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Elizabethan tragedies based on contemporary murders

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ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDIES BASED ON CONTEMPORARY MURDERS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

H. Y. Moffett.

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1920
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Introduction

The student of Elizabethan drama finds himself face to face with a vast complexity of movements, forces, and tendencies, operating in numerous ways throughout a period of intensely dynamic energy. Amid the welter of dramatic movements there emerge a few great figures that loom giant-like among their contemporaries because of vastly superior genius. Yet we can scarcely arrive at a true understanding of these robust personages until, with a realization that they, like their more obscure associates, are products of their time, we have delved into the soil from which they grew. It is with the desire to examine a modest portion of this soil that the writer ventures upon this inquiry into a certain type of the drama which ran its course from about 1590 through the first few years of the new century.

According to the chronology of Malone, three-fourths of the work of Shakespeare was done during this period. Of his tragedies, *Romeo* and *Juliet* (according to this calculation) appeared in 1590, *Hamlet* in 1600, and *Othello* in 1604. Authorities agree that *King Lear* was written in 1604 or 1605, and that *Macbeth* came in 1606. Having thus established our orientation in the field, we may better understand the significance of the form of tragedy which we purpose to examine.

Shakespeare developed his skill largely by writing historical plays, a species of drama that was tremendously in vogue during the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth. The history play derived its popularity in part from the great general interest in matters of English
history which reached its fervid climax in 1588, the year of the
Armada, and in part also from an eager popular interest in the
politics and historical concerns of foreign lands. When we add to
these two stimulating influences the circumstances of the great
increase in the number of theaters between 1590 and 1600, we see why
the field of historical and chronicle writings was at this time being
thoroughly ransacked by playwrights of every degree of ability, all
striving to catch up with an insatiable popular demand for their pro-
ductions. We can also understand why many of the resulting plays were
of the rudest workmanship, apparently thrown together in great haste
by collaborating authors.

A definite link connects the historical play with another dramatic
form that rivaled it in popularity, the tragedy of blood. Indeed, it is
not always practicable to attempt a judgment as to which of the two
types a particular play belongs. All the thrills that could be produced
by the most horrible events, enacted on the stage with highly realistic
method, were utilized in both, while supernatural elements were often
employed to heighten the horror of the atmosphere. The diligent searchers
who were plundering the chronicles of Stow, Holinshed, and Hall for
historical matter could not long avoid the conclusion that there existed
in these repositories of play material another source of profit which
possessed a similar appeal. Ballads and broadsides dealing with sensation-
al items of domestic news had long been popular. Pamphlets upon horrible
murders, suicides, executions, and such matters, often presented in the
guise of moral instruction, were decidedly alluring to the part of the
English population that was able to read. Why not, then, exploit some
Thus we see the emergence of a new species of tragedy, rude, hasty, realistic, sometimes disgusting, but often remarkably powerful, which grew up from diverse roots, and, while passing through its brief vogue, both displayed in its own course a kind of progress and exerted an influence on more artistic and permanent dramatic work. Like the history plays, the domestic tragedies could be produced rapidly, and could follow with little variation the accounts in the chronicles upon which they were usually based. Like these, too, they lent themselves to methods of collaboration and patch-work. But unlike the plays which dealt with matters of history, the domestic tragedies depended for their effect almost entirely upon realism of details. The attraction of patriotism, the glamor of remote lands and peoples, the allurements of mythology or romance, are all cast aside; the charms of poetry and fancy lend no aid; we stand face to face with the savagely accurate portrayal of events the most gruesome and horrible as they have actually occurred in English life. These representations of life succeed by effect of their realistic appeal, and by that alone.

We may only guess at the number of such plays that were produced. The first known specimen of the type, Arden of Feversham, published in 1592, has come down to us, with but four or five others of its kind. Henslowe's Diary mentions at least eight other plays, now lost, which without doubt belonged to this species, beside two or three others which may possibly have dealt with contemporary murders. Unquestionably, the supply was far in excess of the names that remain. That such
performances were pleasing to the best audiences seems to be indicated
by the fact that Murderous Michael and The Cruelty of a Stepmother
were presented at court in 1578. (1) Among the lost plays mentioned by
Henslowe we find Black Bateman of the North composed by Dekkar, Chettle,
Drayton, and Wilson in 1598, Page of Plymouth, by Jonson and Dekkar,
acted in 1599, Cox of Collumpton, in which Day and Haughton collaborated
in 1599, and The Black Dog of Newgate, 1602-1603, with which were con­
cerned Day, Hathaway, Smith, and "another poet." Other lost tragedies
which seem to have belonged to this type were The Bristol Merchant by
Ford and Dekkar, and another which may well have reached the zenith of
horror, A Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother, by Ford and Webster!

Perhaps the loss most to be regretted is that of Page of Plymouth.
In Henslowe we find this interesting note: "Lent unto Wm. Borne, alles
birde, the 10 of aguste 1599, to lend unto Bengemyne Johnsome and
thomas Dekkars, in earneste of ther booke which they are writtinge,
called pagge of plimothe, the somme XXXXs." A later note indicates
that these two dramatists finished their tragedy in September, 1599,
and were then paid £ 6, the entire price of the play being £ 10. (2)
A version of the tragic event upon which the play was based, a murder
strikingly like the Feversham murder discussed on a later page, appears

1. The opinion has been advanced that the first-mentioned tragedy was
identical with Arden of Feversham. See Swinburne, The Study of Shakespeare.
There is little ground upon which to base such a conjecture. However,
the epilogue to the latter play has a reference to gentlemen which may
suggest a court performance.

2. Schelling's computation is £ 8. See The Elizabethan Drama, 1, 316.
in an old tract a portion of which has been reprinted by the Shakespeare Society. The contributor says of the account that "it serves to show the sort of subjects taken up and employed by great stage poets in the time of Shakespeare." The pamphlet version is entitled: *A true discourse of a cruel and inhumane murder, committed upon M. Padge of Plymouth, the 11 day of February last, 1591, by the consent of his owne wife and sundry other.*

Besides *Arden of Feversham*, several other domestic tragedies still extant may engage our attention. These are: *A Warning for Fair Women*, printed in 1599 and apparently acted shortly before by the Lord Chamberlain's Company; *Yarrington's Two Tragedies in One*, printed in 1601; *Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness*, acted in 1603 and printed in 1607; *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, one of the much-discussed "doubtful plays" of Shakespeare; and, probably the last specimen of the species, *The Witch of Edmonton*, by Dekkar, Ford, and Rowley, acted in 1623, but not printed until 1658. It will be observed that men of no mean talent worked in this species of composition. While Dekkar seems to have been the most prolific writer in this field, Jonson, Ford, Chapman, and Webster all tried the domestic tragedy, and it is at least possible that an even more skilful hand took part in such work. (2)

It is the intention of the writer to examine the specimens of the murder tragedy that have come down to us, to attempt to make plain the character of this form of the drama, and to trace as best

2. See discussion of *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, pp.
he may the relation that exists between the contemporary events and the dramas based upon them. Problems of authorship will in general be touched but lightly, since much has been attempted in that field, with only slight results.
Arden of Feversham was entered by Edward White on April 3, 1592, and was printed in the same year. The date of its stage production is unknown, nor do we have any definite clue to the identity of the author. Though the play appears as the earliest of the known domestic tragedies, it is one of the most finished of them. The title-page of the first edition is worthy of study in itself, as illustrative of the materials and methods of this dramatic type. "The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent. Who was most wickedlye murdred, by the meanes of his most disloyall and wanton wife, who for the love she bare to one Mosbie, hyred two desperat ruffins Blackwill and Shakbac to kill him. Wherin is shewed the great mallice and discimilation of a wicked woman, the insatiable desire of filthie lust, and the shameful end of all murderers." (1)

The playwright deals with an actual crime which took place in Kent in 1591, taking his account from Holinshed's detailed version of the affair. He follows closely the bare and realistic horror of his source, building up a tragedy which, with all the coarseness and repulsiveness of its details, contains passages of vigorous character delineation and scenes of gloomy power. Yet it is true to the style of the typical murder tragedy in that it depends upon the naked, primitive appeal of bloodshed. At the close of the play, after we are told

of the execution of eight persons, the epilogue closes with these significant lines:

Gentlemen, we hope you'll pardon this naked tragedy, 
Wherein no filed points are foisted in 
To make it gracious to the ear or eye; 
For simple truth is gracious enough, 
And needs no other points of glozing stuff.

Here we have in a few words the whole theory of the domestic tragedy.

The dramatists who worked up plays of this class knew their audiences.

The taste which revelled in the tragedies of blood and the melodrama of the historical plays did not demand "glozing stuff." Professor Wallace, speaking of the group of authors to whose number belong Lodge, Green, Marlowe, and Kyd, says: "The great thing for these young dramatic plungers—and they did it well—was to remember the audience, and to give them plenty of thunder, battle, blood, buffoonery, bombast, and show—action, action, action, through it all. Though they drew subjects and names of characters from Italy, France, Spain, and other foreign countries, the place was after all England, and the characters were intensely English—on the level of what was known or imagined by the audience."(1)

If this sort of interest could be made to attach to action based on remote or foreign stories, a native English event of the sort we are considering, the facts of which were known to every auditor, could scarcely fail to appeal to a popular London audience. The fact that the chronicler digresses from a discussion of momentous state affairs to devote a half-dozen folio pages to the murder of Arden is an indication of the notable interest of the affair. His lengthy and

1. Schriften der Deutschen Shakespeare Gesellschaft, IV, 184, 1912.
circumstantial account begins thus: "About this time there was at Feversham in Kent a gentleman named Arden most cruelly murdered and slain by procurement of his own wife. The which murder for the horribleness thereof, although otherwise it may seem to be but a private matter and therefore as it were impertinent to this historie, I have thought good to set it forth somewhat at large, having the instructions delivered to me by them that have used some diligence to gather the true understanding of the circumstances."(1)

This atrocity might well have been a matter of common knowledge all over England had there been no other remarkable features about it other than the "horribleness thereof." But there were in connection with it still other sensational circumstances. According to Holinshed, Arden, who was a man of grasping disposition and unscrupulous character, had defrauded several persons of lands, with the result that the murder seemed in a remarkable way to fulfil some of the curses which certain of his victims had placed upon him. At the end of his detailed discussion the chronicler writes: "This one thing seemeth verie strange and notable touching maister Arden, that in the place where he was laid, being dead, all the proportions of his bodie might be seene two years after and more, as plaine as could be, for the grass did not growe where his bodie had touched...so that manie strangers came in that meane time, besides the townsmen, to see the print of his bodie there on the ground in that feeld. Which field he had (as some have reported) most cruelly taken from a woman that had...married to one Richard Reade a mariner...For the which the said Reade wife not onelie exclaimed against him...but

1. Holinshed's Chronicles, 111, 1024 ff.
also cursed him most bitterlie even to his face, wishing manie a vengeance to light upon him, and that the world might wonder on him. Which was thought then to come to passe when he was thus murthered, and laie in that field from midnight till the next morning. And so all that daie, being the faire daie (a fair was being held in the grounds of the adjacent abbey) till night, all the which daie there were manie hundreds of people came wondering about him." Is it likely that a play like Arden of Feversham would fail to interest a sixteenth century English audience?

The play opens with Mrs. Arden in love with Mosbie, and already plotting to get rid of her husband. Arden is aware of the unfaithfulness of his wife, and can scarcely be ignorant of the fact that his own life is in danger, yet he continues to endure a situation that wrings his heart with misery and shame, hoping by some means to redeem the woman from her evil life. The paramours plan Arden's death. After failing in an attempt to poison him, they employ two "cutters" of desperate reputation, Black Will and Shakebag, and put the project in the charge of one Greene, whom Arden has cheated out of his inheritance of land. On five occasions the murderers are baffled in their attempts. On the sixth trial they catch their victim in his own house, and with the active aid of Mosbie, Arden's wife, and a rascally servant named Michael, they perform the murder. Retribution promptly follows, and the tragedy ends with the promise of executions in plenty. A more utterly abominable and villainous cast of characters were never associated.
This play is well known and has attracted much attention. Opinions of its merits vary widely. Swinburne calls it "a tragic masterpiece", and in an eloquent argument assigns it to the pen of the youthful Shakespeare; Ward terms it "a slovenly piece of work", and believes that "the characters carrying on its action throughout are either repulsive or uninteresting."(1) Between these extremes there are many shades of opinion. After several careful readings, the writer ventures the judgment that it is at least tremendously impressive to a reader, and must have been still more impressive on the stage.

