Chapter One

Old English literature

The Old English language, also called Anglo-Saxon, was the earliest form of English. It is difficult to give exact dates for the rise and development of a language, because it does not change suddenly; but perhaps it is true to say that Old English was spoken from about A.D. 600 to about 1100.

The greatest Old English poem is *Beowulf*, which belongs to the seventh century. It is a story of about 3,000 lines, and it is the first English epic. The name of its author is unknown.

*Beowulf* is not about England, but about Hrothgar, King of the Danes, and about a brave young man, Beowulf, from southern Sweden, who goes to help him. Hrothgar is in trouble. His great hall, called Heorot, is visited at night by a terrible creature, Grendel, which lives in a lake and comes to kill and eat Hrothgar's men. One night Beowulf waits secretly for this thing, attacks it, and in a fierce fight pulls its arm off. It manages to reach the lake again, but dies there. Then its mother comes to the hall in search of revenge, and the attacks begin again. Beowulf follows her to the bottom of the lake and kills her there.

In later days Beowulf, now king of his people, has to defend his country against a fire-breathing creature. He kills the animal but is badly wounded in the fight, and dies. The poem ends with a sorrowful description of Beowulf’s funeral fire. Here are a few lines of it, put into modern letters:

> alegdon tha tomiddes maerne theoden haeleth hiofende hlaford leofne ongunnon tha on beorge bael-fyra maest wigend weccan wudu-rec astah

sweart ofer swiothole swogende leg

wope bewunden.

*The sorrowing soldiers then laid the glorious prince) their dear lord) in the middle. Then on the hill the war-men began to light the greatest of funeral fires. The wood-smoke rose black above the flames) the noisy fire) mixed with sorrowful cries.*

The old language cannot be read now except by those who have made a special study of it. Among the critics who cannot read Old English there are some who are unkind to the poem, but *Beowulf* has its own value. It gives us an interesting picture of life in those old days. It tells us of fierce fights and brave deeds, of the speeches of the leader and the sufferings of his men. It describes their life in the hall, the terrible creatures that they had to fight, and their ships and travels. They had a hard life on land and sea. They did not enjoy it much, but they bore it well.

1. The few lines of *Beowulf* given above do not explain much about this kind of verse, and it may be well to say something about it. Each half-line has two main beats (a main
accent or rhythmic unit in music or poetry). There is no rhyme," Instead, each half-line is joined to the other by alliteration (the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.)(middesimaerne; haelethlifendelhelaford; borge bael; ungendlioeccanhuudu; stoeart] sunotholelsioogende ), Things are described indirectly and in combinations of words. A ship is not only a ship: it is a sea-goer, a sea-boat, a sea-wood, or a wave-floater. A sailor is a sea-traveller, a seaman, a sea-soldier. Even the sea itself (sae) may be called the waves, or the sea-streams, or the ocean-way. Often several of these words are used at the same time. Therefore, if the poet wants to say that the ship sailed away, he may say that the ship, the sea-goer, the wave-floater, set out, started its journey and set forth over the sea, over the ocean streams, over the waves. This changes a plain statement into something more colourful, but such descriptions take a lot of time, and the action moves slowly. In Old English poetry, descriptions of sad events or cruel situations are commoner and in better writing than those of happiness.

There are many other Old English poems. Among them are Genesis A and Genesis B. The second of these, which is short, is concerned with the beginning of the world and the fall of the angels. It is a good piece of writing; the poet has thoroughly enjoyed describing God's punishment of Satan and the place of punishment for evil in Hell is most of the long Genesis A, on the other hand, is dull, and little more than old history taken from the Bible and put into poor Old English verse. Other poems taken straight from the Bible are the well-written Exodus, which describes how the Israelites left Egypt, and Daniel. Another poem, Christ and Satan, deals with events in Christ's life. There is a good deal of repetition in this work.

We know the names of two Old English poets, CAEDMON and CYNEWULF. Almost nothing now remains which is certainly Caedmon's work. He was a poor countryman who used to stay apart when his fellows sang songs to God; for Caedmon was un-educated and could not sing. One night an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to sing God's praise. When he woke, he was able to sing, and part of one of his songs remains.

Cynewulf almost certainly wrote four poems, Juliana, The Fates of the Apostles, Christ, and Elene. The last of these seems to have been written just before Cynewulfs death; for he says in it, 'Now are my days in their appointed time gone away. My life-joys have disappeared, as water runs away.' Cynewulf's poems are religious, and were probably written in the second half of the eighth century.

Other Old English poems are Andreas and Guthlac. The second of these is in two parts, and may have been written by two men. Guthlac was a holy man who was tempted in the desert. Another of the better poems is The Dream of the Rood (the rood is Christ's cross.) This is among the best of all Old English poems.

Old English lyrics include Dear's Complaint, The Husband's Message, The Wanderer and The Wife's Complaint. Dear is a singer who has lost his lord's favour. So he
complains, but tries to comfort himself by remembering other sorrows of the world. Of each one he says 'That passed over; this may do so also.'

There are many other poems in Old English. One of the better ones is a late poem called *The Battle of Maldon*. This battle was fought against the Danes in 991 and probably the poem was written soon after that. It has been highly praised for the words of courage which the leader uses:

hige sceal the heirdra heorte the cenre mod sceal the mare the ure maegen lytlath her
lith ure ealdor eall forheawen
god on greote a maeg gnornian
se the nu fram this wigplegan wendan thenceth.

*The mind must be the firmer, the heart must be the braver, the courage must be the greater, as our strength grows less. Here lies our lord all cut to pieces, the good man on the ground. If anyone thinks now to turn away from this war-play, may he be unhappy Jar ever after.*

In general it is fairly safe to say that Old English prose came later than Old English verse; but there was some early prose. The oldest *Laws* were written at the beginning of the seventh century. Some of these are interesting. If you split a man's ear, you had to pay 30 shillings. These *Laws* were not literature, and better sentences were written towards the end of the seventh century.

1. The most interesting piece of prose is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (a factual written account of important or historical events in the order of their occurrence), an early history of the country. There are, in fact, several chronicles (Records), belonging to different cities. No doubt KING ALFRED (849-901) had a great influence on this work. He probably brought the different writings into some kind of order. He also translated a number of Latin books into Old English, so that his people could read them. He brought back learning to England and improved the education of his people.

Another important writer of prose was AELFRIC. His works, such as the *Homilies?* (990-4) and *Lives of Saints* (993-6), were mostly religious. He wrote out in Old English the meaning of the first seven books of the Bible. His prose style is the best in Old English, and he uses alliteration to join his sentences together.

