan . . . He is the creditor's hawk . . . He is the period of young gentlemen, or their full stop, for when he meets with them they can go no further. His ambush is a shop-stall or close lane, and his assault is cowardly at your back . . . He is an occasioner of disloyal thoughts in the commonwealth, for he makes men hate the king's name worse than the devil's . . ."(1)

And William Fennor in his "Counter's Commonwealth" tells how he was arrested one night for debt and was seized by two catch-poles. On their way to the prison they promised to treat the captive well if he would give them money . . . but

> "I never saw them after I was mewed up in the Counter. But before I was matriculated in one of these City universities, by persuasion they got me into a tavern not far from the enchanted castle -- the prison -- and there milked me out of all my money, to stuff their paunches with wine and good cheer."(2)

The sergeants received much criticism for the taking of bribes, and for the harsh manner in which they carried out their duties. Whenever Thomas Dekker spoke of them, he did so with bitterness, for as a debtor, he had suffered at their hands. Whatever good they performed in creating of law and order, was counter-balanced by their own corruptness.

> "Serjeants are the cunning pilots that in all stormes bring men safely to these havens of peace and contemplation . . . (prison!)"(3)

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(1) John Earle. Microcosmographie. Edited by E. Blount. Section 74. London: Methuen, 1904.
(2) William Fennor. Counter's Commonwealth. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 430. London: G. Rutledge, 1930.
(3) Thomas Dekker. Discoveries made by Cock Wat. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. II, p. 355 and p. 357. The Huth Library.

"They are the lawyers factors, the citizens men of warr, that bring in bad dettors, who like pirates have seized upon other goods, as lawfull prize; they are the scriveners good lords and maisters; they are relievers of prisons, good benefactors to Vintner's halls: they are keepers of young gentlemen from whorehouses, and drivers of poore handy-craftsmen from bowling allies."(1)

Dekker blamed the constables on similar grounds. Their lack of vigilance allowed criminals to thrive; they were often found asleep on duty; they took bribes from astute knaves who taught them how to "wink the eye"; often like Shakespeares' Dogberry and the Watchman in "Much Ado About Nothing" they were too fearful to deal with the scoundrels.

William Bullein in his "A Dialogue against the Pestilence" 1573 tells how watchmen and constables falsely abuse the time by,

"coming very late to the watch, sitting down in some common place of watching, wherein some falleth or sleep by the reason of labour or much drinking before, or else nature requireth rest in the night. These fellows think every how a thousand until they go home, home, home, every man to bed. Goodnight, goodnight! God save the Queen! sayeth the constables, farewell, neighbours. Eftsoons after their departing, escapeth forth the wild rogue and his fellow, having two or three other harlots for their turn, with picklocks, handsaws, long hooks, ladders &c., to break into houses, rob, murder, steal, and do all mischief in the houses of true men, utterly undoing honest people, to maintain their harlots. Great hoses, lined cloaks, long daggers, and feathers, these must be paid for &c. This cometh for want of punishment by the day, and idle watch in the night . . ."(2)

It was also whispered that beadles were in league with the

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Discoveries made by Cock Wat. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. II, p. 357. The Huth Library.

(2) William Bullein. A Dialogue against the Pestilence. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 131. London: Penguin, 1944.

keepers of the Counters, and that for every man they committed there, they would receive a groat. Thus for any slight fault a man would be taken in, unless he could provide a higher fee, when they would help him safely to his lodgings. They were criticized for cruelty also, and many men in the prisons could reveal signs of being hacked and maimed by halberds.

Yet, whatever might be said about the constables, even Dekker would agree that they tried their best to remedy an "out-of-hand" situation, and as their punishments were feared by some of the knaves, they did have a measure of success. Dekker himself could sing a "canting" song which summed up the situation.

> "The Devil take the Constables head
> If we beg bacon, butter - milk or bread,
> Or pottage, to the hedge he bids us hie,
> Or sweares (by this light) ith stocks we shall lie.
> The Devil haunt the Constables ghost;
> If we rob but a booth, we are whipt at a' poast,
> If an ale-house we rob, or be tane with a whore,
> Or cut a purse that has just a penny or more,
> Or come but stealing in at a Gentleman's dore,
> To the justice straight we goe;
> And then to the Jayle to be shackled: and so
> To be hanged on the gallowes ith day time: the pox
> And the Devill take the Constable and his stockes."(1)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Lanthorne and Candlelight. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. III, p. 203-204. The Huth Library.

On their walks through London, Dekker pointed out the many instruments of punishment to his friend. They were everywhere, -- at the city gates, near famous market places, on any small open space, and they were so numerous that they were taken for granted. The Londoner suffered their presence, in the same way that he suffered the plague, they had to be endured. Dekker did not hide the fact that he disliked unnecessary pain, but he appreciated the need for some preventatives for crime and when successful measures were taken, he would support them. Yet there was one element of justice which was mightily abused; and Dekker came under its jurisdiction for many years of his life. This was the administration of the London prisons. In Dekker's day, the prison was not a means of punishment exactly. It was a place were men were held, awaiting trial in court, or awaiting the charity of friends and neighbours so that they might be bought out.

Dekker had spoken to his friend on several occasions since his visit to London, about the state of these penitentiaries, but he wished him to see the life of the prisoner with his own eyes. Bearing this in mind, they set out for the Counter. Dekker knew most of the jailers in the city. He had spent periods in the Poultry Prison and in the King's Bench for debt, and he had visited friends in most of the other prisons. A wise man made it his business to be on good terms with the jailers, for then a little bribery would make the prisoner's life much easier or might even get him a release. The jailer of Newgate was symbolized for all time by the "Black Dog" in Luke Hutton's

"The Black Dog of Newgate". He represented the keeper of Hell.

> "His countenance ghastly, fearful, grim, and pale,
> His foamy mouth still gapeth for his prey;
> With tiger's teeth he spares none to assail,
> His lips hell-gates, o'erpointed with decay,
> His tongue the clapper, sounding woeful knell,
> Tolling poor men to ring a peal in hell.
>
> Like sepulchre his throat is hollow made,
> Devouring all whom danger makes a prey,
> Bribery his hand, spoil of the poor his trade,
> His fingers talons, seizing to betray;
> And with his arms he foldeth men in woes,
> Destruction still the path where 'er he goes."(1)

The prison was nothing less than Hell in Dekker's eyes. This was chiefly due to the terrible conditions within the iron gateways. Here men lost their humanity and became beasts. The prison itself was divided into several divisions inhabited by men and women both. Those that could bribe the jailers well, had comparative ease in the one part. They had fairly comfortable beds, their food depended on what dishes the jailers could procure for them; they might play cards or drink to pass the time. As their money ran out, however, they had to move to the poor-man's side and there, they would be fettered, and be left to crouch in damp, dark corners on straw: then food would be little and poor, and worst of all, there would appear to be no hope of leaving the prison unless some bulk of money bequeathed by a rich person in a legacy, lifted them from their torments. Salvation from

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(1) Luke Hutton. The Black Dog of Newgate. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 264. London: G. Routledge, 1930.

prison usually depended either on the charity of friends or on such lump sums of money as mentioned above.

John Earle, who never failed to see the weakness of people, and of society's monuments, had this comment to make.

> "A prison is the grave of the living, where they are shut up from the world and their friends, and the worms that gnaw upon them, their own thoughts and the jaylors. A house of meagre looks and ill smell, for lice, drink and tobacco are the compound . . . You may ask . . . which the beggar, which the knight; -- for they are all united in the same form of a kind of nasty poverty. Only to be out at elbows is in fashion here, and a great indecorum not to be thread-bare. Every man shews here like so many wracks upon the sea, here the ribs of a thousand pound, here the relics of so many manors, a doublet without buttons; and 'tis a spectacle of more pity than executions are. The company one with the other is but a vying of complaints, and the causes they have to rail on fortune and fool themselves, and there is a great deal of good fellowship in this. They are commonly, next their creditors, most bitter against the lawyers, as men that have had a great stroke in assisting them hither. Mirth here is stupidity or hard-heartedness, yet they feign it sometimes to slip melancholy, and keep off themselves from themselves, and the torment of thinking what they have been. Men huddle up their life here as a thing of no use, and wear it out like an old suit, the faster the better; and he that deceives the time best, best spends it. It is the place where new comers are most welcomed, and, next them, ill news, as that which extends their fellowship in misery, and leaves few to insult: -- and they breathe their discontents more securely here, and have their tongues at more liberty than abroad. Men see here much sin and much calamity; and where the last does not mortify, the other hardens; as those that are worse here, are desparately worse, and those from whom the horror of sin is taken off and the punishment familiar: and commonly a hard thought passes on all that come from this school; which through it teach much wisdom, it is too late, and with danger: and it is better be a fool than come here to learn it."(1)

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(1) John Earle. Microcomographie. Edited by I. Gollancz, p. 81. London: Dent, 1928.

A fair judgment indeed, for in prison, as Earle states, a man had time to reflect, had time to sum up his own life and to learn something from his misfortunes, even if ~~it~~ was only bitterness. No truer comment could be made, nor is there a more applicable one for Thomas Dekker himself; for during his years in the debtor's prison Dekker drew close to the essence of humanity, and by sharing in its miseries and sharing in its hopes, he learned more about people than any "citizen of the world" could possible learn. It gave him the power to speak from experience, to criticize with honesty and truth; and it instilled in his heart a strange peace and detachment, which is evident in all his writings. This wisdom that he learned through suffering taught him never to judge the weak harshly; always to treat men with respect, and always to try and understand rather than to castigate.

Dekker realized that men had their weaknesses, and the criminals in society, in his opinion, were not the "conies" and the "gulls", but those who preyed upon them. It was not the debtor, who was forced to waste his years in uselessness and penury, who was the creator of evil in society, but he who lived like a leech, on the life-blood of these victims. For these men Dekker had no compassion.

Thus Dekker would consider the first of the Seven Deadly Sins to be the Politick Bankrupt, who by his cunning, sent many men to the debtor's prison. He sets up as a merchant or Tradesmen, and at first spends all his craftiness at creating a

good impression of honesty and thrift. He does this until

> "by such artificiall wheeles as these, he winds himselfe up into the height of rich mens favours, till he grow riche himselfe, and when he sees that they dare build upon his credit, knowing the ground to be good, he takes upon him the condition of an Asse, to any man that will loade him with gold; and useth his credit like a Ship freighted with all sorts of Merchandize by ventrous Pilots: for after he hath gotten into his hands so much of other mens goods or money, as will fill him to the upper deck, away he sayles with it, and politickly runnes himselfe on ground, to make the world beleive he had suffered shipwrack."(1)

The troops of honest citizens (his creditors) who have been "gulled" try to use the law to make him pay, and employ yeomen and sergeants to catch him, but for a month or so he hides in his lodgings, then one night he slips into the country, and from an unknown place he begins to make some kind of compromise with his creditors,

> "parlies then are summond; compositions offered; a truce is sometimes taken for 3 or 4 yeeres; or (which is more common) a dishonourable peace (seeing no other remedy) is on both sides concluded, he (like the States) being the only gayner by such civill warres, whilst the Citizen that is the lender, is the loser."(2)

Then, being once more exonerated by the law, the Politick Bankrupt comes back to the city, and "advances in the open street as he did before; sels the goods of his neighbor before his face without blushing: he sets up and downe in silks woven out of other mens stocks, feeds deliciously upon other mens purses, rides on his

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 16. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 17. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

ten pound Geldings, in other mens saddles, & is now a new man made out of wax, that's to say, out of those bonds whose seales he most dishonestly hath canceld.

. . . these are the Rats that eate up the provisions of the people: these are the Grasshoppers of Egypt, that spoyle the Corne-fields of the Husbandman and the rich mans Vineyards . . . The theefe that dyes at Tyburne for a Robbery is not halfe so dangerous a weede in a Commonwealth, as the Politick Bankrupt, I would there were a ~~Bak~~ Derick to hang up him too."(1)

Another "leech" of society was the usurer, and Dekker laughed bitterly about both these blood-suckers, because they were the greatest competitors for other men's money.

> "there is not halfe so much love between the Iron and the Loadestone, as there is mortall hate betweene these two Furies. The Usurer lives by the lechery of mony, and is Bawd to his own bags, taking a fee, that they may engender. The Politick Bankrupt lives by the gelding of bags of Silver. The Usurer puts out a hundred pound to breede, and lets it run in a good pasture (that's to say, in the lands that are mortgag'd for it) till it grow great with Foale and bring forth ten pound more. But the Politick Bankrupt playes the Alchimist, and having taken a hundred pound to multiply it, he keepes a puffing and a blowing, as if he would fetch the Philosophers stone out of it, yet melts your hundred pound so long in his Crusibles, till at length he either melt it cleare away, or (at the least) makes him that lends it thinke good, if every hundred bring him home five, with Principall and Interest."(2)

A third "leech" was a man in a similar line of business to

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 20. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 21. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

the Politick Bankrupt; he was called by Dekker the Bankerout. He was a citizen "that deales in mony or had money in Banke or in stocke. He is out (when he Breakes) -- he fats his ribs with other men's labours."(1)

These were the criminals of society in Dekker's opinion; they were the men who thrived on the cupidity of others, who used their cunning to work on the weaknesses of others, and when they had "broken" a man, and had seen him incarcerated in the debtor's prison, they would rejoice at their own craftiness. There were other "shavers" in society, who needed to be unmasked, and who contributed to the sufferings of the citizen; the covetous landlords who demanded higher exorbitant rents for minor repairs of property; the lawyer, who would not help a client until he had "milked" him of every penny he possessed; the broker who shaved "poor men by most jewish interest"; and the many unscrupulous tradesmen in the city who asked more for their goods than a just price.

. . . . . .

Dekker explained to his friend how easy it was for a citizen of London to fall into debt, often through circumstances beyond his control. He did not deny that there were many who deserved their

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(1) Thomas Dekker. A Strange Horse-Race. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. III, p. 376-377. The Huth Library.

punishment inside prison but he felt there were others who were the victims of this changing acquisitive society. However, the administration of a prison had to be seen to be believed, and he had brought his friend to the famous Counter, so that he might witness life within.

They arrived at the prison gate, and Dekker called to the keeper. For a moment they spoke together and the sergeant shook his head vehemently; then Dekker thrust his hand into his pocket and showed a note to the keeper. For a moment there was hesitation, then the man disappeared and with a rattling of locks and chains the prison door stood open. Dekker and his friend walked into the shadows and the door clanged behind them; as they did so, Dekker pressed the bribe into the keeper's hand. This was a place where money "talked". They were taken through several dark hallways to the "best end" of the prison. Here the wealthy prisoners were kept, as long as they could pay the guards well. They had separate cells and fairly comfortable beds, and even the luxury of sheets and other linen. They dined according to their purses, and for sixpence, could be assured of a quart of wine. During the day time they would while the time away playing cards, smoking and arguing; and when money ran short would borrow among themselves. Thus quite a pleasant stay could be had in the Master's side of the prison for a short time, but when the money ran out then the prisoner was moved into the Knight's Ward.

Here treatment was quite different. The keepers were rough and cruel and would shout at and beat the prisoners if necessary. The cells were small and damp and were often evil-smelling. The tedious hours were spent in drinking and smoking, as in other parts of the prison, and often in brawling too. Dekker and his friend moved among the inmates observing and talking; and they soon realized that there were many kinds of people penned together. One man explained the situation to them, thus . . .

> "There lies your right worshipful poor knight, your worshipful beggarly esquire, your distressed gentleman, your mechanic tradesman, your prating pettifogger, and juggling (liars, I would say) lawyers, all these, like so many beasts in a wilderness, desire to prey one upon the other, for I think there are as many sins looking through the grates of a prison as there are walking through the gates of a city. For though we are all prisoners, yet the causes of our restraint are divers. Some are in for debt, some for other more heinous and criminal actions. Some there are that are in upon constraint, and such are they that come in for debt and can no way shun what they suffer, or have no means to give satisfaction to their creditors. Others there are that are voluntary and such are they that come in of purpose, who, if it please themselves, may keep themselves out; of which I find four kind of people, that are good subjects to this commonwealth, the Counter, and they are these: the first, your subtle citizen; the second, your riotous unthrift, the third your politic highwayman; and the fourth and last your crafty mechanic."(1)

Then Dekker and his friend went to see the worst area of the prison, the place known as the Hole.

> "that stinks many men to death, and is to all that live in it as the dog-days are to the world: a cause of diseases."(2)

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(1) William Fennor. The Counter's Commonwealth. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 466. London: G. Routledge, 1930.

(2) William Fennor. The Counter's Commonwealth. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 483. London: G. Routledge, 1930.

The only way men could be reclaimed from the Hole was by charity, and then

> "at Easter or Christmas, when any good legacy comes in, it is fittest that those prisoners that have been five or six years standing should have the profit of it before such as have been there but two or three months . . ."(1)

The Hole had a government of its own made up of a Master Steward and twelve "honest" prisoners and they would rule the other unfortunates, and see "justice" was administered.

Before they left the Counter prison, Dekker spoke to one of the inmates about corruption among the jailers. He wanted his friend to hear first-hand information about a matter he knew to be true. The prisoner shook his head sadly over a situation without remedy and began to tell of rampant extortion. A gentleman imprisoned for one night

> "must pay twelve pence for turning the key at the Master's side door, two shillings to the Chamberlain, twelve pence for his garnish of wine, tenpence for his dinner, whether he stay or no; and when he comes to be discharged at the book, it will cost at least three shillings and sixpence more, besides sixpence for the book-keeper's pains, and sixpence for the porter.
>
> But they have other tricks as bad as these, which are as followeth: When a gentleman that hath been long resident in the Master's side, and hath paid all their demands there, and chanceth to be turned over to the Knight's ward for want of means, he must be forced to pay all the fees over again, or else they will either pull his cloak from his back, or, his hat from his head, and the steward of that ward will stand as peremptorily upon it as if it were confirmed to him by act of

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(1) William Fennor. The Counter's Commonwealth. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 468. London: G. Routledge, 1930.

> Parliament, or had it under all the Privy Council's' hands. And if a gentleman stay there but one night, he must pay for his garnish sixteen pence, besides a groat for his lodging, and so much for his sheets; and still, he that receives it says, it is a custom, and that it is toward the buying of such things he wants . . .
>
> When a gentleman is upon discharge, and hath given satisfaction for his executions, they must have fees for irons, three halfpence in the pound, besides the other fees . . ."(1)

To Dekker, the debtor's prison was another of the cruelties of society. The unjust creditor was often the cause of many years of misery; the corrupt prison administrator, the reason for indefinite incarceration. As the two men left the halls of darkness, and stepped out again into the sunlight and warmth of the street, he made his last remarks on the situation. They concerned the creditor, the instigator of all misfortune.

> "You have another cruelty in keeping men in prison so long, till sickness and death deal mildly with them, and (in despite of all tyranny) bail them out of all executions. When you see a poor wretch that to keep life in a loathed body hath not a house left to cover his head from the tempests, nor a bed (but the common bed which our mother the earth allows him) for his cares to sleep upon, when you have (by keeping or locking him up) robbed him of all means to get, what seek you to have him lose but his life? The miserable prisoner is ready to famish, yet that cannot move you; the more miserable wife is ready to run mad with despair, yet that cannot melt you; the most of all miserable, his children be crying at your doors, yet nothing can awaken in you compassion. If his debts be heavy, the greater and more glorious is your pity to work his freedom: if they be light, the sharper is the vengeance that will be heaped upon your heads for your hardness of heart. We are most like to God that made us, when we show love one to another, and do most look like the devil that would destroy us, when we are one another's tormentors. If any have so much

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(1) William Fennor. The Counter's Commonwealth. Edited by A.V. Judges, p. 474-475. London: G. Routledge, 1930.

flint growing about his bosom, that he will needs make dice of men's bones. I would there were a law to compell him to make drinking bowls of their skulls too: and that every miserable debtor that so dies, might be buried at his creditor's door, that when he strides over him he might think he still rises up (like the Ghost in Jeronimo) crying 'Revenge'."(1)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 161-162. London: Penguin, 1944.

CHAPTER V

The Heart of the City

The City Companies

At the turn of the 16th century London was the centre of world trade. She had captured the pre-eminence from Antwerp; and this started her august position as the chief banking nation in the world until the twentieth century, and even today, the London stock market is immensely important. Certain factors brought this situation about. Firstly, England was a haven of peace in the sixteenth century compared with war-torn Europe. The tensions of religious battles did not make for the feeling of security and confidence which is essential for a creditor nation. In England the Tudor dynasty had proved that its power and position rested to a large degree on the will of the people. The phlegmatic nature of the English people helped to foster peace, the majority were not inclined to be fired into civil strife by religious differences.