The character of Arden is not strongly presented. In real life he seems to have been weak, unprincipled, and despicable, yet the dramatist apparently feels the necessity of touching him up a trifle in order to insure some degree of sympathy for him. In attempting to gain this end the author goes too far in one respect. In the very opening of the action Arden is shown to be aware of his wife's adultery with Mosbie. He has even seen his own wedding ring on Mosbie's finger, and knows that his name is a laughing-stock because of the open scandal. Yet he allows the affair to go on, laying bare his grief only to his friend, Franklin. Now Holinshed mentions a motive, albeit a base one, for this contemptible weakness. He says: "Although ... Arden perceived right well their mutuall familiaritie to be much greater than their honestie, yet because he would not offend her, and so loose the benefit he hoped to gain at some of her friends hands in bearing with her lewdnesse, which he might have lost if he should

have fallen out with her: he was contented to wink at her filthie disorder, and both permitted, and also invited, Mosbie to lodge in his house." (1)

The chronicle and the play agree in showing Arden to be greedy of gain and willing to amass property by any means. He contrives to secure possession of the lands of Feversham Abbey, notwithstanding the fact that Greene has a prior right to them, so that Greene, who is spoken of as a man of deep religious devotion, desperately resolves to vindicate his rights by killing Arden at any cost to himself. He expresses his determination to Mistress Arden in the following words:

Desire of wealth is endles in his minde,
And he is gredy gaping still for gaine,
What cares he though young gentlemen do begge,
So he may scrape and hoorde up in his poutche,
But seeing he hath taken my lands Ile value lyfe
As careless as he is carefull for to get,
And tell him this from me, Ile be revenged,
And so as he shall wishe the Abby lands
Had rested still within their former state.

Hence Greene becomes a willing ally of Mistress Arden, and actively sets about devising the murder.

Later in the play the sailor, Reed, meets Arden, and curses him vengmously about a similar piece of fraud, adding a terrible prophecy like that mentioned in the chronicle. On this occasion Arden assures Franklin that the land has been honestly bought and paid for, and no more is said of the matter until the epilogue, in which appears this statement, merely condensed from the source:

But this above the fest is to be noted,
Arden lay murthered in that plot of ground,
Which he by force and violence held from Rede,
And in the grass his bodyes print was seene,
Two yeeres and more after the deede was doone.

1. There are some grounds for the belief that Arden's wife was a daughter of Sir Edward North. Symonds suggests that the playwright may have dispensed with this hint of motivation because the North family was still noble and influential.
In the early part of the play Mistress Arden says to Mosbie:

My saving husband hoordes up bags of gould,
To make our children rich, and now is hee
Gone to unload the goods that shall be thine.

There is still another detail in Holinshed's version which the dramatist omits. The fair which had been an annual source of revenue to the townspeople had formerly been held partly in the Abbey grounds and partly in the town. But this year Arden, having control of the former, had contrived that the fair should be conducted entirely on his ground "for his own private lucre and covetous gain...and so reaping all the gaines to himselfe, and bereaving the towne of that portion which was woont to come to the inhabitants, got many a bitter curse."

He shows unthinkable stupidity in continuing to trust his life in the hands of his wife and Mosbie after their treacherous intentions have been made perfectly apparent. He tastes something wrong with his soup at breakfast, and says so, whereupon the woman, with brazen impudence, throws the dish to the floor, exclaiming,

Theres nothing that I do can please your taste,
You were best say I would have poisoned you.

Then she angrily rates him for imagining evil of her and Mosbie, who is sitting at the table with them. And in the face of these circumstances Arden replies to her,

Why, gentle Ales, cannot I be ill,
But youle accuse yourselve?

Then, after asking Franklin for a dose of emetic, he prepares for a journey to London.

Even after the pair have insultingly kissed and embraced before his eyes, after Mosbie has taunted him with the horn, even after a
narrow escape from death at the hands of the two and their attendant
cut-throats, Arden idiotically swallows his wife's explanations, be­
lieves that he has wronged Mosbie, and hastens after him to make
amends, ending by inviting the wretch to dine with the family again.
Indeed, the figure of Master Arden does not inspire much respect or
sympathy. One thing only can be said for him; he is obviously no coward.

The central figure of the play is the powerful and passion-swayed
woman. Coarse and brutal as she undoubtedly is, there is still about
her a quality of vitality and energy of will that can be found in no
other female character of tragedy save Lady Macbeth. She is a mighty
force of evil, dragging the oft-thwarted design of murder along by the
resistless power of her determination, overcoming the weakness of her
confederates, laying plot after plot, undaunted by repeated failures,
and contemptuous of consequences. When Mosbie weakens she fires his
cooled resolution by her own savage passion; she artfully stimulates
the rage of Greene, and with reckless audacity enlists the painter,
Clarke, and Michael in the plot by promising to both the hand of
Mosbie's sister. Her comment on the failure of the poison plot is
merely, "This powder was too gross and palpable." Then she promptly
devises other means, lashing the slackened zeal of Mosbie with her own
contagious fire, and persuading him by such casuistry as this:

What, shall an oath make thee forsake my love?
As if I have not sworn as much myselfe,
And given my hand unto him in the church,
Tush, Mosbie, oaths are words and words are wind,
And wind is mutable: then I conclude,
Tis childishness to stand upon an oath.

Her audacity, indeed, is a source of constant apprehension on the part
of her cowardly and cold-blooded paramour, who, nevertheless, is impelled
on by the amazing force of her character.
The only touch of remorse which she displays before the accomplishment of the murder occurs in one terrible scene in which the dramatist boldly departs from his source, with fine artistic effect. Here, with a prayer-book in her hand, she speaks words which betray a desperately striving conscience. Mosbie, in hypocritical protestations, rebukes her sadness.

**Mos.** It is not love, that loves to anger love.

**Ales.** It is not love that loves to murther love.

**Mos.** How meanes you that?

**Ales.** Thou knowest how Arden loved me.

**Mos.** And then.

**Ales.** And then conceale the rest, for tis too bad,
Least that my words be carried with the wind,
And publish in the world to both our shames,
I pray thee Mosbie let our springtime wither,
Our harvest else will yeald but lothesome weedes.
Forget I pray thee what hath passed betwix us,
For now I blush and tremble at the thoughts.

**Mos.** What, are you changde?

**Ales.** I, to my former happy lyfe againe.
From tylte of an odious strumpets name,
To honest Ardens wife, not Ardens honest wife.

When she has completed her speech, Mosbie turns upon her with bitter, scornful abuse that crushes out her spirit of repentance, and brings her cringing before him, begging his forgiveness. Never again until after the murder does she feel a pang of repentance. Her passion for her lover increases her hatred for the man who stands between them.

When Mosbie has received a slight wound in the arm from Arden's rapier, he flings at her the viperish reproach, "Mistress Arden, this is your favor." She replies:

Ah, say not so, for when I saw thee hurt,
I could have toke the weapon thou letst fall
And run at Arden, for I have sworne
That these mine eyes offended with his sight,
Shall never close till Ardens be shut up,
This night I rose and walked about the chamber.
And twice or thrice I thought to have murthered him.
From this time her rage for the death of her husband and her passion for Mosbie are nearly akin to madness. Such lines as these express her frenzy of desire on a rather high poetic level:

Nay, he must leave to live that we may love,  
May live, may love, for what is life but love?  
And love shall last as long as life remains,  
And life shall end before my love depart.

In planning the final attempt, which results in the butchery of Arden at his own table, she proceeds with a ferocious energy. In the ghastly episode, when Black Will, rushing out from concealment, drags the victim over backward with a towel, and Mosbie strikes him on the head with a heavy pressing-iron, she springs in among the struggling assassins, crying,

What, grones thou? Nay then, give me the weapon,  
Take this for hindering Mosbies love and mine.

So fiendish does her brutality seem that even the villainous Michael, who has from the first been accessory to the murder, cries out in horror, "Oh! Mistress!" (1) Then, taking command of the situation, she dauntlessly directs her adherents in the disposal of the body. Not until the crime has been positively proved does she break down and surrender utterly to helpless penitence and regret for her wickedness. A great, powerful figure, with a touch of Tamora and a touch of Lady Macbeth, too, but with an individuality of her own, she makes an end that is not altogether devoid of pathos and a kind of dark nobility.

1. Holinshed's grisly account gives her a still more gruesome part. "After that blacke Will was gone mistresse Arden came into the counting house and with a knife gave him seven or eight picks into the brest."
Of Mosbie almost enough has already been said. He is a thoroughly infamous scoundrel, lacking in every attribute of manhood. At first a rascally tailor, he has somehow fawned himself into the employ of Lord Clifford, and has become the latter's steward. At the very opening of the play he feels that the adventure in which he has embarked has become too hazardous, and desires to drop it, but is prevented by the magnetism of Mistress Arden, which is too strong for his weak will. When he is faced by Arden, who calls him a miserable "botcher", and, taking his sword from him, taunts him with his needle and pressing-iron, he whines, falters, and protests until Arden takes pity on him. His cowardice appears in all the plotting to which he is a party. He is in constant fear lest the recklessness of the woman involve him in disaster, choosing rather to attempt Arden's death by the safer devices of poisoned pictures and crucifixes. In the midst of the plots he treacherously studies to secure his own safety by setting the conspirators against each other, and even to kill Mistress Arden herself. When he quarrels with her his speeches show the very essence of meanness. He constantly fears for his own skin. Directly after the murder he cries in a panic, "Tell me, sweet Ales, how shall I escape?" and again, "See you confess nothing in any case."

In the shadow of the gallows he pours foul abuse on the woman who has sacrificed everything for his love:

How long shall I live in this hell of grief?
Convey me from the presence of this strumpet.

The remaining characters of this play of villains may be disposed of in brief space. Franklin is a mere figurehead; he takes a part in the conversation, serves as the author's mouthpiece on several occasions, and speaks the epilogue. The painter, Clarke, is a complete rascal,
but is not strongly individualized. Bradshawe and Susan are innocent tools who are engulfed in the whirlpool and swept to tragic fates. Michael is somewhat more real. He, too, is a thorough rogue, a tool of murderers, while lacking the courage to perform a desperate act himself. Yet he can talk like a dauntless bravo. Early in the first act, Mistress Arden makes him swear to kill her husband, promising him the hand of Susan Mosbie, for whom he has a clownish devotion.

Ales. What needes all this, I say that Susans thine.
Mic. Why then I say that I will kill my master
Or anything that you will have me do.
Ales. But Michael, see you do it cunningly.
Mic. Why, say I should be tooke, Ile nere confesse,
For I will rid my elder brother away:
And then the farm of Bolton is mine owne.
Who would not venture upon house and land,
When he may have it for a right downe blowe.

But for all his bold talk, he turns out to be a miserable craven. His rival, the painter, breaks his head for him. Black Will and Shakebag bully him prodigiously, and put him into a terrible fright by their sulphurous threats. The extremity of his terror furnishes one of the most effective dramatic passages of the play. The two desperadoes have sworn him to leave Arden's door unlocked. When his master and Franklin have gone to bed, and Michael tremulously awaits the coming of the pair, his imagination reaches a poetic pitch of terror.

Conflicting thoughts encamped in my brest
Awake me with the echo of their strokes:
And I a judge to censure either side,
Can give to neither wished victory.
My masters kindnes pleads to me for lyfe,
With just demand, and I must grant it him.
My mistres she hath forced me with an oath,
For Susans sake the which I may not breake,
For that is nearer than a masters love.
That grim faced fellow, pittiles black Will,
And Shakebag stearne in bloody stratageme,
Two Ruffer Ruffins never lived in kent,
Have sworne my death if I infrindge my vow,
A dreadfull thing to be considered of,
Me thinks I see them with their bolstred haire,
Staring and grinning in thy gentle face,
And in their ruthles hands, their dagers drawne,
Insulting ore thee with a peck of oathes,
Whilste thou submissive pleading for releefe,
Art mangled by their irefull instruments.
Me thinks I heare them aske where Michaell is,
And pittiless black Will cryes, Stab the slave,
The pesant will detect the Tragedy.
The wrinkles in his fowle death threatening face,
Gape open wide, like graves to swallow men.
My death to him is but a merryment,
And he will murther me to make him sport.
He comes, he comes, ah Master Arden, helpe,
Call up the neighbors or we are but dead!

In the emotional climax of terror leading up to the final wild scream
there appears the touch of a hand that has passed its apprenticeship.

Black Will and Shakebag, while drawn somewhat after the pattern
of conventional stock murderers, are decidedly interesting. Bluster-
ing, swaggering ruffians they are, to whom brawling and purse-snatch-
ing are matters of regular employment, and murder, by their own account,
at least, a pastime. They are individualized in a measure, Will being
the more horrible in fierce words and oaths, but his companion fully
as cruel and desperate in disposition. Hear their speeches when Greene
has employed them to waylay Arden, and has given them their first
payment to whet their ardor.

Will. My fingers itch to be at the pesant,
Ah that I might be set a worke thus through the year,
And that murther would grow to an occupation:
That a man could without daunger of law,
Zounds I warrant, I should be warden of the company.

I tell thee Greene the forlorne traveler,
Whose lips are glewed with sommers parching heat,
Nere longed so much to see a running brooke,
As I to finish Ardens Tragedy.
Seest thou this goare that cleaveth to my face?
From thence nere will I wash this bloody staine,
Till Ardens heart be panting in my hand.
Greene. Why that well said, but what saith Shakbag?
Sha. I cannot paint my valour out with wordes,
But give me place and opportunitie,
Such mercy as the starven Lyones
When she is dry suckt by her eager young,
Shows to the pray that next encounters her,
On Arden so much pity would I take.

