WOODCUTS IN ENGLISH PLAYS PRINTED BEFORE 1660.

WHEN loaves are lacking it seems natural to attach a high value to crumbs, and perhaps this may be accepted as an excuse for printing the following rough notes on the few woodcuts which I have been able to find in editions of English plays printed before 1660. An excuse is needed, because, while the artistic value of the cuts is distinctly low, the plays in which they are found, with the exception of Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus," are not of the first interest. On the other hand, as I hope to show, the woodcuts, as a rule, are not merely fancy pictures used only because they looked pretty. They are real illustrations, drawn by men who had certainly read the plays themselves, and in all probability had seen them. To have had, say, the play-scene from "Hamlet" drawn, however rudely, as a title-cut by a contemporary artist would have been a very pleasant addition to our scanty sources of knowledge as to the appearance of the actors and the stage when Shakespeare's plays were first acted, and, though it is less interesting plays which have come down to us embellished with illustrated title-pages, we may as well take note of what fortune has given us.

Two at least of the old morality plays, "Every Man" and "Hickscorner," are prefaced with cuts, to some of which the names of the characters are attached on labels, so that we may be sure of their identity. Unfortunately most of these little figures are poor copies of those used in a French translation of Terence, published by Antoine Vérard. In "Hyckescorner" Wynkyn de Worde went farther. To fill up a gap on his title-page he inserts a picture of an elephant with a howdah on his back. I have

read "Hyckescorner" once, ten years ago, and I hope never to have to read it again. But if my memory serves me, there is nothing about an elephant in it, and this particular elephant agrees so closely with one used by John of Doesborgh to illustrate a tract about Prester John's country that I am afraid he was one of Wynkyn de Worde's job lots. Clearly these earliest cuts throw no light on the contemporary stage.

The title-cut of "The pleasant and stately morall of the Three Lordes and Three Ladies of London," printed by "R. Ihones" in 1590, is of more interest. If I am right in my interpretation of it, it relates not to the play itself, but to a performance of any morality in a private hall. On the right is a philosophical-looking person with a wand in his hand, whom I take to be the "Doctor" or "Expositor," who used to interpret to the audience the meaning of the old miracle plays and moralities. On the left is a man in ordinary dress of the reign of Henry VIII., apparently an actor. Both these are turning their faces to a group of ladies seated on a dais, presumably as spectators. The picture is thus taken from the rear of the actors, and illustrates, though in rather a dull and conventional manner, the performances of a much earlier period than 1590. This is in keeping with the play itself, the "statelie morall" being a curious hybrid, half morality, half play, the publication of which at a date when Shakespeare and Marlowe were already writing for the stage was certainly an anomaly.

Three other sixteenth-century plays, Marlowe's "Faustus," Greene's "Friar Bacon" and "Hieronimo," were issued with title-cuts, but not, I believe, in the sixteenth century. The edition of "The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus. Written by Chr. Mar.," which I have found thus illustrated is that "printed for John Wright, and to be sold at his shop without Newgate at the sign of the Bible, 1616." Unfortunately the cut is larger than the page of text, and in the copies, both of

this and of later editions, to which I have had access, has been cropped by the binder's shears beyond any possibility of reproduction. It shows Faustus, looking rather like some of the least flattering portraits of Archbishop Laud, standing in a magic circle, wand in hand, and the devil he has raised squatting before him on his haunches like a ferocious black poodle.

As in the case of "Dr. Faustus," it is difficult to find an uncropped copy of "The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay. As it was lately plaid by the Prince Palatine his servants. Made by Robert Greene, Master of Arts. (London, Printed by Elizabeth Allde dwelling neere Christ-Church. 1630.)" In the copy accessible to me only about three-fourths of the title-page have escaped the horrid shears; but this suffices to show that we have here one of the few variations from the dramatist's text of which these illustrators have to be accused. Bacon, when weariness compels him to leave to his servant the task of watching the Brazen Head, chides him for slowness in answering his call. "Think you," is the answer, "that the watching of the Brazen Head craves no furniture? I warrant you, sir, I have so armed myself that if all your devils do come I will not fear them an inch." Unluckily the artist has dressed the servant not as a fighter, but as a bandsman, with drum and a kind of fife, and no visible arms. But the Brazen Head is there, and Bacon very fast asleep, while the labels issuing from the Head's mouth, "Time was," "Time is," "Time is Past," show that the text of the play had been read, though not very carefully.