Then too England was a sea-going nation, and throughout the sixteenth century her trade was increased by strange commodities from the east, never before seen; and also at the heart of her system of trade were the very powerful City Companies who ruled their members within and without the City of London.

The Companies began their history in the second half of the twelfth century, when they were known as Gilds, and consisted of men employed in the same trade. Each Gild developed a kind of hierarchy

and a set of rules to regulate religious, economic and political duties. The central feature of the London Gild was the Court of Assistants. This chosen group of men had jurisdiction over the other members and could carry out a number of punishments. Unruly apprentices could be whipped, journeymen on strike could be imprisoned, masters who went outside Gild regulations could be fined, and whatever the grievance a man had, he could not take it to another court until he had appealed in vain to the Gild court. This Court of Assistants developed into the Livery Company in the sixteenth century.

Most of the Gilds had halls or meeting places in London, and there the members would gather several times a year. The greater the trade increased in London, the more numerous grew the gilds. The new middle-class of merchants began to form new companies of their own, and as the world market expanded they became concerned with luxury goods. By the middle of the fourteenth century there were twelve great Livery Companies in London, and it had become the custom to choose a Lord Mayor from the common Councils of the various crafts. The most important at this time were -- the Grocers' Company, the Mercers', the Fishmongers', the Drapers', Goldsmiths', Woolmongers', Vintners', Skinners', Saddlers', Tailors', Cardwaines' and Butchers'. Before the close of the fourteenth century many of these companies had been granted royal charters to regulate trade.

They used these powers of self government to good economic account by controlling the import and export of wares, by limiting their own membership, by making secret agreements regarding price, and by exercising their power to seize defective goods. This latter clause allowed many unscrupulous men to remove foreign competition by saying, foreign goods were not up to standard. The fact that they owned a royal charter made their powers of monopoly of national importance, and brought to London trade and industry an authority derived from the King and Parliament.

In Dekker's day, the government of the Livery Companies was oligarchical. At the centre, was the Court of Assistants. This consisted of a body of men who had held the position in the company previously, of either Master or Warden. Its members held their office for life and recruited others by co-option. Every year the Masters and Wardens were changed but they either named their own successors, or shared their choice with the ex-masters and ex-wardens, who formed the Court of Assistants. Masters, Wardens and Assistants named the Freemen who were to be placed on the Livery from time to time, and where the Yeomen were separate, they were selected out of the Freemen by the ruling body. The principle behind this government was a social hierarchy chosen by selection from above.

During James I's reign, most of the Companies received Charters which put the powers of the Court of Assistants on a legal footing. Every quarterly, the Court would meet, and often the whole

company would also attend. Fees were paid, and routine business carried out. They dealt with matters of trade regulations, and the maintenance of order and discipline. Court-Books began to be kept in the middle of the sixteenth century and these reveal the registering of apprentices, the admission of freemen or householders, the recording of disputes settled among journeymen within the company over wage arrears, unsatisfactory bargains and other trade matters. Always there appears to be a tendency of the smaller companies to revolt against the power of the larger bodies, who could command monopoly.

As the City Companies developed, the position of Lord Mayor became increasingly important. Just as the King was the head of the political capital of Westminster, so the Lord Mayor became ruler over the trading centre of London. The position of Mayor was first filled in 1189 by Henry Fitz-Aylwin. As London became larger and more wealthy and the duties of mayor more onerous, the position was lifted to the dignity of an Earldom. Sir Martin Bowes became the first Lord Mayor in 1558. When attending the King or receiving other sovereigns, he was expected to wear the robes of that rank, and within the City of London itself, he ranked next to the sovereign, even taking precedence over the heir to the throne.

In 1214 King John signed a Charter which granted the right of London citizens to elect their Mayor from among themselves. This choice, however, had to receive the monarch's approval and the

procession for this purpose, from the City to the Palace of Westminster developed into the pageant "The Lord Mayor's Show".

Henry Machyn gives an "eye-witness" report of such a ceremony in the year 1557.

> "The XXIX day of October dyd my new lorde mayre (take) ys owth at Westmyster; and all the craftes of London (in their) bargys, and the althemen; and after-ward landyd at Powlles warf; and at the Powlles cherycrche-yerd ther the pagantt stod, and the bachelors with their saten hodes and lx poore men in gownes, and targets and gayffelyns in their handes, and the trumpetes and the wbettes playing unto Yeld-hall; and ther dynyd, and after to Powlles and after to my lord mayre('s) howse, and ther the althermen, and the craftes, and the bachelors, and the pagantt browth hym home."(1)

The Lord Mayor had viceregal status. He was the first person to be told of the Sovereign's death, and it was his duty to order the tolling of St. Paul's bell. He was also the first person to be summoned to the Privy Council when a new sovereign was proclaimed. In royal processions the Lord Mayor always carried his own sceptre to symbolize the independence of the City of London.

The election of a new Lord Mayor was preceded by a religious ceremony. Then the procession would go from the Church to the Great Hall. Amidst a gathering of Aldermen, the retiring Lord Mayor would hand to his successor, first his sceptre -- a sign of the transference of power -- then the City Purse and Seal, and finally the Mace and City Swords. All these would be returned by the mayor-elect to the

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(1) Henry Machyn. Diary. Edited by J.G. Nicols, p. 155-156. Camden Society, 1848.

traditional custodians. The pageant would then go to Westminster Palace for the monarch's approval and finally return to Guildhall for a night of feasting.

The authority of the Lord Mayor was at its height in the reign of James I, when a claim was put forward that he was Master over all Companies. The strength of his position grew with the power and wealth of the Companies. He was the arbitrator of disputes, the judge of rules and regulations; the regulator of trade in the victualing and brewing companies, and the King's representative whenever the Crown needed revenues. He issued precepts which were binding on the Companies he ruled. These usually concerned the King's demands for money and for men, in times of crisis.

Next to the Lord Mayor in importance was the Sheriff of London, a position which went back to Saxon times. He served for one year only, and was elected on June 24th with much ceremony.

> "Common Hall having been opened by the Common Cryer, the Recorder acquaints the assembly with the nature of the election, and in order to leave free choice in the hands of the Livery, the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen who have 'passed the chair', and the Recorder - retire, not to the Aldermen's Court Room but to the Common Council Chamber, where, according to an ancient custom, the Sword is placed on a mass of roses."(1)

The election was then made by a show of hands, and on September 29th the "swearing in" ceremony was carried out.

The Court of Aldermen consisted of twenty-five representatives,

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(1) Blackham. Selection in "The City of London: An Outline of its History", p. 25. British Information Pamphlet.

one from each ward, elected for life. They had jurisdiction over the City Companies,and a grant of Livery had to be made by them. Subject to the King's approval, the Court appointed the City Recorder who became the principal judiciar. It was their privilege to provide and pay for the Earl's robes worn by the Lord Mayor. The Alderman was usually a man of wealth, and John Earle gives a "satiric twist to his portrait, to reveal a few human vices of social climbing" to complement the virtues of this public figure.

> "He is venerable in his gown, more in his beard, wherewith he sets not forth so much his own, as the face of a city. You must look on him as one of the town gates, and consider him not as a body, but a corporation. His eminency above others hath made him a man of worship, for he had never been preferred, but that he was worth thousands. He over-sees the commonwealth, as his shop, and bis an argument of his policy, that he has thriven by his craft. He is a rigorous magistrate in his ward; yet his scale of justice is suspected, lest it be like the balances in his warehouse. A ponderous man he is, and substantial, for his weight is commonly extraordinary, and in his preferrment nothing rises so much as his belly. His head is of no great depth, yet well furnished; and when it is in conjunction with his brethren, may bring forth a city apophthegm, or some such sage matter. He is one that will not hastily run into error, for he treads with great deliberation, and his judgment consists much in his pace. His discourse is commonly the annals of his mayoralty, and what good government there was in the days of his gold chain; though the door-posts were the only things that suffered reformation. He seems most sincerely religious, especially on solemn days; for he comes often to church to make a shew (and is part of the quire hangings). He is the highest stair of his profession, and an example of his trade, what in time they may come to. He makes very much of his authority, but none of his satin doublet, which, though of good years, bears its age very well, and looks fresh every Sunday: but his scarlet gown is a monument, and lasts from generation to generation."(1)

This latter remark was directed toward the Livery of the Alderman. This mode of dress was a relic of feudalism, as Livery once referred to the dress worn by servants in a certain household.

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(1) John Earle. Microcosmographie. Edited by I. Gollancz, p. 12. London: Dent, 1928.

However, the idea was taken over by the fraternities as a mark of distinction. It usually consisted of two parts -- a gown and a hood, and both were always of two colours. In 1419, the grocer's were scarlet and green. John Stow, speaking of the liveries, says

> "these hoods were worn, the rowndlets upon their heads, the skirts to hang behind in their necks to keep them warm."(1)

As well as the Court of Assistants there was the Court of Common Council. This was the oldest municipal body in England and was made up of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and 206 Councillors. They had administrative control over the city.

The authority of the Lord Mayor and the power of the City Companies was symbolized by the Guildhall. Here would be held the fortnightly meetings of the Common Council, here would be celebrated the elections of numerous Lord Mayors and Sheriffs of London. It was the scene of great civic banquets, as when Richard Whittington entertained Henry V and Queen Catherine; it was a severe court of justice, as when Lady Jane Grey received the death sentence there for treason. As a meeting place for citizens, as a central ground for Gilds and Livery Companies, as the focal point of civic government and justice, as the recruiting station for men in times of war, as a place of sumptuous banquets in times of peace, the Guildhall represented the wealth and pomp and power of the City of London.

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(1) John Stow. A Survey of London. P. 481. London: Dent, Everyman Library.

The Bourse

Dekker had been explaining to his friend how the vision of one man can often change the face of a nation. The prosperity of Elizabethan London had been growing continuously, and peace in the land, strong government, the foresight of City Companies and the competitiveness of society had all added impetus to the movement. However, every Londoner knew that the honours for bringing the money-market to England really belonged to one man, -- Sir Thomas Gresham. He came from country stock, -- from the ruling country class and his family belonged to Gresham in Norfolk. Other members had proved excellent public servants, for both his father Sir Richard and his Uncle Sir John had been Lord Mayors of London.

Thomas Gresham, therefore, had the advantages of wealth and station, and also came from a household where public life was considered almost a duty. He was educated at Gonville, (later Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge) and after he had taken his degree was apprenticed in his uncle's company -- the Mercers' Company. From the beginning of his career, Gresham was interested in the question of trade, from a national stand-point. Therefore, at the age of thirty-two, he was appointed Royal Agent at Antwerp. English loans, then offered at Antwerp and Bruges, could be taken up by merchants at 14% interest. Gresham felt that if England was to become the banker nation of the world, she must capture this

position by reducing interest; and therefore he began to decrease it, from 14% to 12% and finally to 10%.

Gresham was an astute man, and circumstances played into his hands. The Religious Wars caused many European merchants to lose confidence in the Antwerp market and to take credit from England and the reduced interest rate on sums of money appealed to them. Therefore, when Gresham had succeeded in winning over the Antwerp traders, he then mooted a plan to build a Royal Exchange in England.

Dekker took his friend to see this monument, which Sir Thomas had built to the memory of his son Richard who died in 1564 at the age of twenty years. As they drew near they couldlook up at the large grasshopper which surmounted a tall Corinthian column on the north side, and which was the Gresham family crest. They entered a long building and walked amidst the company of merchants in the central courtyard who were constantly talking and bargaining. Here was the trade centre of Elizabethan England. Every day at noon and at six in the evening, the bell on the tower of the south side would call the merchants together. For a while Dekker and his friend mingled with the traders, then they left the piazza and wandered along the covered walks on all sides. These cloister-like parts of the Exchange were lined with the statues of English monarchs from Edward the Confessor to Elizabeth and there were also the statues of Sir Thomas and the builder of the Exchange. There were shops built along the walk -- apothecaries', booksellers', goldsmiths', glass-sellers' and others, who did a good trade, often in wares new to

the English market, such as apricots, hops, fans, shoe-buckles, and hundreds of other commodities.

Story has it that there was divergence of opinion between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Thomas in the naming of the trading centre. Sir Thomas wished that it should be called the London Bourse to distinguish it from the King's Exchange. This latter building in Old Change in London dealt with bullion for minting, the distribution of new coinage, and the regulations regarding the control of foreign currency. Gresham's conception was for trade only, and he wished it named accordingly. However, Elizabeth thought otherwise, and when she visited it on January 23rd, 1571 she named it the Royal Exchange.

Thomas Gresham had built this centre in the city to displace Antwerp as financial focus of the world. The City gave the site and contributed the bricks, Europe was scoured for the best materials and craftsmen, and so the monument was completed and a man's vision fulfilled. Sir Thomas had pledged himself to give the completed building into the joint ownership of the City of London and the Mercers' Company, and this he did. As Dekker looked up at the tall building, and listened to the hub-bub within; he felt there could be no better introduction to the merchant life of London than a glimpse into the "alchemist's workshop".

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OLD ST. PAUL'S

ST. MARY-LE-BOW
OR
BOW CHURCH

ST. BRIDE'S
FLEET STREET

ST. MICHAEL'S
ST PETER
LE-CHEPE

ELEANOR
CROSS

LESSER
CONDUIT

GOLDSMITH'S
ROW

UPPER
CONDUIT

"THE STANDARD

CROWN SILD
OF
SILDAM

INN OR
HOSTELRY

CHEAPSIDE.


H.W. Brewer, imp. et del.

The City Merchants

The busiest place on earth on a fine summer's morning seemed to be Cheapside. Its very name taken from the Anglo-saxon "ceapian" -- meaning to sell or bargain -- setthe tone for this mecca of merchandise. The various wards of the City were concerned with specific trades -- textiles were sold in Bread Street, and Cripplegate; furriers plied their business in Aldersgate; fish and fruits were offered at Billingsgate, then, rubber and grain had houses near the Tower; yet in Cheapside, Dekker and his friend found a universal market -- here, all goods could be found for sale. They stood on the corner of the street and watched with amazement, and listened to the heart of London.

> "in every street, carts and coaches make such a thundring as if the world ranne upon wheeles: at everie corner, men, women, and children meete in such shoales, that postes are sette up of purpose to strengthen the houses, least with justling one another they should shoulder them downe. Besides, hammers and beating in one place, Tubs hooping in another, Pots clinking in a third, water-tankards running at tilt in a fowth: heare are Porters sweating under burdens, there Merchants-men bearing bags of money, Chapmen (as if they were at Leape-frog) skippe out of one shop into another: Tradesmen (as if they were dauncing Galliards) are lusty of legges and never stand still: all are as busy as countrie Atturneyes at an Assises."(1)

In Cheapside were Mercers' shops selling the new exotic silks, the white linens and laces for shirts and ruffs; the brocaded

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by R. Brett-Smith, p. 37-38. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

fabrics for the beautiful Elizabethan gowns; here were goldsmiths' shops filled with strange jewellery in gold, in diamond, in other precious stones -- the work of exquisite craftsmanship; here were the shoe-makers' shops with a multitude of fashions in boots for ladies and gentlemen, and in brocaded slippers for indoor wear. Here in Cheapside could be bought luxury goods, strange and new, from the world over. Amidst the crowds of eager lookers and buyers stood the shop-keeper, the new rich man of Elizabethan England, touting his wares, arguing and bargaining and cajoling to get the best price he could.

> "His shop is his well-stuffed book, and himself the title-page of it or index. He flatters much to all men, though he sells but to a few, and entreats for his own necessities by asking others what they lack. No man speaks more and no more, for his words are like his wares, twenty of one sort, and he goes over them alike to all comers. He is an arrogant commender of his own things; for whatsoever he shews you, is the best in town, though the worst in his shop. His conscience was a thing that would have laid upon his hands, and he was forced to put it off, and makes great use of honesty to profess upon. He tells you lies by rote, and not minding, as the phrase to sell in and the language he spent most of his years to learn. He never speaks so truly, as when he says he would use you as his brother, for he would abuse his brother; and in his shop thinks it lawful. His religion is much in the nature of his customers, and indeed they pander to it: and by misinterpreted sense of scripture makes him a gain of his godliness. He is your slave while you pay him ready money, but if he once befriend you, your tyrant, and you had better deserve his hate than his trust."(1)

The morality of buying and selling was still a controversial question in Dekker's day. The shop-keeper who asked more than the just price, and therefore made a profit, was subject to criticism. Yet it

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(1) John Earle. Microcosmographie. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 123. London: Penguin, 1944.

was a dying criticism for the new values of acquisitiveness and social climbing had come to stay, and soon the mark of success and acceptance was to be the acquisition of money and property. Capitalism had taken a hold, and nobody could put back the clock. Yet, in a way, it was healthful to society, that certain writers should remind men of the principles of the past, for they remained a kind of yard-stick to economic enterprise. Donald Lupton in his "London and the Countrey Carbonadoed" 1623 has this to say about the famous Cheapside and the traders there.

> "Tis thought the way through this street is not good, because so broad and so many go in it; yet though it be broad, it's very straight, because without any turnings. It is suspected here are not many sufficient able men, because they would sell all: and but little honesty, for they show all, and, some think, more sometime than their own: they are very affable, for they'll speak to most that pass by: they care not how few be in the streets, so their shops be full: they that bring them money, seem to be used worst, for they are sure to pay soundly: their books of accounts are not like to their estates, for the latter are best without, but the other with, long crosses . . ."(1)

Some merchants were unscrupulous, Dekker knew only too well, but in this lust for money and position they were often aided and abetted by their ambitious wives. Dekker and his friend watched one such lady in a draper's shop; she was busy selling some gentlemen of the court cloth for cloaks and doublets. She used all her wiles and cunning, all her business acumen, accompanied by much of her personal charm, and finally succeeded in making a sale for almost twice its

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(1) Donald Lupton. London and the Countrey Carbonadoed. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 121-122. London: Penguin, 1944.

actual value. She had good reason for wanting to have money. If her husband could be made into a successful, wealthy member of the Drapers' Company, perhaps one day he might be chosen as Alderman or even Lord Mayor. What a multitude of pleasantries that conjured up; opportunities to be present at court, to hob-nob with the nobility, to wear the most fashionable dress, to ride in state through London, to own property in town and a house in country; and a chance -- oh! how delightful -- to snub many of her old condescending friends. For all these things, she could indeed be a little unscrupulous! Usually, the more money her husband amassed, the more she desired him to gain, until his life was a treadmill. The merchant's wife, as trade prospered, gave less time to the business and more to holding a social position. This required hours of preparation in make-up and dress, preceded by much laziness.

> "Your simpering merchants' wives are the fairest liers in the world; and is not eleven o'clock their common hour? They find, no doubt, unspeakable sweetness in such lying; else they would not day by day put it so in practice. In a word, midday slumbers are golden: they make the body fat, the skin fair, the flesh plump, delicate, and tender: they set a russet colour on the cheeks of young women, and make lusty courage to rise up in men: they make us thrifty; both in sparing victuals, for breakfasts thereby are saved from the hell-mouth of the belly; and in preserving apparel, for whilst we warm us in our beds our clothes are not worn."(1)

> "Gay gawdy women, who spent yeares of noones
> In tricking up their fronts with chaperoones
> And powdred Haire: whose Taylors sheares did quarrell

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Gull's Hornbook. Edited by R. McKerrow, p. 26-27, London: Charto, Windus, 1907.

