The Elizabethan Playhouse

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By Dr. F. E. Schelling.

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It is my purpose to set before you, this evening, the localities of the chief theatres of the London of Shakespeare; to describe how they developed from the Inn Yards, previously used for theatrical purposes; and to explain somewhat the nature and construction of these old playhouses. All of the slides, save the diagrams of construction and the reconstructed Elizabethan playhouses, are derived from contemporary maps, prints or sketches, and have, therefore, the value and sanction of documents. The material is, all of it, thoroughly well-known and authentic.

The population of the City of London in the year 1580 has been estimated at 123,000 souls. It scarcely reached 200,000 twenty-three years later, when King James came to the throne. London was then, as now, the center of the English speaking world; but that world was smaller in population than our single State of New York or Pennsylvania, and interests, political, social and literary, were concentrated in the metropolis to a degree far beyond the present, even in England. (Norden's Map of London, 1593, Fig. 53.) The London of Elizabeth was as yet a walled town, although the houses had grown out beyond it on almost all sides, and many of the nearer villages were connected with the city by an almost unbroken line of buildings. The city extended along the Thames from the Tower to Bridewell Palace, and back from the river about a mile and a half. The city was entered by seven gates, which are still commemorated in the names of streets, precincts and parishes, such as Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Moorgate, Cripplegate, Aldgate, Newgate and Ludgate. The Thames was, in those days, a clear and swiftly flowing stream. Foreign travelers in England told of the many swans that floated on its waters, of the stately houses of the nobility that adorned its banks, and of the beautiful gardens which sloped to the water's edge between Blackfriars and Westminster.

The river, moreover, was a thoroughfare not only of commerce,

but of pleasure. It was easier to go to Westminster, the seat of the Court, by water than by land. Suburban ways were foul and beset with danger. Coaches and carriages were a late innovation of Elizabeth's reign. The queen had ridden on horseback to her coronation. It was on the Thames that her majesty took the air in her royal barge, rowed by the strong arms of her household servants, and the humblest apprentice might row with a single sculler for a penny, and, cap in hand, watch his queen as she passed in state.

London within the walls was ruled by the Lord Mayor, his two Sheriffs, and a council of Aldermen, representing the various wards of the city and likewise the several craft-guilds or trades' associations of the city. The coats-of-arms which surround the first of the accompanying cuts, are those of these guilds. The jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor stopped at Temple Bar, at the end of Fleet Street to the west, at the Tower to the east, and in the middle of London Bridge, which connected the city with the Borough of Southwark. This borough is in Surrey, London is in Middlesex, and Southwark was variously subject to the King and to the Bishop of Winchester. Southwark and the Bankside—as the part of Southwark which lay along the river to the west was popularly called—was thus, from very early times a place of refuge and of license. London Bridge was the only bridge over the Thames within the precincts of the city. This structure is described by Stow as "very rare, having with the drawbridge, twenty arches made of squared stone of height sixty feet and in breadth, thirty feet,....compact and joined together with vaults and cellars; upon both sides be houses built, so that it seemeth rather a continual street than a bridge." From London Bridge the chief thoroughfare north and south was through New Fish Street (now King William Street) to Gracious or Gracechurch Street, and thence through Bishopsgate Street to Bishops' Gate. In a walk northward along the streets just named to Bishopsgate, when Shakespeare was a boy, he would have passed the Bell and the Crosskeys in Gracechurch Street and the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, all of them inns, the yards of which were commonly used for theatrical performances. Had we extended this walk through Bishopsgate and out on the road leading thence to the village of Shorditch, about half a mile or more from the gate, turning short to the right, we might have stood on the spot on which the first structure expressly built