Scores of quotations might be given to illustrate the delightful characterization of these fellows. They quarrel savagely between themselves, and breathe out vengeance and slaughter against each other. They boast tremendously of their courage and their bloody exploits. There is real humor in Will's accounts of the terror he inspires in tavern-keepers and maintainers of bawdy houses. Yet with all their braggadocio, there is something terribly inevitable in the persistence with which they hang to the trail of their victim. There is much that is genuinely dreadful in their composition.

This inevitability is characteristic of the tragedy itself. From the first scene it is certain that for Arden there can be no escape. He is indeed "benetted round with villainies"; his weaknesses combine with hostile forces to enforce his overthrow. The characters in league against him form an inexorable combination; each has a strength that supplements the weakness of another. Though one attempt after another is thwarted, with the suspense constantly mounting, the events seem to fall out with perfect reasonableness. Not a scene is purposeless, and the rising suspense carries the tragedy forward with a powerful sweep to a predestined end.

The play throughout is strikingly rich in pictures of contemporary life. We see people dining, retiring and arising, transacting business,
and strolling among the crowds on the streets and in Pauls. We are impressed by the ominous loneliness of the country highways, haunted by thieves. We hear Arden direct his servant to watch for the tide which enables passengers to journey by water, and listen to the homely chaff of the ferryman. For our interest the apprentice pulls down the shutters of his stall, remarking, "There will be old filching when the press comes forth of Pauls." Amid the surging throng of the city streets, we hear Black Will boast of his levy of tribute on tavernkeepers by threatening to pull down their signs after nightfall. In all these features Arden of Feversham is clearly the work of no unpracticed hand. It is thoroughly worth reading.

Some critics have believed that this play was written by Shakespeare. This theory has been advanced by Tieck, Ulrici, and Knight. Swinburne in his Study of Shakespeare advanced interesting, if not very convincing, arguments on this side of the question. (1) Charles Crawford, however, in 1903 presented an argument which seems to establish the fact that the play belongs to Kyd, and that he put the best of his interest and talent into it. Crawford concludes his convincing discussion with these words: "I assert, then, that Kyd is the author of Arden of Feversham, and that he composed the play at about the end of 1591 or the beginning of 1592; and that, moreover, it was written shortly after Soliman and Perseda."(2)

1. A thorough summary of these arguments is presented by Symonds in his Shakespeare's Predecessors, 420.
2. The Authorship of Arden of Feversham, Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXIV, 74-86.
CHAPTER TWO

A Warning for Fair Women

The second of the murder tragedies that remain to us is the anonymous Warning for Fair Women, which was entered on the Stationers' Register November 17, 1599, and printed in the same year. Two originals are known to exist, one in the Dyce collection at South Kensington, the other in the Bodleian Library. On the title-page of the Dyce copy appears the statement that the play was "lately diverse times acted by the right Honorable, the Lord Chamberlaine his Servauntes, that is, by Shakespeare's company. The complete title is as follows: A Warning for Faire Women, containing the most tragicall and lamentable murther of Master George Sanders of London Marchant, nigh Shooters hill. Consented unto by his wife, acted by M. Browne, Mistres Drewry and Trusty Roger, agents therin with their severale ends. Farmer hazards the opinion that the play was probably written in 1589-90. The number of mentions that we have of the tragic event upon which it is based indicates that a great amount of interest was aroused by the circumstances.

The murder of George Sanders took place in 1573. Stow and Holinshed both describe it in detail, following the account given in a religious pamphlet written by a puritan named Golding and published in London in the year of the murder. This pamphlet, rather than the chronicles, seems to have been the direct source of the play. (1) Also, Anthony Munday, in his View of Sundry Examples, 1580, uses the events connected with the crime as the text for an abundance of rhetorical moralizing. By this time,

as Tucker-Brooke puts it, "the murder had risen out of the plane of current journalism into that of belles-lettres."(1) In this document is much that throws valuable light upon Elizabethan interest in any sort of strange or sensational news. Among "many straunge murders, sundry persons perjured, signes and tokens of Gods anger towards us... straunge and monstrous children...of late...born," and a discourse on a recent earthquake, we find reference to the "example of John Morgan, who slew Maister Turberville in Somersetshire,1580";(2) and a number of other similar tragedies, all of which seem to be well known to the public. The Sanders murder is discussed as follows.

"Not long since, one George Browne, a man of stature good and excellent if life and deedes thereto had been equivalent; but as the ancient adage is, goodly is he that goodly dooeth, and comely is he that behaveth himself comely, so may it be witnessed in this man, who more respected a vaaine pride and prodigal pleasure...than commendation and good report that followeth a godlie and virtuous life...this George Browne murdred cruelly maister George Saunders, an honest, vertuous, and godly cittizen, well knowne, of good name and fame; among his neighbors well thought of; abroade and everywhere well esteemed; of wealth well storéd; of credit well allowed;of living Christianly disposed, and of those that knew him well beloved. This man being met by George Browne (who by consent of maister Saunders wife was appoynted to kill him) after he perceived what was his intent,

1. The Tudor Drama.357-80.
2. Some have supposed this to have been George Turberville, the translator of Ovid's epistle, but Collier thinks not. See Annals of the Stage,11,389.
and howe he sought to bathe his handes in his guyltes blood, fell to
entreatance, that pittie might take place in his bloody breast.

"But he, a wretch more desirour of his death that wylling his
welfare, more mindful of murder than safe-gard of his soule, so bent
to blindness that he expected not the light, strooke the stroke that
returned his shame, dyd the deede that drove him to destiny, and ful-
filled the fact, that in the end he found folly." Then follow pious
ejaculations of horror, and extracts from Isaiah, David, and Solomon,
in a strain of moralizing that removes this work as far as possible
from the plain narrative of the chroniclers.(1)

No clue as to the identity of the author of A Warning for Fair
Women has been found. It has been ascribed to Lyly, to Lodge, and to
Kyd; there is no evidence in favor of any save the doubtful one of
apparent similarity of style. In so far as this is an indication of
any value, perhaps Kyd is a more likely candidate than either of the
others.

There are some likenesses between the structure of this play and
that of Arden of Feversham. In both plays, suspense is maintained by
the repeated thwarting of the murderer's purpose by the arrival of
other persons or by some other chance occurrence. In both cases the
device gives more scope for depiction of the mental processes of the
murderers and sustains the interest of the spectators. In both plays
similar clues lead to the detection of the criminals; a blood-stain
on the stocking of Browne betrays him to the servants of the Queen
while they are furnishing him with a cup of beer, and the bloody

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1. This interesting document is reprinted in the edition of John-a-Kent
and John-a-Cumber published by the Shakespeare Society, 1851.
handkerchief of the earlier play reappears here to exert its damning influence. In general, the *Warning* is a far less powerful play than the other, though some of the characters are much more human.

Mistress Sanders is far more womanlike than the monstrous figure of Arden's wife. She is guilty of conniving at her husband's murder, but the dramatist has taken pains to show us that there are excuses for her, even though they may seem slight to modern readers. Mistress Drewry, playing the part of pandar, and encouraging Browne, works upon the woman with diabolical skill. We are not shown the complete process in the transformation of her character. At the beginning she seems to be a wife of perfect chastity. The first hint we receive that her character is not so angelic after all is when we see her in a rage because her husband has refused her money for the immediate purchase of finery. The fiendish Drewry seizes this moment to make her attack, and after her assay at palmistry we see that the forces of ruin have gained entrance. The advance of the corrupting process in the woman's character is not shown; however, we are soon made to understand that she and Browne have come to an understanding, and that her approval has been given to the murderous plot.

As soon as she receives news of the murder, her conscience begins to work terribly. Drewry and her accomplice, Roger, are filled with dismay at her condition, and the former tells her:

> See where master Browne is, in him take comfort,  
> And learn to temper your excessive grief.

The reply of the wife is a whole sermon on the revenging power with which evil deeds recoil.

> Ah, bid me feed on poison and be fat,  
> Or looke upon the Basiliske and live,
Or surfeit daily and be still in health,  
Or leap into the sea and not be drownde:  
All these are even as possible as this,  
That I should be recomforted by him,  
That is the author of my whole lament.

Every trace of love has vanished at the moment of the murder. Browne has become to her eyes only an object of horror. When he speaks to her of the necessity of concealing their guilt, she replies, in lines of the tragic value of which there is no need to speak:

Mountains will not suffice to cover it,  
Cimmerian darkness cannot shadow it,  
Nor any policie wit has in store,  
Cloake it so cunningly, but at the last,  
If nothing else, yet will the very stones  
That lie within the streets cry out for vengeance,  
And point at us to be the murtherers.

Yet after all, her remorse seems to consist largely of overpowering fear. Not until the others, who have promised to deny her complicity, have at last betrayed her, and the evidence proves her guilt beyond any doubt, does she confess her sin; even then it is only because her dread of punishment in another world has become her chief concern. In all, perhaps, she is a very weak woman, rather than a very wicked one.

Master Sanders is not characterized very strikingly. He is pictured as an ordinary busy merchant; apparently he is a kind father and a good husband. Browne, on the other hand, is far more strongly individualized. He stands out handsome, brawny, and well-fed, in his doublet of white satin and his blue silk breeches. He is a heartless, desperate bravo, who needs little steeling of the conscience to enable him to kill the man whose life is a check upon his unbridled appetite. Yet with all his viciousness, his dashing air and his vigorous personality make him popular with associates of all classes. And in his villainy there is
one touch of manhood. Though cowed and conscience-stricken, he holds to the last his determination to shield the guilt of the woman he loves, and he dies insisting that she is innocent. Indeed, there is about him more than a suggestion of the hero of tragedy, together with the full character of the villain.

Some of the most effective portions of the play are those which describe Browne's reactions to the events which follow the murder. A strong realistic touch appears when he is shown to be unable to approach the house of Sanders until the child whom he has made fatherless is taken from before the door. He cries:

...the sight of him
Strikes such a terror to my guilty conscience,
That I have not the heart to looke that way,
Nor stir my foote untill he be removed,
Me thinkes in him I see his fathers wounds
Fresh bleeding in my sight, nay, he doth stand
Like to an Angel with a firie sworde,
To bar mine entrance at that fatall doore,
I prethee steppe, and take him quickly thence.

**A Warning to Fair Women**, as appears in the title itself, supplies one of the best illustrations of the didactic and moral aims which were so often affected by the dramatic companies. While no student of Elizabethan literature is likely to treat very seriously the conventional claims of moral purpose which were made by writers of stories, translators of romances, and playwrights, such a claim seems to be rather well justified in the case we are considering. Certainly this play might well serve as a more effective instrument of warning and correction than any of the rhetorical religious tracts that dealt with similar themes. Every step of retribution, from the first awful clearing of the vision that follows the murder to the trial and the
payment in full of the penalty of the law, takes place on the stage. Not a word in the play makes sin inviting; every page portrays vice and crime in their most loathsome aspect. Personifications and dumb-shows appear and reappear, with vivid portrayals of the awfulness of lust and murder. The whole is a powerful sermon, even to the two exempla that are related after the confession of Browne.

One of these stories is especially interesting because it seems to be a version of the incident related in the Hamlet of 1589, which in the later play was replaced by the general and familiar lines:

...I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions;
For murther, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ.

The account given in the discussion that follows the discovery of Browne's guilt is as follows:

A woman that had made away her husband,
And sitting to behold a tragedy,
At Lynn, a town in Norfolk,
Acted by players travelling that way,
Wherein a woman that had murdered hers
Was ever haunted by her husband's ghost,
The passion written by a feeling pen,
And acted by a good tragedian—
She was so moved with the sight thereof
That she cried out, 'the play was made by her',
And openly confessed her husband's murder.(1)

A feature which must have been extremely impressive to an Elizabethan audience is found in the miraculous survival of the servant, "with nine

1. The story as told in the early Hamlet differs slightly from the above, the most important variation being that the place of the occurrence is transferred to a town near Strasburg, Germany. Still another version, agreeing with the one here given as to place and other details, appears in Heywood's Apology for Actors, Shakespeare Society reprint, 57-60.
or ten mortal wounds" until the time comes for him to identify the murderer, which he does in the most dramatic scene in the play. If any such touch were needed to drive home the moral of the certainty of retributive justice, it could scarcely be handled more naturally or with more realistic effectiveness.
CHAPTER THREE

Two Lamentable Tragedies

In 1601 was printed in quarto a play called Two Lamentable Tragedies, with a running head by which it is perhaps more frequently named, Two Tragedies in One. This play, although little known and extremely crude in workmanship, is of considerable interest for several reasons. In the first place, it is an interweaving of two distinct tragedies, one "of the Murther of Maister Beech a Chaundler in Thames-streete, and his boye, done by Thomas Merry", the other a dramatization of the Babes in Wood story. Aside from this unusual combination of tragedies, the question of authorship has proved an apparently hopeless problem, concerning which eminent scholars have disagreed. There are also certain remarkable details about the staging and the stage directions which make the play one of especial interest to the student of the drama. (1)

The murder of Beech and Winchester by Merry took place on the night of August 24, 1594. Merry was quickly detected, and, with his sister Rachel, was executed at Smithfield on September 6. The crime was one of shocking brutality, and there is abundant evidence that great interest was aroused by the murder and the punishment of the criminals. On August 29 a discourse on the murder was entered on the Stationers' Register. On the same date there appears the entry of a ballad entitled: Beeche his ghose, complayninge on the wofull murder committed on him and

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1. Only one edition is extant. Several copies are in existence, one of them in the British Museum. The play was reprinted by Bullen in Old English Plays, IV, in 1885, and more recently by Farmer in the Tudor Facsimile series.
and Thomas Winchester, his servant. (1) Four other entries of ballads occur, one on September 3, two on September 7, and one on September 9. One of these tells the story of the execution, while another recounts "the pittiful lament of Rachel Merrye who suffred at Smithfield with her brother Thomas Merrye." (2)

The second tragedy in the composite play is usually said to have the same story as the well-known ballad The Children in the Wood. (3) There are, however, important differences between the two stories. The ballad refers to a Norfolk gentleman who in his will committed the care of his two children to his brother. The latter caused them to be slain for their property. In the play, on the other hand, the scene of the event is laid near Padua in Italy, and only one child is killed. There are other variations, also, especially in the latter part of the story. The ballad, registered on October 15, 1595, was printed by Bishop Percy in his Reliques. In Persy's note appears the statement that the ballad was founded upon the play. "Whoever compares the play with the ballad will have no doubt but the former is the original: the language is far more obsolete, and such a vein of simplicity runs through the whole performance, that, had the ballad been written first, there is no doubt but every circumstance of it had been received into the drama; whereas this was probably built on some Italian novel." (4)

1. Arber's edition of The Stationers' Register, 11, 311. A curious fact in relation to the first of these two entries is that the pamphlet refers also to the arraignment and execution of Merry, which seems not to have occurred until September 6, a week later.