The illustration to "Hieronimo" here shown is taken from the edition whose title runs: "The Spanish Tragedie, containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Bel-imperia: with the pittiful death of old Hieronimo. (London, Printed by Augustine Mathewes, and are to bee sold by Iohn Grismand at his shop in Pauls Alley.)" The original cut is very "mealy" (a characteristic quite successfully re-

produced in the accompanying facsimile of it), and the design has not many artistic merits; but in point of faithfulness it is probably all that could be desired. It will be remembered that as Horatio and Belimperia are toying in an arbour in Hieronimo's garden, the lady hears footsteps. "Lorenzo, Balthazar, Cerberim, and Pedringano enter, disguised." Lorenzo, the jealous brother, bids his minions

FROM "THE SPANISH TRAGEDIE."

"Quickly despatch, my Masters," and according to the stage direction, "they hang him in the Arbour" (*i.e.*, Horatio, not Lorenzo), and, despite Belimperia's entreaties, stab him to death.

"Murder, murder, help, Hieronimo, help!" cries Belimperia, as in the picture, and though at Lorenzo's bidding, "Come stop her mouth; away with her," she is dragged off, the old man hears. The stage direction, "Enter Hieronimo in his shirt," has been interpreted liberally, for Hieronimo

has nether garments in addition ; but he is duly coatless and provided with a torch with which to see the "murderous spectacle."

"*Hier.* What outcry calls me from my naked bed,
And chills my throbbing heart with trembling fear,
Which never danger yet could daunt before ?
Who calls Hieronimo ? speak, here I am.
I did not slumber ; therefore 'twas no dream.
No, no ; it was some woman cried for help,
And here within the garden did she cry,
And in this garden must I rescue her.
But stay, what murderous spectacle is this ?
A man hang'd up, and all the Murderers gone ;
And in my Bower, to lay the guilt on me ?
This place was made for pleasure, not for death :
[*He cuts him down.*
These garments that he wears I oft have seen :
Alas, it is Horatio, my sweet son !"—

and so he makes his discovery and devotes himself henceforth to revenge. The labels issuing from the actors' mouths show that the artist had studied his text, and I cannot resist remarking on how admirably he has caught the pose of the straw dummy, which must have been left hanging to personate Horatio, in place of the actor, who had doubtless slipped behind the arbour during the scuffle and was now resting after his exertions.

Of plays first acted in the seventeenth century which have woodcuts, the earliest is probably, "If you know not me, you know nobodie: Or the troubles of Queene Elizabeth. Printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1606." To render the "me" emphatic there is a portrait of Queen Bess seated in a chair of state, crowned, and with ball and sceptre in her hands. It is carefully drawn and cut, and no doubt represents the "make up," which the actors followed. Seven years later the same publisher similarly embellished another chronicle play, "When you see me you know me,

or the famous Chronicle Historie of King Henrie the Eight, with the birth and vertuous life of Edward Prince of Wales. As it was played by the high and mightie Prince of Wales his servants. By Samuel Rowly, servant to the Prince. (At London, Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his shop in Paules churchyard near S. Austines Gate. 1613.)" In the cut Henry VIII., in his familiar attitude, is standing enveloped in curtains, rather like a stage manager who has come to the "front" to address the audience.