With pride, how to cut onely their apparell
Whose backs wore out more Fashions than their wits."(1)

Dekker blamed the citizen's wife for her pride and for all the sins this engendered -- her shrewishness, her lust for money, her wastage of fortunes, her desire always to be a spectacular figure in the latest of fashions. He agreed wholeheartedly with Thomas Nashe when he summed up the lady thus:

> "Mistress Minx, a merchant's wife, will eat no cherries, forsooth, but when they are at twenty shillings a pound, that looks as simperingly as if she were besmeared, and jets it as gingerly as if she were dancing the canaries: she is so finical in her speech, as though she spake nothing but what she had first sewed over before in her samplers, and the puling accent of her voice is like a feigned treble, or one's voice that interprets to the puppets. What should I tell how squeamish she is in her diet, what toil she puts her poor servants unto to make her looking-glasses in the pavement? how she will not go into the fields, to cower on the green grass, but she must have a coach for her convoy; and spends half a day in pranking herself is she be invited to any strange place? Is not this the excess of pride, signior Satan? Go to, you are unwise, if you make her not a chief saint in your calendar."(2)

Besides Cheapside were other important markets in London such as Eastcheap, Bread Street, Milk Street, Honeypot Lane, Poultry and Fish Street Hill. All did a most prosperous trade. Then there were the City fairs, and most of them had histories which went back to Norman times. Originally, fairs were closely associated with the churches. Church land was loaned for the use of trade, and no priest seemed to

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Dekker - His Dream. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. III, p. 49-50. The Huth Library.
(2) Thomas Nashe. Pierce Pennilesse. Edited by J.D. Wilson, p. 176. London: Penguin, 1944.

think there was anything sinful in making a little money this way. This arrangement also suited the citizen because he could come to church and discharge his religious duty and then buy and sell in the market near by. Most large city markets had rights confirmed by royal charter. Billingsgate Fish Market received a charter in 1400; Smithfield Market which became the cattle market was originally a place for tournaments, and later the site of witch burnings and judicial hangings; Bartholomew Fair, portrayed for all time by Ben Jonson in his play, had its origin in the idea of a man called Rahere, founder of St. Bartholomew's Priory, in 1123. When the Priory was established, a three-day fair was also inaugurated on the Feast of St. Bartholomew. For hundreds of years this Fair was the great centre of cloth marketing in England.

Then there was the Leadenhall Market which was always associated with the sale of food and which became the centre of the poultry, butter and cheese trade. "Ledden Halle" was also the place where the old pageant of the Midsummer Watch was prepared. The buildings around the quadrangle were used for storage of properties. Spitalfield Market also, outside the City boundary, became the centre of the London fruit exchange. Markets with their charters became more formal than the fairs, and it is true to say that the trend was for fairs to fade in importance, and Markets to flourish.

However, on their tour of London, Dekker chose to take his friend to Sturbridge Fair so that he might see the bustle and bargaining of these temporary store-keepers. The Fair took place on a large

field, and lasted for three days. It was a mushroom growth, and everybody there was bound and determined to make money.

> "There be Fayne-streetes, so filled with people, that they seeme to be paved even with the feete of men: whilst on eyther side shopes are . . . furnished and set forth with all rich and necessary commodities."(1)

Dekker enjoyed watching all the people milling round at the fair. They came from all walks of life -- rich man, poor-man, beggar-man and thief. Here the gallant was gulled; the city wife was decked out in finery; the puritan stalked abroad clothed in his own self-righteousness: the beggar stretched out an empty cap; the wastral made free with his father's estate, the prostitute picked up her "living", and the cunning pick-pocket loosed the strings of many bulging purses. A world "in little" for the wise man to contemplate.

However, although Dekker enjoyed the vital, competitive life of commercial London, he was not blind to the everyday abuses of trade; and being the man he was, at heart, honest and moral, he could not allow his friend to observe the mischief of money-making without showing him that petty crime did not pay. He pointed out the carelessness which often afflicted the Elizabethan tradesmen who,

> "threw by their tooles, neglected their trade, fled from their shops, and spent both their gettings and their goods in

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Dead Terme. Edited by A. Grosart. The Huth Library.

common bowling-allies, dicing houses and ale houses."(1)

He showered invective against many merchants who increased suffering by their hoarding of goods.

> "In times of plenty you transport your corne, butter, cheese and all needfull commodities into the countries, of purpose to famish and impoverish hated, whining wretches . . .
>
> Hire ware-houses, vaults underground, and cellars in the City, and in them imprison all necessary provisions for the belly, til the long nailes of famine breake open the dores, but suffer not you those treasured victuals to have their free liberties till you may make what prey you please of the buyers and cheapners . . . then the great will buy up all goods at higher price and afterwards sell to the poor at three times as much . . ."(2)

And lastly, within the various trades, Dekker saw signs of strife brought about by envy and jealousy. The making of money embittered men against each other and it was this fact. Dekker mourned sadly; for trade was becoming, less the bargaining of brothers, and more the cut-throat competition of a nest of vultures.

> "Tailors swore to tickle the Mercers, and measure out their Sattins and velvets without a yard before their faces, when the prowdest of them all should not dare to say Bo to a Taylors Goose. Shoomakers, had a spite to none but the rich Curriers, and swore with their very awle to flea off their skins (and the Tanners) over their eares, like old dead rabbets. Every soldier prickt downe one Goldsmiths name or another, or else the signe in stead of ye name, as the Goate, the Unicorne, the Bull, the Harte etc., swearing damnable oathes to pisse in nothing but silver in meere scorne, because he had oftentimes walked by a stall, when his teeth had watered at the golden bits lying there: yet coulde not so much as licke his lips after them. There was one little dwarfish

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Work of Armourers. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 119. The Huth Library.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Work of Armourers. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 148. The Huth Library.

> Cobbler with a bald pate, and a nose indented like a scotch saddle, who tooke bread and salt, and praised God it might be his last, if he ran not over all the fine dames that withstood him, in blacke revenge that hee never had their custome in his shope, because it could never be found out or seene, that any of them did ever treade her shooe awAy."(1)

The abuses were numerous, more than enough in trade; but from this commercial intercourse emanated the wealth and prosperity on which the City of London was founded. Her greatness grew out of the exchange of merchandize, and the worship of money. The Guildhall, the Royal Exchange, Cheapside and Sturbridge Fair -- all contributed to her unrivalled position in the Sixteenth Century.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Work of Armourers. Edited by A. Grosart, Vol. IV, p. 153. The Huth Library.

CHAPTER VI

Farewell to London

Before Dekker's friend took leave of the City, the two men hired a boat to go up the river as far as the City Wall and from there Dekker pointed out the great houses of the nobility that lined the river bank, Essex House, Arundel House, Somerset House, Savoy Palace -- all places of great interest and renown, and the homes of famous men. Then they looked across at Whitehall Palace -- the principal seat of the Tudor and Stuart Kings.

> "The palace covered acres of ground between the Thames and St. James's Palace. It was an enormous quadrangle, its centre the huge open space of the Priory Garden, and grouped round it, like a village around its green, was a mass of separate buildings, some of stone, some of brick, and some of half-timber. It was a picturesque place, as picturesque as any cathedral close."(1)

From this palace came the Royal edicts that ruled the land, from here destinies were made and destinies were terminated. Then they glanced across to the Palace of Westminster. Here was the centre of law and government. The Law courts were held in Westminster Hall, the Commons met in St. Stephen's Chapel and the Lords in the old Court of Requests. The astute politician at the time of the sixteenth century, could already see the powers of administration were moving from Whitehall to Westminster, and the more the monarchs demanded money, the greater would these powers of parliament become.

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(1) H. V. Morton. In Search of London, p. 208. London: Methuen, 1951.

However, Dekker did not stay long looking towards Westminster. Matters of government were outside his hands and his interest. He had only one home -- the City of London and he had only one love -- the people in its busy roadways. All his life he had lived either within the precincts of its wall or in Southwark all his life had been spent watching and trying to understand the hundreds of characters that worked and loved and suffered in this great battle for survival.

Evening was closing in as the boat flowed down river with the ebb tide, and the summer sunset was glinting on the spires of the city churches, on the mellowing grey walls of the Tower, and on the mansion-like buildings that balanced precariously on London Bridge. There could not be a finer time to leave the ancient city than at sundown for then it seemed crowned with a golden halo all its own, and men must stand in awe and whisper with Dekker, "O London, thou art great in glory."(1)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London. Edited by H. Brett-Smith, p. 9. Oxford: Blackwell, 1922.

PART II

CHAPTER VII

The Theatre in Dekker's Day

Thomas Dekker, the dramatist, was indeed fortunate to have been born at such a propitious moment in the history of the English theatre; for it is true to say that the years between 1572 and 1640 were the greatest in that field of creative work that the English stage has ever known. It is interesting to consider why this came about in the latter half of the sixteenth century. What suddenly precipitated the building of theatres, and the writing of plays?

The drama, in its simplest form, has a history almost as long as the history of man. It is a manner of self-expression used either to teach a lesson or just to entertain. The years previous to the reign of Elizabeth had seen various kinds of dramatic presentation. Bands of players belonging to the city gilds would put on miracle plays in the squares of the towns they visited. Some were "strolling" players, but others would remain in one locality. Nearly always their performances would take place in the open, on scaffolding erected for the occasion. Here would be presented the destiny of mankind as adapted from various parts of the Bible. This tradition of drama had its roots in the early ceremonies of the Christian church; and as years went by, and certain aspects became more ~~anti~~ sacri- religious, the drama moved out into the secular world. Morality plays, another dramatic form, having their roots in the sermon given from the mediaeval pulpit, would also be presented in the open air. Both types of dramatic

presentation set out to teach a lesson first, then to entertain.

There were, of course, other kinds of plays given in Tudor England. Some were performed in the Universities, and others were presented privately on certain royal or civic occasions. It was quite usual for plays to be acted during a banquet as part of the evening entertainment. This kind of play became known as the interlude. Dramas would also be given at the homes of the nobility, and a monarch "on progress" would expect his evenings to be well filled with the performance of plays. It is from these beginnings that the "Public Theatre" and the "Private Theatre" of Elizabeth's time developed.

. . . . . .

Plays were very popular in England. The audience loved spectacle, and their ears were tuned to listen to sermon and diatribe. Hence, as soon as it was known in London that the players were coming to town everybody would be ready to pay his penny, and crowd into the inn yard. The public companies presented most of their plays in the yards of famous inns such as the Boar's Head, Aldgate, and the Saracen's Head, Islington. The innkeepers were usually willing to agree to the arrangement because the larger the crowd gathered, the more drink they would sell. The City of London, however, was much against these public performances. The City Fathers feared the spreading of the plague, and also the hooliganism which often occurred

after a performance. They did their best to stop presentations, and on 27th November 1571 the Court of Aldermen ordered that no play or interlude should be allowed in any ward of the City upon Sundays, holy-days, or other days of the week, and should not be given at night. This effort, however, was ineffectual. Most of the adult players belonged to companies enjoying the patronage of nobility. They originated in the homes of these nobles and carried their names . . . hence, there were groups such as the Earl of Leicester's Men, the Lord Admiral's Company, the Lord Chamberlain's Company and the Earl of Worcester's men. Many of these nobles, especially those who had positions in the Privy Council, could override the decisions of the Aldermen. Such a situation developed over the city's ruling mentioned above, and on 6th December, about a week later, the Aldermen were obliged to yield to the pressure of nobility and grant a licence to the Earl of Leicester's men to play within the City.

This clash of ideas did not occur just once. The 1570's reveal a constant battle between the City and the nobility. The City were endeavouring always to keep play-acting at a minimum, the nobility, who enjoyed the entertainment given, were continually striving to get licences and patents for their companies. They were often successful, because the Queen herself much enjoyed a good play, and often overruled the city with a Royal Patent as she did in 1573, thereby giving the monarch's permission for Leicester's men to perform within the City.

The City, however, did not give way altogether, and men in the theatre business soon began to devise other means and localities for the presentation of plays. London had already grown beyond its boundaries, and the suburbs were not under the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor, but were ruled by the magistrates of Middlesex and Surrey who were far easier to persuade. James Burbage who led the Earl of Leicester's men, realized that the acting of plays would be a very profitable business if it could be freed from the interference of the authorities, and the fees demanded by the innkeepers. He therefore decided that the best way to circumvent both difficulties would be to build a place solely for the presentation of plays, and to do so outside the City boundaries.

On the edge of Finsbury, in Shoreditch, Burbage found the site he needed. It was owned by one Giles Alleyn, and included some old tenement buildings and a stable. Between the two, however, was a piece of land large enough for the erection of a theatre. On the 13th April 1576 Burbage and Alleyn signed a lease, and the Theatre came into being. The charge for admission was one penny, which went to the players, and another penny or two pennies for admission to the galleries, which went to the landlords as rent. The occupying companies seem to have been: Leicesters 1576-78, Warwick's -- Oxford's 1579-82, Queen's on occasions between 1583 and 1589, Admiral's 1590-91, and Chamberlain's 1594-96.

This was the beginning. It was a most important event in

the progress of the drama because at last the players had a "home" of their own. They could establish themselves within one place, and have every opportunity for the rehearsals of their works. Almost immediately another theatre was built, just south of the Theatre in the parish of Shoreditch. It derived its name "The Curtain" from a piece of land called Curtain Close. Little is known about the building of this playhouse, but it is presumed that one Henry Laneman was responsible, for he rented Curtain Close, and in 1585, made a seven year agreement with James Burbage to pool the profits of the two theatres. It is believed that the Chamberlain's Company played mostly at the Curtain, and for a while in 1603 it became the home of the Worcester's -- Queen's Men.

These first theatres were built on the north bank of the Thames. The late ones, the Globe and the Rose were constructed on the Southwark side of the river. The story of the beginning of the Globe is interesting. It was started when the lease on the Theatre site expired, and Giles Allen, the owner of the land, threatened to pull it down, because of the many vices it was believed to foster. The Burbages who owned the building anticipated his action and it is said that in January 1599, they organized a riotous company, went to the site of the Theatre and carried away all the wood and timber they could find, and brought it to Bankside for the erection of their new theatre. The land had belonged to Nicholas Brend, but it was conveyed in two halves, one half to the Burbages, Richard and Cuthbert -- sons of James -- and

the other half, in five equal shares, to Shakespeare, Heminge, Phillips, Pope and Kempe. Thus the cylindrical outline ~~in~~ of the famous Globe Theatre made its appearance on the London skyline. The fact that this theatre was owned by directors, actors and playwrights, and that all were called upon to assist in its upkeep; and also all shared in its profits, gave this company, the Chamberlain's, a tremendous sense of unity which helped in the presentation and in the actual writing of plays. Shakespeare was a man of the theatre, and this was partly responsible for his skill in play construction, and his excellent sense of the dramatic moment.

The name of Burbage will always be associated with the Theatre and the Globe, and with the tremendous impetus these theatres gave to the writers of plays. However, he was really one of three great men of the Elizabethan theatre. Philip Henslowe also had a very important part to perform. He too, realized the importance of every theatrical company having "a home", and in 1587, he formed a partnership with John Cholmley and began the building of the Rose Theatre on Bankside in the Liberty of the Clink. From accounts, it appears to have been built of timber and plaster on a brick foundation, and had a thatched roof. It became the home of the Strange's Company and later of the Admiral's Company, and remained so until 1600 when the Fortune Theatre was built by the third eminent figure of the Elizabethan theatre, Edward Alleyn.

Alleyn was an actor before all else. He was born in 1566, and by 1583, when only sixteen, he was a full member of the Earl of

Worcester's company. Later he transferred to the Lord Admiral's company and thereafter remained with them. Thomas Nashe considered him one of the most outstanding actors of all time.

> "Not Roscius not Aesop, those admired tragedians that have lived ever since before Christ was born, could ever perform more in action than famous Ned Allen."(1)

Edward Alleyn was not only an actor, however, but also a shrewd business man. He knew that if he was to make the theatre profitable, he must have a good stage and expert playwrights. In 1592 he married Joan Woodward, the step-daughter of Philip Henslowe, and later he formed a partnership with Henslowe, and began the building of the Fortune Theatre, north of Cripplegate in the liberty of Finsbury. Alleyn did a very great deal for the men of the theatre world. He amalgamated the Strange's Company and the Admiral's, and during the Plague in London took them on tour, so that the companies would not be broken up. He not only kept acting talent together, but maintained a high standard of acting, and encouraged the writing ability of London's many dramatists.

The drama would never have flourished as it did, during Dekker's life-time, if there had not been a receptive audience, and these three remarkable men. They realized the power of this popular demand, and by their foresight in the construction of theatres, they turned a dream into reality. Plays were no longer just an entertainment

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(1) Thomas Nashe. Piers Pennilesse. Edited by R.B. McKerrow, i, 215.

for the nobility, they were for the edification and enjoyment of every London citizen, and this audience was to become a most exacting task-master.

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Just as the Public Theatre grew out of the performances of strolling players, and local gild companies, the Private Theatre had its roots in the play-acting given at court to entertain the king and nobility. Both answered a very pressing demand, and complied with public taste. Before the decade of the University Wits (1583-93) -- Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, Lyly etc., -- the performances given by the public companies were "rough and tumble" because the people in the market square enjoyed their entertainment that way; however, Elizabeth and the Court enjoyed more cultural performances, and therefore this period reveals the growing success of the Children's Companies. These Companies were made up of choristers who had been trained by scholars, and accomplished musicians to present the court and the nobility with intellectual plays. The Children of the Chapel Royal had quite a long history. The "Chapel" was established in the twelfth century as part of the Royal household, and by 1603, consisted of the Dean, Sub-dean, thirty-two Gentlemen (priests and laymen), including the Master of the Children, and twelve children. These children were formed into a Company ~~in 1509~~, to perform court interludes. They had many talented Masters -- among whom were William Cornish, Richard Edwardes, William

Hunnis and Nathaniel Giles. These men realized that the boys had certain advantages over the adult players. They were all well educated and had knowledge of the classics, and a speaking knowledge of Latin and Greek; many had excellent voices, as they were chosen from choristers, and could therefore speak out in good audible voices, and sing the many Elizabethan songs which the nobility enjoyed. As women did not act on the stage in Elizabeth's time, these parts had to be taken by boys, and the Children were more able to present these female characters gracefully, than the adult players. Thus it is not surprising that the boy actors achieved success.

Another important company was that of St. Pauls. In the twelfth century, a grammar school attached to St. Paul's Cathedral was founded, and at the same time a cathedral choir school. The boys attended the choir school for their musical education, and went to the grammar school for their more academic studies. The boys of the choir school became known as the Children of Paul's. They too were fortunate in having very talented Masters such as Sebastian Westcott 1557-82. Thomas Giles 1584-1579 and Edward Peers. They performed many times at court, at private houses, and at the Blackfriar's Theatre in many of Lyly's plays.

The Blackfriars' Theatre was first used as such, when Richard Ferrant, Master of the Chapel Children, leased the upper half of a building sited on the property of a Dominican Friary, for the public performance of plays before they were presented at Court. Ferrant

died in 1580 but his plans were continued by William Hunnis and Henry Evans. In 1584, however, Sir William More who had leased the property took back the buildings, and concluded the history of the first Blackfriars. The Second Blackfriars' Theatre was adapted from the buildings bought from More for £600 by James Burbage in 1596, and was leased from him to Henry Evans, until the latter gave up this right, and the Blackfriars' became the home of the King's Men in 1608 -- a company which consisted of Richard Burbage, Cuthbert Burbage, Shakespeare, Heminge, Cordell, Sly and Thomas Evans. It was during the years when the children's companies played at Blackfriars, that they became so popular in London.

The Children of the King's Revels and the Children of Windsor were two smaller companies, whose periods of success were more short-lived than the other two. However, they performed often at court, and the Blackfriars' Theatre, and did much to provide pleasant entertainment for the nobility.

Thomas Dekker wrote for both adult and child players, and many of the famous playwrights did the same thing. At one point, it was feared that their popularity of the boy players would supercede that of the adult group, and Shakespeare mentions the unadvisability of this in his play "Hamlet". However, the presence of so many talented adult and child companies, and the growth of established theatres where they could rehearse and present their plays gave a tremendous impetus to the production of dramatic works. Here were the

houses, the acting talent, the avid critical audience, the necessary instability to prevent any complacency appearing within the companies . . ., and at the same time in the same city, such dramatists of genius as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Marston, John Webster, Cyril Tourneur, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, John Ford and George Chapman. The propitious moment had arrived.

CHAPTER VIII

The Comic Tradition

The history of comedy is as old as the history of man. It is a fundamental part of human nature to invoke laughter by some strange action or remark. It is a way of releasing pent up emotions, it is a way of showing enjoyment of life. In considering the comic tradition of drama, we must turn back to a period when plays had a most receptive audience, to the classical works of ancient Greece. The Grecian drama, as in other lands, had its roots in religious ceremonies. As Allardyce Nicoll states in his "British Drama" the wine-flushed devotees of Dionysus, arraying themselves in symbolic garments, led the way towards satiric comedy; the more stately worshippers at the altars of majestic gods showed men the possibilities of tragic emotion."(1)

The rise of Greek drama is interesting to study. It started with the common chant, and developed into the primitive dialogue between a leader, probably in the robes of a god, and the chorus. This kind of antiphonal song was elaborated, and developed a narrative. Then the leaders became two instead of one, and the chorus took a back place, no longer representing the protagonist. Thus the play was born -- with two or three dramatized figures on the stage. Greek comedy was chiefly satirical, and developed from situations of intrigue. Aristophanes and Menander were two of its exponents. From their pens

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(1) Allardyce Nicoll. British Drama. P. 15. Published by George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1925.

came involved plots concerning stock characters, such as the scheming slave, the doting father, the wayward children, and the miserly uncles -- all characters that were to influence the world of comedy for hundreds of years. This was partly due to the fact that in every historical period, they were the source of comedy; and amusement could be gained by the ludicrous, self revealing situations in which they found themselves. Aristophanes' plays are not only important for character portrayals, but also for the caricaturing of leading personages of the time.