2. Ibid, 11, 311.

3. See Fleay, Chronicles of the English Drama, 11, 308.

Ritson seems to have been the first to note that the ballad was entered at Stationers' Hall in 1595; in his opinion, since the play was not printed until 1601, the ballad must be the earlier. (1) Of course this proves nothing, since plays were often printed years after they were written. But Sharon Turner believes that the ballad ought to be dated much earlier, and points out the fact that the story is very similar in its outlines to the murder of the princes by Richard III. This theory, apparently based on rather unsubstantial evidence, is that the piece may have been written as an attack on Richard at a time when to stigmatize him more openly would be dangerous. (2) Whatever may be the source of the ballad, there seems to be no adequate reason to reject Percy's theory in regard to it.

Very evidently, the author of Two Tragedies in One either was not aware of the circumstances as they are detailed in the ballad, or he purposely transferred the scene to Italy and otherwise altered the story. If the ballad had been written before, a motive for such procedure can scarcely be conceived. To be sure, there was a great interest in Italian crimes, but this interest was not at its height until the vogue of contemporary incident had declined. (3) It would seem that at this time a well-known contemporary murder would offer a more popular theme; besides, the play would have been more coherent if both parts had had their scenes laid in England.


2. See Furniss, Variorum Shakespeare, XV1, 611-17.

Certain entries in Henslowe's Diary have caused a curious conflict of opinion among scholars as to the authorship of this play. The play was printed in 1601, apparently without entry. On the title-page, and again at the end of the text, appears the name "Rob. Yarington." Of this man absolutely nothing has ever been discovered, a fact which led Fleay to believe the name to be fictitious, and Greg to ascribe the authorship of the play to others. The former pointed out the fact that Chettle, in November, 1599, began a play called The Tragedy of Orphans, for which he received a payment in September, 1601, but which he apparently did not finish. At the same time, Day was receiving money in advance for "an Italian tragedy". In November and December, 1599, Haughton and Day were given payment in full for a play called The Tragedy of Thomas Merry. According to Fleay, "This coincidence is sufficiently striking. But when we find that in 1600 the Master of the Revels was paid for licensing Beech's Tragedy, which was evidently the same play, the connection grows stronger, for I have shown in my History of the Stage that such payments in Henslowe's Diary were for licenses to print, and not to perform...I can see no doubt that this play was the publication paid for, made up out of the two by Chettle, Day, and Haughton; that Yarrington was a fictitious name; and that the 10s paid in 1601 was for alterations, perhaps for Chettle's pains in consolidating the two plays. Moreover, on the 10th. Jan., 1600, Day was paid 2 pounds for his Italian Tragedy, which may have been the same as The Tragedy of Orphans."  

1. Greg thinks it was finished and printed. See his edition of Henslowe, 11,209.  
2. Ibid.  
Even a more complex theory has been advanced by Mr. Greg, who follows Fleay in asserting the identity of the Tragedy of Orphans and the Italian Tragedy, but who sees also that each of the two parts of Yarrington's play is too brief to be an independent play in itself. To account for this difficulty, Greg conjectures that "Day contributed a more or less independent underplot to each, and...these lines were dropt when the main plots were amalgamated. There is certainly no trace of his (Day's) hand now remaining." After referring to certain differences in the style of the two parts, Mr. Greg adds, "The piece as we have it was certainly copied out and to some extent edited by one hand, for the curious direction 'to the people' for 'aside' occurs in both parts, and certain peculiarities of spelling run throughout. These are due, I believe, not to Chettle, but to Yarrington, the scribe, as I take it, who placed his name at the end of the mss. whence it found its way on to the title page." (1)

Mr Greg sees a further difficulty in the fact that the style of the induction, which fits the Yarrington play and should be Chettle's, has more resemblance in style to the Merry portion. This dilemma he avoids by another conjecture, that "it may have originally belonged to Thomas Merry, and have only been altered by Chettle to fit the composite play."

As to the style of the two pieces, Mr. Greg holds that the Orphans' Tragedy is on a distinctly higher plane than the other part. To quote him again: "The Merry part is written in an extraordinarily wooden bombast of commomplaces, which it would be difficult to parallel except

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from some broadside ballad, and which one may well hesitate to father on anyone. I suppose, however, that it must have had an author, and of Haugthon's work we know little. The Orphana part, though feeble enough, is much better written, the author having some feeling and some notion of poetry. He actually uses rime and classical allusions, both of which are wholly foreign to the style of his collaborator. There is plenty of rant, but it is upon more promising subjects than privies and ditches. On the whole, it is quite good enough to be by Chettle." (1)

Except for the fact that Mr. Greg's eminence as a scholar makes even his guesses worthy of consideration, there is little to recommend his theory. Too little evidence has been found to establish anything worth while concerning this problem of authorship. To begin with, the idea that the name "Rob. Yarington", placed at the end of the play by the scribe who copied it, should "find its way on to the title-page" looks highly improbable if we accept the view that the plays were being written in 1599-1600. Would the printer, in 1601, be likely to mistake the copyist for the author? The play as we have it was certainly printed in that year.

1. Reference is made to the following lines in the Merry tragedy.

Neighbor. Then let commandment be given,
And sinckes and gutters, privies, crevices,
And every place where blood may be concealed,
Be thoroughly searcht, swept, washt, and neerely sought,
To see if we can finde the murther out.

Merry. Do what you can, cast all your wits about,
Rake kennels, gutters, seek in every place,
Yet I will overgoe your cunning heads.

On another place we read:

All houses, gutters, sincks and crevices,
Have carefullie been sought for, for the blood.
Mr. R.A. Law has pointed out other weaknesses in the theory of Mr. Greg. (1) Why, he asks, if the play is the composite product of four writers, should most or all of the parts written by the best one of these dramatists be dropped from the play in the amalgamation of the two chief plots? Mr. Law shows further that there are many points of likeness in the style of the two plays. "Several passages in the Orphants' Tragedy," he says, "like the hunting scene of the Duke and his companions near Padua, Alenzo's lament over the corpse of Pertillo, and the dialogue between the disguised shepherds, strike a higher note, I admit, than do any parts of the Merry tragedy. But it is somewhat easier to treat imaginatively, even poetically, the incidents connected with the slaying of an innocent child in Italy at some indefinite time, than the widely discussed events of a certain notorious, brutal murder of a shop-keeper which has recently taken place in the very city where the drama is to be acted, and the subsequent events of the hanging witnessed by many spectators of the play." (2)


2. Mr. Law has authority for the latter statement. The words of the introductory chorus describing the two murders are:
The one was done in famous London late,
Within that streete whose side the river Thames
Doth strive to wash from all impuritie;
But yet the silver streame can never wash
The sad remembrance of that cursed deede
Performed by cruell Merry on just Beech,
And on his boye poor Thomas Winchester,
The most here present know this to be true.

Later in the play Truth, as chorus, speaks of the stage execution:
Your eyes shall witness of their shaded tipes,
That many here did see performed indeed.
Mr. Law goes on to quote passages from the two portions in which he distinguishes the hand of a common author. The first of these, from the Merry tragedy, I take to be the best poetry in the play.

Rachel. Rest still in calm secure tranquillitie, And overblowe this storme of mightie feare With pleasant gales of hoped quietnesse. Go when you will; I will attend and pray To send this wofull night a cheerful day.

Beside this he places the following passage from the other portion:

Fallerio. Pass ore these rugged furrowes of laments And come to plainer pathes of cheerfulness: Cease the continuall showers of thy woe.

Then he cites other examples to prove that some of the rant in the story of the orphans is of as low an order as that in the other part, (1) and that there are plenty of rhyme tags in the latter. He observes that Mr. Greg's method of "fathering" Two Lamentable Tragedies on Haughton merely because we know little about him or his work may apply fully as well to Yarrington.

An interesting circumstance noted by Mr. Law is that the play dealing with the orphans contains a number of lines that are identical with lines in King Lear, or very nearly identical, while in the companion plot there is one line that is exactly the same as one very unusual line in the same play.(2) There are also evidences of borrowing from Richard III and from Greene's James IV. The conclusions drawn are little more plausible than the older theories, and are largely stated

1. It should be noted, however, that these ranting speeches are all put into the mouth of a stock murderer.

2. On May 14, 1594, "Ed. White entred alsoe for his Copie...a book entitled The Most famous Chronicle historie of Leire, kings of England and his Three Daughters." Stationers' Register (Arber) 11, 649. This edition has never been discovered, but in Henselow's Diary, 1, 17, appears the entry, "Quenes Co.and my lord of Susexe to geather acted king leare ", April, 1593.
in similar terms of conjecture. "In my opinion, then, we have in the
Two Lamentable Tragedies a play written toward the end of 1594, soon
after the execution of Thomas and Rachel Merry.(1) The author, who calls
himself Rob. Yarington I take to have been some obscure hanger-on at
the theatres, perhaps an actor, or even a ballad writer, if we may judge
from the style of his verse. The two tragedies may have been his first
and last attempt at play-writing. Perhaps this play later fell into the
hands of Henslowe, who set Day, Haughton, and Chettle at work to make
out of it two tragedies no longer extant. But if there is any objection
to this last theory I am not ready to defend it...The orphan plot must
be taken as antedating the ballad of The Children in the Wood, which
was licensed in 1595. With one orphan victim and the scene laid near
Padua, the play probably follows the older version of the story. The
anonymous composer of the ballad, possessed of a finer poetic sense
than Yarrington dreamed of, shifted the events to Norfolk in order to
bring their pathos home to his English readers."

It is very doubtful whether Mr. Law can be said to have cleared
up the problems of this play. He has advanced some very plausible
arguments against earlier theories, only to replace these with a
structure founded as largely on conjecture. Doubtless he is right as
to the ballad; as to the other problems, there seems to be no scrap
of information available that throws any light on the tangle. Until
something further has been discovered about the authors in question,

1. By a rather obscure course of reasoning, having as a basis the
speeches of the chorus above referred to, Mr. Law concludes that
the play as we now have it was written by Yarrington in the latter
part of 1594.
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it would seem to be idle to attempt further combinations of the few
known facts on a foundation of guess-work.

From the viewpoint of stagecraft, Two Lamentable Tragedies has
several special features of interest. First, there is such absolute
realism in the action that some effects are obtained which are hard
to understand from a modern point of view. In addition, the disposition
of the scenes upon the stage are worth some comment. We have seen that
in this play executions are performed upon the stage.(1) Of course the
usual method is either to have the condemned led away to his death or
to let a speaker describe the scene, as the execution of Cawdor is
related in Macbeth. Here the stage directions leave no room for doubt
that Merry and Rachel are hanged in view of the audience.

Yet there are scenes more difficult of performance than this.
The murder of Beech seems to have been done in a strikingly thorough
and permanent manner, the murderer striking him fifteen blows on the
head with a hammer, and then wiping from his own face the blood that
had spattered upon it. The killing of the boy is accomplished in an
equally emphatic fashion; the directions read: "When the boy goeth into
the shoppe Merry striketh (sixe) blowes on his head and with the seaventh
leaves the hammer sticking in his head." Five times later in the play
the "hammer sticking in his head" is mentioned, as though the dramatist
wished to use a somewhat similar method of getting this point home to
the least astute of his audience.

But a still more brutal piece of realism is seen when Merry chops
the body of Beech to pieces, and then carries these away in a sack,

1. It is clear that the hanging of Browne in A Warning for Fair Women
took place on the stage. Such performances were not uncommon in the
tragedies of blood, and in the historical plays that employed similar
realism. Hangings occur in Sir Thomas More, The Spanish Tragedy, and
Tamburlaine.
first the trunk and arms and later the head and legs. (1) As he is about to start on his first trip he says to Rachel, "Helpe me to put this trunk into the bag." When she refuses out of pure horror, he makes a shift to perform the task alone. Later two watermen stumble over a bag in a dark place, and when they pick it up, the head and a leg fall out. When the other gruesome relics have been collected, and all have been brought to Beech's home, we hear Loney casually observe:

Lay them together, see if they can make,  
Among them all a sound and solid man.