"*epic*, the story in poetry of the adventures of a brave man (or men)

2 *rhyme*, ending two or more verse lines with the same sounds. Two lines *rhyme* when each has the same vowel sound bearing the last stress (beat) e.g. *pay* and *day* or *pay* and *weigh* as last words. Any sounds after that vowel are exactly the same -- e.g. *meeting* and *beating* ; but the sound before that vowel is different - e.g. *state* and *weight* are rhymes but *meet* and *meat* are not true rhymes.

3 *alliteration*, two or more words beginning with the same sound.
• angel, a servant of God in Heaven. According to old accounts, Satan and other angels disobeyed God and became the Devil and the Devil's servants in Hell.

s hell, the place for punishment for evil.

6 Apostle, one of the twelve men chosen by Christ to preach to others.

7 lyric, a poem originally one meant to be sung - which expresses the poet's thoughts and feelings.

B prose, the ordinary written language, not specially controlled like verse.

9 Homily, religious talk. 10 Saint, holy man.

11 style, manner of writing; one writer's special way of using language.

Chapter Two

Middle English literature

The English which was used from about 1100 to about 1500 is called Middle English, and the greatest poet of the time was GEOFFREY CHAUCER. He is often called the father of English poetry, although, as we know, there were many English poets before him. As we should expect, the language had changed a great deal in the seven hundred years since the time of Beowulf and it is much easier to read Chaucer than to read anything written in Old English. Here are the opening lines of The Canterbury Tales! (About 1387), his greatest work:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures swote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote

When April with his sweet showers has struck to the roots the dryness of March . . .

There are five main beats in each line, and the reader will notice that rhyme has taken the place of Old English alliteration. Chaucer was a well-educated man who read Latin, and studied French and Italian poetry; but he was not interested only in books. He travelled and made good use of his eyes; and the people whom he describes are just like living people.

The Canterbury Tales total altogether about 17,000 lines - about half of Chaucer's literary production. A party of pilgrims agree to tell stories to pass the time on their journey from London to Canterbury with its great church and the grave of Thomas a Becket. There are more than twenty of these stories, mostly in verse, and in the stories we get to know the pilgrims themselves. Most of them, like the merchant, the lawyer, the cook, the sailor, the ploughman, and the miller, are ordinary people, but each of them can be recognized as a real person with his or her own character. One of the most enjoyable characters, for example, is the Wife of Bath. By the time she tells her story
we know her as a woman of very strong opinions who believes firmly in marriage (she has had five husbands, one after the other) and equally firmly in the need to manage husbands strictly. In her story one of King Arthur's knights must give within a year the correct answer to the question 'What do women love most?' in order to save his life. An ugly old witch knows the answer ('To rule') and agrees to tell him if he marries her. At last he agrees, and at the marriage she becomes young again and beautiful.

Of Chaucer's other poems, the most important are probably *Troylus and Cryseyde* (1372-79), and *The Legend of Good Women* (1385). The former of these is about the love of the two young people. Shakespeare later wrote a play on the same subject, but his Cressida is less attractive than Chaucer's.

The old alliterative line was still in use in Chaucer's time, though not by him. *The Vision 6 of Piers the Ploughman*, mostly by WILLIAM LANGLAND, is a poem in this verse. It was written by a poor man to describe the sorrows of the poor. It looks a lot older than Chaucer's rhymed verse, though the two men lived at the same time. Langland sadly tells, as in a dream, how most people prefer the false treasures of this world to the true treasures of heaven. The characters in the poem are not as real as Chaucer's.

The alliterative metre was used in several other poems, including *Sir Gawazn and the Green Knight* (1360?), one of the stories of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. Like others of these legendary stories, it tells of the adventures of one of King Arthur's knights (in this case Sir Gawain) in a struggle against an enemy with magic powers as well as great strength and cunning. Sir Gawain finishes the adventure with all honour.

Perhaps the author of *Gawain* also wrote *Pearl* and *Patience*, two of the best alliterative poems of the time. Pearl was the name of the poet's daughter, who died at the age of two; but he is comforted when, in a dream, he sees her in heaven. *Patience* is the story of Jonah, who was thrown into the sea and swallowed by an immense creature of the sea, which carried him to the place where God wished him to go.

A good deal of Middle English prose is religious. The *Ancren Riwle* teaches proper rules of life for anchoresses (religious women) how they ought to dress, what work they may do, when they ought not to speak, and so on. It was probably written in the thirteenth century. Another work, *The Form of Perfect Living*, was written by RICHARD ROLLE with the same sort of aim. His prose style has been highly praised, and his work is important in the history of our prose.

JOHN WYCLIFFE, a priest, attacked many of the religious ideas of his time. He was at Oxford, but had to leave because his attacks on the Church could no longer be borne. One of his beliefs was that anyone who wanted to read the Bible ought to be allowed to do so; but how could this be done by uneducated people when the Bible was in Latin? Some parts had indeed been put into Old English long ago, but Wycliffe arranged the
production of the whole Bible in English. He himself translated part of it. There were
two translations (1382 and 1388), of which the second is the better.

It is surprising that Wycliffe was not burnt alive for his attacks on religious practices.
After he was dead and buried, his bones were dug up again and thrown into a stream
which flows into the River Avon (which itself flows into the River Severn):
The Avon to the Severn runs, The Severn to the sea,
And Wycliffe's dust shall spread abroad, Wide as the waters be.

All important Middle English prose work, *Morte D' Arthur [= Arthur's Death]*, was
written by SIR THOMAS MALORY. Even for the violent years just before and during
the Wars of the Roses, Malory was a violent character. He was several times in prison,
and it has been suggested that he wrote at least part of *Morte D' Arthur* there to pass the
time.

Malory wrote eight separate tales of King Arthur and his knights but when Caxton printed the book in 1485 (after Malory's death) he joined them into one long story.
Caxton's was the only copy of Malory's work that we had until, quite recently (1933-4),
a handwritten copy of it was found in Winchester College.

The stories of Arthur and his knights have attracted many British and other writers.
Arthur is a shadowy figure of the past, but probably really lived. Many tales gathered
round him and his knights. One of the main subjects was the search for the cup used by
Christ at the Last Supper. (This cup is known as The Holy Grail.) Another subject was
Arthur's battles against his enemies, including the Romans. Malory's fine prose can tell
a direct story well, but can also express deep feelings in musical sentences. Here is part
of the book in modern form. King Arthur is badly wounded:

Then Sir Bedivere took the king on his back and so went with him to the water's edge.
And when they were there, close by the bank, there came a little ship with many
beautiful ladies in it; and among them all there was a queen. And they all had black
head-dresses, and all wept and cried when they saw King Arthur.