This satirical treatment became known as the New Comedy of Greece, and this tradition was received and developed by Terence and Plautus in Roman times. The stock characters became the tools of comedy -- the braggart, the coward, the parasite, the courtesan, the pantalone (miserly father) and the prodigal. They were all caught up in a cunning entanglement, which threw their respective characters into relief.

The themes of comedy became stereotyped. The love chase was a favourite theme. It had variations -- the old man futilely pursuing the young girl; the romantic lover deceiving everyone, and carrying the girl off; the story of the persistent maiden and the indifferent gallant. All became vehicles for humorous situation.

Another favourite theme was that of prodigality which introduced the wastrel son; and that of guile, which allowed free scope for plots of intrigue, and characters who perpetrated deception.

Another theme was that of patience in the face of adversity, and illustrated the limits of endurance to which any human being could be forced. The basic struggles of the drama were those of age against youth, and evil against good.

The Romans not only developed character and plot, but also used a very witty, racy dialogue, which became an indivisible part of good cultural comedy. The plays of Terence were alert and cleverly constructed and were obviously written for a small aristocratic audience. This interest in the cut and thrust of speech became organic to good comedy and was an inheritance used extensively by sixteen century dramatists.

Another influence may have been received from Rome. During the years of the break-up of the Roman Empire, theatrical performances tended towards spectacle, buffoonery and farce. It is possible that many of these relics of Roman comedy were carried on by wandering players such as minstrels, acrobats and "jongleurs". If this happened, it was the only kind of entertainment available, for there is no evidence of regular drama being held between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Mystery plays.

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The Mystery Plays grew out of the religious ceremonies of the Catholic Church, in much the same way, as the Greek drama had its origin in pagan rites. The mediaeval church was serious and

mystical in its observances, but it also allowed for laughter. The true bishop was complemented by the so-called "boy-bishop" and his riotous company; the various solemn feasts had their complement in the Feast of Fools.

The very serious celebration of the Mass and its accompanying ritual gave rise to the indigenous drama. Its elaborate tropes and antiphonal singing suggested dramatic form; and the "Quem Quaeritis" theme of Easter very soon became detached from the regular service and developed into a play. These Latin playlets made up of dialogue and action were soon translated into the vernacular, and although they were acted within the walls of the church, they were moving nearer to the people in content and form. However, as long as the drama remained within the church it had to deal only with religious subjects. Many plays were tinged with anti-clericism, and should have been dealt with in secular surroundings; and as the spectators at Christmas and Easter became more and more unmanageable within sacrasanct locations, the performances were given outside, in the space surrounding the church. This marks the break-away of the primitive drama from the service of the Mass. It also marks the performance of plays as a community effort, for the town guilds took over the presentation, and carried on the tradition until the sixteenth century.

The Miracle Plays were acted by amateurs under the auspices of the trade guilds. They were usually performed in the market place on platforms which were erected for the occasion. The top half would

create the stage, the lower half was used as dressing rooms. The cycles of plays -- the Coventry, Chester, York and Townley plays were religious in origin and usually presented the destiny of Man as illustrated by a Biblical story. However, the audience who devoutly watched the conquering of evil, were not averse to a good coarse joke, and thus the serious theme of these miracle plays was often shattered by the introduction of a 'fabliaux". Comedy went hand in hand with tragedy in the Mystery plays; and it was comedy of the people, light and fresh and filled with a rich fund of good humour.

Nowhere is this comedy more ably exemplified than in the "Secunda Pastorum". This play belongs to the Townéley Cycle which deals with Noah, the Shepherds, the Adoration and the last days of Christ. The comedy concerns the shepherds who go to seek the child Jesus. They are shown sleeping soundly when Mak comes in and steals one of their lambs. When his companions awake they discover their loss and go to Mak's cottage. Mak has already wrapped the lamb in blankets and put it in a cradle. When the other shepherd's enter they desire to see the little child, and look in upon the long snout of the so-called "baby"! Thus the comedy begins; and ~~it~~ the humorous incident ends with a riot of fun and Mak being tossed in a blanket.

Thus the Mystery and Miracle Plays certainly made a contribution to the tradition of comedy. They gave to the English people a taste for theatrical show; they presented a form of native English humour full of freshness and vitality which embraced not only rough

buffoonery, but the quick cut and thrust of good dialogue. Here were the elements of originality, which combined with classical form, would lay the foundation for early English comedy.

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One particular playwright did much to shape this tradition of drama. His name was John Heywood and he was born towards the close of the fifteenth century, in 1497 or 1495. His work was distinctive, and different from the miracle and morality plays. Firstly, he dispensed with all didactic aims and allegorical machinery, and also, he gave a realistic dramatization of contemporary citizen types. The characterization of his plays is much more individual than that of his contemporaries. Heywood was exposed to certain foreign influences, namely the "soties" or farces, which were popular in France, and these realistic, down-to-earth incidents, gave a new verve and liveliness to his work.

His "The Play of the Wether" introduces a truly comic character, the Vice, Mery-reporte. The plot is that of the "debat theme", but the characters are becoming more individualized. The problem of the management of the weather gives scope to a range of characters and ideas. The "gentylman" wants dry and windless weather suitable for hunting; the merchant begs for variable, but not violent winds; the water-miller wants rain without wind and so on. At last Jupiter, declares that all petitioners shall have the weather they have asked for, but in turn. The idea of comedy for amusement's sake is beginning

to appear, and with it, plots of a secular nature, with no religious overtones, and also characters who have individuality enough to "live" after the play is over. Mery-reporte, the "bouncing, self-confident rogue with an ungovernably free tongue",(1) has taken on definite, substantial humanity.

His next notable contribution to the tradition of comedy was "The Foure P.P." a play concerning four characters, the palmer, pardoner, 'potycory and pedler. F.S. Boas describes the drama in this manner.

> "The opening wrangle between the palmer, the pardoner and the 'potycory on the merits of their respective vocations is in Heywood's characteristic manner. The entry of the light-hearted pedler -- a true fore-runner of Autolycus -- with his well filled pack, turns the talk into a more broadly humorous vein ending in a song. The newcomer is then asked to decide between the claims of the three rivals, but he modestly declines to judge 'in maters of weyght'. As, however, he has some skill in lying, and, as lying is their 'comen usage' he offers to pronounce upon their relative merits in this respect. After some preliminary skirmishing, in which the pardener vaunts the virtues of his remarkable assortment of relics, and the 'potycary those of his equally wonderful collection of medicines, the pedler proposes that each shall tell a tale as a test of his powers of falsification. Though these tales are not organically related to the preceding dialogue, they give Heywood an opportunity for the display of his remarkable narrative faculty at its best."(2)

Thus, it is correct to say, that in Heywood's work, are to be found the beginnings of true comedy. Here are the elements of intrigue, the developed character portrayal, the tersely written, vivacious

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(1) F.S. Boas. Early English Comedy. P. 94. Cambridge History of English Literature. Volume V.
(2) F.S. Boas. Early English Comedy. P. 95.

dialogue, and the desire on the part of the playwright to entertain by amusing situation and conversation.

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The final welding of all the different elements of comedy mentioned so far was achieved by Nicholas Udall in his play "Ralph Roister-Doister". This is the sole work which illustrates his dramatic powers. He was born in Hampshire in 1505 and was educated at Winchester and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His classical education was of immense value, because it was this knowledge, which revolutionized the drama. Following in the footsteps of Plautus and Terence, he substituted for the loosely knit structure of the English morality, or the debat technique or the French farce, an organic plot divided into acts and scenes. He also used many of the "stock" characters of Latin comedy -- such as the braggart, the miser, and the parasite, and changed them to suit English surroundings. He modified classical ideas to coalesce with the native drama. In the person of Merygreeke he succeeded in anglicising a classical type, but he is not this only, for the whimsical mischief maker has much in common with the Vice of the late morality plays.

Lastly, mention must be made of a Cambridge farce called "Gammer Gurton's Needle", played at Christ's College not much later than 1550. This displayed the same features. The story of the play is very slight, and concerns the loss of a needle, but the following

intrigues and jealousies are skilfully intertwined. The setting is rustic, and some of the characters speak a rural dialect,yet basically they are the types presented in the plays of Terence.

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This was the comic tradition which Thomas Dekker inherited, when in the sixteenth century, he began the writing of plays. It was made up of the classical influences of plot and characterization evident in the works of Terence and Plautus; it was strongly rooted in the miracle and morality tradition of the native drama, and it bore the marks of foreign overtones in the manner of the French "sotie". From the one source, it had drawn form, character interest and satiric "bite", from the other it had received a fresh native approach, a colourful appealing kind of presentation and much witty dialogue; from the third it inherited robust humour and knock-about buffoonery. In the London of Dekker's day, was an audience desirous to be entertained and amused; people who loved to see a spectacle and to hear the rant and rage of fine oratory. They were willing to pay their hard-earned money to witness a good play, and therefore theatres were built to answer their demand. These many factors led to the most flourishing period of dramatic production England has ever known. There were "great men" and "little men" among the playwrights, and all contributed their share, and all left their varying messages in the hearts of men. Thomas Dekker was among the worthy brotherhood of playwrights, in this glorious age, and he had his own very special contribution to make to Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama.

CHAPTER IX

Dekker's "Mediaeval" Plays

Dekker's contribution to the drama must be weighed and carefully evaluated, and this presents quite a problem, because he not only wrote plays entirely by himself, but he often joined with other playwrights in the construction of plots and the creation of characters. Also his work ranged from comic plays based on the morality pattern, to realistic comedies of citizen life; and as well as comedy, he produced many good masques to grace certain civic occasions, and some plays of an historic nature.

Three plays make up the "Mediaeval" group, and consist of "Old Fortunatus", "Patient Grissel" and "If it be not good the Devil is in it". These plays have been placed together because each in its own individual way is based upon a mediaeval theme or idea, and is in the tradition of the miracle and morality dramas. They link Dekker's work with the earlier English comedies.

"Old Fortunatus" was one of Dekker's first plays. It was presented at court on December 27th, 1599 as part of the Christmas celebrations for Queen Elizabeth. The only printed edition was the quarto of 1600. This play was written for a specific occasion, and therefore, it is not surprising to find the work filled with eloquent tributes to the Queen. Most of the dramas written for court occasions began in this manner. It was an honour to the monarch to be so addressed and gave Elizabeth pleasure, also it revealed a little of the true reverence and respect in which Elizabeth was held at the

turn of the century. She was no longer a young woman, but she had given the country stable government and comparative peace for most of her reign. She had also revealed skill and craft in the "chess-game" of politics, and being a woman of extraordinary personality and will-power, she had become almost a myth to the people she ruled. She was addressed as Pandora, Gloriana, Cynthia, Belphoebe and Astrea -- as tributes to her greatness, and the feelings of the two old men in the court reflect the "patriotic Elizabethan".

> "That which all true Subjects should: when I was young, an armed hand; now I am crooked, an upright heart."(1)

They weep to see the world decay, but yet Elizabeth remains to them a symbol of youth, strength and beauty.

There may indeed have been a little self-delusion in this attitude, for as well as the myth of Elizabeth's greatness, was the fear that when she died, there would be no comparable heir or successor to take the throne.

The theme of "Old Fortunatus" is very old, a theme used by Chaucer, and by morality playwrights through the centuries. It hinges on the idea of the Wheel of Fortune. Fortune is an objective, unfeeling force that rules the destinies of men. Life, for most people, consists of a scramble to rise on Fortune's wheel. As long as their progress is upward, they are happy and the comedy of life is

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. I, p. 117. Cambridge: University Press, 1953.

supreme, but when they fall from their prosperity and drop from the cycle of greatness, then they are plunged into tragedy. The more important the status of the man involved, the greater is his mishap, and thus it is most exciting to watch the destiny of kings. This idea of the Wheel of Fortune is activated by the morality framework of Vice and Virtue, who are in constant competition for the soul of men, and thus the fall from prosperity is due to sinfulness, the rise is brought about by virtue. These are the underlying ideas of the mediaeval pattern, but in "Old Fortunatus" we see an interesting semi-inversion of this concept, and inversion which was carried to an extreme by Marlowe in his Dr. Faustus.

At the beginning of the play old Fortunatus is shown with his Echoe. The old man is poorly dressed and out of luck. He is at the bottom of the Wheel of Fortune. He sees the world as a place of "Popiniayes and Squirrels, and Apes, and Owles, and Dawes and Wagtails", a place where most men are fools, and really unhappy ones are the poverty stricken. To accentuate the folly of the times, a masque is introduced in which the Carter, the Tailor, the Monk and Shepherd are crowned to show their rise in status, whilst the four kings are introduced with broken scepters. They are chained and led in by Lady Fortune. She has spurned their greatness, and they are now at the bottom of the Wheel. This farce of Fortune is seen as something illogical and unreasonable. Men are just Fortune's toys.

> "This world is Fortunes ball wherewith she sports
> Sometimes I strike it up into the ayre,

And then create I Emperorows and kings:
Sometimes I spurne it: at which spurne crawles out
That wild beast multitude . . .

Tis I that tread on neckes of Conquerours . . .

Being swolne with their own greatnesse, I have prickt
The bladder of their pride and made them die.

Some great men are overthrown because of their pride, but more often Fortune works without actual reason.

"I thrust base cowards into Honours chaine,
While the true spirite Souldiour stands by
Bare headed, and all bare, whilst at his skarres
They skoffe, that nere durst view the face of warres
Iset an Ideots cap on vertues head
Turne learning out of doores, clothe wit in ragges,
And paint ten thousand images of hoame,
In gawdie silken colours; on the backes
Of Mules and Asses I make asses ride,
Onely for sport, to see the Apish world
Worship such beasts with fond idolatrie."(1)

Dekker is here making a social criticism against the new values of the time, when the new middle class were rising in status, the nobility losing their power. He is also revealing some of the injustices of the time when wounded soldiers were left uncared for, and learning did not receive its true rewards.

Fortune decides to have her "joke", and to take the poor man Fortunatus and to advance him in life,

"This begger ile advance
Beyond the sway of thought."

She gives six gifts to mortality -- wisdom, strength, health, beauty,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Vol. I, p. 119.

long life and riches. These she will offer to Fortunatus and he may make his choice. Fortunatus considers each in turn, and finally draws to this conclusion.

> "The wisdom of this world is Idiotisme,
> Strength a weake neede: Health sicknesse enemie,
> (And it at length will have the victorie)
> Beauty is but a painting, and long life
> Is a long journey in December gone,
> Tedious and full of tribulation.
> Therefore dread sacred Empresse make me rich
> My choice is store of gold; the rich are wise,
> He that upon his backe rich garments weares,
> Is wise, though on his head grow Midas eares.
> Gold is the strength, the sinnewes of the world,
> The Health, the soule, the beautie most divine
> A maske of Gold hides all deformities
> Gold is heavens phisicke, lifes restorative,
> Oh therefore make me rich: Not as the wretch,
> That onely serves leane banquets to his eye,
> Has Gold, yet starves: is famisht in his store:
> No let me ever spend, be nevere poore."(1)

Thus Fortunatus disregards wisdom, and chooses riches (a contemporary attitude). To Fortunatus, the greatest misery in the world was poverty; with an everlasting supply of money he felt he could buy everything a man would desire. The decision is therefore made -- a wrong decision, and the audience now watches as the plot unfolds and the retribution is meted out.

Fortunatus is the central characterof the play, and he motivates the action. His decisions immediately have repercussions on other people,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Vol. I, p. 120.

principally his two sons, Ampedo and Andelocia. These characters are drawn in sharp contrast, in the mediaeval manner. Ampedo is the virtuous brother, Andelocia the wicked one. They do not develop these separate ways until after Fortunatus receives his wealth. Yet the potential for good or evil is already present. It is the power of money, which makes Andelocia into the wily, shiftless person he becomes. The "foil" who throws both characters into relief is the humorous Shadow. He represents Flattery, and he is a constant servant to Andelocia. Before Fortunatus arrives with his money, Andelocia is dissatisfied with the poverty he is suffering; Ampedo is more philosophical and advises his brother to

> "Turne your eyes inward, and behold your soule,
> That wants more then your body: burnish that
> With glittering Virtue:(1)

It was a sign of the times, that Andelocia, seeing his father dressed extravagantly like a gallant, should comment.

> "I doubt for all your bragging, you'le prove like most of our gallants in Famagoosta, that have a rich outside and a beggarly inside . . ."(2)

However, he is only too happy to receive the gift of ten pieces of gold, given to him by Fortunatus; and he takes full advantage of Fortunatus' advice -- which is to use the gold to "appear" wealthy.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Vol. I, p. 129 and 130.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Vol. I, p. 130.

"Glitter, my boyes, like Angels, that the world
May (whilst our life in pleasures circle ronnes)
Wonder at Fortunatus and his sonnes."(1)

The Masque element is used very cleverly in this play to reflect and substantiate the main theme. The old morality device of Vice and Virtue ~~are~~ *is* introduced to show the deceit of the times; appearance and reality are difficult to distinguish. Thus Vice has a gilded face and horns, her garment in front is decorated with silver half-moons; but on the back of this garment are painted fools' faces and devils' heads.

Virtue has a coxcomb on her head, and to all appearances is a fool; only on the back of her garment are crowns and stars to reveal her true nature. The other dancers, followers of Vice, wear vizards and carry a Tree of Gold with apples on it -- a fair tree, prosperous with fruit; the followers of Virtue carry a tree with "greene and withered leaves mingled together, and little fruit on it." Such was the perversion of the times, when Vice triumphed. The morality figures set up their trees in defiance of each other, but the difference between them is significant. The priest sings:

"Vertue is exilde from every Cittie,
Vertue is a foole, Vice onely wise."(2)

Fortune cares little which of the two prosper -- for as she states

"the Queene of chance
Both vertuous soules and vicious doth advance."

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. Vol. I, p. 132.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. p. 133.

Then Fortune states why Virtue no longer attracts people. She is not dressed attractively; she does not allow for show or for loose morals. The world has grown childish again and only falls for a painted face. However, both Virtue and Vice intend to battle for the soul of mankind in the old morality tradition.

The next Act sees the fall of old Fortunatus. He has been rich and proud and now finds himself at the bottom of Fortune's wheel wishing he had chosen wisdom instead of riches. However, this ill-fortune is as short-lived as Lady Luck's whim, and quickly she raises him once more to fame. Fortunatus is found in the court of the great Emperor Souldan, and the latter is willing to strike a bargain. In return for Fortunatus' purse, Souldan will show him "wondrous sights" including a magic hat, which once placed upon the head will transport a person

> "in a moment, over Seas,
> And over lands to any secrete place:
> By this I steale to every Princes court
> And heare their private councels . . ."(1)

Fortunatus tricks Souldan into letting him try on the hat, and then quickly escapes with it. This hat is also symbolic of Souldan's soul, so that Souldan has indeed lost a precious jewel by trickery. This part of the play is almost Marlovian in manner and verse form, a point which this quotation will illustrate.

Sould: "Wel-come, most welcome to the Soldiers court,
Stay here and be the king of Babylon,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. p. 133.

Stay here, and I will more amaze thine eyes
With wondrous nights, then can all Asia:
Behold yon towne, there stands mine Armoirie,
In which are Corslets forg'd of beaten gold,
To arme ten hundred thousand fighting men,
Whose glittering squadrons when the Sunne beholds,
They seeme like to ten hundred thousand Joves,
When Jove on the proud back of thunder rydes
Trapt all in lightning flames."(1)

Fortunatus' fame, however, is short-lived. He uses his powers to travel widely and to enjoy every kind of pleasure he can find, but soon the old pride fills his soul again and as Fortune says

"where thy proud feete doe tread
These shal throw downe thy cold and breathlesse head . . .
Thy Sunne like glorie hath advanced her selfe
Into the top of prides Meridian
And downe amain it comes . . .

Thou hadst thy fancie, I must have thy fate
Which is, to die when th'art most fortunate."(2)

His final plea before his death is wisdom for his sons -- but this is refused. By choosing riches, Fortunatus, like Dr. Faustus, sold his soul, committed the unpardonable sin of avarice, and thus cannot look for redemption. Before he dies he leaves his purse and the Wishing Hat to be divided between Ampedo and Andelocia. Thus the sin of Fortunatus is to be visited upon his heirs.