I can account for these details only by supposing some sort of dummy to have been used. There is certainly no doubt that details which other dramatists took pains to have enacted off the stage were here performed to the limit in full view of the spectators. (2)

Some recently-advanced views as to the mechanical arrangement of the Elizabethan stage receive support from this play. (3) A number of much-discussed points on the use of the inner stage, the balcony above, stairways, and entrances enter into the problem in an interesting way.

1. The directions run: "Merry begins to cut the body, and binds the arms behinde his backe with Beeches garters, leaves out the body, covers the head and legs again."

2. In Marston's Insatiate Countess and Massinger's Virgin Martyr beheadings were performed on the stage. This had long been a trick of strolling jugglers. See for example the explanation and illustration of how to perform a trick beheading, in Aydelotte's Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds, (Oxford Historical Series, Vol. 1) Here also are described methods of employing bladders filled with the blood of kids or calves to give a realistic appearance to stabblings, etc. No doubt many contributions to realistic stagecraft came from such sources. See also Tucker-Brooke's reference to realism in Appius and Virginia and Cambises, Tudor Drama, 205-6.

3. Albright, in his dissertation on the Elizabethan stage, seems entirely to have overlooked this play.
After the introductory chorus, Merry makes his first entrance, soliloquizing in his shop, which seems to occupy one side of the inner stage. Beech and a neighbor then enter, probably at one of the entrances on the opposite side of the stage, and go to Merry's shop to get a drink of beer. Merry is meantime made to "sit in his shop" until they come, after which he converses with them. Next Rachel enters, apparently through a door in the rear of the stage, which appears to lead into the back part of the house, and Merry uses the same entrance when he goes to fetch the drink for his customers. Finally all the characters leave the stage, Merry and Rachel using this door, while Beech and the neighbor pass out where they came in, at the opposite side of the stage.

After Merry has planned the murder the directions read: "Then Merry must passe to Beech's shoppe, who must sit in his shop, and Winchester his boy stand by: Beech reading." Professor Baker has concluded from the situation at this point that one of the neighboring boxes must have been used for the home of Beech. He says: "If the shop were set under the upper stage, Merry must originally enter well on one side, as must Rachel and Williams when they enter because they have heard someone going upstairs. Yet as the speeches at all these entrances are important, and the "garret" is just above centre entrance, it would be much more natural and more effective to give the speeches at centre back. That, however, necessitates using one of the neighboring boxes as Beech's shop." (1)

1. George Pierce Baker, The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, 82-83.
This rather ambiguous statement does not seem convincing. Why should not Merry’s shop be set on one side of the stage, with such a door as appears in the Dewitt picture of the Swan serving for all exits and entrances there? Certainly the speeches could be given well forward under such an arrangement, for the shop might extend to the outer stage, which could then serve as the street in front of the shop. Why Mr. Baker is so positive that the "garret" is directly above the central entrance I do not know, nor need this have any bearing upon the situation below. (1) Personally I do not believe that either of the shops occupied the center of the inner stage, nor am I forced to accept the view that one of the boxes was used for the shop of Beech. No doubt the inner stage was of sufficient width to permit a small shop to be placed at the right and another at the left, (2) and it does not seem unreasonable to conceive of Merry as employing the front stage as the street, and passing across to the entrance of Beech’s shop on the opposite side of the stage. Most scholars agree that many theaters had a curtain suspended from the front of the balcony, and separating the outer and inner stages. Conceive of this curtain as being drawn up at the sides to permit the two shops to be seen, and the front stage does duty as the street. The center of the rear stage, I believe, has another office to perform, as

1. The contract for building the Fortune theater seems to make plain the fact that the balcony extended entirely across the stage. See Baker, op. cit., appendix; also Albright, The Shakespearian Stage, 47-51.

2. The Fortune contract seems to indicate that the inner stage was from twenty to twenty-five feet in width. In Bartholemew Fair there are certainly two shops located on the inner stage, and people pass from one to the other in the manner described above.
I shall later endeavor to show, in connection with the tragedy of the orphans.

Merry has planned to lure Beech to his garret and there murder him. Before he passes across the stage he says:

And therefore I will place the hammer here,
And take it as I follow Beech upstairs,
That suddenly, before he is aware,
I may with blows dash out his hatefull braines.

Here it is very evident that there is a stair on the stage, where the audience can see it. When Merry returns with Beech he says, "Goe up those staires; your friends do stay above." And they mount the stairs, Beech going ahead, and Merry picking up the concealed hammer as he goes.

"Then, being in the upper Rome, Merry strickes him in the head fifteene times." Rachel and Harry Williams enter below, doubtless at the door in rear, and Rachel goes up the stairs to carry a light to her brother. Here, while the stage direction for Williams is "exit", for Rachel it is "exit up". After she has returned to the lower stage, the direction "exit up" appears for Williams, and "she goes up" for Rachel. It is difficult to tell how the characters leave the upper stage, since the directions for that purpose are merely "exit", nor is it material whether they use the open stair or another stair off the stage.

Merry and Rachel next appear in the balcony, where they discuss the body, which is still lying there. Rachel says:

Where shall we hide this trumpet of your shame,
This timeless, ougly map of cruelty?

She hears someone call in the shop below, and Merry tells her to "goe down and see". The direction here reads "exit" and again "enter" when she returns. When Merry inquires who has called below, she replies that
it was a girl who wished to buy a penny loaf. Now obviously, in this scene, the shop itself is not seen by the audience. A reasonable explanation is that the curtain has been drawn over the shops so that the entire inner stage is concealed, and attention is centered upon the action in the balcony. Then after a scene of the companion plot, doubtless on the outer stage, the shop is displayed again, and Merry and Rachel reappear in the upper room, whence they carry the body down to the lower room and cover it with faggots. Now whether the stair on the stage is used in all the passages up and down that have taken place, it is certain that such a stair must have been employed.

After the killing of Winchester, a man and a maid enter upon the stage, no doubt through one of the proscenium doors at the side of the outer stage.(1) They come to Beech's shop, and finding the murdered boy, call to Loney above, telling him to come down. Loney replies "out at a window". This might reasonably be such a window as appears in the stage of the Duke's Theater(2), over the proscenium door, on the level of the balcony. Loney is then at once said to come down, and a group gathers at the shop. Most of the conversation in this scene occurs on the front stage, which represents the street, and the shop of Merry is probably hidden from view by the curtain.

The stage, as I have attempted to describe it, is arranged as follows. There is a curtain suspended from the front of the balcony, concealing the inner stage. The shops are situated on opposite sides of the inner stage, so that they can be hidden or displayed by adjusting the ends of the curtain. There is a stairway in Merry's shop, and

2. Ibid., illustration opposite P. 46.
a door at the rear of it. At the sides of the outer stage are proscenium doors, with balcony windows above them; the outer stage itself serves as the street. No use has been made of the center of the inner stage in any of these scenes.

In the other portion of the play there is no mention of any particular place, though one is made to understand that one scene is in a house, another in a forest, etc. The opening scene has the direction, "Enter Pandino and Armenia sicke on a bed, Pertillo their son, Falleria his brother Sostrato his wife, Alinso their sonne, and a Scrivener with a Will, etc." This scene is an important one. It seems scarcely probable that so large a group would occupy a rear stage and be "discovered" by drawing an arras, as was frequently done in scenes in which a bed appears. On the other hand, the dragging of a bed with two persons in it from a side entrance, while possible, does not seem probable, nor is it necessary here. To my mind, the best explanation is that the five persons enter from the side upon the outer stage, and open the curtain at the center, disclosing the bed on the inner stage, occupying the space between the two shops, which are now concealed from view.

Throughout the scene a number of "asides" or speeches "to the people" are given to Falleria, indicating that he occupies a central position on the outer stage. The sealing and signing of the will, however, compel the characters to be in close proximity to the bed; Pertillo is made to approach near enough to it to receive the blessing of the blessing of his parents. At the close of the scene it is clear that the entire group leaves the stage. Pandino and Armenia are now dead, and the mere closing of the central arras would conveniently provide for the exit
of the bed and its occupants. In many plays, of course, a bed is "dragged in", and it may have been drawn somewhat forward for part of the scene we have discussed. But I believe that the scene could have been very neatly handled as has been described, and the awkward procedure of moving the bed back again obviated. (1)

All other scenes of the orphans' part were no doubt acted on the front stage. Entrances and exits of groups of people take place at the proscenium doors, and none of the scenes call for any use of the space under the balcony. The final execution is performed by means of a ladder in a manner which the directions do not indicate; probably the upper stage was again requisitioned to serve as the platform of the gallows.

Under these circumstances several obscure points about the staging of this tragedy are cleared up. Scholars now agree that the Elizabethan stage was not a rigid affair, but that it was sometimes adjusted with a considerable degree of ingenuity to fit the peculiar conditions of a play. The only feature I have dealt with which seems not to be generally-believed in is the stairway on the stage, and that such a stairway was used in this play seems a certainty. Doubtless the more grisly details of realism would prove simple enough, too—if we only knew how they were handled.

1. In The Witch of Edmonton, discussed on a later page, the stage-directions for the second scene of Act IV read: "A bedroom in Carter's house. A bed thrust forth, with Frank in a slumber."
CHAPTER FOUR
A Woman Killed with Kindness

We have already seen that the writers of the murder tragedies were fully aware of the bareness of their plots, and adopted various expedients to extend or elaborate the material upon which they worked. An apology for the nakedness of such a plot appears in the epilogue to Arden of Feversham. Again in the conclusion of A Warning for Fair Women, Tragedy speaks of the hampering necessity of fidelity to the fact:

That now of truth I sing,
And should I add, or else diminish aught,
Many of these spectators then could say,
I have committed error in my play.
Beare with this true and home borne Tragedy,
Yielding so slender argument and scope
To build a matter of importance on,
And in such form as, happily, you expected.
What now hath failed tomorrow you shall see
Performed by History or by Comedy.

But the subject matter of the tragedy of murder had its value to the dramatist of first rank. That this barrenness of subject was not an insuperable obstacle to high artistic attainment may be illustrated by Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness, which we now purpose briefly to examine.

In this, Heywood's finest play, may be observed a novel and interesting variation from the methods used in such performances as we have considered. Given a situation almost identical with that which opens the action in A Warning for Fair Women, the dramatist eliminates the element of bloodshed, and substitutes the noble solution of forgiveness and mercy, without either losing sight of retribution or falling into sentimentality.
A Woman Killed with Kindness was first produced in March, 1602.(1)

The only existing copies, dated 1617, are claimed to be the third edition; however, Collier mentions having seen a copy dated 1607 which strangely disappeared, and has never been rediscovered.(2) A contemporary reference shows that the play was on the stage in 1604,(3) and the title-page of the third edition bears the words,"As it hath beene oftentimes acted by the Queenes Majest. Servants."

The plot of the story may be given in a few words. A country gentleman, Frankford by name, marries Anne, the beautiful and accomplished sister of Sir Francis Acton. An agreeable but impoverished young gentleman named Wendoll is invited by the generous Frankford to reside in his home and share his happiness. Wendoll, after a time, repays the kindness of his patron by seducing the wife of the latter. A faithful servant tells Frankford of the situation, and he, after securing proof of his wrongs, banishes his wife to a distant manor house, forbidding her to see him again or to send any messages to him. Heartbroken, she sinks and dies, after an affecting reconciliation with her husband.

A secondary plot, rather light and shallow, seems to be based on an Italian novel.(4)

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1.Henslowe has the following curious notations: "Pd unto Thomas hewode the 5 of febreary, 1602, for a womones gowne of blacke velvett for the playe of a womon Kylld with Kyndnes, some of VJli 15 S."
   "Pd at the apoyntment of Thomas Blackewood, the 7 of marche 1602, unto the tayller which made the blacke satten sewt for the woman Kyld with Kyndness, the some of X s."
   "Pd at the apoyntment of the company, the 6 of marche l602,unto Thomas Hewode, in full payment for his playe called a womon Kyld with Kindnes the some of 11J11."

2.See Collier's introduction to the Shakespeare Society reprint, VII-VIII.


4.Collier, Ibid., IX.
The finest characterization in this fine play is found in the conception of Frankford. Noble and generous in thought and act, he combines strong suggestions of Othello with the just, Christian majesty of King Arthur. When first the honest servant, Nicholas, has convinced him of his dishonor, he speaks:

Thou hast killed me with a weapon whose sharp point Hath pricked quite through and through my shivering heart: Drops of cold sweat sit dangling on my hairs; And I am plunged into strange agonies! What didst thou say? If any word that touched Her credit or her reputation, It is as hard to enter my belief, As Dives into heaven.