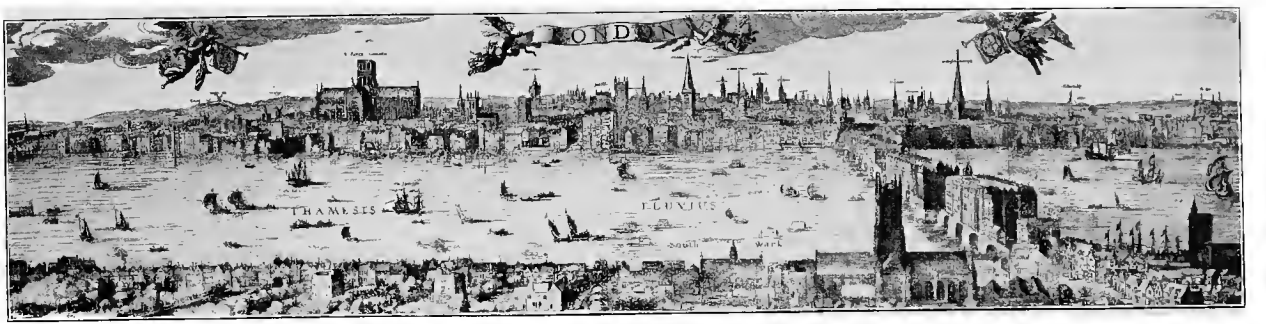

Fig. 54. Vischer's View of London, 1616.

for the performance of plays was shortly to be erected. This was the Theatre. Near it stood the Curtain. Once more, had we extended our walk in the opposite direction and passed over London Bridge, turning from the Southwark end to our right, we should have seen, stretched along the river, no less than four theatres. But these were of later times than the inns. Other inns were in early times thus employed. Such was the Bell Savage on Ludgate Hill, Blackfriars', where later Shakespeare's winter theatre was situated, Whitefriars, just without the walls to the west, and the places vaguely known in the records as "Nigh Pauls" and "In the City."

In a drawing by Railton, 1560, four years before Shakespeare's birth, London Bridge appears with the shops upon it and a realistic representation of the heads of traitors exposed on pikes over the gateway of the drawbridge to admonish her majesty's liege subjects of the fate awaiting traitors. Need we wonder at the horrors of a play like *Titus Andronicus* and try to prove that they are not Shakespeare's, or shudder at that terrible scene in *King Lear* in which Gloucester's eyes are torn out on the stage, when we recall that suicides in those days were buried at the cross roads with a stake driven through their vitals, that malefactors were hung in chains and left for years to pollute the air till their carcasses dropped into shreds and tatters; whilst offenders against the state were drawn and quartered and their heads, previously boiled in oil to make them weatherproof, were thus gibbeted in public places? Shakespeare, when he came a lad to the metropolis, might have cast his eyes on what remained of the noble head of Sir Thomas More, for it was exposed for years over this very gate. (Visscher's View of London, 1616, Fig. 54.) In this picture the large church across the river is the Cathedral of St. Paul's, not the present one, but that destroyed in the great fire in 1666. The foreground of this picture is the Bankside, Southwark. The large church near to the bridge is St. Mary Overy's, later known as St. Saviours, now the Cathedral of Southwark. Here lie buried Gower, Chaucer's friend, Fletcher, Massinger and other players and playwrights. It has been thought by some that Shakespeare was at one time a resident of Southwark, and that here he attended church. Among the entries of burial in the year 1607, that of one Edmund Shakespeare, a player, is recorded, and it is also noted that he was buried with a forenoon knell of the great bell, for which the

charge was twenty shillings. As a man might have been buried for twelve pence, is it too hazardous to infer that the great brother of this forgotten player gladly expended twentyfold the needed sum that due reverence might be paid to the dead?

This section from a map of London, published by Agas, in 1560, represents, to the north, the general character of the Liberty of Holywell in the Parish of Shorditch, as it then appeared. Shorditch was without the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor. Hence when the Lord Mayor and his Council, who were strongly Puritan, at length succeeded in banishing plays from the precincts of the city, the actors established themselves at Shorditch and thus outwitted their enemies. The first playhouse to be built in England was the Theatre, and it was erected in the year 1576. Its builder was James Burbage, the father of the famous actor, Richard Burbage, and himself an actor of some repute. In the agreement which Burbage made with the owner of the land, he was to have the right, under certain conditions, to remove the material with which the structure was built; a right which his heirs afterwards claimed and exercised. Access to the Theatre seems, in the old times, to have been over Finsbury Fields. The Curtain (which curiously is named from the region or old manor on which the playhouse was erected and not from the familiar drapery of the stage) was situated south of Holywell Lane in Moorsfield (modern Gloucester Street), and is first mentioned in the following year, 1577. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was among the many plays first acted there. The Theatre was moved away to the Bankside and the old materials were employed in building the Globe, Shakespeare's theatre, in 1598. The Curtain continued to be used as a theatre far into the reign of King James. Save for an unsatisfactory detail of Ryther's pictured map, no cuts have been handed down representing either of these old playhouses. And owing to their position without the walls, none of the old maps represent their location with precision.