The first part of the morality patternhas been worked out at this stage, and Vice is supreme, having captured Fortunatus' soul. However, in this play there is a lack of the beneficent power in the

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 138.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 147.

background. The "norm" of life is not seen as the power of Good. The Vice and Virtue are the servants of Fortune, and this force is a strange, illogical creature, who acts by whim, and often for the sake of malice. If Virtue should overcome Vice at the end of the play it will be more a stroke of luck than a matter of moral destiny. The reason for this change seems to be that Dekker presented life as he witnessed it at the end of the sixteenth century, and by this time the old mediaeval pattern of morality and social ideals had been replaced by the acquisitive values of the new merchant classes. Their rise to power and wealth was not "morally" allowable, for they made money through personal profit, but their place in society certainly seemed, to the onlooker, to be a matter of luck and business acumen. Dekker did not entirely invert his values as Marlowe was to do in Dr. Faustus, but he did modify his framework to express his view of life.

The character of Fortunatus is individualised. He is not just the figure of mankind who is caught up between the contending forces of good and evil. He stands out from the play as a man, who from the beginning, finds himself the child of circumstance. Yet he is a man with a developed character. He has known the misfortunes attendant on poverty, and these have warped him, so that he is jealous of success, and eager for any means to appear wealthy and powerful, even if he must embrace evil to achieve them. Once he has grasped money he spends it recklessly on luxury, pleasure and travel (the sins of the century); he achieves no good whatsoever, and merely becomes more crafty and

crooked and proud than before. This can only last a while, for good fortune does not befriend an extravagant man for long.

The second half of the play concerns the two sons Andelocia and Ampedo, and their reaction to the money and power bequeathed to them by their father. There is no element of surprise about what they do, for already their characters have determined the way in which the plot will evolve. Andelocia would take all, if he could, but finally decides to have the money, and leave Ampedo the Hat. Andelocia then leaves for England. A completely new group of characters are here introduced into the play -- the nobility -- Athelstone, the English king, Agripyne, his daughter, Orleans, the French prisoner and other suitors for Agripyne's hand in marriage. Agripyne is the heroine of the second part of the play. She is sarcastic and unscrupulous, but an intelligent woman, and Dekker voices social criticism, through her comments.

> "What lady can abide to love a spruce Silken face Courtier that stands every morning two or three hours learning how to look by his glass . . .
>
> wee poore women doe but smile in our sleeves to see all this fopperie; yet we all desire to see our lovers attirde gallantly, to heare them sing sweetly, to behold them daunce comely and such like."(1)

We expect little good to come from Agripyne, for she sets out to torment the love stricken Orleans, to torment with malicious glee.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 156.

"I was about to cast my litle litle selfe into a great love trance for him, fearing his heart had been flint, but since I see this pure virgin wax he shall melt his belly-full: for now I know how to temper him".(1)

The rest of the play becomes a battle of wits between two unscrupulous masters of craft, Andelocia and Agripyne; and the audience's whole interest is absorbed in this intrigue. Agripyne is the more astute of the two. She uses her feminine appeal to steal Andelocia's purse; this she gains whilst he sleeps with his head in her lap. Andelocia does not learn one wit of wisdom from this experience, but goes to Ampedo, steals his Wishing Hat, and pursues Agripyne again, this time to get back his purse. She entices him to climb the tree of Vice, after he has spurned the tree of Virtue, and to pluck a golden apple for her. Whilst in the tree, she complains of the heat, and he throws down the Wishing Hat to protect her. Immediately, she flies off with it, and Andelocia is made the fool a second time. He has abused wealth and knowledge, and is now the captive of Vice. In the following masque, Andelocia shows some repentence and kneels to Virtue, and thus the battle of his soul is taken up equally again.

The comedy of the play to this point has been activated by Shadow in his comments, and by the intrigue of Agripyne; now, Dekker introduces a humorous disguise plot, when Adelocia dressed as the French doctor, Doctor Dodipoll, professes to be able to remove the

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 158.

"fool's horns" from Agripyne and the English courtiers. They have eaten of Vice's apples. He mixes the medicine, makes them turn their backs, and when they turn round again, has made his escape with money, the Hat and Agripyne.

At the conclusion of the play Ampedo burns the Hat and the purse, and dies of a broken heart; Andelocia is refused forgiveness from Virtue and Fortune.

> "Riches and knowledge are two gifts divine,
> They that abuse them both as I have done,
> To shame, to beggerie, to hell must runne
> O Conscience, hold thy sting, cease to afflict me."(1)

He is carried off by Vice. The other characters are allowed to live, but always with a tormented conscience. In the final moral judgment in which Virtue is triumphant there is an unusual twist to Ampedo's destiny. He becomes the slave of Vice, not because he practised evil, but because he did not show "active" virtue.

> "So perish they that so keepe vertue poare."(2)

The morality pattern at the end of the play is falsified, in as much as the supremacy of Virtue is only achieved by outside means, not constituent to the play. Virtue is deified by the power of Queen Elizabeth's unspoken judgment. This was a final tribute to the Queen maybe, but it was not altogether a satisfactory way to tie up the strands of the plot and to adjust the balance.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 191-2.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Old Fortunatus. P. 192.

This play "Old Fortunatus" follows the morality framework, but Dekker has made modifications. His universe is no longer beneficent; his characters have developed individuality, his values reveal the acquisitive instincts of the sixteenth century. The play has great moments and weak moments, and suffers from its episodic design. It lacks a central point, a moment of climax. It has all the elements of a good play, but falls down in the construction. As a morality play, the message is clear, the reward for sin is death, but Dekker does not attempt to solve the problem of the very active power of Evil in the Universe, even when Elizabeth has redressed the balance it is questionable whether the power of good is supreme.

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"The Pleasant Comodie of the Patient Grissill" is also a "mediaeval" play in as much as it uses a mediaeval theme, but a theme modified to allow for social comment and criticism. It is believed that this work was a combined effort of Dekker, Chettle and Houghton, because Philip Henslowe paid ten guineas to these men for the said play. It was performed by the Earl of Nottingham's "servants". The first and only printed quarto appeared in 1603, printed for Henry Rocket by Edward Allde.

As this play reveals the combined talents of three playwrights, it is no easy matter to judge the extent of Dekker's contribution. However, in the light of his other dramatic works, it is time to say,

I think, that Dekker was responsible for the form of the minor plots and for most of the characters therein.

The central idea, the proving of fidelity by trial, was a theme prevalent in mediaeval literature, particularly the trial of the patient wife by the suspicious husband. Dekker was exceedingly interested in the character portrayal of women, and this is well illustrated in "Patient Grissil", for here we have three separate plots in which the social position of woman is seen to be greatly the result of personal character.

The first plot -- the one revealing the least of Dekker's work -- portrays the patient woman, whose badge is sufferance. Grissel is the daughter of Janiculo, a poor-basket-maker. She is discovered by the rich Marquis, who, drawn by her simplicity and beauty, stoops to a marriage below his social rank. He acts against the advice of his friends, and is subject to the prejudice of his own class. However, he is determined to raise up Grissel and her family in the social sphere and this he does.

> "I'le gild that povertie, and make it shine,
> With beames of dignitee . . ."(1)

It is only later, that the Marquis decides to test Grissel's love.

> "men, men trie your wives
> Love that abides sharpe tempests, sweetly thrives."(2)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. I, p. 223. Cambridge: University Press, 1953.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. I, p. 236.

He then blames her for her low breeding, he treats her in a servile manner, he takes away the wealth and position he has given to her father and brother. Later, he drives her back to her father's home, he takes away her children, and he forces her to be servant to a supposed "new bride". All these humiliations she bears with patience and at no time does she show disobedience or rebellion -- she is always the perfect "subjected" wife.

It is interesting in this connection to remember that Chaucer was also concerned with this subject of "sovereignitee" within marriage bonds in his tales given by the Wife of Bath, the Clerk, the Merchant and the Franklin. His solution in the latter tale of the Marriage Group, was the need for mutual trust between the two parties. This play, however, of "Patient Grissel" does not really reach any conclusion, but it does present the theme by contrasted plots.

The second -- showing much of Dekker's hand -- is centred around the character Gwenthyn, the Welsh widow, who is pursued by two foolish suitors. Sir Owen ap Meredith, and Emulo. She has been married before and has gleaned much experience in the management of "wooing males". In contrast to the Patient Grissel, Gwenthyn is the shrew who is determined to have her own way in every situation and who employs her wits to that end. Her meetings with her suitors are always a battle of words, and Dekker is given ample scope for his skill at racy, pungent dialogue. He also uses a dialect speech to add

to the amusement of the situation, a technique he employed in many plays. This is best exemplified in the scene where Gwenthyn disguised as a beggar woman, fools Sir Owen. He does not recognise her in her rags and tatters. The dialogue ensues thus:--

Sir Owen: "Ha? you hungry rascalles, where's her Ladie Gwenthyan? Cods plude peggers eate her sheere and cozen Marquesse come.

Rice: I know not where my Lady is, but there's a begger woman, aske her, for my Lady dealt her almes amongst them her selfe.

Sir Owen: (to Gwenthyan in disguise) A pogs on you pegger whore, where's ther pread and sheere? Cod udge me Ile pegger you for fittels.

Gwen: Howld, hawld, hawld, what is mad now? here is her Lady: is her Lady pegger you rascals?". . .(1)

Gwenthyan and Sir Owen finally marry on the widow's terms. She represents the "untamed shrew" -- the dominant factor in their marriage. She extols this position of feminine "sovereignitee".

> "but heare you now, awl that bee sembled heere, know you that discord's mare good musicke, and when lovers fall out is soone fall in, and tis good you know: pray you al be married, for wedlocke increases peobles and cities, awl you then that have husbands that you would pridle, set your hands to Gwenthian's pill, for tis not fid that poore womens shoulde be kept always under."(2)

Grissil and Gwenthyan are drawn in a sharp contrast to each other, and act as the other's foil; between the two comes Julia, and

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. P. 271.

(2) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. P. 289

she too bears the hall-mark of Dekker's studied character portrayal. She is the courtezan, a woman who has many suitors, and no desire to enter into the married state.

> "Indeed marriage is nothing else but a battaile of love, a friendly fighting . . ."(1)

She complains that marriage is a constant war -- a war for superiority over the other party. She loves her own "sweete libertie" and is unwilling to give up this independence. Her opinion of men is exceedingly low, and she expresses it fervently,

> "You are nothing but woorme-wood and oake and glass: you have bitter tongues, hard hearts and brittle faiths. . ."(2)

At the end of the play she remains unattached. She loves her freedom above all else, and feels she can enjoy more frivolity and attention by staying that way. She would rather "dye a mayde and leade apes in hell, then to live a wife and be continually in hell."(3)

The interweaving of the three plots is skilfully done and reveals, I think, the talent of another playwright. Dekker's "forte" is not in the dramatic construction of a play but in the treatment of character, and the development of humorous situation. In this he was a master of his craft. This play is not episodic, its complications and intrigues are welded carefully together, and for this reason I would suggest either Chettle or Houghton was responsible for the form, and

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(1) Thomas Dekker, Patient Grissil, P. 234.
(2) Ibid., P. 275.
(3) Ibid., P. 289.

possibly for the main plot. Dekker's contribution included the two minor plots, and the characters involved. However, as well as the people already mentioned, two other characters reveal Dekker's versatile genius, and these are the clown Babulo and the scholar Laureo. Laureo is not of particular importance except as a "mouth-piece" for Dekker's ideas on the state of the poor man of letters. He does not hesitate to repeat his opinions on this matter many times in his dramatic and non-dramatic works. He felt that the man of education and genius often received very little remuneration or respect for his works . . . the reason, -- the sixteenth century citizen was too busy trying to make money, and trying to raise his social standing, to have any sympathy with the wisdom of scholars. Wisdom did not show a profit, therefore, it could linger in disuse. Laureo could not find financial assistance to aid learning.

Laureo: "Who is more scorn'd then a poore scholler is? . . .(1)
Oh I am mad,
To thinke how much a Scholler undergoes,
And in th'ende reapes nought but pennurie
Father I am inforced to leave my booke,
Because the studie of my booke doth leave me,
In the leane armes of lancke necessitie."(2)

In the play Laureo is a very minor character and never really assumes any individuality; Babulo, on the other hand, is one of Dekker's comic masterpieces and is well developed. He is the centre of every situation, and is astute enough to see through the

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. P. 219.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. P. 220.

actions of other men. He is a good Clown, in the Elizabethan sense, and is a constant source of wise comment and amusing dialogue.

Bab: "Master Laureo (Ianiculaes sonne) welcome home, how doe the nine muses, Pride, covetousness, envie, sloth, wrath, glutonie and letcherie? you that are Schollers read how they doe.

Laur. Muses: these (foole) are the seaven deadly sins.

Bab: Are they: Mas we thinkers its better serving them, then your nine muses, for they are starke beggers."(1)

Babulo is a basket-maker like Janiculo, and their fortunes rise and fall together. He is aware of social distinction and his remarks foreshadow the later action.

"beggers are fit for beggers, gentle folkes for gentlefolkes: I am afraid that this warder of the rich loving the poor, wil last but nine daies."(2)

He is faithful to his master and to Grissil in all adversity, and when they are sent away from the palace with the children, it is Babulo who takes the little one and who hushes the baby to sleep, and later sings a lullaby beside the cradle. He is also the foil to Laureo, and comments on the latter's pride.

"so a crumme of learning makes your trade prouide"(3) he says, and thereby reveals the unpleasant side of the learned man's character. In the cut and thrust of pungent dialogue, and in the sympathy he evokes, Babulo resembles Shakespeare's clowns, particularly Touchstone.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Patient Grissil. P. 219.
(2) Ibid., P. 225.
(3) Ibid., P. 278.

The importance of this play lies in the contemporary treatment of a very old, mediaeval idea. Once again, in these modifications, it reveals Dekker's originality, originality which showed itself in the presentation of different kinds of comic character, such as Babulo, the witty clown, Sir Emulo, the foolish "Ague-cheek" gallant, and Sir Owen, the butt to a shrewd woman; it also exemplifies his talent for creating amusing situation; and finally, it introduces, interesting women characters -- women of different psychological make-up, who create a tremendous impact on the events of the play.

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The third play of the "mediaeval" group is "If it be not good, the Devil is in it." This was acted by the Queenes Majesties Servants at the Red Bull theatre. The authorship seems to have been entirely Dekker's, and it was printed and sold in 1612. This play is exceedingly interesting because it deals with the mediaeval devil theme from a seventeenth century stand-point, and in this play, the new acquisitive values of a changing society are fully evident. The play is conceived in a mood of comic irony. Dekker wrote with "his tongue in his cheek" the whole time, and tried to suppress a smile.

This play has tremendous 'audience appeal' from the very beginning. In his Prologue, Dekker castigates playwrights who bastardize the muse, and write only for money. A good play must hold and thrill its audience. This Dekker proceeds to do by setting his first scene in Hell, and introducing a situation which would amuse the

Jacobean audience intensely. Charon, who carries the souls of men in his boat across the River Styx, is very dissatisfied with his job. He comes to Pluto, the King of the Underworld and complains that his wages are too low!

"Pluto, mend My wages, or row thy selfe."(1)

The ever increasing demand for more money has begun. Money is seen as a means to better living conditions and a higher social status. The Jacobean audience would appreciate every word of Pluto's reply:

> "Thy fare was (first) a halfe-peny, then the soules give thee
> A peny, then three-halfe-pence, we shall have thee
> (As market-folkes on drath) so damned deere,
> Men will not come to hell, crying out, th'are heere
> Worse racke then th'are in tavernes . . ."(2)

Charon grumbles too about the state of souls he has to transport

> "Once, men died of honourable wounds, now he finds men die only of disease!"

Pluto calls together his devils to go on missions to earth -- his complaint is that his servants are too weak for

> " above us dwell
> Dwells braver and more subtill then in Hell."(3)

He therefore rallies three of his most successful devils together -- Shacklesoule, Ruffman and Lurchall. They are to go disguised into the three most important spheres of society -- the Church, the Court

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(1) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. Edited by R.H. Shepherd, Vol. III, p. 266. Pearson Reprints, London, 1873.
(2) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. Vol. III, p. 266.
(3) Thomas Dekker, Vol. III, p. 268.

and the City. There they are to pit their wits against the machinations of men and win souls for Pluto.

Dekker therefore initiates three separate intrigues, but at no point in the play does he lose command of them, and he foresees a place at which the strands can be intertwined and his drama brought to a successful conclusion.

Before Ruffman appears at the Court of the King of Naples, that monarch is instituting a rule of benevolent dictatorship. Every day he intends to do some good for his people, to act as judge; visit hospitals, help widows, orphans and wounded soldiers; support Learning, and do away with corruption in the church. Ruffman has a plan for Saturdays. He suggests every man's aim should be Pleasure, and pursuades the King to reserve that day for tilts, turneys, masques, playes, dancing and drinking. Thus as the wise critic, Octavio, notes,

"Our swan turnes crow, poison'd with one drop of gall."(1)

Shacklesoul under the name of Friar Rush enters a religious house,and there sets about corrupting the community by winning over the Prior to the sin of Gluttony, and then by spreading contention among the inmates. Shacklesoul is made chief cook to the house, but wandering pilgrims are turned away without food or rest.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. Vol. III, p. 278.

Lurchall is keeping company with Bartervile, a merchant already consumed by the sin of Avarice. He needs little prompting by Lurchall -- in fact, it is difficult to recognize the greater devil of the two . . . such is Dekker's irony.

Lurchall: "Bartervile,
There's in thy name a Harvest makes mee smile . . ."(1)

Barter-vile: "This day twixt one and two a Gallants bound
To pay 400, crownes to free his Landes
Fast morgag'de to mee, Lurchall, get thee up hye
Into my Turret, where thou mayst espie
All commers every way; if by thy guesse,
Thou seest the Gull make hither . . ."(2)

Thus the devils work in their respective spheres, until the three intrigues gravitate to the Court of Naples. Bartervile seeks judgement from the King over a financial matter; the virtuous Sub-prior brings the news of the disorders within his house (symbolic of the Church); the King of Naples, having now given all seven days to the seeking of pleasure is involved in war and suffers severe bankruptcy. Having caused much consternation, the devils report their uninhibited success to Pluto. They have gulled kings, merchants, gallants; these fools have fallen for the fruits of evil.

The forces of right are personified by the Duke of Calabria who wins the war against Naples, and receives the submission of the King. This saves Naples' soul so that once again he can embrace

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(1) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. P. 295.
(2) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. P. 296.

Virtue and restore his kingdom to justice and honour.

> "Here we begin
> Our reigne anew, which golden threds shall spin,
> Justice shall henceforth sit upon our throne,
> And vertue be your King's companion."(1)

However, the play is not over. The last scene, as the first, takes place in Hell. We have come full circle. The devils return with their "catch" -- and this includes Bartervile and Prodigall, and two contemporary villains, Ravillac who assassinated Henry IV of France in 1610, and Guy Faulx, who tried to blow up the House of Commons. They are followed by a multitude of Puritans, -- all crooked and lame,

> "How can I choose but halt, goe lame and crooked,
> When I pulled a whole church downe upon my backe."(2)

But even Pluto wouldn't have all the Puritan's (Dekker's comment) because

> "Theile confound our kingdome,
> If here they get a footing; . . ."(3)

The play ends with the devils' celebration over their "haul" of wicked men from earth, but this is just a short respite for soon they will be back,

> "Agen to walke your circuites o're the earth,
> Soules are hells Subjects, and their grones are mirth."(4)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. If it be not good the Devil is in it. P. 348.
(2) Ibid., P. 359.
(3) Ibid., P. 359.
(4) Ibid., P. 359.

This play of Dekker's is well constructed, and the interweaving of intrigue, skilfully done. It is a Jacobean interpretation of a mediaeval idea, and expresses man's embracing of the Seven Deadly Sins, now seen to be those rife in an acquisitive society. Extravagance and pleasure are the sins of the Court; profit-making by unscrupulous means, the sin of the City; and in the Church, a failure to abide by the strict rules of its foundation, and a tendency to serve no longer the poor and needy. The theme and the spectacle of this play accounted for its popularity -- for it was popular. The characters are interesting and witty, especially the devils, but not deeply drawn. As a commentary on society it is excellent, as an afternoon's entertainment, highly enjoyable. Dekker was not attempting more with this play, but within its limited purpose, it is well done.

