

RISE OF THE DRAMA IN ENGLAND—

“ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE!”

WILLIAM FITZSTEPHEN, a monk of Canterbury, who wrote in the reign of Henry II., and died in 1191, in speaking of the performances of the stage, says, London, instead of common Interludes belonging to the theatre, hath plays of a more holy subject; representations of those miracles which the holy confessors wrought, or of the sufferings wherein the glorious constancy of the martyrs did appear. In the reign of Edward III., it was ordained by act of parliament that the strollers should be whipped and banished out of London, on account of the scandalous masquerades which they represented. By these masquerades we are to understand a species of entertainment similar to the performances of the mummers; of which some remains were to be met with so late as on Christmas Eve, 1817, in an obscure village in Cumberland, where there was a numerous party of them. Their drama related to some historical subject, and several of the speeches were in verse, and delivered with good emphasis. The whole concluded with a battle, in which one of the heroes was subdued; but the main character was a jester, who constantly interrupted the heroes with his buffoonry, like the clown in the tragedies of Calderon, the Spanish Shakspeare. The play of Hock Tuesday, performed before Queen Elizabeth, at Kenilworth, was in dumb-show, the actors not having had time to get their parts. It represented, says Dr. Percy, in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, after Laneham, the outrage and insupportable insolency of the Danes, the grievous complaint of Huna, King Ethelred’s chieftain in wars; his counselling and contriving the plot to despatch them; concluding with conflicts (between Danish and English warriors), and their final suppression, expressed in actions and rhymes after their manner. One can hardly conceive a more regular model of a complete tragedy. The drama, in England, undoubtedly arose much in the same way as it did in Greece. The strollers, or vagrants, with their theatres in the yards of inns, answer to the company and exhibitions

of Thespsis; and the improvements were gradual, till at last, to use the words of Sir George Buck, who wrote in 1631, dramatic poesy is so lively expressed and represented on the public stages and the theatres of this city (London), as Rome, in the highest pitch of her pomp and glory, never saw it better performed.

HANG UP BABY’S STOCKING.

Hang up baby’s stocking,
Be sure you don’t forget
The dear little dimpled darling,
She ne’er saw Christmas yet;
But I’ve told her all about it,
And she opened her big blue eyes;
And I’m sure she understands it,
She looks so funny and wise.

Dear; what a tiny stocking!
It doesn’t take much to hold
Such little pink toes as baby’s
Away from the frost and cold,
But then, for the baby’s Christmas
It will never do at all;
Why Santa wouldn’t be looking
For anything half so small!

I know what we’ll do for the baby—
I’ve thought of the very best plan—
I’ll borrow a stocking of grandma,
The longest that ever I can;
And you’ll hang it by mine, dear mother,
Right here in the corner, so,
And write a letter to Santa,
And fasten it on to the toe.

Write: “This is the baby’s stocking
That hangs in the corner here;
You never have seen her, Santa,
For she only came this year;
But she’s just the blessedest baby—
And now before you go
Just cram her stocking with goodies,
From the top clean down to the toe.”

THE ACCUSING BIRDS.

MURDER is so great a crime, my friends, that God almost always so ordains that the wretches who commit it are discovered and punished even in this life. Some curious stories are told on this subject. Here is a very extraordinary one:—

St. Meinrad was a young lord of Suabia, in Germany. In the flower of his age he left his illustrious family to commune with God in solitude. The night often surprised him reading the Sacred Scriptures, a manuscript copy of which, with golden clasps, had come down to him from his fathers. Often, too, he meditated on the virtues, the holiness, the goodness, and the miracles of the Blessed Virgin. He made his vows in the Abbey of Reichenau, situated in the Duchy of Baden, and he afterwards left it to take up his abode in a little her-