The first English plays told religious stories and were performed in or near the churches.
Many events of religious history were suitable subjects for drama. "These early plays,
called Miracle!" or Mystery Plays, are in four main groups, according to the city where
they were acted: Chester, Coventry, York and Wakefield.

The subjects of the Miracle Plays are various: the disobedience of Adam and Eve; Noah
and the great flood; Abraham and Isaac; events in the life of Christ; and so on. They
were acted by people of the town on a kind of stage on wheels called a pageant. This
was moved to different parts of the town, so that a play shown in one place could then
be shown in another. Often several Miracle Plays were being performed at the same
time in different places. Here is a short bit of *Noah's Flood* in the Chester Plays:
GOD: Seven days are yet coming For you to gather and bring Those after my liking
When mankind I annoy. Forty days and forty nights
Rain shall fall for their unrights
And those I have made through my mights Now think I to destroy.

NOAH: Lord, at your bidding? I am true Since grace is only in you,
As you ask I will do.
For gracious? I you find.
A wrongdoing wonderful powers corders D kind

Although the Miracles were serious and religious in intention, English comedv- ' was born in them. There was a natural tendency for the characters in the play to become recognizably human in their behaviour. However serious the main story might be, neither actors nor audience could resist the temptation to enjoy the possibilities of a situation such as that in which Noah's wife needs a great deal of persuasion to make her go on board the ark.!!

Other plays, in some respects not very different from the Miracles, were the Morality Plays. The characters in these were not people (such as Adam and Eve or Noah); they were virtues (such as Truth) or bad qualities (such as Greed or Revenge) which walked and talked. For this reason we find these plays duller today, but this does not mean that the original audiences found them dull. The plays presented moral truths in a new and effective way.

One of the best-known fifteenth-century Moralities is Everyman, which was translated from the Dutch. It is the story of the end of Everyman's life, when Death calls him away from the world. Among the characters are Beauty, Knowledge, Strength, and Good Deeds. When Everyman has to go to face Death, all his friends leave him except Good Deeds, who says finely:

Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide, In thy most need to be by thy side.

Another kind of play, the Interlude, was common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The origin of this name is uncertain; perhaps the Interludes were played between the acts of long Moralities; perhaps in the middle of meals; or perhaps the name means a play by two or three performers. They are often funny, and were performed away from churches, in colleges or rich men's houses or gardens. One of them is The Four P's. In one part of this play, a prize is offered for the greatest lie; and it is won by a man who says that he never saw and never knew any woman out of patience.

The writers of these early plays are unknown until we come to the beginning of the sixteenth century. JOHN HEYWOOD wrote The Four P's (printed about 1545) and The
Play of the Weather (1533), in which Jupiter, the King of the Gods, asks various people what kind of weather ought to be supplied. Heywood wrote other Interludes and was alive in Shakespeare's time.

1 tale, story.

2 pilgrim, a person making a journey for religious reasons to a holy place.

• knight, a man who - historically as a good fighter and leader in war has the rank shown by the word Sir before his name.

4 witch, a woman with unnatural (more than human) powers.

5. legend, story (usually one which has come down to us from ancient times so that we cannot be sure of the truth - adj. legendary).

6 vision, ~omethm& seen in the imagination as if in a dream; a vision is often a sight of things in the future.

7 metre, the number and kinds of feet in the lines of poetry.

B magic, having the help of spirits or other more than human abilities to influence events.

9 William Caxton (1422?-gl) set up the first English printing press in 1476-7. He printed not only the works of other writers but also books from other countries translated by himself into excellent English prose.

1 ° drama, stage plays; the writing of plays; adj. dramatic.

11 miracle, an event produced by more than human powers.

12 comedy, amusing plays; a comedy is a play meant more to entertain than to teach, usually one with a happy ending.

13. Noah's Ark, the great ship built by Noah to save two of each of God's creatures during the flood.

Chapter Three

Elizabethan poetry and prose

Many imitators of Chaucer appeared after his death in 1400, but few are of great interest. More than a century had to pass before any further important English poetry was written. Queen Elizabeth ruled from 1558 to 1603, but the great Elizabethan literary age is not considered as beginning until 1579. Before that year two poets wrote works of value.

SIR THOMAS WYATT and the EARL OF SURREY are often mentioned together, but there are many differences in their work. Both wrote sromes.J which they learned to do
from the Italians; but it was Wyatt who first brought the sonnet to England. Surrey's work is also important because he wrote the first blank 2 verse in English.

In the form of the sonnet Wyatt mainly followed the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-74). In this form, the 14 lines rhyme abbaabba (8) + 2 or 3 rhymes in the last six lines. The sonnets of Shakespeare are not of this form; they rhyme ababcddefgg.

Wyatt has left us some good lyrics. Here is part of a lover's prayer to his girl:

And wilt thou leave me thus That hath loved thee so long In wealth and woe" among;
And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?
Say nay "! Say nay!

A sorrow B no

Surrey's blank verse, which has been mentioned, is fairly good; he keeps it alive by changing the positions of the main beats in the lines. Marlowe's famous 'mighty- line' is blank verse and much finer poetry, and Shakespeare improved on it. Milton made blank verse the regular metre of epic.

Before and during the Elizabethan age, the writing of poetry was part of the education of a gentleman, and the books of sonnets and lyrics that appeared contained work by numbers of different writers. A good example of these books is Tottel's Songs and Sonnets (1557), which contained 40 poems by Surrey and 96 by Wyatt. There were 135 by other authors". Did these popular sonnets and lyrics express real feelings, or were they just poetic exercises? Some may be of one sort and some of the other. They differ a good deal. Some contain rather childish ideas, as when a man is murdered by love and his blood reddens the girl's lips. Some are very fine indeed.

One of the best sonnets of the time was by MICHAEL DRAYTON.

It begins like this:

I t begins like this:

Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part:

N ay", I have done; you get no more of me; And I am glad, ~ yea B glad with all my heart That thus so cleanly I myself can free.

A no Byes

The sonnets of Shakespeare, printed in 1609, were probably written between 1593 and 1600. For whom, or to whom, did he write them? Many of them refer to a young man of good family, and may be addressed to William Herbert (the Earl of Pembroke), or the Earl of Southampton. At the beginning of the 1609 collection, it is said that they are for 'Mr. W. H.' Other people mentioned in the sonnets are a girl, a rival poet, and a dark-eyed beauty. Here is one of Shakespeare's sonnets:
Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were filled with your most high deserts "? Though yet, Heaven knows, it is but\(^B\) as a tomb\(^c\) Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts. If I could write the beauty of your eyes,

And in fresh numbers" number all your graces The age to come would say, 'This poet lies,

Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.' So should my papers, yellowed with their age,

Be scorned like old men of less truth than tongue; And your true rights be termed E a poet's rage\(^^F\) And stretched metre of an antique? song.