Determined to secure full proof of his worst fears, he comes to his home on a black night of tempest when none suspect his coming, and stands an instant in speech before he thrusts the key into the lock of his wife's bedchamber door. His speech at this dramatic moment is the high point of the play:

A general silence hath surprised the house; And this is the last door. Astonishment, Fear, and amazement beat upon my heart, Even as a madman beats upon a drum. O keep my eyes, you heavens, before I enter, From any sight that may transfix my soul: Or, if there be so black a spectacle, O, strike mine eyes stark blind; or if not so, Lend me such patience to digest my grief, That I may keep this white and virgin hand From any violent outrage or red murder!

At last he enters, only to rush forth again, crying out:

Oh me unhappy! I have found them lying Close in each other's arms and fast asleep. But that I would not damn two precious souls, Bought with their Saviour's blood, and send them, laden With all their scarlet sins upon their backs, Unto a fearful Judgment, their two lives Had met my rapier.

There is infinite pathos in his expression of unutterable longing for time to turn backward to his lost days of happiness. There is in his
conduct no contemptible weakness, in spite of his humanity and mercy.

When the betrayer flies in his night-dress, and the husband, with drawn rapier, pursues him, a maid-servant stops the avenger, and in perfect consistency of character he says to her, after a tense instant of pause:

I thank thee, maid; thou, like an angel's hand,
Hast stayed me from a bloody sacrifice.

And later, when he stands looking down at the woman who has wronged him, groveling in awful anguish of spirit at his feet, there is no alloy of sentimentality in the Arthur-like grandeur of his speech. All is powerful, natural, and sincere.

It would be hard to overpraise the delicate skill with which the dramatist touches in his most poignant details. Sincerest feeling appears in the passages which show Frankford, after he has sent his wife away, seeking through the house to rid it of every article that might serve to remind him of her. The reader cannot avoid the recurrence of haunting echoes of Guinevere:

And I should evermore be vexed with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.

His wife was skilled in music, and in the happy past her playing has been one of his greatest delights. And now in his pathetic search, he finds her lute! It requires poetic skill of the highest order to deal with conceits and word-play in such a strain of noble emotion as pervades these lines:

Her lute? O God! upon this instrument
Her fingers have ran quick division,
Sweeter than that which now divides our hearts.
These frets have made me pleasant, that have now Frets of my heart-strings made. O Master Cranwell,
Oft hath she made this melancholy wood,
Now mute and dumb for her disastrous chance,
Speak sweetly many a note, sound many a strain
To her own ravishing voice!—
Post with it after her. Now nothing's left.

The figure of Wendoll, while it comes far short of that of Frankford, is not badly drawn. His conscience struggles desperately against a mighty inward solicitation before he yields to evil, and determines to betray his generous friend. In his surrender he does violence to every spark of good in his being; hence after that surrender he is utterly abandoned, and cunning withal. At the last, he flies from the country, his mind a torturing hell of remorse.

The character of Mistress Frankford is not so convincingly handled; there is somehow an unfitting weakness about her. She yields at first through a sort of compliant pity; her motive in later stages is too vaguely indicated. It can only be accounted such a weakness of will as hardly gains for her the sympathy which the closing scene requires. Her own words, spoken just before the climax, contain about all that can be said for her:

You have tempted me to mischief, Master Wendoll:
I have done I know not what. Well, you plead custom;
That which for want of wit I granted erst,
I now must yield through fear. Come, come, let's in,
Once over shoes, we are straight o'er head in sin.

At the risk of lingering overlong on this play, aside from our theme, we must give a few quotations from the closing scene, if only to illustrate how the most realistic material may be decked in the most exquisite garb of poetry. Frankford, yielding to his wife's last message, has come to her bedside. He first addresses her coldly:

How do you, woman?
Mrs.A. Well, Master Frankford, well; but shall be better,
I hope, within this hour. Will you vouchsafe
(Out of your grace and your humanity)
To take a spotted strumpet by the hand?
Frank. This hand once held my heart in faster bonds
Than now 'tis grip'd by me. God pardon them
That made us first break hold.

Mrs. A. Amen, amen.
Out of my zeal to Heaven, where I'm now bound,
I was so impudent to wish you here;
And once more beg your pardon. Oh, good man,
And father to my children, pardon me.
Pardon, oh! pardon me; my fault so heinous is,
That if you in this world forgive it not,
Heaven will not clear it in the world to come.
Faintness hath so usurped upon my knees,
That kneel I cannot; but in my heart's knees
My prostrate soul lies thrown down at your feet,
To beg your gracious pardon. Pardon, oh, pardon me!

Frank. As freely, from the low depth of my soul,
As my Redeemer hath forgiven his death,
I pardon thee. I will shed tears for thee;
Pray with thee; and in mere pity of thy weak estate,
I'll wish to die with thee.

Even as I hope for pardon, at that day
When the Great Judge of heaven in scarlet sits,
So be thou pardoned. Though thy rash offense
Divorced our bodies, thy repentant tears
Unite our souls.

My wife, the mother to my pretty babes!
Both those lost names I do restore thee back,
And with this kiss I wed thee once again.
Though thou art wounded in thy honor'd name,
And with that grief upon thy death-bed liest,
Honest in heart, upon my soul, thou diest.

Mrs. A. Pardoned on earth, soul, thou in heaven art free:
Once more thy wife dies, thus embracing thee.

The extent of Heywood's debt to the obscure authors of the early murder-tragedies is plain. Clear, too, without comment, is the fashion in which he rose above their brutal realism into a realm of the loftiest poetic artistry.
CHAPTER FIVE

A Yorkshire Tragedy

In 1605 there occurred in Yorkshire a domestic crime the particularly sensational character of which attracted the widest attention, and which was promptly seized upon by ballad-maker and dramatist alike. Stow gives the following unadorned record of the affair: "Walter Calverly of Calverly in Yorkshore Esquier, murdred 2 of his young children, stabbed his wife into the bodie with full purpose to have murdred her, and instantly went from the house to have slaine his youngest child at nurse, but was prevented. For the which fact at his triall at Yorke hee stood mute, and was judged to be prest to death, according to which judgment he was executed at the Castell of Yorke the 5th of August."

On the Calverly murders was based the famous Yorkshire Tragedy, which several eminent authorities have ascribed to Shakespeare, at least in part.\(^1\) The assumption that Shakespeare had any active hand in its production seems to be founded on no more substantial evidence than these facts: the unscrupulous Thomas Pavier entered the play as "by Wylliam Shakespeare\(^2\)"; the first quarto had on its title-page the words,"Written by W. Shakespeare", while the second quarto, printed in 1619, displayed the same statement; the play shows specimens of spasmodic power that seem to be above the reach of any other known dramatist of the day. An excursion into the field of this problem is

\(^1\) In this group may be counted Steevens, Ulrici, Hopkinson, and Ward.

\(^2\) The entry reads:"Master Pavyer entered for his Copie under the hands of master Wilson and master Warden Seton a booke called A Yorkshire Tragedy written by Wylliam Shakespeare Wjd." The date was May 2, 1608.
beyond the modest scope of the present dissertation; besides, the literature of the subject is abundant and easily accessible. It will suffice to state that that the weight of expert critical opinion is against the assumption that Shakespeare did any more than give the play his approval before it was acted by his company at the Globe theater. On this side of the case may be cited the testimony of Malone, Tyrrell, Knight, Halliwell-Phillips, Swinburne, and others whose opinions are equally significant. As Symonds puts it: "The collectors of Shakspere's works did not include it in the first folio; and we are met by the further difficulty that it was produced at the height of Shakspere's power and fame, when Macbeth and King Lear had already issued from his hands. Calverley's murder of his children took place in 1604; the play was published with Shakspere's name in 1608; Antony and Cleopatra may be referred with tolerable certainty to the same year. That is to say, between the date of the crime and the date of the play four years elapsed, during which Shakspere gave to the world his ripest, most inimitable masterpieces. Is it then conceivable that this crude and violent piece of work, however powerful we judge it—and powerful it indubitably is, beyond the special powers of a Heywood or a Dekkar—can have been a twin-birth of the Master's brain with Julius Caesar, or with any one of the authentic compositions of his third period?"

1. Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama, 421 ff. See also Creizenach, English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare, 208-13. The negative arguments are well summed up by Tucker-Brooke in the introduction to The Shakespeare Apocrypha, while a statement of the affirmative appears in Collier's History of Dramatic Literature, 11, 438-40.
The full title-page of the first quarto is as follows: "A Yorkshire Tragedy. Not so new as Lamentable and True. (1) Acted by his Majesties Players at the Globe. At London. Printed by R. B. for Thomas Pavier, and are to be sold at his shop on Cornhill, neere to the exchange. 1608."

A Yorkshire gentleman of wealth and family had been forced into an unhappy marriage. The unsatisfactory nature of the union preyed upon his mind until he entered into a career of wild dissipation that soon reduced him to beggary. Crazed by the wretchedness of his situation, his frenzied brain burned with the thought that his children must be beggars, and he murdered the two that were within his reach, inflicted an almost fatal wound upon his hated wife, and was hurrying to kill the other child, a nursing babe, when he was apprehended, and promptly sentenced to be executed. The play follows Stow's concise version, with the exception that the former introduces a few essentials of setting and circumstance, finds in the familiar belief in demon-possession a motive for the devilish rage of the murderer, and causes him to exhibit repentance and remorse at the close.

Everything about the play indicates its having been dashed off in great haste by a writer who knew only the essential facts. Resembling Two Tragedies in One in this regard, it has the further likeness that the original play consisted of four parts, roughly connected into one play, of which the portion represented by the printed Yorkshire Tragedy is the sole remnant. It is probable that at least one of the three

1. Though the lapse of time may have rendered this apology advisable, plays and ballads frequently renewed interest in such events after several years had passed. See Shakespeare's England, 11, 529-53.
missing parts dealt with the earlier life of Calverly, as will be pointed out later in connection with the play by Wilkins called *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*, an interesting reworking of the material which was presented by the same company in 1607, when the memory of the murders had dimmed, and an appeal different from that of the original sensational realism was required. (1)

*Yorkshire Tragedy* is a short play, the action rushing with great rapidity to the finish of its lurid course in slightly over seven hundred lines. Of these, about seventy-five lines are given to the introduction which links the action to that of a preceding play in the series, and which serves to set the clownish humor of a group of serving men over against the ghastly rush of horror that treads upon the heels of their exit. There are two principal characters, a husband and his wife. The savagely powerful character delineation that appears in the speech of the former, which Symonds thinks "cannot be paralleled by anything in Shaksper's known writing", causes the feeble figure of the wife to appear weaker and more colorless by the contrast.

The conversation of the servants in the introduction brings out the information that the husband curses and beats his wife and calls his children bastards, and that he has gambled all his property into pawn, besides making his brother in the university go his bond for large sums which cannot be paid. The first speech of the wife confirms these evils in a piteous lament over the ruin which her husband's vices have brought upon the family. She is in deadly fear of him because of

1. The first play was probably staged shortly after the incidents on which it was founded, probably in August or September, 1505; *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* was printed in 1607, and was on the stage at the same time. Its relation to the four plays will be discussed later.
the black madness of despair which has come upon him. He enters, and his first speech hurls us into the stream of the hurrying tragedy:

Pox o' the last throw! It made five hundred angels
Vanish from my sight. I'm damned, I'm damned;
The angels have forsook me. Nay, it is
Certainly true, for he that has no coin
Is damned in this world; he is gone, he is gone.

Hearing the entreaties of his wife, he turns upon her with venomous hatred:

O! most punishment of all, I have a wife!

As he strides the floor his words burst forth with raging intensity, striking like repeated dagger-thrusts. The ideas that possess his mind gush to his lips in fearfully staccato reiteration,—"beggary, beggary, beggary!"—"base, slavish, abject, filthie poverty!"—"money, money, money, and thou must supply me!"—"harlot"—"bastards, bastards, bastards!" One instant he commands the shuddering woman to sell her dower instantly and to give him the money for dicing and bawdry; the next, he spurns her with curses of hate, raving, as he flings from the room: "Speedily! speedily! I hate the very hour I chose a wife! Trouble! trouble! Three children like three evils hang upon me! Fie! fie! fie! Strumpet and bastards, strumpet and bastards!"

When friends enter to remonstrate against his beastly conduct, he insults them, and at length is slightly wounded by one of them, who leaves him writhing on the floor, vowing to avenge the indignity he has suffered upon his "strumpet" wife. Rapid sketches show us that the wife has gone to London and has secured, through her uncle, a place for her husband, with a chance to redeem his wrecked fortunes. On her return he meets her with fierce, stabbing demands that money be given
him instantly. "Now you are come, where's the money? Is the rubbish sold? Those wiseacres, your lands? Why? When? The money! Where is't? Pout't down! down with it! I say, pour't o' the ground! Let's see it! let's see it!" His dagges is drawn from its sheath when a cowering servant enters and informs him that a "master of a college" has arrived, and desires to speak with him. This newcomer brings him word that his university brother lies in jail, executed for the debts. This news brings the good in the man's nature to the surface for a moment; he is cast into a mood of remorse over the undeserved plight of his brother; but the momentary ascendency of manhood in his nature promptly succumbs to the overwhelming prepossession of the certain beggary of his sons, and he rushes in to execute his murderous designs.

