

for his labors by his own people before his death. The "Unities" were observed generally by the French poets, and they were very severe in their criticisms on those who did not. Here the farce originated, which was a mere filling up between the scenes, and was composed of low extravagant wit. The first tragedy of importance was the *Cid*, written by Corneilli, in the reign of Louis XIV. After him came Moliere, who wrote famous comedies, and escaped the anger of the French critics, for his neglect of the "Unities;" but the favorite poet of that time was Racine, who wrote his great tragedy, *Athalic*. He refined French literature with his elegance and beauty of thought, but a sadness vibrates through all his works. From him we turn to notice Voltaire, who gained the attention of everybody by his romantic dramas; but unfortunately they are full of his infidel notions. After Voltaire, we can only mention two well-known poets, Victor Hugo, and Dumas.

The three pillars of the German drama are Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller. Goethe is greatly beloved by his countrymen, and they have not misplaced their affections, for he is one of the grandest writers that has ever lived. His chief work is the *Faust*. After him comes Schiller, to divide the honors; his greatest work is *William Tell*.

But it is to our own mother country that the palm of victory is awarded for the best dramas. The progress was very slow until the sixteenth century. The first idea the English had before this time was given to them by the clergy, who endeavored to teach the scriptures by the presentation of noted characters. Their notion of propriety was not very high, as Christ was personated by any wag. These efforts were useful, as books were not to be had and people could remember the raising of Lazarus much easier by seeing it, than hearing it read. The miracle plays, however, soon gave way for the morality plays, in which Justice and Virtue were the characters; but unreal characters cannot hold the interest, and when the plays of Greece

and Italy became known, the morality plays were dropped.

A modern actor would not feel much at home on the rickety old stage that used to travel from town to town and exhibit at street corners. If the scene in the play moved from one place to another a sign-board was hung out and the audience were to imagine that they were looking at a landscape in Scotland or France. If a pair of lovers whispered through a knot-hole, a man made the shape of one with his thumb and finger, and if the play did not interest them; they could use their lungs as well then as now.

The earliest tragedy is *Gorbuduc*, and the earliest comedy is *Ralph Roister Doister*. Then for about twenty years nothing much was written until Marlowe introduced the first historical play,—*The Life of Edward II*; also his *Dr. Faustus*, became celebrated later years. Contemporary with Marlowe is Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakespeare. Ben Jonson will be remembered for his *Every Man in his Humor*, and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy* redeem that age from some of the coarseness found in most of the plays. Of Shakespeare himself, we know so little and yet of his works we have so many. He left us fourteen comedies, eleven tragedies, and ten histories. Many Shakespearian scholars have made his plays a life-study, and yet feel that this man with the "oceanic mind" is still unfathomable. Philip Massinger wrote a play which would not be acceptable to modern business men, a new way to pay old debts.

A new term now came into use which embraced tragedy and comedy. It was called *tragi-comedy*, and was given to those plays in which some of the principal actors were brought so near to destruction and yet at the end of the play every thing turned out happily. This kind of play Shakespeare used, of which *The Merchant of Venice* is an example.

When the Elizabethan period closed, the Paritans took the reins of government and prevented any from attending play-houses. But after the Restoration, the