But were some child of yours alive that time
You should live twice ~ in it, and in my rhyme.

A what you deserve B only C grave 0 verses E called F madness Gold

The poet who introduced the Elizabethan age proper was EDMUND SPENSER. In 1579 he produced The Shepherd's Calendar, a poem in twelve books, one for each month of the year. Spenser was no doubt making experiments in metre and form, examining his own abilities. The poems are unequal, but those for April and November are good. They take the form of discussions between shepherds 5, and are therefore pastorals 6 ~ the best pastorals written in English up to that time. There are various subjects: praise of Queen 'Elizabeth, discussions about religion, the sad death of a girl, and so on. The nation welcomed the book; it was expecting a great literary age, and accepted this work as its beginning.

Spenser's greatest work, The Faerie Queene (1589-96), was planned in twelve books, but he wrote little more than the first six. The 'Queene' is either Queen Elizabeth or Glory as a person. There are twelve knights representing different virtues, and King Arthur is gentlemanliness. The knights' adventures are the basis for an allegory 7, but this is not clear. The greatness of the work is not in its thought or in its story. It is in the magic feeling in the air, the wonderful music of the verse, the beauty of the sound. Few people now read the whole thing; perhaps too much sweetness at once is more than the mind and spirit can bear.

Spenser invented a special metre for The Faerie Queene. The verse has nine lines; of these the last has six feet, the others five. The rhyme plan is ababbcbcc. This verse, the 'Spenserian Stanza' 8, is justly famous and has often been used since. Here is an example:

Long thus she traveled through deserts wide,
By which she thought her wandring knight should pass, Yet never show of living wigh
tA espied B;
Till that at length C she found the trodden" grass In which the track of people's footing
was, Under the steep foot of a mountain hoar ";
The same she follows, till at last she has
A damsel" spied? slow-footing her before,
That on her shoulders sad a pot of water bore.
A person B saw C at last D pressed down by feet E old and grey F girl G seen
Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle in 1594 when he was over forty. The joy that he felt is
expressed in *Epithalamion* (1595), an almost perfect marriage song. His *Prothalamion*
(1596), written in honour of the double marriage of the daughters of the Earl of
Worcester, contains the repeated line, 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song'.
Spenser also wrote 88 sonnets which were published in 1595 with the *Epithalamion* -
under the title, *Amoretti*.

The Elizabethan age produced a surprising flow of lyrics.

Lyric poetry gives expression to the poet's own thoughts and feelings, and for this reason
we tend to picture the lyric poet as a rather dreamy unpractical person with his thoughts
turned inwards. As a description of the Elizabethan lyric poets, nothing could be further
from the truth. We know few details of Spenser's life, but his friend SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY was a true Elizabethan gentleman of many activities _ courtier, statesman,
poet, soldier. It is probably true that this man, accepted as the pattern of nobility in his
time, refused a cup of water when he lay dying on the battlefield of Zutphen, saying that
it should be given to a wounded soldier lying near to him. Sidney's book of sonnets,
*Astrophel and Stella*, was printed in 1591 after his death. Most of the poems of another
great Elizabethan, SIR WALTER RALEIGH, soldier, sailor, explorer, courtier, and
writer, have been lost, but the short pieces which remain show a real gift for poetic
expression.

Some of the best lyrics of the time were in the dramatic works.

Characters on the stage were given songs to sing to please the audience and to give some
relief when necessary. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, there is a very sweet
lyric: (see page 44)
o mistress mine, where are you roaming?

Shakespeare's longer poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, are both on the subject of
love. The former of these was probably his first published 9 work. In both poems there
is a .kind of coldness, as if Shakespeare was only writing according to the rules, but
without much feeling.
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, the famous dramatist, was also a fine lyric writer. *The Passionate's Shepherd to his Love* (published in 1599) starts like this:

Come live with me and be my love, And we will all the pleasures prove That hills and valleys, dales" and fields Woods or steepy mountain yield.

A river-valleys

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote another poem as the girl's answer:

If all the world and love were young And truth in every shepherd's tongue, These pretty pleasures might me move To live with thee and be thy love.

As the song~ and sonnets of the great Elizabethan age passed slowly away, the Immense lyrical tide began gradually to lose its force. The age that followed, the Jacobean age, was less fresh - more interested in the mind than in heart or eye. A group of poets, known as the Metaphysical'! Poets, wrote verse which was generally less beautiful and less musical, and which contained tricks of style and unusual images" to attract attention. These poets mixed strong feelings with reason, and the mixture is strange.

JOHN DONNE is the greatest metaphysical poet but it is difficult to find a complete poem by him which is faultless. He wrote many good things, but no perfect poem. His songs and sonnets are probably his finest work, but he is best studied in collections of verse by various poets. He wrote a lot of poor verse which these collections omit.

Donne was a lawyer and a priest, and he wrote religious poetry, though it is not his best. In metre Donne often put the main beat on words of little importance; yet he had his good qualities. Some of his beginnings, such as 'Go and catch a falling star,' are fine. He can say effective things in a few words: 'I am two fools I know'

For loving and for saying so.' Yet some of his lines are terribly bad:

Here lies a she sun and a he moon there She gives the best light to his sphere" Or each is both, and all, and so

They unto one another nothing owe.

A ball like the moon

The dramatist BEN JONSON, known as 'Rare Ben Jonson', was a quarrelsome man, but fearless and honest. He has left plays, poems and prose. One of his best lyrics is *To Celia*

Drink to me only with thine eyes, And I will pledge? with mine; Or leave a kiss but in the cup, And I'll not look for wine.

A drink to your health

It is time now to turn to the prose of this age, which took several very different forms. The translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579), SIR THOMAS NORTH is important. It is on the whole written in fine and noble English,
and it had a wide influence on Elizabethan prose. It was used by Shakespeare as a storehouse of learning. Shakespeare used quite extensive expressions from it in *Julius Caesar, Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. North was one of the best translators, with a good command of English words and the ability to weave them into powerful sentences. He did not translate directly from the Greek, but from a French translation by Amyot of Auxerre.