Let us return to the Bankside. This view of London by Hollar, in 1620, gives a clearer idea of the theatres and their situation. The Swan is furthest from the bridges. It was perhaps built on the site previously occupied by Paris Garden, which had been used from very early times for bull and bear-baiting. The Swan was in repute about 1598. This theatre was not far from the Falcon Stairs as the neighboring landing place was called.

Fig. 55. The New Globe Theatre. Opened in the year 1614.

It is supposed that Shakespeare lived near to this landing while a resident of Southwark. The next theatre coming toward the bridge is the Hope, which is supposed to have occupied the old site of the Bear Garden. This place was used for all sorts of entertainments, theatrical and other, and was finally closed by Parliament in 1642, when triumphant Puritanism put down all the theatres and reduced the staple of English amusement to meditation and prayer. The playhouse adjoining the Hope on the right was the Rose. This was certainly open in 1592, as it was in that year that a play on Henry VI was acted there and attracted large audiences because of the excellence of certain scenes depicting the exploits of Talbot against the French in the years after the death of King Henry V. It is notable that several fine scenes of an otherwise indifferent play, *The first part of Henry VI,* are those which concern Talbot; and it is the belief of some that the play, as we have it, is Shakespeare's only in those parts: matters which point to Shakespeare as the cause of this popular success of a revised play. The theatre nearest the bridge is the celebrated Globe.

The Globe was the playhouse which Burbage built in part with old materials brought from the demolition of the theatre in Shorditch. This structure was completely destroyed by fire in 1613, during the performance of a play on Henry VIII, supposedly Shakespeare's. The accident was due to the firing of the thatched roof with the blazing wadding of a cannon which was shot off on the stage. When we remember that the manuscripts of players' parts, the records and accounts of the company, and other like things were customarily kept in the tiring-room with the wardrobe and properties, we can see at once what a loss this one fire has entailed to all students of Shakespeare and the drama. The Globe was rebuilt in the next year, and it is described to us as "the fairest that ever was in England." (Fig. 55.) This picture scarcely seems to warrant this praise; and both this and the previous one, as only the details of larger maps, can in no wise be accepted as accurate representations of Shakespeare's famous playhouse. We may feel sure indeed that their proportions are by no means preserved; and that neither of these old structures, could we see them now as they were, would raise in us any feeling save wonder at their small size, their dinginess and general uncomfort. The Globe was finally demolished to make room for tenements in 1644.

The Blackfriars Theatre, commonly described as Shakespeare's winter theatre, was a private house offering many contrasts, which do not concern us here, to the early octagonal public theatres. In 1599, Edward Alleyn built the Fortune in Golden Lane, Cripplegate, to rival the Globe. From the detail of Ryther's Map this theatre appears thus (Fig. 56): This theatre cost Alleyn the sum of £1,320, which, considering the purchasing value of money at that time and translated into dollars, means about $30,000.00 or $40,000.00. This theatre also suffered from fire in 1621, and was re-erected in this form (The New Fortune). It was later suppressed by the Puritans. But the building was in existence, at least, as far as the facade here represented was concerned, as late as 1819.

The earliest plays were acted on an improvised stage in the yards of inns. The inn-yard is structurally the original of the Elizabethan theatre. This slide represents a typical English inn-yard, dating about 1690. (Fig. 57.) It will be noticed that the building is constructed around a quadrangle to which there was usually but one entrance. The lower stories were used for stables, kitchens and storehouses, and were called in the speech of the day, "the offices." The living rooms for guests were situated, as on the continent generally to-day, in what we should call the second story. And about the yard, which lay open to the sky, ran a balcony, sometimes two, sometimes enclosed, onto which all the better rooms of the house opened.