But for our purpose kings and queens copied from familiar portraits are less important than persons of a much humbler rank, and more interesting than either of the two illustrations just described is that of the heroine from "The Roaring Girls or Moll Cut-Purse. As it hath lately beene acted on the Fortune Stage by the Prince his Players. Written by G. Middleton and P. Dekkar. (Printed at London for Thomas Archer. 1611.)" Moll Cut-Purse was a real person, of whom, as Mary Frith, a judicial account from the pen of Mr. A. H. Bullen will be found in the "Dictionary of National Biography." In the play she frightens a father into allowing his son to marry another Mary by persuading him that it is she herself of whom the young man is enamoured. She is credited with "the spirit of foure great parishes and a voyce that will drown all the citty," but the cowardly Laxton, whom she fights, mistakes her in her male attire for a young barrister, and perhaps the Temple produced many rufflers not unlike the figure here shown. Mary Frith herself seems to have had few good qualities, but Moll in the play is an amiable giant, and her promise to her servant of the reversion of her man's clothes "next week" was probably made in order to persuade the spectators that this masquerading was only an isolated freak.

No less interesting than this, and artistically the best picture we have to show, is the title-cut of "Greene's Tu Quoque or the Cittie Gallant, as it hath beene divers times

acted by the Queenes Maiesties servants. Written by Jo. Cooke, Gent. (Printed at London for John Trundle. 1614.)" Originally known as "The Cittie Gallant," this play was renamed after Thomas Green, the actor who so

MOLL CUT-PURSE.

successfully personated Bubble, to whom the "Tu Quo-que" quip is assigned.

Bubble is the type of the foolish young gentleman who wants to know "the lowest price of being italianated." No doubt this excellent cut is a portrait of Green in the

part as he enters "gallanted," and exclaims: "How apparel makes a man respected, the very children in the

GREENE'S "TU QUOQUE."

streets do adore me; for if a boy that is throwing at his jackalant chance to hit me on the shins, why I say nothing but *Tu quoque*, smile and forgive the child with a beck of

my hand or some such like token: so by that means I do seldom go without broken shins."

In contrast to these portraits of single characters is the title-cut of "The Maids Tragedie, as it hath beene diuers times acted at the Black-Friers by the Kings Maiesties

FROM "THE MAIDS TRAGEDIE."

Seruants. Newly perused, augmented and enlarged, this second Impression. (London, Printed for Francis Constable, and are to be sold at the White Lion in Pauls Church-yard, 1622.)" Here we have depicted the chief incident of the play, the fight which Aspatia, in man's clothes, forces upon Amintor in order to end her life at his hand. The drawing is a little rude, but, as will be seen

from the following quotation, the attitude of Aspatia is strictly in accordance with the text.

"*Aspatia*. You must be urged, I do not deal uncivilly
With those that dare to fight, but such as you
Must be used thus. [*She strikes him.*]

Aminor. I prithee, youth, take heed.
Thy sister is a thing to me so much
Above mine honour that I can endure
All this—good gods!—a blow I can endure,
But stay not, lest thou draw a timeless death
Upon thy self.

Aspatia. Thou art some prating fellow,
One that has studied out a trick to talk
And move soft-hearted people; to be kickt, [*She kicks him.*]
Thus to be kickt—[*aside*] Why should he be so slow
In giving me my death?

Aminor. A man can bear
No more and keep his flesh. Forgive me then,
I would endure yet, if I could. Now show
The spirit thou pretendest, and understand
Thou hast no hour to live. [*They fight.*]
What dost thou mean? Thou canst not fight.
The blows thou mak'st at me are quite besides,
And those I offer at thee, thou spread'st thine arms
And tak'st upon thy breast, alas, defenceless!

Aspatia. I have got enough,
And my desire. There is no place so fit
For me to die as here."

The fight, it will be observed, is akin to that between David Balfour and Alan Breck in Stevenson's "Kidnapped," but here the spectators' pity is more keenly worked on by the inexperienced challenger being a woman and by the more tragical termination of the combat. As for the artist, no doubt he did his best.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's "A King and No King," printed by T. Walkley in 1619, the title-page shows a

well-drawn figure of a man, above whose head, half on, half off it, a crown is held by an arm from the sky. In "Swetnam the Woman-hater, arraigned by women," printed for Richard Meighen the next year, a fairly good cut, which I regret to have remembered too late to have reproduced, exhibits Swetnam formally tried at bar, before a judge and jury of women.

