

subsequent work. However, undoubtedly to the general student of the Elizabethan drama and the literary historian of the period, who so far have had to account for the brilliant national drama which culminated in the supreme work of Shakespeare, by the demand of a few theatres and their supporters in London for plays, the fact of importance will be that not only London but most of the towns and villages of England were enthusiastic admirers of the drama and constantly demanding dramatic performances. How truly and how deeply national was the dramatic outburst of the Elizabethan period and why it was so national can only be fully understood when we consider how universally England was interested in the drama.

Incidentally, much of interest to genealogists will be found in these volumes, for concerning many of the patrons of the players, men of title and importance in their day, no word is to be found in the usual sources of genealogical information.

My method of arrangement in this work has been to treat the London companies in vol. i. and the provincial companies in vol. ii. In some cases it has been necessary for the sake of clearness to consider some of the provincial companies in vol. i. Under such circumstances I have endeavoured to avoid all possibility of confusion by cross references. When it was imperative to discuss at length, with elaborate show of evidence, some particular point in the history of a company I have thought it advisable to relegate such a discussion to the Appendices,