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CHAPTER X

The "Citizen" Plays

This group of plays -- eight in number -- form the heart of Dekker's dramatic work. They are the plays that best reflect contemporary London life in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and they bring together a multitude of the playwright's experiences and ideas. Dekker lived most of his life in London. From his non-dramatic writings we know how familiar he was with every aspect of citizen behaviour, and with every street, lane and alley in which this society thrived. Therefore, it is not surprising that Dekker should choose to dramatize the characters he knew and loved so well. Nobody understood the humour of low life like Dekker (unless it should be Will Shakespeare); nobody had studied more minutely the psychology of the new thriving merchant class. There were few playwrights of the time, who were as interested in the different women citizens of London, be they court lady, merchant's wife or common prostitute. Dekker was fascinated by the changing face of society and of the differing characters who composed it, and it was this aspect of life he sought to crystallize in dramatic form. His genius was for comedy. A perennial optimist, he always looked for the good in mankind; and woven in with this attitude, was Dekker's capacity to be always either sympathetic or detached. He rarely castigates, he rarely dips his pen in gall; his irony is gentle, his humour all-embracing, his object, to entertain by giving the audience of London, a glimpse of itself in retrospect.

The first citizen comedy is "The Shoemakers' Holiday". The earliest court performance took place in January 1600 as part of the Christmas celebrations, and the first quarto was published in the same year. This is probably the best known of Dekker's plays, and is considered by many to be his one and only masterpiece. It certainly has much to recommend it.

The play opens with an address to all Professors of the Gentle-Craft. Dekker calls his work a "merrie conceited Comedie" and then proceeds to give an outline of the plot. This is followed by two songs -- an element in Dekker's work which has passed undiscussed so far. Dekker often inserted songs in his plays -- a tradition in the Elizabethan drama which was much enjoyed by the audience. Usually the song was a lyrical reiteration of the changing mood of the play -- thus the song for the beginning:--

> "O the month of Maie, the merrie month of Maie,
> So frolicke, so gay and so greene, so greene, so greene,
> O and then did I, unto my true love say,
> Sweete Peg, thou shalt be my Summers Queene."(1)

-- a song of innocence; and at the conclusion of the play -- a song of experience.

> "Cold's the wind, and wet's the raine,
> Saint Hugh be our good speede:
> Ill is the weather that bringeth no gaine
> Nor helpes good heartes in neede."(2)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemaker's Holiday. Edited by Fredson Bowers, P. 20, Vol. I. Cambridge: University Press, 1953.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemakers' Holiday. Vol. I, p. 21.

This is followed by a tribute to the Queen, and then the play begins.

The play is basically a commentary on the seventeenth century awareness of social status. In the mediaeval hierarchy, families of one stratum of society only married into families of the same standing. Thus the nobility kept strongly to their class, the yeomen to theirs; but with the acquisitive values of trading families in London, the "new rich" were often more wealthy than the old nobility, and marriages between the aristocracy and the merchants became more usual. The Earl of Lincoln and the Lord Mayor, Sir Roger Otley discuss the rumours abroad that Lincoln's nephew Lacie is in love with Otley's daughter Rose. This is a situation which neither of the two gentlemen likes, Lincoln feels he is above Otley in degree and that their families should not mingle. Otley, in return, agrees, but his reason is tinged with sarcasm.

> "Too meane is my poore girle for his high birth,
> Poore Citizens must not with Courtiers wed,
> Who will in silkes, and gay apparrell spend
> More in one yeare, then I am worth by farre."(1)

Otley is of the opinion that sons of the nobility are mostly wastrels who live extravagantly. Lincoln warns Lacie that he does not wish him to demean himself by marrying a citizen, and as there is a war with France at the time, he considers a plan to send his nephew abroad. Lacie is aware of this and determines to "o're-reach his policies".

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemakers' Holiday. P. 25.

Lacie has already learned the shoe-making trade when his "coyn was spent" during a visit to Germany; thus it is easy for him to deceive his uncle, disguise himself as Hans Meutler, a Dutch shoemaker, and to return to London to work for Simon Eyre.

This plot gives Dekker an excellent opportunity to present his chief character Simon Eyre, the master-craftsman, who by his own efforts is able to lift himself up the social ladder. He does this by a successful business deal, and the acquiring of wealth. Eyre is well-drawn, and lives not only in the play but after the play is over. He represents the new acquisitive class. He has the robust characteristics of the merchant; he is a man with a purpose in life, and that is to meet the nobility on their own ground. He is helped by his wife in the building of the business, and when he is finally rewarded by his election as Sheriff of London, it is she who imagines herself fulfilling the part in new shoes, a new hood, new wig, and fan.

"Fie upon it, how costly the world's calling is . . ."(1)

Both Eyre and his wife typify the rising middle class. They are proud of their achievement, and are determined to look well in their new station. Eyre treats his preferment with amusement.

> "When I go to Guildhall in my scarlet gowne, Ile look as demurely as a saint, and speake as gravely as a Justice."(2)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemakers' Holiday. P. 25.
(2) Ibid., P. 51.

Simon Eyre fulfils his new position well. His journeymen like and respect him, and this is because fundamentally Eyre does not allow his gains and his status to warp his character. He does not look down upon the men who work for him, and when later he is made Lord Mayor of London, he does not forget his promise to proclaim a holiday for all shoe-makers on Shrove Tuesday.

> "every Shrove-Tuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell, my fine dapper Assyrian lads, shall clap up their shop windows, and away . . ."(1)

There is no doubt of the sheer enjoyment Eyre gets out of his position.

> "by the lorde of Ludgate", he says, "its a modle life to be Lord Mayor, its a stirring life, a fine life, a velvet life, a careful life . . ."(2)

Simon Eyre is not only successful in retaining his many friends among his brother merchants and his journeymen, but he also succeeds in making himself popular with the nobility. He may act like a "wilde ruffian" sometimes, but this at least adds colour to his public personality, and as far as his responsibilities are concerned,

> "In al his actions that concerne his state
> He is as serious, provident and wise
> As full of gravity amongst the grave
> As any maior has beene these many years."(3)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemakers' Holiday. P. 74.
(2) Ibid., P. 74.
(3) Ibid., P. 81.

Finally, he is honoured by the King, who names Eyre's new building Leaden Hall, and allows his Company the privilege of selling leather there two days a week. Eyre is a robust, likeable man, and probably the best drawn of Dekker's characters. He is "down to earth" and has a wonderful sense of humour.

The comedy in this play is very lively, and would be well enjoyed by the Eliabethan audience. The apprentices Hodge, Firke and Rafe are wonderful character portraits and might indeed have been met by Dekker in any shoe-maker's shop in London. They have the ring of authenticity, which marks all Dekker's work. Their conversation, often witty, sometimes bawdy, is typical of the class they represent. It is part of Dekker's creative genius, that he is able to keep dialogue in character, and his conversation, especially among the city men, is always filled with lively comment and jest.

Dekker had a keen interest in all his plays, in the presentation of city women. It is evident in "The Shoemakers' Holiday". In Margary, Simon Eyre's wife, he draws the typical middle-class woman, who is ambitious for her husband and for herself. She is often of a shrewish temperament, and insists on over-lording the journeymen; but at heart she has a real respect for her husband, and a pride in their achievement. Rose, the daughter of Otley, is not fully drawn. She is a pawn in the intrigue of plot, but hardly comes to life. Jane, Rafe's wife, as with most of Dekker's lower life characters, does have personality, but once again she is a pawn in the play only. Sibil, Rose's maid, is chiefly important for her

comments, and her vivacious attitude to life, exemplified in her description of hunting of the deer.

> "the deere came running into the barne through the orchard, and over the pale, I wot wel, I lookt as pale as a new cheese to see him, but whip saies goodman Prime-close, up with his flaile, and our Nicke with a prong, and downe he fel, and they upon him, and I upon him, by my troth we had such sport, and in the end we ended him, his throate we cut, flead him, unhorned him, and my lord Maior shall eat him anon when he comes."(1)

The "Shoemakers' Holiday" is important for the careful dove-tailing of plots, for the motivation of interesting characters, for the presentation of city life as Dekker saw it. It is also, full of social comment, and deals with amusing angle of citizens, rising on the social scale. Its highlights are pungent dialogue and amusing situations.

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The two plays, "The Honest Whore Part I and II" are exceedingly interesting in connection with Thomas Dekker's dramatic presentation of another aspect of city life. The first play was written by Dekker and Middleton in 1604; the second is believed to have been composed soon after, as a complement to the former. The earliest known reference appears in the Stationer's Register, April 29th, 1608. From the point of view of subject matter, they are closely connected, and Dekker has used the same important characters in both plays.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Shoemakers' Holiday. P. 38.

Dekker was concerned about the question of prostitution in London. He speaks honestly about it in his non-dramatic works; and in these two plays he presents the problem from a human standpoint. He views it from many aspects through the eyes of different characters, and he endeavours to reveal the psychology of the woman of the streets in his portrayal of Bellafront.

The play opens with Hippolito, an Italian gentleman, grieving over the supposed death of his beloved Infelice. Matheo, who is his friend, and a frequent visitor to the house of prostitution laughs at Hippolito's sense of fidelity. He is the witty man of the world, and can foresee Hippolito's grief lasting but a short time before

"I shall take you with a wench."(1)

Matheo seeks to relieve his friend's sorrow by interesting him in other women, and thencefore he introduces him to Bellafront, the prostitute.

Dekker's presentation of Bellafront's manner of life seems entirely authentic. He uses Roger, her servant, as a foil to her, and her character is revealed as by reflection. She is introduced in a customary attitude, partly dressed, her hair in curlers, and seated at her mirror applying heavy make-up. The general tone of their conversation is bawdy, and would probably highly amuse certain elements of an Elizabethan audience. Her attitude towards the courtiers Fluello, Castruchio and Pioratto is basically one of extreme contempt. Theirs is a weakness from which she makes a livelihood.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Honest Whore Part I. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, p. 25. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.

The scenes between Bellafront and Hippolito are the most revealing for both characters. Bellafront, at first believes that Hippolito wants the fleeting comforts of a prostitute's house -- a place to spend a few spare hours. She is amazed when he demands that she remain true to him only; she has never met a man before who had any care or consideration for her well-being.

"O my Stars!
Had I but met with one kind gentleman,
That would have purchasde sin alone, to himselfe
For his owne private use, although scarce proper:
Indifferent handsome: meetly legd and thyed;
And my allowance reasonable -- yfaith,
According to my body -- by my troth,
I would have been bin as true unto his pleasures,
Yea, and as loyall to his afternoones,
As ever a poore gentlewoman could be."(1)

Hippolito does not believe her and castigates the wiles of prostitutes.

"This is the common fashion of you all,
To hooke in a kind gentleman, and then
Abuse his coyne, conveying it to your lover,
And in the end you shew him a french trick,"(2)

and despite Bellafront's promise to become "a honest whore" faithful to him alone, Hippolito continues to rant in damning terms. There can be no doubt that Dekker's opinions are here voiced.

"You have no soule,
That makes you wey to light: heavens treasure bought it,
And halfe a crown hath sold it: for your body,
Its like the common shoare, that still receives
All the townes filth."(3)

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Honest Whore. Part I, Vol. II, p. 51-52.
(2) Ibid., p. 53.
(3) Ibid., p. 53.

He blames the prostitute for the sordidness of her life, for the diseases thereby engendered, for allowing herself to be the servant of bawds, for allowing her body to be bought and sold in the common markets of the world. He says there is nothing to her future but disease and destitution, the constant fear of penury, and finally, the ~~mission~~ prison house. Hippolito makes a convert; henceforth Bellafront will be true to him alone.

Dekker's ideas, expressed by Hippolito, on prostitution are given in all seriousness, and with considerable force. Having stated his views, he turns again to the working out of comedy and indeed numerous amusing situations are to follow when Bellafront refuses to follow the remunerative trade by entertaining many different "customers". As Matheo was "the first gave money" for her soul Bellafront tries to make him marry her. She is unsuccessful. He would never marry, "a Punck, a Cockatrice, a Harlot," despite the fact that he inveigled her into this position. She therefore tries once more to win the heart and respect of Hippolito, but although he has shown her the error of her ways, he will not help her; and he is even unaffected when she treatens to return to the life of common prostitution.

At the conclusion of the play, presented in Bedlam, (the first time, incidentally, that the mad house was brought to the English stage) Bellafront is able to recognize Matheo, and accuses him of stealing her virginity. The Duke, who restates the moral balance therefore forces Matheo to marry Bellafront, and her position in society is made acceptable.

The other elements in this play -- the trial of the patient man, Candido; the light-hearted machinations of Fustigo, Viola's brother, are all minor in comparison with Dekker's central theme of the women in prostitution, and the men who have made them what they are. This play is a condemnation of the sin of licentiousness, but not of the sinner. In his attitude to all characters, Dekker shows a strange sympathy; an understanding and forgiveness for human frailty. How much is Bellafront to blame for her situation? How much is this the fault of circumstances, and the weakness of other human beings?

In the "Honest Whore Part II", Dekker endeavours to answer a few of these questions. He introduces several plots in this play and they are complicated by the duplicity of Orlando Friscobaldo. He is a new character, and is Bellafront's father. Orlando is a traditional figure, a descendent of the Pantalone of ~~Roman~~ Italian comedy.

Dekker takes up the situation from whence he left it in the Honest Whore Part I. Bellafront is Matheo's wife, and has become the honest whore, vindicated by her marriage. She is still affected by Hippolito's teaching, and now endeavours to reform her wastrel husband. Orlando, to all outward appearances has nothing but disgust and repugnance for his daughter, and for the man who sullied her virtue, but in reality, he seeks to help them both all he can. Thus, this play is shot through with irony, irony which arises from Orlando's disguise.

The sinner of this play is Matheo. He has lost all his money and even his clothes through dicing and extravagant living, and finally suggests to Bellafront that she make some money by returning to her profession of common whore. The low life characters which Dekker introduces, are filled with a crude liveliness, all their own. Mistress Horseleach the bawd, and the pander Bots, are looking for young girls to draw into the net of prostitution.

Bots: "We want tooles, Gentlemen, to furnish the trade: they weare out day and night, they weare out till no mettle bee left in their backe; wee heare of two or three new Wenches are come up with a Carrier, and your old Goshawke here is flying at them."(1)

Dekker touches closely on a social evil of the time. Quite often, innocent girls were drawn into the "trade" by older women. Inexperience and loneliness in a strange city like London, would often lead to the downfall of country lasses. Bellafront, however, is not eager to embrace the old life again and does all she can to remain honest. Dekker then introduces a mock reversal in this play. Hippolito, the castigator of prostitution suddenly becomes its advocate. He speaks of the profession in glowing terms, and praises the freedom of the prostitute.

"She's no mans slave; (men are her slaves) her eye
Moves not on wheeles screwed up with Jealowsie,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Honest Whore II. Edited by Fredson Bowers, p. 117. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.

She (Horst or Coacht) does merry journeys make,
Free as the Sunne in his gill Zodiake."(1)

Bellafront becomes the reformer now and she preaches the virtuous life. Her reason is that prostitutes receive no respect and little gain.

"There's no true pleasure in a Strumpets sheetes
Women, whom Lust so prostitutes to sale,
Like Dancers upon ropes, once seene, are stale."(2)

This is designed to be a test of the best argument, and to give vent to both sides of the question. Bellafront remains true to her decision, but also seeks to do all she can to help her profligate husband. Finally, her father Orlando, saves the situation by giving them a home and clearing Matheo's debts.

Dekker was particularly interested in the presentation of women. He delved into the psychology of these characters. He knew only too well that a multitude of factors led to a woman taking up the insecure life of prostitution, and in these plays he endeavours to reveal why this is done, how it is done, and the multitude of human problems, it perpetrates. These plays certainly have weakness. The plots are too involved to allow for clear cut construction, most of the characters become mouth-pieces for lengthy diatribe; however, this aspect of city life is presented convincingly on the stage, and these plays reflect a very real problem of the century.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Honest Whore II. Page 189.
(2) Ibid., Page 191.

The final group of Citizen plays "Westward Ho", "Northward Ho", "The Roaring Girl", "Match Me in London" and "The Wonder of a Kingdom" are brought together because fundamentally they are plays of intrigue in which Dekker has developed his talent for humorous situation. They all deal with aspects of citizen life, and they all, though apparently moral, are most concerned with the comic aspects of unfaithfulness and prostitution. In these plays the bitterness has gone from Dekker's pen. He damned human failings in the Honest Whore plays, even if he felt sympathy for the sinners, but in this group he presents the farcical element of husbands deceiving wives to spend time with their lady friends, and of wives gulling husbands so that they may entertain their lovers. Yet the situation never quite becomes one of immorality due to Dekker's careful scheming.

Mistress Birdlime, the bawd, is the most interesting character in the play "Westward Ho". She not only instigates much of the action, but is a commentator on social situations. The citizen's wife is finding her feet in society and emulating the ladies of court. Mistress Birdlime makes this remark.

> "I tel thee there is equality enough betweene a Lady and a Citty dame, if their haire be but of a colour; name you any one thing that your cittizens wife coms short of to your Lady. They have a pure Linnen, as choyce painting, love grene Geese in spring, Mallard and Teale in the fall, and Woodcocke in winter. Your Cittizens wife learnes nothing but fopperies of your Ladie, but your Lady or Justice -- a pence Madam, carries high wit from the Cittie, namely, to receive all and pay all: to awe their Husbands, to check their husbands, to controule their husbands; nay, they

> have a tricke out to be sick for a new gowne, or a Carcanet, or a Diamond, or so: and I wis this is better wit, then to learne how to weave a Scotch Farthingale."(1)

Mistress Birdlime is in an excellent position to express a valuable opinion, because she has come into contact with men and women from all strata of society. The men, she has come to know from a "business" standpoint; the wives through the comments of their husbands.

The humour of situation which is the main strength of this play springs from Justiano's plan to pretend he has gone bankrupt. From this deception, and also the intrigues of Honeysuckle, Tenterhook and Wafer, citizens, and their wives Mistresses Honeysuckle, Tenterhook and Wafer, is evolved the idea that as far as men are concerned -- towards morality -- there should be one law for themselves and one for their wives. As long as the citizens think that their wives are being faithful and sitting patiently at home, they see no wrong in enjoying themselves in the city, but when they believe that their wives are themselves out entertaining lovers, then they are filled with concern and set out to trap their spouses. The wives of the play had no intention of being unfaithful, -- only of appearing so. They not only gull their husbands but also trick their lovers.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Westward Ho. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, P. 319-20. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.

"They (the lovers) shall know the Citizens wives have wit enough to strip twenty such guls, tho' we are merry, let's not be mad; be as wanton as new married wives, as fantasticke and light-headed to the eye as fether-makers, but as pure about the heart, as if we dwelt among them in Black Fryers."(1)

Thus when the lovers, Monopoly, Linstock and Whirlpool look forward hopefully to a night of bliss with the citizens' wives, the women are concocting a plan to avert the situation. They pretend illness, and thus remain faithful to their husbands. The whole plan has been an intrigue for merriment only.

Justiano, who starts the deception, also concludes it, and has the last telling words on Mistress Birdlime and prostitution.

Justiano: "They coat is an ancient Coat, one of the seven deadly sinnes, put thy coat first to making; but do you heare, you mother of Iniquity, you that can loose and find your eares when you list, go, saile with the rest of your baudie -- traffickers to the place of sixepenny Sinfulnesse the suburbes.

Bird: I scorne the Sinfulnesse of any suburbes in Christendom: tis wel knowne I have up-rizers and downe-lyers within the Citty, night by night, like a prophane fellow as thou art.

Just: Right, I know thou hast, Ile tell you Gentle-folkes, theres more resort to this Fortune-teller, then of forlorne wives married to old husbands, and of Greene-sicknesse Wenches that can get no husbands to the house of a wise-Woman. Shee has tricks to keepe a vaulting house under the Lawes nose.

Bird: Thou dost the Lawes nose wrong to bely mee so.

Just: For either a cunning woman has a Chamber in her house or a Phisition, or a picture maker, or an Attorney, because all these are good Clokes for the raine. And then if a female party that's clienteed above -- Staires, be yong, Shees a Squires daughter of lowe degree, that lies there for phisicke,

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Westward Ho. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, p. 378.

or comes up to be placed with a Countesse: if of middle age, shees a Widow, and has Sutes at the terme or so."(1)

Mistress Birdlime is thereafter dismissed, and the citizens are reunited with their wives to conclude the play on a merry note and a song.