Our next picture is from "The Fair Maid of the West, or, a Girle Worth Gold. The first part. As it was lately acted before the King and Queen, with approved liking, by the Queens Majesties Comedians. Written by T. H. (London, Printed for Richard Royston, and are to be sold at his Shop in Ivie Lane. 1631.)" The cut, of course, represents the "girl worth gold," and leaves one wondering whether the man who took the part was really able to screw his waist to the fashionable limit here shown.

THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST.

In "The Iron Age: Contayning the Rape of Hellen: The siege of Troy: The Combat betwixt Hector and Ajax: Hector and Troilus slayne by Achilles: Achilles slaine by Paris: Ajax and Vlisses contend for the Armour of Achilles: The Death of Ajax. &c. Written by Thomas Heywood," we have a very pictorial title-page, which duly answers to the stage direction: "Alarum. In this combat, both having lost their swords and shields, Hector takes up a great piece of a rock and casts at Ajax, who tears a young tree up by the roots, and assails Hector; at which they are parted by both armies."

In "The Second Part" (N. Okes, 1632) the title-cut shows Troy in flames, the Greeks issuing from the wooden horse, and in the foreground Sinon and Thersites engaged in a most conventional stage dialogue. The actual greeting of these heroes is in contrast with the earnest mien the artist has given them; for Thersites hails Sinon as "My Urchin," and Sinon hails Thersites as "My Toad." But these epithets had no doubt a hidden meaning.

Our next illustration is from "The Foure Prentises of London, With the Conquest of Jerusalem. As it hath beene diuers times acted at the Red-Bull, by the Queene's Maiestie's Seruants with good applause. Written and newly reuised by Thomas Heywood. (Printed at London by Nicholas Okes, 1632.)"

On the whole I am inclined to think that the picture merely represents the jovial dance of the apprentices, either when their labours are over, or when, after the proclamation for the Crusades, they hold this colloquy :

Eustace. Ran, tan, tan.

Now by S. George he tells us gallant newes.
I'll home no more. I'll run away to-night.

Guy. If I cast bowl, or spoon, or salt again,
Before I have beheld Jerusalem
Let me turn Pagan.

Charles. Hats and caps, adieu ;
For I must leave you, if the Drum say true.

Godfrey. Nay, then, have with you, brothers ! for my
spirit

With as much vigour hath burst forth as thine,
And can as hardly be restrain'd as yours.
Give me your hands. I will consort you too :
Let's try what London Prentices can do !

Eustace. For my Trades sake, if good success I have
The Grocers arms shall in my ensign wave.

Guy. And if my valour bring me to command
The Goldsmiths' arms shall in my colours stand.

THE FOUR PRENTISES OF LONDON.

Godfrey. So of us all. Then let us in one fleet
Launch all together."

These are brave words, and the coats of arms hung over the 'prentices' heads are in accordance with them. But there is a stage direction later on in the play: "Alarum. The four brethren each of them kill a Pagan king, take off their crowns and exeunt, two one way and two another way"; and I cannot but regret that the artist did not choose this as the subject of his cut.

From the same press as our last two illustrated plays came: "A Pleasant Comedy, called a Mayden-head Well Lost. As it hath beene publickly Acted at the Cocke-pit in Drury lane, with much Applause: By her Maiesties Seruants. Written by Thomas Heywood. (London, Printed by Nicholas Okes for John Jackson and Francis Church, and are to be sold at the Kings Armes in Cheape-side. 1634.)"

Like its predecessors, this also is illustrated, and unlike them, or any other play I have noticed, the title-cut is repeated in the body of the book, opposite to the passage to which it refers. Here is the quotation:

"Enter a Serving-man with a child in a covered Dish.