In 1589 RICHARD HAKLUYT collected and published *The Principal Naoigations: Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*. At this time there was a great deal of travel and adventure on the sea, and this book was enlarged in 1598, 1599 and 1600. It includes accounts of the voyages of the Cabots, Hawkins, Drake, and Frobisher, besides several others. Hakluyt left a lot of unpublished papers, and some of these came into the possession of Purchas.

SAMUEL PURCHAS published the Hakluyt papers under the title, *Purchas his Pilgrims* (1625), containing 'A History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travel'. This book deals with voyages to India, Japan, China, Africa, the West Indies and other places. Two other books by Purchas have titles which are almost the same, *Purchas his Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages* (1613) and *Purchas his Pilgrim, or The History of Man* (1619). Another important history book of this time was Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577). Though it is known by his name, several writers were responsible for the material in it.

A kind of novell " began in the Elizabethan age; Lyly's *Euphues* (1578 and 1580) started a fashion which spread in books and conversation.

JOHN LYLY was employed at court. *Euphues* has a thin love story, which is used for the purpose of giving Lyly's ideas in various talks and letters. The style is filled with tricks and alliteration; the sentences are long and complicated; and large numbers of similes are brought in. A short example of this style is, 'They are commonly soonest believed that are best beloved, and they liked best whom we have known longest.' The reader forgets the thought behind the words, and looks for the machine-like arrangement of the sentences. This kind of style was common in the conversation of ladies of the time, and most of those at court were at one time Lyly's pupils. Queen Elizabeth herself used it. Every girl of good family in those days learnt to speak, not only French, but also Euphuism. Even Shakespeare was influenced by this artificial style.

Another novelist was ROBERT GREENE, whose story *Pandosto* gave Shakespeare the plot of his play *The Winter's Tale*. Another, THOMAS NASH, a writer of very independent character, refused to copy Euphues or anyone else. His book *The Life of Jacke Wilton* was a picaresque novel, that is to say, a novel of adventure about men of bad character. Picaresque novels were first written in Spain and then copied elsewhere. The interest of the adventure is sometimes spoilt by long speeches which are made just when we want the speaker to do something instead of talking.
These Elizabethan 'novels' are of little value on the whole, and few people read them now. They did not lead on to the great novels of later years. They were a false start, and died out.

The prose of FRANCIS BACON is important. His Essays especially are popular still. They first appeared in 1597 and then with additions in 1612 and 1625. The sentences in the earlier essays are short, sharp and effective; the style of the later essays is rather more flowing. Some of the best-known sayings in English come from Bacon's books, and especially from the Essays.

*16 simile*, the use of an image usually introduced by *like* or *as* - to make a comparison in one respect with the thing or idea described (e.g. 'the elephant looked as big as a house').

Here are a few, with the title of the essay:

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark. (*Death*) All colours will agree in the dark. (*Unity in Religion*) Revenge is a kind of wild justice. (*Revenge*)

Why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me? (*Revenge*)

Children sweeten labours' but they make misfortunes more bitter. (*Parents and Children*)

If a man be gracious to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world. (*Goodness*)

The remedy is worse than the disease. (*Troubles*)

Stay a little, that we may make an end the sooner. (*Despatch*) Cure the disease and kill the patient. (*Friendship*)

That is the best part of beauty which a picture cannot express. (*Beauty*)

Some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly. (*Studies*)

A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds. (*Ceremonies and Respects*)

Other books by Bacon include *A History if Henry VII* (1622), which was written in a few months. *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) considers the different ways of advancing knowledge, and the divisions of knowledge, such as poetry and history. *The New Atlantis* (1626) contains social ideas in the form of a story. This story is of a journey to an imaginary island, Bensalem, in the Pacific Ocean. Bacon wrote several other books in English and Latin.

The Authorized's" Version." (**A.V.**) of the Bible appeared in 1611.

The history of the English Bible is important. In Old English several translations of *parts* of the Bible were made, but the first complete translation was Wycliffe's. WILLIAM
TYNDALE translated the New Testament from the Greek, and part of the Old Testament from the Hebrew. He was later burnt to death for his beliefs, but he is remembered for his careful and important work on the translation. The Authorized Version depended a great deal on Tyndale's work. Several other translations were made in the sixteenth century, including a complete Bible (r 535) by Miles Coverdale.

A meeting was held in 1604 to consider a new translation. Fortyseven translators were appointed, and they worked in groups on different parts of the Bible. The work was finished in 1611 and the result, depending chiefly on Wycliffe and Tyndale, was called the Authorized Version, though in fact no one authorized it.

The language is beautiful, strong and pure, very unlike Euphuism.

Most English writers are influenced in some way or other by the words of the A.V.

Here are a few sentences from Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12:

Remember now thy Creator" in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.

A maker near

Timber or Discoveries (1640) by the dramatist Ben Jonson, is a collection of notes and ideas on various subjects. Until Jonson wrote this book, nothing had appeared to make clear the true work of a critic, his aims and limitations. Jonson says that a critic ought to judge a work as a whole, and that the critic himself must have some poetic abilities. Jonson is the father of English literary criticism. His critical ideas are not limited to this book, but appear elsewhere. He has some interesting things to say. He thought that Donne, 'for not keeping of accent [proper beat], deserved hanging'. He was not pleased with the Spenserian stanza or with Spenser's language. When he was told that Shakespeare had never 'blotted a line' (= crossed a line out), he wished that he had 'blotted a thousand'. Jonson's ideas were much influenced by the classics, 22 and this explains much of what he says.

1 sonnet, a 14-line lyric poem of fixed form and rhyme pattern.

2 blank verse" verse without rhymes, usually in lines of five iambic feet (each 1 w - I), e.g.

o good 1 old man! I how well 1 'in thee^ 1 appears 1 The con -I st'lllItBser ! vice of 1 the an 1 fique'iworld 1 SHAKESPEARE, As You Like It

A you B never changing cold

3 mighty, of great power. 4 author, writer.

5 shepherd, a man who looks after sheep in the fields and open country.
Chapter Four

Elizabethan drama

The chiefliterary glory of the great Elizabethan age was its drama, but even before it began several plays appeared which showed that a great development had taken place. They are not very good plays, but in general the comedies are better than the tragedies.

The first regular English comedy was Ralph Roister Doister (1553?) by NICHOLAS UDALL, headmaster of Westminster School, who probably wrote it for his boys to act. It is in rough verse and contains the sort of humour that may be found among country people. Another comedy was Gammer Gurton's Needle, acted at Cambridge University in 1566, also in rough verse. It is about the loss and the finding of a needle with which
Gammer Gurton mends clothes. Quarrels, broken heads, and a drinking song are important parts of it.