"Northward Ho" is another play of intrigue in which the interest is maintained by comedy of situation. All the male characters are in love with each other's wives. Greenshield is pursuing Mistress Mayberry, Kate Greenshield is "carrying on" with Fetherstone, and Doll makes a gull out of Allum to the tune of £50. The play is a farce and would be much enjoyed by the audience of Elizabeth's time. There is also a dialect interest in this play. Dekker created quite a bit of humour by his use of dialect conversation. He used this technique in the "Shoemakers' Holiday", and in his character Han Van Belch of "Northward Ho", he endeavours to fit appropriate conversation to character.

Hans: "Dar is var you, and var you: een, twea, drie, vier, and vieie skilling, drinks Skellum upsie freese: nempt, dats vdrinck gelt."(2)

Probably two of the most amusing incidents are, the dressing of Jack Hornet as Doll's father; and the sleep-walking scene, where Kate Greenshield pretends she suffers from insomnia and joins her lover Fetherstone in bed. There she is found by her husband, who is fooled by

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Westward Ho. Edited by Fredson Bowers. P. 391-392.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Northward Ho. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, p. 427. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.

her explanations. This scene, full of robust humour goes thus:

Green: "Was there ever any walking spirit, like to my wife? what reason should there bee in nature for this; I will question some Phisition: nor heare neither: vds life, I would laugh if she were in Maister Fetherstone's Chamber, shee would fright him, Maister Fetherstone, Maister Fetherstone.

Within
Feth: Ha, how now who cals?

Green: Did you leave your doore open last night?

Feth: I know not, I thinke my boy did.

Green: Gods light shee's there then, will you know the jest, my wife hath her old tricks, Ile hold my life, my wife's in your chamber, rise out of your bed, and see you can feele her.

Squirrel: He will feele her I warrant you?

Green: Have you her sir?

Feth: Not yet sir, shee's here sir.

Green: So I said ever now to my selfe before God la: take her up in your armes, and bring her hether softly for feare of waking her.

Enter Fetherstone with Kate in his arms."(1)

This is one of several very amusing situations, and the strength of this play, lies in the earthy, sometimes bawdy comedy, which the audience would doubtless receive with hearty guffaws. In conclusion Dekker ties the play into a moral setting -- Kate and Mistress Mayberry go back to their husbands, and Fetherstone promises to pay up Doll's debts and later to marry her. Yet the fact remains the most enjoyable

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Northward Ho. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, P. 444-445.

moments in the play have evolved from immoral intrigue.

"The Roaring Girl" belongs to the same type of play, only it deals with some contemporary problems, and has one well developed character -- that of Moll. It is believed that she may have been drawn from a living London personality, one Moll Firth or Moll Cutpurse who in 1612 did penance at St. Paul's Cross for an unknown offence. In her male attire, which the real Moll wore, she was addressed as Jack. Certainly this character has life and depth. Dekker and Middleton worked together on this play but it is impossible to disentangle their respective contribution. Altogether the play is well constructed. Of the "roaring girls" in society, Dekker has this to say.

> "One is shee
> That roares at midnight in deepe Taverne bowles,
> That beates the watch, and Constables Controuls,
> Another roares in the day, sweares, stabbes, gives braves,
> Yet sells her soule to the luste of fooles and slaves.
> Both these are Suburbe roarers. Then there's (besides)
> A Civill Citty Roaring Girle, whose pride,
> Feasting and riding, shakes her husbands state
> And leaves him Roaring through on yron gate."(1)

but Moll, he states, is above the common type, she is of higher quality. The intrigue of the play develops from Sebastian Wengrave's desire to marry Mary Fitz-Allard. So that his father will not object to this idea, Sebastian pretends to woo Moll. . . the logic being, that Sir Alexander will favour the marriage with Mary to prevent his son from mixing with worse company.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, Vol. III, p. 133.

Moll, a prostitute herself, does not desire to be other than she is, and thinks that those that take to the profession, wish to do so.

> "I am of that certaine beliefe that there are more queames in this towne of their owne making, then of any man's provoking, where lyes the slacknesse then? Many a poore foole would downe, and ther's nobody will push 'em."(1)

She is jealous of her own indpendence, and would not stoop to marriage.

> "I have no humour to marry, I love to lye aboth sides alth bed myselfe; and again oth' other side, a wife you know ought to be obedient, but I feare me I am too headstrong to obey . . ."(2)

Moll has an extraordinary pride in herself. No man has hold over her, and she makes this quite clear.

> "but how ere
> Thou and the baser world censure my life,
> Ile fend 'em word by thee, and write so much
> Upon thy breast, cause thou shalt bear't in mind,
> Tell them 'twere base to yeild, where I have conquered.
> I scorne to prostitute myself to a man,
> I that can prostitute a man to me . . ."(3)

> "My spirit shall be Mistresse of this house,
> As long as I have time in't."(4)

The character of Moll is well drawn. She has intelligence and wit, and a tremendous independence of spirit which must be respected. Moreover, she knows how to handle the men folk in the play. She is

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 160.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, Vol. III, p. 164-165.
(3) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 173.
(4) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 174.

superior to the citizens' wives in every respect of personality. Mistresses Gallipot, Openwork, and Tiltyard are excellent representatives of the shopkeeper's wife. Dekker presents their idiocyncrasies and laughs at them in a good-humoured way. They are really highly respectable women, and although they may flirt with Greenwit, Laxton and Goshawke, in reality, these wives are quite content with their own husbands. Once again, in this play, we see Dekker's real interest in the character studies of women particularly women of the middle and lower classes.

This play is also concerned with the problem of wayward sons. In the sixteenth century, it was becoming a habit for sons of the nobility to come to London, and waste their father's fortunes in extravagant living. Dekker presented this problem in his non-dramatic works, and in the "Roaring Girle", he presents Jack Dapper, who in his father's opinion is nothing more than a wastrel. Alexander is unhappy about Sebastian, but Sir Dapper has a worse difficulty to face.

> "your Sebastian
> Doates but on one drabb, mine on a thousand,
> A noyse of fiddles, Tobacco, wine and a whore,
> A Mercer that will let him take up more,
> Dyce, and water spaniell with a Duck: oh,
> Bring him a bed with thefe, when his purse gingles,
> Roaring boyes fellow at's tate, fencers and ningles . . .
> these horse-leeches sucke
> My sonne, he being drawne dry, they all live on smoke."(1)

Parental authority over young men seems to have been very weak. No amount of good advice had any effect in the face of such numerous temptations.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 187.

Sir Davy decides at first to have Jack penned up in the Counter prison. Sir Alexander has only scathing remarks for the organization of prisons. ~~of prisons.~~ Here Dekker speaks from well-founded experience, and it is interesting to note that this description corroborates the picture we are given of prison life in "The Counters' Commonwealth".

S. Davy: "Thinke you the Counter cannot breake him?

Adam: Breake him?
Yes and breake's heart too if he be there long.

S. Davy: I'le make him sing a Counter tenor sure.

Adam: No way to tame him like it, there he shall learne
What money is indeed, and how to spend it.

S. Davy: Hee's bridled there.

Alex: I yet knowes not how to mend it,
Bedlam cures not only madmen in a yeare,
Then one of the Counters does, men pay more deere
There for there wit then any where; a Counter
Why 'tis a university, who not sees?
As schollers there, so heere men take degrees,
And follow the same studies (all alike).
Schollers learne first Logicke and Rhetoricke
So does a prisoner; with fine honied speech
At's first comming in he doth persuade, beseech,
He may be lodg'd with one that is not itchy;
To be in a cleane chamber, in sheets not lowsy,
But when he has no money, then does he try,
By subtle Logicke, and quaint sophistry,
To make the keepers trust him.

Adam: Say they do.

Alex: Then hee's a graduate.

S. Davy: Say they trust him not.

Alex: Then is he held a freshman and a sot
And never shall commence, but being still bar'd

Be expulst from the Maisters side, to th' twopenny ward,
Or else i'th hole beg plac't."(1)

The two officers Curtilax and Hanger are satirically named and satirically portrayed. They may be unscrupulous in their job, but as Curtilax explains, in a world where "great fish and little fish" are, "and feede upon one another",(2) their dishonesty is negligible, in comparison.

One of the most colourful and characteristic scenes in the play is Moll's meeting with the rogues, Trapdore and Teare-cat. Dekker drew straight from experience here, for he had studied the underworld minutely. The characters we have met in "Lanthorne and Candlelight" are here presented dramatically. The whole Regiment is reviewed by Moll in all their respective degrees, and this is in keeping, because so often in London, the prostitute and the pick-pocket worked together -- the one to seduce a gull into a dark alleyway, the other to perform the theft.

This play would be most enjoyed by an Elizabethan audience, because it presents the characters of London, familiar to every man present. It has a unified plot, allowing for comic intrigue, and a central figure, who is fascinating in herself. It also reflects certain popular ideas and feelings of the time on the gallant, on prisons and on officers

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 188.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Roaring Girle. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 190.

of the law. By the comedy of situation and dialogue this play would "fill with laughter our vast Theater", and as long as this entertainment was achieved, Dekker's purpose was fulfilled.

In comparison with the "Roaring Girle" the last two citizen plays "Match me in London" and "The Wonder of a Kingdom" are slight in plot and in character study. The former is important for its treatment of a contemporary problem -- namely, how far was it allowable for members of the nobility to interfere in the lives of the citizen class. In this play the King wishes to make a whore of Tormiella, a citizen's wife. The King feels he can "buy" the citizen's approval.

> "if he storme, give him a
> Court-Loafe stop's mouth with a Monopoly."(1)

This is also a satirical poke at the Jacobean scourge of monopolies in certain trade commodities. Cordolente, who thinks he has lost his young wife to the King, voices a bitter resentment, one often felt by the citizen for the nobility.

> "You oft call Parliaments, and there enact
> Lawes good and wholesome, such as who so breake
> Are hung by th' purse or necke, but as the weake
> And smaller flyes , the Spiders web are tane
> When great ones teare the web, and free remaine."(2)

The grievance was genuine. There was one law for the rich and one for the poor. Cordolente's outcry against the King takes an added meaning when we remember the Jacobean idea of Divine Kingship.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Match me in London. Edited R. Shepherd, Vol. IV, p. 149.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Match me in London. Edited R. Shepherd,p. 190.

"Oh thou daring Sacrilegious royall Theefe."(1)

Here is a man who has destroyed the people's faith and betrayed their trust. At the conclusion, Dekker tries to restore the moral balance of by the repentance of the King and his return to the good life . . . an ending which we feel is falsified.

The only outstanding characters in the play are the Clowne and the Coxecombe, Bilbo and Pacheco. Their conversation is full of typical comment, and they are sharp critics of society. Their subject is Court and City. They blame the nobles for never paying their debts, and for carrying neither conscience nor coin in their pockets; they blame the City for aping court manners, and thereby emulating the failings of the nobility. In the Queen and Tormiella we have court and city personified. They should be parallel and complementary, and each social strata should live unto itself.

"The Wonder of a Kingdome" is a slight play of intrigue involving the lives of two brothers Gentili and Torrienti. In many ways it harks back to the theme of "Old Fortunatus" for here we have two men endowed with wealth, the one a philanthropist, the other, a wastrel. The play is eminently moral, and is almost back in the morality framework, of just retribution for good and evil. Its characters are but superficially drawn, just pawns to play out an idea. It does reflect contrasting attitudes to life of the time, and shows that some people

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Match me in London. Edited R. Shepherd, p. 212.

were growing aware of the need for help instead of punishment to remedy social evils

> "My heires shall be poore children fed on almes,
> Souldiers that want limbes, schollers poore and scorn'd
> whilst I live, my roofe
> Shall cover naked wretches; when I die
> Tis dedicated to St. Charitie."(1)

This spirit of assistance and reform, which was symbolized by the founding of hospitals for the sick and needy, presents a new attitude to a very pressing sixteenth century social problem.

On this note, we draw to a close the group of citizens' plays -- the heart of Dekker's work. Within their gamut, he has dramatized the whole realm of citizen activity, the life of the Londoner, presented on the stage. These plays are rich in topical comment and allusion and are rich in comedy of dialogue and situation. They introduce a variety of characters, some drawn deeply, and from within; others merely representatives of a class -- but all vital living creatures whilst on the stage. In Dekker's presentation of city women we have an innovation in the drama, at least in his sympathetic, understanding attitude towards them. In the wide humanity of his approach to social problems we have a fore-runner of social reform. If Dekker's plays are weak because of the contemporaneity of subject matter and the subsequent fault of "dated" work; this same failing is also his chief

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Wonder of a Kingdom. Edited by R. Shepherd, Vol. IV, p. 235.

strength, because it is as a reflection of Elizabethan and Jacobean citizen life that his plays are of unique value.

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CHAPTER XI

Dekker and the Poets' War

One of Dekker's plays "Satiromastix" -- the Untrussing of the Humourous Poet -- stands outside the general scope of Dekker's work. This is because it deals with an important controversy of the time, the Poets' War. This grew out of a clash of opinions over the Child Players who were usurping the position of the adult companies. Manyplaywrights including Jonson and Marston were writing prodigiously for these boys. Then Jonson made an unwarranted and bitter attack on Marston and Dekker in his "Poetaster" and although Dekker was not drawn to satire, yet he felt a reply was called for. This play suffers from its dual design. Dekker was concerned with an intrigue involving the King's efforts to seduce the wife of a nobleman. As a comic underplot Dekker brings in Minever and the three ~~sisters~~ Suitors who are competing for her hand in marriage, Sir Quintilian Shorthose, Sir Adam Prickshaft and Sir Rees ap Vaughan. In the latter character Dekker uses his command of dialect humour again, this time Welsh. The humour here is nearly all of situation.

The other, more important aspect of the play, is a satiric portrait of Ben Jonson under the name of Horace. It is the pride of the playwright Dekker ridicules. A man who is so pompous in his own esteem, that he feels he can castigate his fellows without reserve. He treats all criticism of his own work with contempt, for nobody is good enough to judge his creations.

"I am too well rankt, Asinus, to bee stab'd with his dudgeon wit."(1)

Horace does not think he has anything to fear from the "voluptuous reveler" -- Marston -- and the "arrogant puff" Dekker. If critics do not like his work then the fault is their own he feels.

"The error is not mine, but in theyr eye
That cannot take proportions."(2)

However, proud as Ben Jonson is, his fellow playwrights will bide with him; but when he stoops to personal invective, they must retort, even if it is highly unpleansant to them. Crispinius voices the matter thus.

" . . . when your dastard wit will strike at men
In corners, and in riddles folde the vices
Of your best friends, you must not take to heart
If they take off all gilding from their pilles,
And only offer you the bitter Coare."(3)

Neither Marston nor Dekker were eager to fall out with Ben Jonson.

"Our pens shall like our swords be alwayes sheath'd
Unlesse too much provockt . . .
Come let thy Muse beare up a smoother sayle,
Tis the easiest and basest art to raile. . ."(4)

However Jonson continues to use a sharp pen against these "Poet-apes" as he calls Marston and Dekker and finally they determine to revenge.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers. Vol. I, p. 320.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers. P. 322.
(3) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers. P. 322.
(4) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers. P. 355-356.

Captain Tucca, also the butt of Horace's sarcasm grumbles too.

> "A gentleman or an honest citizen shall not sit in your pennie-bench theatre, with his squirrel by his side cracking nuttes; nor sneake into a taverne with his Mermaid; but he shall be satyr'd and epigram'd upon, and his humour must run upon the stage; you'll ha' "Every Gentleman in's humour, and Every Gentlemen out on's humour."(1)

Horace is blamed for his arrogance, for his pettiness, for his misuse of talent. Finally Tucca gets his way, and Horace and his flatterer Bubo are dragged in and "untrussed" which means unclothed and tickled with nettles! Horace is blamed for usurping the name of a great Greek poet, and then he is forced to swear to the following testimony. He must never "bombast out a new play, with the old lynings of Jestes, stolne from the Temples Revels . . ."

> "you shall not sit in a Gallery, when your comedies and interludes have entered their actions and there make vile and bad faces at every line, to make Gentlemen have an eye on you, and to make Players afraide to take your part . . .
>
> When you sup in tavernes, amongst your betters, you shall sweare not to dippe your Manners in too much sawce, nor at table to fling Epigrams, Embleames, or Play-speeches about you."(2)

Horace is forced to take the oath. So the play ends on a merry note, and incidentally, the war between Jonson and Marston was soon over, for they later became good friends again. This play is interesting for its contemporary view of this literary battle, and for its insight into the character of Ben Jonson. As a play of personal satire -- even if mild and humorous -- this work stands alone.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers, p. 355-356.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Satiromastix. Edited by Fredson Bowers, p. 382-383.

CHAPTER XII

Dekker's Plays of State and Church

The deeper one delves into Dekker's work, the more one realizes that there were few trends or events of the time that did not find reflection in his plays. He was able to present a variety of subject matter, and must have been a man with a constantly avid questioning mind, and one who realized the important influence of the past on the contemporary events of these years. Most of the characters in Dekker's comedies are drawn from the figures who wandered the London streets and were well known by the playwright; their purpose was to reveal the problems of citizen life. In these two plays "Sir Thomas Wyatt" and "The Whore of Babylon" Dekker moves into the tradition of history play represented by the "Mirror of Magistrates" and the many dramas from historical chronicles within the Shakespearean collection.

Dekker was interested in the reasons for political upheaval and religious strife, and in his plays, he shows that events of the time are shaped by men in important political positions. His play "Sir Thomas Wyatt" is interesting to the student because it presents the human side of the question, and dramatizes the men who were responsible for the unrest of these years. Dekker chose to write about a period, twenty years or so before his birth and is therefore far enough away from it, to get some historical perspective. It was a tumultuous time dominated by the personalities of individuals and complicated by religious issues. On the death of Henry VIII in 1547,

the young Edward VI came to the throne, and as he was a minor, the Council chose his uncle Somerset to be Protector. On religious matters Somerset worked closely with Archbishop Cramner, and together they drew up the 1549 Prayer Book, and enforced its use by an Act of Uniformity. His policy in agriculture was unpopular because he did little to prevent the extension of sheep farming, the enclosure of land and consequent evictions. There were risings in the country against the government and the nobility blamed Somerset for his failure to deal with the situation, for his arrogance of demeanour, for his assumption of power without precedent, and for his incompetent handling of foreign affairs.

The Council, and particularly, the Earl of Warwick, felt that the moment had come to dispossess Somerset. He was therefore imprisoned for a while, but later released. However Warwick began to seek more power and in 1551 he made himself Duke of Northumberland, and a few months later, he had Somerset tried on a trumped-up charge of trying to overturn the government. Somerset was condemned and executed in 1552.

Having made himself extremely powerful, Northumberland indulged his ambition, and set about the "witch hunt" of his opponents. On religious matters, he upheld the Protestant standpoint, and in the 42 Articles of Religion gave the Church of England its first ~~creed~~ doctrine. As the King's health began to fail, Northumberland feared that Mary, a Catholic queen, would be his successor, and in order to avoid this, he evolved the following scheme. His son, Lord Guilford Dudley, was to marry one of the four grand-daughters of Mary, the younger sister of Henry VIII; and the dying Edward was then to make the bride a wedding present of the

crown. Northumberland, chose Lady Jane Grey, as the potential queen and the marriage took place in May 1553.

On Edward's death, Mary Tudor, fearing trouble from Northumberland fled to Framingham in Suffolk. From there she sent an order to the Council concerning her rightful title to the succession. The Council denounced Mary, and replied by raising troops under Northumberland and sending him out to fight Mary's followers. Northumberland, however, lost the battle against Mary's men, and then learned that the Council had betrayed him and proclaimed Mary queen. Finally, Northumberland did the same, but Mary, on gaining power, had Northumberland, Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley put in the Tower. Northumberland was executed; the others were imprisoned to await their time.

As soon as Mary Tudor assumed power she removed all of Northumberland's men from government, and set about converting England back again to Catholocism. She also contemplated a most unpopular marriage. She wished to marry Philip of Spain because he belonged to the House of Hapsburg, a great Catholic reigning house, and she was captivated by his youth and personality. However, her counsellors were against this arrangement and so were Parliament and the people. Englishmen were suspicious of a foreign monarch on the throne; and Spain was traditionally an English rival in trade and in colonial exploitation. Mary was adamant and at last a marriage treaty was concluded in 1554. This was the event which set off the Rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt.