Gentleman. The Prince, my Master, hearing your solemnities

Hath sent this dish, to add a present to
Your royal feasts, wishing himself therein
To be a welcome guest.

Prince. Your master's name?

Gent. Prince Parma.

Prince. Give this gentleman

A hundred crowns. This will much grace our banquet.

Florence. There's in that dish some moral.

Milan. Coming from him,

Methinks it should be seasoned with some strange
And dangerous poison. Touch it not, my Lord.

FROM "A MAIDENHEAD WELL LOST."

Florence. There should be more in it than a feasting dish ;
What 's here, a child ?

Julia. Oh, my perplexed heart !

Prince. Upon his breast there's something writ. I'll
read it.

*'Tis fit, if justice be not quite exiled,
That he that weds the mother keep the child.
This child was sent to me !*"

The child, it will be observed, is of some age, and is behaving with great equanimity under its trying circumstances. The side-cut on the right seems to have been rather superfluously added by the artist to explain a situation he might safely have left to the dramatist.

In 1655 "The Merry Devil of Edmonton" appeared from the press of D. Gilbertson with a title-cut showing Banks and his famous horse on a platform. Our last illustration is taken, not from this, but from another Edmonton play, "The Witch of Edmonton, a known true story. Composed into a tragi-comedy by divers well-esteemed Poets; William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, &c. Acted by the Princes Servants, often at the Cock-Pit in Drury-Lane, once at Court, with singular Applause. Never printed till now. (London, Printed by J. Cottrel, for Edward Blackmore, at the Angel in Paul's Churchyard. 1658.)"

The illustration in this case is a composite one, referring to three different moments in the play. Mother Sawyer is found by the dog—said dog, of course, being "a Familiar"—cursing "that curmudgeon Banks," the "clown" of the piece, who, with three of his companions, has been abusing her. A long speech of imprecation ends with the effective line :

"Vengeance, shame, ruin, light upon that Canker,"

and it is then that there appears the stage direction, "Enter Dog," his opening remark being the "Ho ! have I found

thee cursing? now thou art mine own," of which part is shown on the label. The dog subsequently explains that it is only when he finds people cursing that he can obtain powers over them of life and death, but before owning to this limitation he has rather unfairly got the old woman to

FROM "THE WITCH OF EDMONTON."

seal the usual covenant with her blood, and instructed her in the art of making herself unpleasant.

"I'll tell thee, when thou wishest ill;
Corn, Man or Beast, would spoyle or kill,
Turn thy back against the Sun,
And mumble this short Orison :

*If thou to death or shame pursue 'em
Sanctificetur nomen tuum."*

In a subsequent scene the Spirit takes the form of Katherine Carter, with whom Cuddy Banks is in love. On her appearing to him he remarks that he will teach her to walk so late! The teaching, however, was not on his side. She trips before him, and his exclamation as he quits the stage, "Nay, by your leave I must embrace you," is speedily followed by that quoted in the cut, "Oh help, help, I am drown'd. I am drown'd." The stage direction hereupon is "Enter Wet," and the dog, after four diabolic "ha ha's," bids him "Take heed how thou trustest the Devil another time!" The tumbling into the water, it will be observed, like the murder of her children by Medea, was enacted behind the stage, probably because on the stage there was no means of simulating water to tumble into. In this case, therefore, the artist, a very rude one, it must be confessed, not only brought three scenes together, but depicted one which the audience could not have witnessed.

Our subject has been limited to woodcuts in old plays, but it should be noted that both the undated editions of Middleton's "Game of Chess" have engraved title-pages of some merit. As for our woodcuts, I have tried to resist the temptation to claim for them more than they deserve. One or two of them are really good, several others at least interesting, a few, like that at which we have just been looking, poor stuff enough. But they are connected with the greatest period of the English drama, and it has been worth while to collect these notes, if only to show that this is the best that English artists could do, or English publishers had the enterprise to commission them to do, when they were confronted with so unique an opportunity.

ALFRED W. POLLARD.