Lyly's prose comedy *Campaspe* and his allegorical play *Endimion* are an improvement on this. They were performed in front of Queen Elizabeth, probably by boy actors. These boys, known as 'Children of Paul's', no doubt caused a lot of fun when they played the parts of great men such as Alexander the Great, or the philosopher, Diogenes.

The play *Campaspe* contains the charming (and now famous) song:

Cupid” and my Campaspe played At cards for kisses; Cupid paid.

A God of Love

Cupid loses one thing after another to Carnpaspe, and at last he offers his eyes:

At last he set her both his eyes;

She won, and Cupid blind did rise. o Love, has she done this to thee? What shall, alas!”, become ofB me?

A how sad I B happen to

The first regular English tragedy was *Gorboduc*, in blank verse, performed in 1564. The first three acts were written by THOMAS NORTON, the other two by THOMAS SACKVILLE. It is very dull, and is about King Gorboduc of England and his family. (This man appears in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* as Gorbogud.) The blank verse is poor stuff, and nothing is done on the stage except some movements in silence. The story of the play is told.

*The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) by THOMAS KYD is an example of the tragedy of blood, popular at the time. Blood and death play a large part in such plays. *The Spanish Tragedy* is in some ways rather like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. A ghost 4 appears, demanding revenge; but it appears to the father of a murdered son, not to the son of a murdered father, as in *Hamlet*. A girl who is mad, and a man with the name Horatio (as in *Hamlet*) also appear in the play. There is a belief that Kyd once wrote a play based on the *Hamlet* story, and that Shakespeare saw it; but it has never been found.

The first great dramatist of the time was CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

His first tragedy, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587 or earlier), is in two parts. It is written in the splendid blank verse that Marlowe brought to the stage. The first part deals with the rise to power of Tamburlaine, a shepherd and a robber. His terrible ambition drives him ever onwards to more power and more cruelty. His armies conquer Bajazet, ruler of Turkey, whom Tamburlaine takes from place to place in a cage, like a wild animal. In the second part Tamburlaine is pulled to Babylon in a carriage. It is drawn by two kings, whom he whips and curses when they do not go fast enough. He shouts angrily:
What! Can ye draw but twenty miles a day? A only

When they get tired, they are taken away to be hanged, and then two spare kings have to pull the carriage. Tamburlaine drives on to Babylon, and on arrival gives orders for all the people there to be drowned. His life is violent in other ways. He cuts an arm to show his son that a wound is unimportant. He shouts for a map. 'Give me a map,' he cries, 'then let me see how much is left for me to conquer all the world.'

The play was well received, but the violence of the language and of the action, and the terrible cruelty, are serious faults. Yet Marlowe's 'mighty line' fills the heart and satisfies the sense of beauty. It is usually powerful and effective, and it is not used only to describe violence. Marlowe discovered the splendid power of the sound of proper names:

Is it not brave' to be a king, TECELLES, USUMCASANE and THERIDAMAS?

Is it not passing" brave to be a king,

AND RIDE IN TRIUMPH^C THROUGH PERSEPOLIS? A fine B very C victory

The Jew of Malta (1589?) is again often violent. In it the governor of Malta taxes the Jews there, but Barabas, a rich Jew, refuses to pay. His money and house are therefore taken from him and in revenge he begins a life of violence. He poisons his own daughter, Abigail, and causes her lover to die too. He helps the Turks when they attack Malta, and so they make him governor; but he decides to kill all the Turkish officers. He arranges that the floor of a big room can be made to rise suddenly, and then invites them to a meal in it. He hopes thus to destroy them while they are eating, but an enemy makes his secret known, and he himself is thrown down below the floor into a vessel of boiling water. His last words are:

Die, life! Fly, soul! Tongue, curse thy fill and die!

The language of The Jew of Malta is not always so fierce; sometimes the beauty of sound and rhythm (and again of proper names) is very fine:

I hope my ships

I sent for Egypt and the bordering isles Are gotten up by Nilus wandering banks; Mine argosies" from Alexandria

Loaden with spic" and silks, now under sail, Are smoothly gliding^C down by Candy'? shore To Malta through our Mediterranean Sea.

A big ships B plant with sharp taste C move smoothly D Crete

The softness of the last line suggests very well the quiet movement of a sailing ship in the old days.
Dr. Faustus was probably acted in 1588. The play is based on the well-known story of a man (Faustus) who sold his soul to the devil so as to have power and riches in this life. Marlowe's Faustus agrees to give his soul to the devil, Mephistopheles, in return for twenty-four years of splendid life. During these years the devil must serve him and give him what he wants. The end of the play, when death is near and Faustus is filled with fear, is a highlight of terrible description.

One of the things that Faustus orders the devil to do for him is to bring back from the dead the beautiful Helen of Troy, the cause of the Trojan war. When Faustus sees her, his delight escapes from his lips in these words:

Was this the face that launched" a thousand ships And burnt the topless towers of IliumB?

Sweet Helen, make me immortal'r with a kiss. (Kisses her.) Her lips suck forth my soul; see where it flies!

Come, Helen, come! Give me my soul again".

0, thou art fairer than the evening air,

CladD in the beauty of a thousand stars.

A sent forth B Troy C undying D clothed

Such beautiful language is very different from the rough verse of Gorboduc.

Marlowe's Edward the Second (1593), perhaps his best play, deals with English history. It is possible that he helped Shakespeare with the writing of parts of Henry the Sixth and other early plays. Certainly Marlowe's writing set an example for other dramatists in the great Elizabethan age in two important ways: the use of powerful blank verse lines to strengthen the drama, and the development of character to heighten the sense of tragedy. When Shakespeare added to these his own mastery of plot 6 and his human sympathy, the drama reached its greatest heights.

Marlowe was killed in a quarrel at a Thames-side inn before he was thirty years of age. If he had lived longer, he would probably have written other splendid plays. Shakespeare certainly thought so.

The order in which the plays of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE were written is uncertain. In fact, we know very little about his life. He was born and educated at Stratford-on-Avon, married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and later went to London, where he worked in a theatre. It is known that he was an actor and dramatist by 1592.