The ground plan of such an inn was the roughly quadrangled yard with a single entrance opposite the stable. The purpose of this construction was protection. Here are all the conditions of the theatre. A single entrance, at which "gate-money" might be charged, a wagon on the top of which a stage might be erected, the barn, back in which the actors might dress and before which a rude curtain might be hung, a loft with a window looking out upon the courtyard which might be used to represent the walls of a beleagured city, Juliet's balcony, or the heavens out of which the gods appear. Moreover, as to auditors, his lordship and company might ascend to one of the rooms of the second story and bring thence chairs or stools on which to sit in the balcony overlooking the stage; the poorer gentleman or man of the city might ascend a flight higher and be nearly as comfortable, save that his chair was not so soft and his view of the actors not quite so good; whilst the apprentice, tapster or other common fellow,

Fig. 56. The Fortune Theatre, Golden Lane, Barbican, built 1599; burned 1621.

Fig. 57. A Typical Inn Yard.

stood in the yard on the cobbles, craned his neck to see over his fellow's shoulders, and endured, if need be, a downpour of rain whilst his lordship sat snug under the eaves. There is practically no feature of the Elizabethan theatre which was not present, or at least suggested in the old inn-yards. The steps were not many by which the yard with its surroundings was transformed into the octagonal theatre of the day. This shape was assumed by cutting off the corners of the inn-yard and thus bringing the spectators that crowded in the corners nearer the stage. The rooms were retained, as they have been to the present day, in what are called, in England, the stalls; the stage was made stationary and brought out into the yard and a pent roof, as it was called, built over at least part of it. Whilst the stable was enlarged into the tiring-room and given two, at times three, entrances to the stage, an advantage at once manifest. Another change consisted in raising part of the building above the stage, either by the addition of a story above the "scene" proper or by elevating the entire structure, making the circumference of the same height. The further addition of a cupola, from which a flag was raised while a play was performing on the stage, with a station for a trumpeter, were both obvious devices. From documents which have been handed down concerning the building of theatres, we can reconstruct these old buildings as to their material and dimensions. Thus we hear of payments for thatchers for the roof, for "balusters," as they used to be called, for a pole from which to fly the flag, represented in the cuts which we have already seen here. The same contract demands that the foundation be of brick at least up to twelve inches from the ground, and that there be two boxes "fit for and decent for gentlemen to sit in," that the stage be supported by means of certain thickness and many other details. Another document shows that the same structure was to be eighty feet square without, fifty-five within, that it was to have three galleries of a height respectively of twelve feet, eleven and nine; that the stage was to be forty feet wide and extend into the yard twenty-seven feet. Such a house would be about forty feet in height and could accommodate an audience sitting and standing of about eight hundred or a thousand people. Shakespeare's theatre, the Globe, must have been much smaller than this.

Interior of the Swan, 1596.

This is the most interesting document concerning the Elizabethan playhouse which we possess. It is a sketch of the Swan, made by one John de Witt, a Dutch traveler in England in the year 1596. (Fig. 58.) This sketch was copied into the common-place book of one Buchell either from a letter or a diary of de Witt and was discovered only as late as 1888. The copy is in the Library of the University of Utrecht; the original sketch by de Witt is lost. It will be noticed that all the features heretofore mentioned are here reproduced, from the flag and the trumpeter on the roof to the stage jutting into the yard, with its two entrances, the stage gallery and the tiers of balconies; in this case three. It seems right, however, to observe that of late this famous sketch has been somewhat discredited, partly because it ill conforms with some of the prejudices of scholars, and, more seriously, because it leaves unrepresented features of which we have certain evidence from other sources. Why, however, scholars should demand of the Elizabethan stage an absolute uniformity in detail of structure, when it is patent that such has never elsewhere been the case, seems to me beside the question; and it does not seem absurd to believe, despite all proofs of curtains, scenery, or doors, one, two, or three, that the Swan in 1596 may have been in reality not much unlike this sketch.