The eldest boy, who is playing with a top, is seized and butchered on the spot, the murderer panting out with venomously repeated dagger blows, "Bleed, bleed, rather than beg, beg!" Then, dragging the bleeding child, he storms into the room where his wife lies asleep, and clutches at the second child, which lies in the arms of a maid. The latter resists, with screams of terror. "Are you gossiping, prating, sturdy queane? I'll break your clamor with your neck down stairs: Tumble, tumble, headlong!" (throws her down) "So! The surest way to charm a woman's tongue, is break her neck. A politician did it." He stabs the infant to death and wounds the struggling mother; then, trampling with his spurred heels a courageous servant who has attempted to thwart him, he takes horse and rushes away to dispatch the remaining child, which is with a nurse.

Now to my brat at nurse, my sucking beggar! Fates, I'll not leave you one to trample on.
Thrown from his horse, he is captured. At first he is defiant and unrepentant, but when his wounded wife meets him with endearments a great change comes over the man, and the demon that has possessed him leaves his body, the manner of the dispossession no doubt fitting the popular belief of the time.(1)

Now glides the devill from mee,
Departes at every joint, heaves up my nailes,
Oh catch him new torments, that were were invented,
Bind him one thousand more you blessed Angells
In that pit bottomlesse, let him not rise
To make men act unnaturall tragedies
To spred into a father, and in furie,
Make him his childrens executioners;
Murder his wife, his servants, and who not.
For that man's dark, where heaven is quite forgot.

He kisses the bloody corpses of his children, repenting of his crimes, and says a farewell to his "dear wife", who is made to cry as she sees him led away to death:

More wretched am I now in this distresse,
Than former sorrows made me.

In contrast with these vapid lines, there are a few that have poetic value. The sight of the two dead boys laid out upon the threshold brings from the repentant murderer these words, the last two lines of which are touching:

Heer's weight enough to make a heart-string crack
Oh were it lawfull that your prettie soules
Might looke from heaven into your fathers eyes,

But you are playing in the Angells lappes,
And will not look on me."

1. The doctrine of demon-possession had at this period the very highest sanction. James I., who came to the throne in 1603, had before leaving Scotland written a book on demonology, which was published in England shortly after his accession. Johnson, in discussing the witches in Macbeth, writes: "As the ready way to gain James' favor was to flatter his speculations, the system...was immediately adopted by all who desired either to gain favor or not to lose it."
The familiar strain of moralizing which characterizes the other murder tragedies is not lacking throughout this play. Warnings against gambling and profligacy appear in the speeches of most of the characters, including the husband himself, who in one of his cooler moments delivers a lengthy prose speech lamenting his sins. His last speeches are doubtless calculated to discourage inclinations to child-murder in the members of the audience.

The play may be said to resemble *A Warning for Fair Women* in the bareness of its structure, and to approach the Beech tragedy in the unrelieved realism of its details. It is more hastily sketched than either, and inferior in versification and the delineation of character, except for the remarkable speech-characterization of the husband.
CHAPTER SIX

The Miseries of Enforced Marriage

The domestic tragedy was a type that could have but brief duration. In the first place, tragedy in all ages has employed characters endowed with the interest that accrues from the glamor of high rank or the romance of remote times or places, while familiar middle-class or low-class characters are naturally the material of comedy. Thus such plays as we have discussed seem to do violence to the traditional conception of tragedy. Besides, the supply of suitable native events was limited, and we have seen that those incidents of tragedy in English life that were available ordinarily had to be supplemented by other matter in order to furnish out a play of full length. In the trend of development this secondary material, which might consist of local color and the treatment of low-class characters, which is always akin to comedy, or of a romantic foreign plot of the sort employed in Two Lamentable Tragedies, tended gradually to usurp the leading part. Thus the play based on contemporary tragedy may be observed to move more and more toward comedy, so that certain plays combine a number of the characteristic features of both dramatic forms. Even in so grim and bare a piece of realism as The Yorkshire Tragedy there occur traces of the comedy of low life in the grotesque speeches of the servants. This element grows continually stronger, until the features of blood and horror fade out of the domestic drama, and take their place in the more aristocratic and foreign tragedies, such as those of Ford and Webster.

The Fair Maid of Bristow, (1602?) may be mentioned as marking an interesting step in the linking of the domestic tragedy with the
domestic comedy in that it possesses a number of the common traits of each. With much of the atmosphere of the common-life tragedy, it develops the theme of the patient wife and prodigal husband which was popularized in Patient Grissell, written in 1589, by Dekkar, Haughton, and Chettle, and is a rather close imitation of another play of a similar sort, How to Choose a Good Wife from a Bad.(1)

The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, written by George Wilkins in 1505, shows the influence of such elements of comedy upon the tragedies of domestic life in a manner that illustrates the changes that were taking place. It is related to A Yorkshire Tragedy in three different regards: it deals with the same persons in an intimately associated situation; it develops elaborately the patient wife theme of the earlier play; and it builds up from the mere germ of low-life comedy that appears in the tragedy the structure of an entire comic plot.

As has been stated, A Yorkshire Tragedy seems to have been staged in connection with three other short plays, or fragments, which have not been preserved. The first edition bears on its initial page the caption: "All's One, or one of the foure Plaies in one, called a Yorkshire Tragedy as it was plaid by the Kings Majesties Plaiers." It seems not unlikely that this play, crude and raw as it was, so far excelled the others that it was the only one of the set to be printed. Of course, one of these bare, realistic plays, patched together in the most hasty manner to catch a transient wave of public interest, could

1. The Fair Maid of Bristow is ably discussed by A.H. Quinn, Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, 1902. His work is reviewed by Brandl in The Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXIX, 230. See also O. Siefkin, Das Geduldige Weib in der Englischen Literatur, 1903.
not be so elaborated as to fill an entire program. Nor was it an easy matter, after a greater lapse of time, to pad out with fictitious matter details with which every spectator was thoroughly familiar. We have seen that in *Two Tragedies in One* the contemporary matter was supplemented by an older story, probably largely fictitious. The necessities of the stage and the nature of public demand controlled these matters.

We have no means of determining whether the staging of the four combined plays exhibited any such alternation of scenes as we saw in *Two Tragedies in One*. The probabilities are against such an assumption, for the reason that at least one of the lost fragments must have dealt with the earlier life of the husband.

Mr A. P. Daniel, in an article written in 1879, showed conclusively that *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* bears a definite relationship to *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. (1) The first of the four printed editions of this play appeared in 1607, and the title-page tells us that the printed play stands "as it is now plaid by his Majesties Servants." (2) The story is briefly as follows. Scarborow, an excellent young gentleman of Yorkshire, is affianced, before he has become of age, to Claire, the daughter of Sir John Harcop. Lord Falconbridge, Scarborow's guardian, compels the young man to break his engagement, and to wed Katherine, his lordship's niece. Scarborow is a man of honor and high principles, but all the objections he can make do not avail to save him from a course of action which he feels to be criminal. In his despair he falls into the clutches of London rascals, who soon consume not only his possessions, but the

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property of his two brothers and his sister as well. When Claire hears that her lover has been false to her, she takes her own life. Scarborowe seems to be determined to complete his ruin and that of his family, and the coney-catchers fatten on the remnants of his money. At this point enters Butler, an old and faithful servant of the family, who maneuvers matters with such shrewdness that all is brought to a happy conclusion. Scarborow, who has hardly been restrained from killing his wife and children, is brought to remorse and penitence by the chiding of Doctor Baxter, the chancellor of Oxford; he is finally reconciled to his wife, and the family fortunes are mended through the timely death of the guardian.

Scarborow is by all accounts an exemplary character at the first. In his wooing he is made to exhibit a marked degree of shyness. Hear his speech: "The father and the gallants have left me alone with a gentlewoman, and if I know what to say to her I am a villain. Heaven grant her life hath borrowed so much impudence from her sex as to speak to me first, for, by this hand, I have not so much steel of immodesty in my face as to parley to a wench without blushing." His reverence for women is the laughter of the base, ruffling London profligates who, knowing him to be both wealthy and guileless, are already hanging about him, biding their time.

When his vows have been made, he holds them as sacred before God; it is this very pious conscience that brings on his ruin by causing him to view his enforced marriage as adultery. His career of debauchery has not run far before he speaks of his wife as a whore, and calls his new-born twin boys bastards with a fierce, gusty abandon that strikes
very familiarly upon the ear of the reader who is familiar with the
Yorkshire Tragedy. Again and again, with increasing frequency, his
speech takes on the characteristic jerky violence. There are compar­
avatively sober moments when for a moment he realizes the gloom of the
depths into which he is sinking, and at these times his utterance is
intense in its bitter remorse. Once he announces his intention of
"parleying with the devil", which is highly significant, as it seems to
me.

John Scarborow, one of the brothers, is by his own account "drawn
from Oxford, from serious studies." Serious he is, too, and gentle in
every act and word, contrasting in this respect with the second brother,
a breezy young blade from the Inns of Court. Doctor Baxter, who marries
Scarborow, and who later rebukes his desperate humor into contrition,
seems to be the full likeness of the figure so nakedly traced as "the
master of a college" in the earlier play. The strange, almost super­
stitious respect which Scarborow has for him is precisely the attitude
which the husband displays toward the visitor from the university who
so sternly rebukes him for his injustice to his brother. The unhappy
Katherine has about her much of the piteous, compliant helplessness of
the wife; while one fancies that even in Butler may be traced a certain
likeness to the brave servant who is brutally trampled and torn in the
murder scene.

All the changes introduced in reworking the material seem to tend
toward lightening the mood,—all save one. The sole tragic episode in
The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, the death of poor Claire, had no
place in the earlier play, for the servants in the first lines of
The Yorkshire Tragedy say that she is still mourning for her lost lover, who is married, and has "two or three" children. "Sirrah Ralph, my yong Mistrisse is in such a pitifull passionate humor for the absence of her love." And again, "My young mistresse keeps such a puling for her love." The theme shows an interesting linking of the patient wife motive with the brief side-eddy of dramatic development that produced the murder tragedies. Scarborow is a nobler figure than the stock prodigal, being himself rather a tragic victim of circumstances. The Patient Grissel type appears in all three of the women, Katherine, Claire, and Scarborow's sister.

Though the moral is too constantly in evidence, the language a mingling of lame verse and prose, and the ending dragged in by the ears, both plot and character are developed with comparative care. The play is a perfect treasury of local color. There are satires upon the city parasites, who cheat their tailors, sing bawdy songs in the taverns, and lay snares to catch the unwary. There are suggestions of The Gulls Hornbook, of The School of Abuses, and of The Young Gallant's Whirligig. Now one is reminded of All's Well that Ends Well, and again one gets a strong hint of the humorous highway exploits of Falstaff and his inimitable fellow-rogues. In comparison with the grisly blood-letting of the murder tragedies, this performance is a comedy, with cuffs, and cracked pates, and wily tricks relieving the gloom of the darkest scenes. It must have been a popular and entertaining play.
CHAPTER SEVEN

The Witch of Edmonton

We have seen how the domestic tragedy developed away from the bare horror and intense realism of its earliest specimens, and tended toward either comedy or romance. The Miseries of Enforced Marriage uses the same sort of material that is used in the tragedies, but turns it to a totally different purpose. The Woman Killed with Kindness turned similar subject-matter into pathos and tender sentiment bathed in poetry. Even in such grim panoramas of horror as Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, and A Yorkshire Tragedy we have observed hints of low-life comedy, however slight; and as time went on the lighter vein grew stronger, and the gloom of morbid realism began to lift.

Hence in the last play we are to discuss, The Witch of Edmonton, written by Dekkar, Ford, and Rowley, and probably first performed in 1625, we have a "tragi-comedy", a combination of two plays, one of them utilizing the theme of domestic murder, but handling it in an unreal and romantic vein, and a play of witchcraft. Thus our type is seen to be more complex than it has thus far appeared to be, for we must now take cognizance of the fact that there was another division of the drama of crime, namely, the plays that dealt with crime as inspired by or connected with witchcraft or demon-possession. The Yorkshire Tragedy referred rather incidentally to devil-possession as a motive for crime. In The Witch of Edmonton we have a complete fusion of the two types, the two plots furnishing a middle-class tragedy of blood and a middle-class tragedy of witchcraft, the two set off by linking scenes of rustic comedy.
This play, written and probably first acted in 1625, was not printed until 1658. The quarto title-page is inscribed: "The Witch of Edmonton, a known and True Story. Composed into a Tragi-Comedy by divers well-esteemed Poets, William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, &c. Acted by the Prince's Servants often at the Cock Pit in Drury Lane, once at Court, with singular Applause." A double prologue was affixed, doubtless by reason of the above-mentioned court performance. The second of these, brief and pointed, shows how the parts of the play were connected:

The whole argument of the play in this distich.

Forced marriage, murder; murder, blood requires:
Reproach, revenge; revenge hell's help desires.