Shakespeare's earliest work is probably seen in certain historical plays. Perhaps he began his work as a dramatist by improving the work of other writers; the three plays which tell the story of Henry the Sixth may be an example of this. In Richard the Third (1593?) and the later Richard the Second (1595?) we see Shakespeare gradually
discovering his powers and mastering his art. In the smooth blank verse of Richard the Third, the sense usually ends with the line:

Oh, I have passed a miserable night,
So full of ugly sights, of ghastly dreams, That, as I am a Christian faithful man,
I would not spend another such a night Though ‘t were to buy a world of happy days. A terrible

In Richard the Second there is rather more freedom. Although the line usually ends at a natural pause, there are times when the sense pushes through from one line to the next:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground And tell sad stories of the death of kings ... All murdered; for within the hollow crown That rounds "the mortal temples" of a king Keeps Death his court

A surrounds B having only a man's life C side of the head

The rhythm of the blank verse is still quite strictly observed; Shakespeare has not yet developed the master's freedom which brings such freshness and power to his later verse plays; but the start is here.

Romeo and Juliet (1594-5) is the first of Shakespeare's great tragedies. The plot of this story of pure and tragic love is known in all parts of the civilized world. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet are necessary: their families are enemies, and death is the only way out of their hopeless situation. The tragedy is deeply sad and moving, but without the shock of the terrible tragedies that followed later.

The first of the comedies was probably A Comedy of Errors (1592-3?); its plot depends on the likeness of twins and the likeness of their twin servants, with the resulting confusion. The order of the early comedies after this may be The Taming of the Shrew 8, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Love’s Labour's Lost. The real step forward comes with A Midsummer Night's Dream (1595-6), which shows Shakespeare's growing power in comedy. The different stories of this light-hearted play are mixed together with great skill. The feelings of the lovers are never allowed to tire the audience; something really funny always interrupts them in time. But there is true sympathy in the treatment of character, and a great deal of beauty in many descriptive lines.

The next play we should notice is The Merchant of Venice (1596-7).

In this, Antonio, a merchant, borrows money from Shylock to help his friend Bassanio, who wants to marry the rich and beautiful Portia. Shylock hates Antonio and only agrees to lend the money on condition that, if it is not repaid at the right time, Antonio shall pay a pound of his flesh. When Antonio's ships are wrecked, and to everyone's surprise he cannot pay the money, Shylock demands his pound of flesh. The case is taken to
court, and Antonio has no hope. Then suddenly Portia, dressed as a lawyer, appears in court. At first she tries to persuade Shylock to have mercy, but she does not succeed, even with the famous speech about mercy:

It [mercy] droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes 'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes? The throned monarcb " better than his crown.

A suits B king

Then Portia herself becomes hard: Shylock may have his flesh but not one drop of blood; there is nothing about blood in the agreement. As Shylock cannot take the flesh without spilling some blood, Antonio is saved.

The story is nonsense - no one believes that living flesh can form part of an agreement at law - but the play is great. It is called a comedy, though Shylock is, in fact, badly treated. He has been called the first great Shakespearian character, the first great tragic figure.

As You Like It (1599?), another important comedy, is the story of a good duke 9 living in the forest of Arden because his evil brother has driven him out of his country. Love affairs play an important part, and the interest is increased when the girl Rosalind dresses herself as a man. (No actresses appeared on the Elizabethan stage. The parts of girls were taken by men, and so 'Rosalind' was more accustomed to a man's clothes than a woman's.) Minor characters in the play include the sad and thoughtful Jacques and the wise fool Touchstone. The pastoral setting gives us some beautiful descriptions, but there is a reality about the characters that was not to be seen in earlier pastoral poetry and plays. It is true that nature at its most cruel is seen as kinder than men in courts and towns:

Blow, blow, thou winter wind, Thou art not so unkind

As man's ingratitude"

A you are B showing that he is not grateful; unthankfulness

But Touchstone is not persuaded:

Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I. When I was at home, I was in a better place; but travellers must be content.

Much Ado About Nothing (1598-9), a well-balanced comedy with good speeches, is also built on love affairs; yet there is a dark side of the play which is there but almost hidden. The appearance of a selfish young man who brings sorrow to others is repeated in the even darker comedy, All's Well that Ends Well, the date of which is uncertain.
Twelfth Night (I600?) has been called the perfection of English comedy. The whole play is alive with humour and action. The skill in the changes from bright to dark, from gentle to severe, is matched by the skill in the arrangement of the verse and prose. The Duke Orsino believes that he is in love with the Lady Olivia, but he is more in love with love. 'If music be the food of love,' he says at the beginning of the play, 'play on.' There are twins again, and they cause confusion when the girl dresses like her brother. Two knights, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, provide amusement with their foolish plans and their drinking. The play contains several songs. Here is one:

0, mistress mine, where are you roaming? 0, stay and hear; your true love's coming, That can sing both high and low.

TripB no further, pretty sweeting; journeys end in lovers meeting, Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'T is not hereafter; Present mirth c hath present laughter; What's to come is still unsure.

In delay there lies no plenty;

Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty, Youth's a stuff will not endure",

A wandering B dance C amusement 0 last

The two parts of King Henry the Fourth (1597-8) introduced the fat knight Sir John Falstaff to the world. Probably his importance in the play is greater than Shakespeare at first intended; but he grew to like the man, and so did his audiences, although Falstaff is certainly not a model of knighthood. The young Prince Henry (later to become King Henry the Fifth) wastes hours drinking and joking with Falstaff, who is proudly penniless, delightfully rude, fatly wicked, wonderfully unpleasant to look at, boastfully late for battles, and a cheerful coward who carries a bottle even on the battlefield. When Henry becomes king, Falstaff expects to be given a position of honour (and an endless supply of refreshment) by his old companion. What a shock he gets! 'I know thee not old man'

is King Henry's answer to his greeting. 'Fall to thy prayers.' Much has been written about the cruel treatment of Falstaff but Henry

as king, cannot have the fat old knight as a companion. Falstaff is heart-broken. Henry allows him some money, but considers the affairs of England more important than the affairs of Sir John Falstaff.

Henry the Fifth was performed in 1599. It is filled with the love of country and the spirit of war. Those who wanted to see Falstaff again were disappointed: he is not there. It is said that Queen Elizabeth, speaking for her people, demanded another play which would show Falstaff in love; and that Shakespeare therefore wrote
The Merry Wives of Windsor (1601?) in two weeks. It is a pleasant but without great importance.

It is convenient now to consider the three Roman tragedies, and then the four great tragedies. Julius Caesar (1599?) is probably the best Shakespearian play to read first. In the earliest plays there is not enough thought to fill the language; the later plays are difficult because so much thought is pressed into the language that it is not very clear. In Julius Caesar the thought and the language are about balanced. Its structure is also clear: the rise from the introduction to the crisis (the killing of Caesar) in Act III, and the gradual fall to the tragic end of the play (the deaths of the conspirators). Further, Julius Caesar is not so dark and heavy as Coriolanus nor so loose as Antony and Cleopatra.