And now as to the structure of the Elizabethan stage. It is substantially agreed that that stage consisted of three important parts; an uninclosed platform extending into the middle of the auditorium; a rear stage separated (at least as to its middle part) from the front stage by a traverse or curtain run on a rod of wire; and a gallery or balcony above the rear stage, curtained or not as the case might be. But here several questions arise; how was such a stage arranged for the presentation of a play; how was a play presented on it? What properties were there and how were they employed? Our documentary evidence as to these matters is unhappily slight, and at times conflicting; and the efforts of scholars at elucidation and even the several "Elizabethan stages" which have been at times erected for the service of particular plays, while for the most part helpful, have reached, and perhaps can reach no definite solution. Thus, in an early type of a stage, reproduced by Professor Baker from a print in the Grenville Library of the British Museum, we have no more than

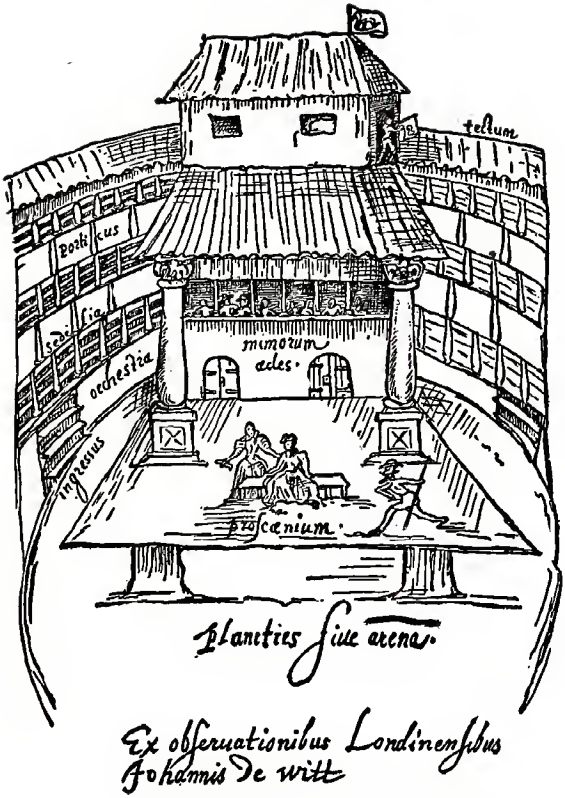

Fig. 58. Swan Theatre, London.

an improvised platform in which the familiar arras hangings of the usual Elizabethan room do service for scene and curtain. On the other hand, while the stage represented on the title page of Alabaster's *Roxana,* represents the essential parts mentioned above; with a similar sketch from the title of Richard's *Messalina,* it clearly pictures a private stage, and belongs to the reign of King Charles. Once again, in the cut commonly called the Interior of the Red Bull, a post-Shakespearean playhouse, but perhaps only a stage for drolls, the gallery and the jutting stage are plainly in evidence; but the traverse has become no more than a curtain concealing the single door, an arrangement which could surely not have been universal, though recently, if I mistake not, maintained as such by no less an authority than Mr. Archer. Moreover as to this cut, which forms the frontispiece of a book of drolls, bearing as late a date as 1672, we have certainly a condition represented in the chandeliers and footlights which did not obtain in the earlier public performances by daylight at the Theatre and the older Globe. The characters here represented are all, however, familiar to the Jacobean stage at the least. The Changeling is from Middleton's famous tragedy of that title, Tu Quoque, who is emerging from the curtain, was a notable clown in Joshua Cooke's play, *Greene's Tu Quoque,* whilst the lame beggar was a favorite stock personage in many plays. Falstaff, the most popular of all Elizabethan characters, and Dame Quickly call for no word.

Returning to the construction of the Elizabethan stage, its chief contrast with the stage of to-day appears to have been in this; our stage is a picture framed; the Elizabethan was primarily a platform for declamation. Our stage attempts in its settings a more or less realistic representation of scene; the Elizabethan stage was content to suggest, at times merely to symbolize, the setting. Hence our method of presenting a play makes for the reduction of intellectual effort, we are personally conducted throughout, and the imagination is rarely taxed. The Elizabethans demanded a partnership of the auditor. He was to imagine in his little wooden cockpit:

"The vasty fields of France,"

and behold in half a dozen supernumeraries;

the very casques
"That did affright the air at Agincourt;"

His mind's eye was to behold Cleopatra; in her habit as she lived,

> The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
> Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver
> Which to the time of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster
> As amorous to their stroke.