In his play Dekker dramatizes these two major historical

events -- the machinations to put Jane Grey on the throne, and the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt brought about by Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain. The character of Northumberland and the Duke of Suffolk, Lady Jane's father, are well presented. They are the minds behind the intrigue. They intend to disregard Henry VIII's will, and usurp the throne for Lady Jane Grey. Sir Thomas Wyatt figures in the early part of the play as a supporter of Queen Mary.

> "I lov'd the Father wel, I lov'd the Sonne,
> And for the Daughter I through death will run."(1)

At the beginning, the play is complimentary to the Queen and to the Catholic tradition she represents. She is seen as a woman of faith who will live in seclusion rather than give up the belief that is dear to her.

> "My brother Edward lives in pompe and state,
> I in a mansion here all ruinate
> Their rich attire, delicious banquetting:
> Their severall pleasures, all their pride and honour,
> I have forsaken for a rich prayer Booke."(2)

The restoration of Catholicism is the first move Mary makes after she attains the throne.

> "The ancient honours due unto the Church,
> Buried within the Ruin'd Monasteries,
> Shall lift their stately heads and rise againe
> To astonish the destroyers wandering eyes."(3)

and this is to be done with money from the Royal Exchequer, not from

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Sir Thomas Wyatt. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. I, p. 413. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.
(2) Thomas Dekker. Sir Thomas Wyatt. Vol. I, p. 411-412.
(3) Thomas Dekker. Sir Thomas Wyatt. Vol. I, p. 428.

the taxes of the people. To this point Mary is seen in a favourable light; but when she insists on the marriage to Philip of Spain, and she loses the support of Sir Thomas Wyatt, she also loses the sympathy of the audience. The wise words of Sir Thomas reflected the feeling and fear of the English people at that time.

> "The Fox is suttle; and his head once in,
> The slender body easily will follow."(1)

It is better that she should not marry than allow Spanish influence in English affairs.

> "O remember I beseech you,
> King Henries last will, and his act at Court,
> I meane that royall Court of Parliament,
> That does prohibit Spaniards from the land,
> That Will and Act to which you all are sworne
> And doe not damme your soules with perjurie."(2)

Mary will not listen to Sir Thomas, and thus he is forced by conscience to take up arms against her. He draws together a band of men and waits outside London. Dekker then comments on the part the common people play in war. They are not aware of why they are fighting, but are swayed only by mob oratory. Five hundred Londoners set out to go against Wyatt, but after he has spoken to them, they join his ranks. Wyatt fights his way to the gates of London only to find that the City no longer supports him.

> "O London, London, thou perfidious town
> Why hast thou broke thy promise to thy friend."(3)

So Wyatt is captured and imprisoned, and finally hanged, and quartered, and this is a judgment against Mary in the play -- an act of foolishness

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Sir Thomas Wyatt. P. 431.
(2) Ibid., P. 432.
(3) Ibid., P. 442.

has led to the death of a wise counsellor and a brave man.

For Lady Jane Grey and Guilford Dudley, the playwright has only pity. They were the pawns in a game of political chess. They were used by Northumberland in his bid for power, and although they had no personal ambition, they suffer the extreme penalty.

> "We sought no Kingdome, we descried no Crowne,
> It was imposed upon us by constraint . . ."(1)

They remain composed and resigned in face of death, and after their execution, the Duke of Norfolk makes the final speech -- one of resignedness to the "status quo".

> "Thus have we seene her Highness will perform'd
> And now their heads and bodies shall bee joynd
> And buried in one grave, as fits their loves
> Thus much ile say in their behalfes now dead,
> Their Fathers pride their lives have severed."(2)

This play was written by both Dekker and Webster, and the latter's influence is evident, I think, in the orderly construction of plot and in some of the character studies. From a dramatic standpoint the play is good. It brings to life two very important historical events, it reveals how intrigue, evolved in the mind of one man, can influence monarchy and government; it shows how often the sufferers of political movements are the innocent, and it comments on the fickle nature of men, when herded together in a crowd. Their cause is always the stronger of the two, their loyalty goes to the man with the most

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Sir Thomas Wyatt. P. 446.
(2) Ibid., P. 454.

persuasive voice. Once again, Dekker, with his ear to the ground, has presented a play full of character interest; one revealing human reactions to political machinations and social unrest.

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Dekker's second play of State and Church was "The Whore of Babylon", which was presented by the Princes' Servants, and entered on the Stationer's Register in 1607. Once again Dekker has chosen to dramatize a period of history; this time, the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and to set before his audience the problems, intrigues and dangers of the years just passed. Such a play would be popular, because most of the Londoners present would have known the events in their life-time, and this would give them an added interest. The play is also a studied compliment to Queen Elizabeth, and is given in all reverence and respect. In the Lectori, Dekker outlines his purpose --

> "to set forth the Greatnes, Magnanimity, Constancy, Clemency, and other incomparable Heroical vertues of our late Queene. And (on the contrary part) the inveterate malice, Treasons, Machinations, Underminings, and continual bloody stratagems of that Purple whore of Roome."(1)

-- the Catholic Church. Whatever slight changes have been made in historical events, have been done for dramatic effect.

Dekker uses masque extensively in this play as in "Old Fortunatus",

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Whore of Babylon. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, p. 497. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.

and the dumb show symbolizes the later action of the play. Thus Truth is shown sad and miserable until Titania (Queen Elizabeth) overthrows Catholicism in England, and creates the State Church. From the beginning political and religious problems are inextricably interwoven. The Roman Catholic Church admits her own corruption yet resents being expelled from England, and sets about bringing this country back to the fold by underhand means. Her policy is to send Jesuit evangelists to win back the dissatisfied factions to the Church of Rome. The Roman Church also uses political methods in the form of pressure, exerted by three powerful Catholic countries of Europe, Italy, Spain and France. At first these countries woo Titania with rich gifts and rash promises. They wish to interfere in the subjection of Ireland under pretence of offering help, they want to bring about a marriage alliance between Elizabeth and a Catholic prince; they want England to return to Catholicism and join a League of Catholic countries. Elizabeth's advisers reflect the feelings of the people when they tell the Queen to act diplomatically, and to keep the crowned heads of Europe guessing.

Florimell: "These potent, politicke, and twin-borne States,
Would to their mitred fortunes tie our fates:
. . . if these gripe your Sceptre once . . .
Vultures are not more ravenous than these men,
Confusion, tyranie, uproares will shake all
Tygres, and wolves, and beares, will fil your seat,
In nothing (but in misere) youle be great."(1)

To allow Catholic influence in England would jeopardize her sovereignity;

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Whore of Babylon. Vol. II, p. 515.

Elizabeth must play her cards shrewdly, and try to play off one king against the other. However, when the Catholic countries can get no way with persuasion, they swear revenge and determine to create internal insurrection in England.

Three men are chosen to sow discontent in England, two were members of the Order of Jesuits, and the spear-head forces of the Catholic Counter Reformation. Edward Campion, (Campeius) the English writer and preacher, was the first. He joined the Society of Jesus and returned to England to preach the Catholic faith. He was executed for treasonable offences. Roderigo Lopez (Ropez) was the next -- a Portuguese Jew who became physician to Queen Elizabeth and was accused of attempting to murder her, (He was hanged in 1594); and lastly, Robert Parsons (Paridel), who accompanied Campion to England, and was fortunate enough to escape with his life. These men are disloyal to their Queen as the Roman Church rightly knows, and therefore they are good servants for her wily schemes.

> "What are they but leane hungry crowes that tyre
> Upon the mangled quarters of a Realme?
> . . . home weele therefore send
> These busie-working spiders to the wals
> Of their own countrey, when their venemous bags
> (Which they shall stuffe with scandales, libels, treasons)
> Are full and upon bursting: let them there
> Weane in their politicke loomes nets to catch flies."(1)

In all her dealings with treasonable offenders Elizabeth, in Dekker's eyes, takes the fairest measures. For herself she would be merciful but for the good of the country, she must act harshly. The people

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Whore of Babylon. P. 537-8.

expected this of their monarch, the Tudors could be despotic, but they must not be weak.

As the Catholic countries have failed to win the Queen's confidence, they try to bludgeon England into submission by war, and the great Spanish Armada is prepared for attack. As the danger increases Dekker presents the courage and clear-headedness of Queen Elizabeth. She is always present to give her forces hope, and her men rally about her in loyalty and reverence. She is seen as the unifying force in England, and the saviour of her country.

Titania: "We come with yours to venture our own blood,
For you and we are fellowes, thus appeares it,
The souldier keeps the crowne on, the prince weares it,
Of all men you we hold the most deere,
But for a souldier I had not beene heare."(1)

The government of England, as Dekker sees it, should be a partnership between King and People; both are necessary to the other and must shoulder their responsibilities.

Most of the characters in "The Whore of Babylon" are not deeply drawn, they merely shadow the real-life characters. They do, however, present dramatically, episodes of history which would be exceedingly interesting to a Jacobean audience, and for many, they would revive personal memories of events in their life-time. Also there is an element of nostalgia in the play, for already in 1607, Englishmen were beginning to look back at the reign of Elizabeth through rose-tinted

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Whore of Babylon. P. 580.

spectacles. Her virtues were remembered and eulogized, and her weaknesses were disregarded or forgotten.

This play is important for its presentation of political and religious issues, for its reflection of the temper of Elizabethan thought towards foreign interference in English government; for its portrayal of contemporary personalities on the stage, and for its character study of the Queen -- always shrewd, courageous, diplomatic -- a ruler, who put her country's welfare above all personal considerations.

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CHAPTER XIII

Dekker's Masques

The Masque was a favourite form of entertainment at the end of the sixteenth century, and Dekker shows considerable versatility in his treatment of it. The Masque was generally of two kinds -- the dumb show which Dekker uses in "Old Fortunatus", and the pageant, written and acted in celebration of a special occasion. Dekker presented both kinds in his works, the latter being well illustrated by his masque given before King James, "Magnificent Entertainment", his three mayoralty masques, and one addressed to the Earl of Southampton.

The "dumb show" masque had an important place in Elizabethan drama. It was used for the presentation of spectacle and music, otherwise impossible to introduce in some plays, and it allowed the audience some relief from the strain of listening to dialogue. However, if the masque started as a kind of interval entertainment, it very soon became absorbed into the framework of plays, and thus for most dramatists, such as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Dekker, the dumb show became a way of reiterating an important idea or situation. Often it took the form of a battle between Good and Evil, as two forces in the universe, and these reflected the foolish actions of mankind. In "Old Fortunatus" the masque element is integrated with the plot, and it stems from the old morality debat. Thus the dumb show underlines the action of the play and allows scope for music, and spectacle, in the form of dress and stage design.

Dekker's "Magnificent Entertainment" is a masque presented before King James on the day of his procession from the Tower into the City of London. It sets down the form of pageantry which the king was accustomed to receive at the City gates and at particular places along the route. A show of this nature was primarily produced for spectacle and entertainment and Dekker tells how the City companies were greatly responsible for setting up the triumphal arches and the organization of the various tableaux. Thus at the Royal Exchange was presented the pageant of the Dutchmen in which all the people taking part were in national costume. The pictures set up there were of men toiling in the fields, symbolic of the character of the people. At Bishop's Gate the monarch is met by two figures representing Saint George and St. Andrew -- and thus is celebrated the union of England and Scotland under James I. This theme, which set the tone of the pageant was repeated at intervals. At Chepeside, a boy choirister of St. Paul's voiced an oration stressing the fact that James' presence had removed the threat of civil war and had unified the land. Then at the Cross of Chepeside, Sir Henry Montague and the Aldermen of the City presented James with the "gold cup", showing their respect and obedience, and this was followed by the Pageant of the "litel conduit" where the King was welcomed by Peace and Plenty, the Nine Muses and the Seven Liberal Arts. On his way to Westminster the King passed through Seven Triumphal Arches.

Dekker catches the bustle and excitement of the ceremony by describing the crowd that flocked to see it, "the world of people."

> "The day is now come; being so earely up by reason of Artificiall Lights, which wakened it, that the Sunne over-slept himselfe, and rose not in many hours after, yet bringing with it into the very bosom of the Cittie, a world of people. The streets seemde to bee paved with men: Stalles instead of rich wares were set out with children, open Casements, fild up with women."(1)

He also tells of ordered arrangement of the City Companies.

> "A goodly and civil order was observed, in Martialling all the companies according to their degrees. The first beginning at the upper end of Saint Marks Lane, and the last reaching above the Conduit at Fleetstreete: their Seats, being double-railde; upon the upper part whereon they leaned, the Streamers, Ensignes, and Bannerets, of each particular Company decently fixed . . ."(2)

Thus Dekker's "Magnificent Entertainment" was written to celebrate a very special occasion, and was not only a pageant, but also a personal tribute to the King. It fulfilled the function of the masque in other respects, for usually a playwright used this opportunity to admonish the monarchto follow virtuous principles. Dekker's work is not only important for the pageant itself, but also for the multitude of detail besides in which he tells of the work that went into the creation of such a tableau. A glimpse into the workshop of artist and craftsman is always fascinating.

Dekker's other Masques -- "London Triumphing", "Brittania's Honor", "London's Tempe" and "The Sun's Darling" were written in tribute to particular individuals, three of them Lord Mayors, on the occasion of their accession to office. These masques generally follow

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Magnificent Entertainment. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Vol. II, p. 258. Cambridge: University Press, 1955.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Magnificent Entertainment. Vol. II, p. 259.

the same form. They begin with a tribute to the City,

> "London in Forraine Countries is called the Queene of Cities -- the Magazine of Merchandize."(1)

and then due reverence is given to the new Lord Mayor and to the office he will fulfil. Then follows the pageants, usually constructed by the various city companies and representing the power of the city or the might of the country, or as in "London's Tempe", a history of the Mayor's office through the centuries. This is "rounded off" by admonishments to the Lord Mayor to act wisely in his new office, and to always judge fairly so that the City and the country will prosper.

"The Sun's Darling" differs from the rest in being a Moral Masque -- didactic -- and one that deals with the Life of Man. This span is seen as the four seasons of the year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Every period has its contribution to make. In this masque Dekker reveals his talent as a poet -- ability which we glimpse only in the occasional songs in his plays, and a quality recurrent in Dekker's Prayers. There is the very lovely poetical song of Summer's court.

> "Haymakers, Rakers, Reapers and Mowers
> Waite on your Summer Queen
> Dresse up with Musk-rose her Eglatine bowers,
> Daffodills strew the greene,
> Sing, dance and play
> Tis Holy day.
>
> The Sun does lovely shine
> on our ears of corn.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. Brittania's Honor. Edited by R. Shepherd, Vol. IV, p. 97. London: Pearson Reprints, 1873.

Rich as a pearle
Coms every girle
This is mine, this is mine, this is mine."(1)

and later in the masque.

Raybright: "I have rioted
In surfeits of the ear, in various musicke
Of warbling birds; I have smelt perfumes of roses
And every flower with which the fresh turnd earth
Is mantled in . . ."(2)

In Dekker's masques he reflects yet another aspect of life in the City of London, and that is the citizen's love of show and spectacle, and the excitement that accompanied parades. He gives us a glimpse of the work that went into the organization of pageants and of the multitude of craftsmen involved. Every public occasion was an excuse for ceremony, and every man, woman and child revelled in the presentation of such entertainments.

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(1) Thomas Dekker. The Sun's Darling. Edited by R. Shepherd, Vol. IV, p. 320. London: Pearson Reprints, 1873.
(2) Thomas Dekker. The Sun's Darling. Edited by R. Shepherd, p. 324.

CHAPTER XIV

The Summing Up

To look back over the full extent of Thomas Dekker's work, and to estimate his contribution to literature is no easy task. He was a Londoner first and foremost, and his work reflects a city man involved in city life and concerned with city problems. His pamphlets are exceedingly important. In reference to topical events they represent the earliest form of journalism, full of contemporary thought and news. They have a definite human interest, because Dekker was fascinated by the "man in society". He studied this creature minutely. He wrote always from observation and experience, and his findings were tempered by a certain amount of sympathy for the weak and foolish. From his standpoint in middle-class society, Dekker had a wonderful point of vantage. He was cognizant with the upper class; he spent years in prison, and thus learned all the wiles of the lower group; above all, he knew and understood the new merchant class. He appreciated the tremendous desire of these people to gain money and thereby, raise their social standing. As documents of social history, his pamphlets have a real contribution to make, for not only is the detail authentic, but Dekker's clarity of style and lively technique bring the era vividly to view.

His non-dramatic works are also important for their presentation of contemporary problems, problems such as poverty, prostitution, the state of prisons, the corruption of law, the position of scholars and the troubles arising from social change. In all his writings Dekker

does not hesitate to deal honestly with the difficulty and he often states an uncompromising opinion. Yet Dekker never suffered from petty, personal dislikes, and he never used sarcasm as a weapon. This power of disassociation was very valuable because he saw the problem in perspective, and could judge it fairly. Dekker wrote "straight from the shoulder" on what he saw and what he felt, and at no time did he stoop to the dictates of patrons.

The variety of his work, which ranged from "Merrie Jests" to comments on war and religious matters, reveals the diversity of his interests. Dekker's personal approach is always one of humility. He comes to watch, learn and record. An optimist in his attitude towards life, he treats most misfortunes from a hopeful and usually humorous stand-point. This cheerfulness runs throughout his works, and makes the reader feel his wide sympathy for the failings of others. He may reveal the weakness but he never condemns the weak. The only condemnation he metes out, is towards the knaves, and the criminal practitioners in society.

By his detailed treatment of women characters, Dekker increased the scope of Elizabethan literature. They are seen as an important element in society, an element which in the citizen class is just beginning to feel its feet and to assume a pride of place. This attitude developed into "snobbery", and brought about the idea in later generations, of eighteenth century class distinction.

Lastly, Dekker's pamphlets and non-dramatic works portray a vital picture of London, at a very great period of its history.

London, in all its variety, from palatial house to slum alley finds a place in his narratives; and every person to be met wandering through the city, is to be found stamped for all time in the pages of Dekker's works.

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In the realm of drama, his gifts to posterity are as diverse and as valuable. He has been called a "journeyman dramatist". If by this is meant a second-rate hack writer, then I would disagree profoundly. Dekker was much more. However, if one means by this connotation, a skilled craftsman in the art of presenting plays, then with some reservations, I would readily concur. The reservations must be stated. Dekker had his weaknesses, and in some plays, they are more blatant than others. He had great difficulty in creating a unified, compelling plot. So often, our interest is maintained only by concern for character. The intrigues and situations he places them in become involved and entangled, and sometimes it is a real mental effort to work out "which character did what". When this happens the force of suspense, which should maintain our interest, flags sadly, and only the ingenuities of his characters -- usually low life characters -- save the situation. Sometimes, one must admit, the situation is not saved.

Then too, Dekker had a habit of voicing personal opinions directly through the mouths of his important characters, and thus, his

speeches often degenerate into diatribe, and Dekker the preacher usurps the position of Dekker the dramatist. This failing is part of a deeper weakness in character portrayal. Too often there is a lack of development. However, this does not apply to all of his characters, and many are as vital to us when the play is over, as they are on the stage. Simon Eyre, Orlando Friscobaldo, Captain Tucca, Candido, Justiano, Babulo and others, as well as being social types have a life and personality of their own; and the same can be said for Bellafront, Mistress Horseleach, Mistress Birdlime, Moll, the roaring girl, Agripyne and Julia. His low life characters seem more vividly drawn possibly because -- and there can be no doubt about it -- Dekker enjoyed revealing certain murky aspects of Elizabethan society. He did not write in any morbid fashion, but fully aware of bawdy humour. There is a lack of refinement in his plays, but in many ways this was eminently true of Elizabethan life.

On the credit side of the balance, Dekker has much to contribute. As a comic dramatist skilled in the humour of situation and witty dialogue, Dekker has a well-founded position. He enjoyed the intrigues resulting from disguise; he was a master in the art of dramatic irony. In the presentation of dialogue, his conversation is usually in character and full of vigour. His plays are rich with contemporary ideas, with allusions to controversial subjects, and with glimpses into the life of Elizabethan London. They succeed in displaying an authentic "slice of life".

Dekker was never squeamish about presenting the characters of bawds and prostitutes, but his plays are moral, in as much as good usually overcomes evil. His versatility in technique is another gift, for he was equally at home with comedy, tragi-comedy, history and masque. His wide interests are represented in his plays, interests which spring fundamentally from his curiosity about humanity, and particularly about the "man in society". Thus it is true to say that Dekker excelled in dramatizing and crystallizing for all time, the panorama of citizen life at the turn of a great century. The full gamut of his work presents this balanced view of society. As we shut the last cover of his writings, this is our final impression, and this, I believe, Thomas Dekker's unique contribution to posterity.

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