For the domestic murder plot no source is known. It may be an adaptation of an Italian story, as was frequent. As to the claim of "a known and true story", Rhys mentions a pamphlet by one Henry Goodcole, (1) printed in 1621, which told the story of Elizabeth Sawyer of Islington, who was executed for witchcraft in that year. (2)

Before the beginning of the play, Sir Arthur Clarington, who lives near Edmonton, has seduced his maid, Winnifred, who has later become intimate with Frank Thorney, a servant. Thorney finally marries the girl, being ignorant of her former character. Immediately after the marriage, he places her in care of her uncle and hurries to Edmonton at the command of his father. Old Thorney forces the young man to wed Susan, the daughter of a wealthy countryman named Carter, who pays down a

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2. There seems to be no connection between this play and the lost Witch of Islington, since the latter was performed as early as 1594.
handsome marriage portion. Winnifred comes in the disguise of a boy, and pretends to be the servant of Frank. The latter, having pocketed the marriage money, starts away with her, intending to leave the country and his second wife, whom he cannot endure. Susan, however, follows him, and he is unable to shake her off. At length, maddened by the persistence of her devotion—and bewitched, as well, as we shall see later—he kills her, and then, after wounding himself, contrives to tie himself up to a tree, with the aim of throwing suspicion upon a former suitor of Susan's. After he is found and taken back to Carter's house, he is betrayed by the discovery of a bloody knife in his pocket, and is executed for the murder. Winnifred, who has won sympathy by her reformation, is taken into Carter's household in place of the lost daughter.

In the other part, which gives the play its name, an old woman called Mother Sawyer is so abused and reviled by the rustics that she longs for power to be avenged upon them. While she is in this state of mind, the devil appears in the guise of a black dog, and makes a compact with her. He is now her familiar, and she a witch indeed; the dog works harms upon the witches enemies, besides doing other wicked work on his own account. The chief connection between the two parts comes by reason of his rubbing against Thorney—invisibly, of course—and thereby influencing him to commit the crime. Again, at the moment when the knife is found, he appears for an instant in the room. He helps along the comedy element by playing mischiefs of a comparatively innocent nature upon the rustics. Finally, in true
devil character, he deserts his mistress, and she is hanged at London on the same day with Frank Thorney.

To unravel the parts contributed by the different authors is of course an impossible task. The scenes in which Susan exhibits her Griselda-like traits are certainly Dekkar's, and his hand also may be distinguished in the comic parts. Probably, too, Dekkar wrote some of the witch scenes. Certain of the more gloomy and tragic portions seem more in the spirit of Ford. Rowley's contributions are more difficult to identify.(1)

Frank Thorney is a decided moral weakling. Of course, he knows nothing of Winnifred's previous conduct, and upon leaving her he swears to keep faith. The nature of his oath may be supposed to invite the fate which overtakes him. He says:

...and, Winnifred, whenever
The wanton heats of youth, or subtle baits
Of beauty, or what woman's art can practice,
Draw me from only loving thee, let Heaven
Inflict upon my life some fearful ruin.

He quickly gets himself tangled up in a mesh of falsehoods from which he has not the manly resolution to extricate himself. He first lies prodigiously about his marriage to Winnifred, fearing lest his father may disinherit him. He supinely accedes to the second wedding, by which Old Thorney intends to repair the fortunes of his own estate. He merely expresses the view that a man must take what fate sends him, in one or two spiritless asides:

On every side I am distracted,
Am waded deeper into mischief
Than virtue can follow; but on I must:
Fate leads on; I will follow.
And again:

No man can hide his shame from Heaven that views him:
In vain he flees whose destiny pursues him.

After the second marriage, Frank is miserable and conscience-stricken. The patient and loving Susan sickens him, and he determines to run away with the money and take his first wife abroad to live. With this purpose, he lies to Susan about the nature of the journey he is about to take, and sets out, the disguised Winnifred acting as his hostler. When Susan follows, unable to say farewell, sentimental speech-occur between her and the supposed boy.

Susan: I know you were commended to my husband by a noble knight.
Winnie: O, Gods! O, mine eyes!
Susan: How now! What ail'st thou, lad?
Winnie: Something hit mine eye,—it makes it water still,—
   Even as you said, "commended to my husband"—
Some dor I think it was.—I was, forsooth,
Commended to him by Sir Arthur Clarington.

Other speeches of double meaning follow. Susan urges the page to be "servant, friend, and wife" to the master, and Winnifred answers that she will be all three. Then with curious significance Susan says:

Farewell: if I should never see thee more,
   Take it forever.

The words of Susan in this scene are rather sentimental to win great applause. The characters and situations have no reality. The murder itself seems unreal, partly because of the "supernatural soliciting". When Thorney has lost all patience with the girl's persistent lingering, the black dog enters. Finding the man in the proper mood to be possessed, he approaches him with this explanatory
speech:

Now for an early mischief and a sudden!
The mind's about it now; one touch from me
Soon sets the body forward. (1)

Then he rubs against Thorney, whereupon the latter stabs Susan. She observes the Griselda convention to her last breath. Though the murderer accompanies his blow with the most brutal speeches, she says:

Now Heaven reward you ne'er the worse for me!
I did not think that death had been so sweet,
Nor I so apt to love him. I could ne'er die better,
Had I stayed forty years for preparation;
For I'm in charity with all the world.
Let me for once be thine example, Heaven,
Do to this man as I him free forgive,
And may he better die and better live.

The modern reader is not likely to be deeply impressed by this sort of sentiment. Susan seems even less convincing than the wife in the Yorkshire Tragedy.

Again in the detection scene reality is felt to be lacking. The instant the knife is found in his pocket Carter and Katherine are convinced of Thorney's certain guilt. The entrance of the dog, also, detracts from the naturalness of the scene. Carter's speeches in grief or anger have a false ring; the author—or authors—failed utterly to realize this character under emotional stress.

In another respect, Carter is better drawn. He is represented as a well-to-do yeoman, proud of his station, and of the fact that his

1. Such influences could only be exerted on a mind in which the seeds of evil had already taken root. Mother Sawyer was first possessed when she was cursing. The dog has no power to take the life of her enemy, Old Banks, because the latter has some good qualities; hence he can only blast the old man's corn and kill his hogs. Similarly, he can do no serious harm to the other clowns, because they are innocent at heart.
ancestors have all belonged to the same class. In talking with Old Thorney about the marriage portion, he says: "No gentleman I, Master Thorney; spare the Mastership, call me by my name, John Carter. Master is a title my father, nor his before him were acquainted with; honest Hertfordshire yeomen; such a one am I; my word and my deed shall be proved one at all times." It is good to hear this fine, bluff old character speak of the plain abundance of his table. "When he comes he shall be welcome to bread, beer, and beef, yeoman's fare; we have no kichshaws: full dishes, whole bellyfulls. Should I diet three days at one of the slender city-suppers, you might send me to Barber-Surgeons' hall the fourth day to hang up for an anatomy."

This play presents what is probably the most humane and sympathetic treatment of the wretched victims of the witchcraft mania that we have, excepting the definite propaganda against the belief. Dramatists of all ranks had employed supernatural material of this sort, either to produce terror or to assist in comedy of the more vulgar type. (1) Marlowe had brought the devil himself into Doctor Faustus; Green dealt with magic on an entirely different plane in his Friar Bacon. Shakespeare again and again used witches, spirits, and other supernatural beings. During the reign of Elizabeth, to be sure, the dramatists seem to have used this sort of machinery much as they used the ghost which they had inherited from the tragedy of Seneca, that is, without much personal

1. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama, 1., 353-354; also The Supernatural in Elizabethan Drama, Modern Philology, 1., 1903.
belief—if any—in these superstitions. But with the accession of James
the complexion of affairs changed. The king himself was a firm believer
in sorcery and witchcraft; indeed, he sponsored the most terrible perse­
cution and torture of supposed witches, both in Scotland and in England.(1)
He also wrote a treatise on demonology, as we have seen, aimed mainly
at Reginald Scot, who had been enlightened enough to raise a vigorous
protest against the abominable hysteria. When Shakespeare introduced
his witches in Macbeth he doubtless was not indifferent to this hobby
of James, whatever may have been his own opinion.(2)

Dekkar and his co-workers seem to have believed in the existence
of witches; the play gives some rather revolting details of their be­
havior. Yet it exhibits as well a strong reflection of the humane in­
fluence of Scot in the spirit of pity shown for the miserable old
women who were frequently hounded into believing themselves to be what
they were continually accused of being. Some very vigorous satire on
certain phases of this persecution which a playwright might well have
been chary of uttering as his own sentiments are very neatly put into
the mouth of the witch herself.

Mother Sawyer is at first only a harmless old woman, guilty of
nothing worse than poverty and ugliness. When she first enters, she
is picking up sticks in a field and muttering of her grievances.

And why on me? Why should the envious world
Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
'Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant

1. See, on the other hand, Kittredge's defense of James, Modern Philol­
ogy, IX, 207.
And like a bow buckled and bent together
By some more strong in mischief than myself,
Must I for that be made a common sink
For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
To fall and run into? Some call me witch,
And being ignorant of myself, they go
About to teach me how to be one; urging
That my bad tongue—by their bad usage made so—
Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.
This they enforce upon me, and in part
Make me to credit it; and here comes one
Of my chief adversaries.

Old Banks enters and beats the old woman, driving her away. In her misery she longs for some power to help her revenge her wrongs.

...I have heard old beldams
Talk of familiars in the shape of mice,
Rats, ferrets, weasels, and I wot not what,
Which have appeared, and sucked, some say, their blood;
But by what means they were acquainted with them
I am now ignorant. Would some power, good or bad,
Instruct me which way I may be revenged
Upon this churl, I'd go out of myself,
And give this fury leave to dwell within
This ruined cottage, ready to fall with age,
Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer,
And study curses, imprecations,
Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths,
Or anything that's ill..."

While she is in this mood, the dog comes and makes her his property.

The mischief which she now practices in earnest soon brings the justices down upon her. It is in answer to their accusations that the witch utters some of the remarks that the poet could scarce venture to own. There is really some pretty strong preaching in the words which the old woman speaks in her own defense.

A witch! who is not?
Hold not that universal name in scorn, then.
What are those painted things in princes' courts,
Upon whose eyelids lust sits, blowing fires
To burn men's souls in sensual, hot desires,

.............. ..................
These by enchantments can whole lordships change
To trunks of rich attire, turn plows and teans
To Flanders mares and coaches, and huge trains
Of servitors to a French butterfly.
Have you not city-witches who can turn
Their husbands' wares, whole standing shops of wares,
To sumptuous tables, gardens of stolen sin;
In one year wasting what scarce twenty win?
Are not these witches?

Had wont to wait on age; now an old woman,
Ill-favored grown with years, if she be poor,
Must be called bawd or witch. Such so abused
Are the coarse witches; t' other are the fine,
Spun for the devil's own wearing.

After Mother Sawyer's tongue has thus scorched several varieties
of male and female witches, who perform with impunity evils far worse
than any old crone is guilty of, Sir Arthur Clarington, of secret ill-
fame, opens his batteries upon her, only to meet with a particularly
decisive, not to say comic, defeat.

Sir A. But these men-witches
Are not in trading with hell's merchandise,
Like such as you are, that for a look, a word,
Denial of a coal of fire, kill men,
Children, and cattle.

M. Saw. Tell them, sir, that do so:
Am I accused for such an one?

Sir A. Yes; 'twill be sworn.

M. Saw. Dare any swear I ever tempted maiden
With golden hooks flung at her chastity
To come and lose her honor; and being lost,
To pay not a denier for 't? Some slaves have done it.
Men-witches can, without the fangs of law,
Drawing once one drop of blood, put counterfeit pieces
Away for pure gold.

Sir A. By one thing she speaks
I know she's now a witch, and dare no longer
Hold conference with the fury.
CONCLUSION

The phase of dramatic activity represented by the domestic tragedy was of brief duration, developing and declining in about two decades. It is of significance because the few years during which it flourished mark the high tide of English drama, and because of the close relation which it bears in so many respects to more artistic and permanent work. The plays which we have left comprise but a small fraction of the number produced, yet from those which are still extant, and from the information we have about others, we are able to reach conclusions that are not altogether without value.

In the first place, we may accept the view that Shakespeare had nothing—or at least very little—to do with the so-called apocryphal plays, being occupied at the time they were written with the superior work of which he was then capable. We may assume that Jonson tried his hand at the tragedy of domestic life, but found his real success in other fields. Kyd and Dekkar did most of the work that is done with marked effectiveness, but not without help from other writers. Among the many dramatists who worked on plays of this type, we find Day, Haughton, Chettle, Wilkins, and Ford, often writing together by twos and threes, and patching up their plays in haste, using as their sources chronicles, pamphlets, and ballads.

The uncompromising realism which is the outstanding feature of Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, and A Yorkshire Tragedy soon passes over into sentiment, as in A Woman Killed with Kindness, or into domestic comedy such as that which may be observed in plays
The limited scope of a source frequently compelled writers to piece together separate plots, an occupation which doubtless taught them something about the trick of fitting together plots and sub-plots. The close parallel usually existing between the plays and their sources did not prevent the authors from exercising all their talent for portrayal of character, and some of the plays contained character studies that had in themselves much intrinsic value, besides exerting an influence on later productions.

Shakespeare did not need to write domestic tragedies in order to learn something from them, or to turn to his own use the hints which they gave him. It does not seem unlikely that some of the plays we have studied made a definite contribution to the genius which produced Macbeth and Othello, such comedies as Measure for Measure, All's Well that Ends Well, and The Winter's Tale.
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