Such a passage as this last, could a contemporary of ours write it as a play, would be cut out as trespassing on the prerogatives of the stage carpenter.

Of late several experimental Elizabethan stages have been constructed abroad and here at home; and a German ingenuity has been at work to discover the constructive principles of the old London theatres, and to derive therefrom the dramaturgical theory of Elizabethan stage presentation. An interesting stage was employed, a few years since, at Leland Stanford University in California, in a successful presentation of Beaumont and Fletcher's *"Knight of the Burning Pestle."* (Fig. 59.) On this stage the curtain or traverse was arranged between the "pilasters." This complete shutting off, by means of a curtain drawn, of the rear balcony and of all exits has led to what has been called "the alternation theory," a theory developed of late years in the hands of several German scholars. Briefly stated, "the alternation theory" assumes that an Elizabethan dramatic performance was invariably continuous, and that the properties were habitually confined to the rear stage. But obviously, with such an assumption, no two scenes with different settings could immediately follow one after the other on the rear stage without breaking this continuity of action. A practical alternation of scenes between the two parts of the stage is, therefore, assumed, in order that the necessary rearrangements of properties might be made behind the curtain while the action continued before it. Hence, all plays, during the prevalence of this mode of staging, must be conceived to have been arranged in a succession of "out-scenes" and "in-scenes" (as they have been dubbed), and this alternation becomes of necessity an important feature of Elizabethan dramatic construction; for, on the basis of such a supposition, it follows that many "out-scenes" were written for no better purpose than to enable the shift of properties necessary

Fig. 50. Reconstruction of an Elizabethan Stage, Leland Stanford University, California, showing the only use made of a Drop-scene.

to the succeeding "in-scenes." It is impossible here to enter into the details of this theory. Suffice it is to say that Brodmeier, its most thorough-going exponent has confessedly confined himself to an examination of the practice of Shakespeare, ineptly omitting all his fellow-workers in the drama. Indeed we need be troubled with no fears that our notions of the staging of Shakespearean drama are in any immediate danger of overthrow by the theory of alternating scenes. Admirable stages, somewhat different in arrangement, have been constructed at Harvard and elsewhere. Most elaborate among them was that of the Elizabethan Stage Society, the motive force of which has been for many years Mr. William Poel. It was Mr. Poel who started interest in the representation of plays after the Elizabethan manner and revived with painstaking study and industry the very spirit of old time.

Once entered into the dark oval of an Elizabethan theatre the first thing that must have struck the visitor's eye was the fine gallants that sat and postured on the stage, who smoked, played cards, critized the play and the actors to their faces or bandied jokes or abuse with the groundlings that stood below on the stones of the yard. The proscenium box is said to have been devised to rid the stage of these troublesome interlopers. On the stage in early times was a piece of ordnance or cannon which was shot off to announce that the performance was about to begin. A throne was commonly set to denote the state of kings and the furnishings and settings were often of the rudest; and what was worse were sometimes left indiscriminately together on the stage. That signs were at times hung up to denote the scene is not a fiction. Venice, Elsinore, the Forest of Arden, all must so have been represented. In some of the older plays the stage directions are ludicrous in the extreme. "Let the messenger be led off to execution and a head be brought in on a pike." "Here let Venus descend, if you conveniently can, from above." Even in the reign of King James, the exigencies of one historical play demanded, "Enter Queen Elizabeth in bed." None the less while Shakespeare was still in London, there must have been a great improvement in these matters owing to the effect which the magnificent settings of the masques at court must have had on the popular stage. We may feel sure that scenes painted on canvas and taken on and off the stage were not unknown to Shakespeare, and we know on the evidence of no less an authority

than Ben Jonson that "a piece of perspective" was on the public stage in the year 1600, and on the evidence of Decker that, in 1609, a gallant on the stage is spoken of as standing at the helm "to steer the passage of the scenes." Juliet's tomb, the cave which Imogen enters, must have been so represented. In earlier times and at the commoner theatres the embellishments of the stage were eked out by the "arras," as it was called. This was a hanging made to imitate tapestry hung on a frame as was usual in the houses of the day and standing out a couple of feet from the walls, which in unheated houses were damp in winter. It was behind such a tapestry that Prince Henry found Falstaff "asleep and snorting like a horse"; and it was behind such a hanging that Polonius hid to overhear Hamlet's interview with his mother and, mistaken for the king, was killed by the prince.

When the play was on the point of beginning, the trumpet sounded from the tower and the prologue entered. The prologue was originally the author who personally solicited a favorable reception for his play. For this reason the prologue was usually clad in black, the clerkly color. Later the prologue was greatly developed and became in what was called the induction, a separate scene, even at times a little prefatory play.

In this view of the stage of the Elizabethan Society we have the stage fully peopled, the balcony and gallery boxes (perhaps the old "lord's room") being occupied as well. The kneeling attitude of the players and the doffed hats of the auditors denote a pleasing and impressive ceremony with which the earlier strictly Elizabethan plays invariably concluded. This was the prayer for the queen; an act in no wise incongruous to the flexible Elizabethan mind, but consonant with the mingling of religious with dramatic impulses which was handed down from time immemorial in the old sacred drama.

Within the last year two hypothetical stages involving new suggestions have been put forth. The first is a reconstruction by Mr. Godfrey, an English architect, from the original specifications of the year 1600 for the building of the Fortune Theatre (Fig. 60). In it we note, besides the familiar features already sufficiently adverted to, the placing of the two side doors of exit from the stage at an angle cutting off the corners of the back stage, and the addition of two flights of stairs on either side of the stage leading thence down into the yard. The latest hypothetical stage is that of Mr. V. E. Albright, lately a student of

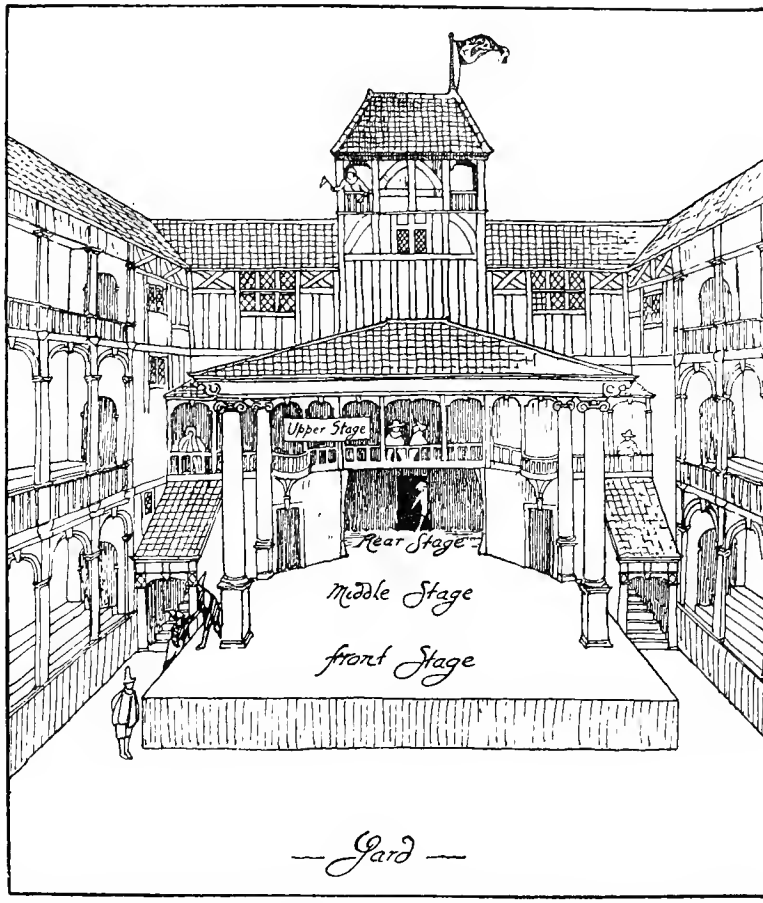

Fig. 60. The Fortune Theatre. Mr. Walter H. Godfrey's reconstruction from the Builder's Contract.

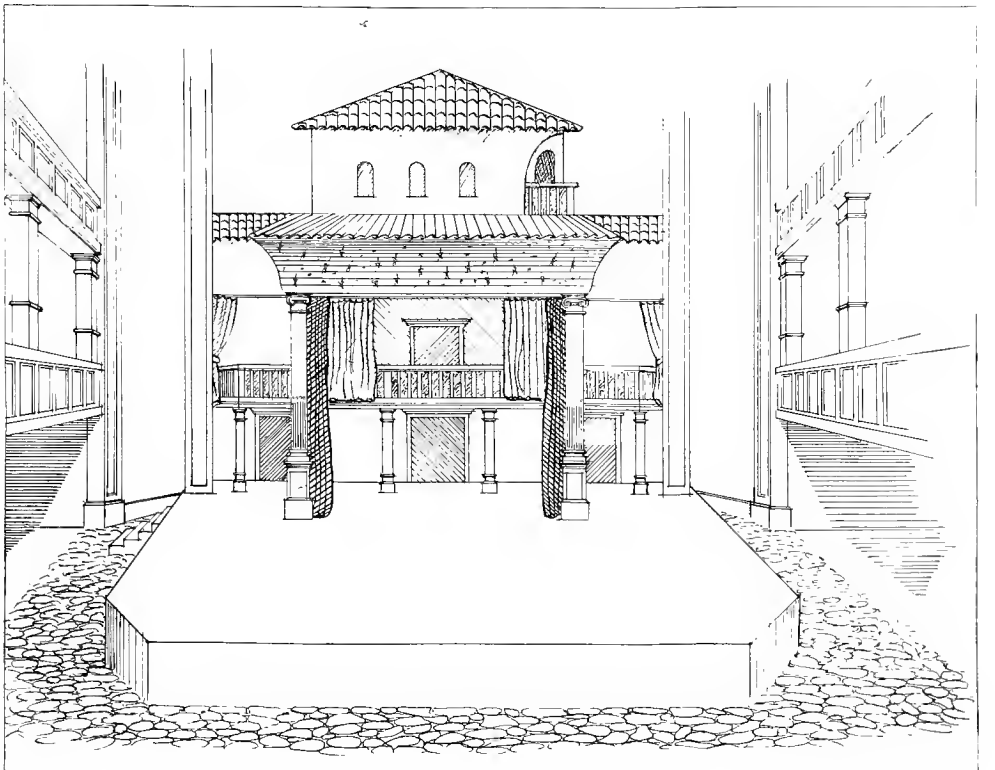

Fig. 61. A Typical Elizabethan Playhouse. Reconstructed from the Specifications of the Fortune and other data, by the author of this paper.

Columbia University. Here the traverse or curtain between the "pilasters" is denied. The position of the side doors, just described, is preserved, but the front stage is shorn on either side so as to taper towards the front, and provided with a low guard rail. These later features are based on the cuts of the title pages of *Roxana* and *Messalina,* both mentioned above, and must be pronounced as directly in defiance of the builder's specifications for the Fortune. Mr. Albright's conclusions attempt to discredit not only the picture of de Witt, but much of the other contemporary evidence as well. Finally Mr. Albright essays a modified rehabilitation of the alternation theory.

Had I a stage to reconstruct, I should like to emphasize one or two points (Fig. 61). I should, for example, preserve more than has hitherto been done, save by Godfrey, the extensive platform thrust out into the middle of the yard; I should place the two "pilasters" out at least a third of the distance of this forward thrust of the stage and bring them closer together. I should spread the balcony across the whole width of the back stage, making it a veritable gallery; and I should provide three doors, not bunched in the middle, but spread across the back of the stage; and I should accept Godfrey's diagonal placing of the two side doors. By such a general arrangement, it seems to me that a freer play of action might be provided, for the side doors, or even the balcony, could be used even when the central traverse between the "pilasters" was drawn, whilst the balcony in any part and the entrances one or all might be employed as need might demand. Let me repeat in conclusion that only the doctrinaire will demand a single style as representative of the variety of Elizabethan stage construction. A plank, a player and a passion might have sufficed then, as now, for the sufficient presentation of a true drama.