The herd is Brutus, who joins Cassius and the other conspirators in the plan to kill Caesar. They believe that he wants to make himself king. Much of the play is now famous. Before a large crowd of Roman citizens Antony makes his great speech over the body of Caesar. It begins:

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears! I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.
So let it be with Caesar ...

A buried

Yet this speech is not a great deal finer than many others. On seeing the dead body of Brutus at the end of the play, his enemy Antony says:

This was the noblest Roman of them all All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar. He only, in a general honest thought,
And common good to all, made'r one of them. His life was gentle; and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

A except B what C became 0 qualities

The main subject of Antony and Cleopatra (1606-7) is Antony's love for the Egyptian queen. He returns to Rome from Egypt to meet Octavius Caesar, whose sister, Octavia, he marries. Cleopatra is jealous, and Antony returns to Egypt. Octavius follows with ships and men, and defeats Antony at Alexandria. Hearing (falsely) that Cleopatra is dead, Antony falls on his sword, is carried to Cleopatra, and dies in her arms. She then takes her own life by allowing a snake to bite her.
Coriolanus (1607) concerns the life and death of Caius Marcius Coriolanus, a proud Roman commander who leads his armies against the Volscians and beats them. On his return to Rome, he wishes to become one of the consuls (rulers) of the city; but to succeed in this aim, he must ask the people for votes. His pride makes this impossible: he cannot beg for votes or for anything else. He is driven from Rome for insulting the people, comes back with a Volsican army to attack his own city, is met there by his wife and his mother, and is persuaded to lead the army away. The Volscians then kill him for failing in his duty to them.

In each of these tragedies, the fatal weakness of character, and the tragic course of events, which together lead a great man to ruin, are clear enough. Brutus is not a practical man. He loves Rome more than he loves his friend, Caesar; but he is thrown into a situation where he must deal with practical life and war. He makes several bad mistakes. For example, he allows Antony to speak to the people after himself; and the crowd remembers Antony's speech better because it is later. A practical man would speak last to an uneducated crowd. He uses reasons to show the crowd that the murder was necessary. Antony more wisely stirs up their feelings.

In the next play Antony is ruined because of his love of comfort and love. Coriolanus is ruined by his terrible pride. If he had humbly asked for votes, the people would gladly have chosen him as consul; but he scorns their dirty bodies and their stupid minds. This wrecks his own life. Many men are not practical; many men love comfort; many men are proud. But they escape destruction because the course of events helps to hide their weaknesses.

In Hamlet (1600-1), the prince of that name suspects that his dead father, King of Denmark, has been murdered by his uncle, Claudius. Claudius has become king and has married Hamlet's mother. The ghost of Hamlet's dead father appears to him in the castle of Elsinore and tells him about the murder. Hamlet decides on revenge; but then he begins to think too much, and to hesitate. Was the ghost telling the truth? Hamlet must try to find proof of the murder. In the crisis in Act III, Hamlet has his proof. But still he hesitates. The play still holds our attention, and Hamlet keeps our sympathy, but the end is certain and unavoidable.

Hamlet's tragic weakness is hesitation, inability to act when action is needed. He is too much of a thinker.

In King Lear (1606?) we see an old king thrown out of his home by two wicked daughters, and treated so badly that he goes mad and dies. It is perhaps Shakespeare's greatest work, reaching into the deepest places of the human spirit; but as a play on the stage it is very difficult, if not impossible, to act. Lear's weakness is his openness to flattery. He gives his kingdom to the two evil daughters who flatter him, and nothing to the youngest girl, who tells the truth but loves him best.
In *Macbeth* (1605-6) the hero, Macbeth, must be considered together with his wife, Lady Macbeth. Three old witches tell Macbeth that he will receive high honours and then become king. The high honours come, and he decides to help fate to make him king. King Duncan stays with him at his castle, and he and Lady Macbeth murder the King; but Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, escape. Malcolm brings an army against Macbeth, who is killed. Lady Macbeth is already dead. Here are some words of Macbeth when he hears of her death:

She should have died hereafter;"

There would have been a time for such a word. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace " from day to day
To the last syllable" of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle"! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets" his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot", full of sound and fury," Signifying\(^H\) nothing.
A After this B slow speed C part of a word 0 short life
E walks proudly and worries F fool Ganger "meaning

Compare these lines with the lines on p. 41 from *Richard the Third*. The *Macbeth* speech has the ring of power, but the metre is treated with the freedom of a master, and the sense runs frequently past the end of a line.

\(\text{It IS i a tale I}
\)

\(\text{I TOld I by an "id I lot, rnu I of sound I and fUry I}
\)

*Othello* (1604-5) is the story of a brave Moorish commander in Cyprus who has a beautiful wife, Desdemona. Iago, an evil old soldier, has seen Cassio raised in rank above him, and tries to make Othello believe that Cassio and Desdemona are lovers. Othello too easily believes this, and kills Desdemona. Some critics have said that Othello has no fatal weakness; but such unquestioning jealousy is great weakness, even if it comes from a mind too noble to doubt evil suggestions.

The main last plays of Shakespeare are usually called the romances. They are *Cymbeline* ( 1609-10), *The Winter's Tale* (1610-1 I), and *The Tempest'? (161 1-12). It is generally agreed that *The Tempest* is his last complete play. All these works are coloured with the idea of forgiveness. There is still wickedness in these worlds, but it is not the final word of the plays. Gone is the violence of the great tragedies. Instead we have happier things - beautiful islands and beautiful girls: Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Perdita in *The Winter's*
Tale, and Miranda in *The Tempest*. A speech in the last of these plays seems to show that Shakespeare had decided to write no more. This is part of it:

Our revels? now are ended. These our actors As I foretold B you, were all spirits and Are melted into air, into thin air ..

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, C and our little life Is rounded with a sleep.

A amusements B told (you) to expect C of

The immense power and variety of Shakespeare's work have led to the idea that one man cannot have written it all; yet it must be true that one man did. There is usually more in the language of the later plays than at first meets the eye. They must be read again and again if we want to reach down to the bottom of the sense. If a new play is found and supposed to be by Shakespeare, we can decide whether it belongs to his later work. If it does, no one ~ill understand the whole meaning at a first reading.

A great dramatist who followed Shakespeare, but who was far below him, was BENJAMIN JONSON. His work is more learned and less inspired-" than Shakespeare's, and the ancient classics had a great influence on it. His best known play is *Every Man in his Humour* (1598). A 'humour' meant a quality made into a person, a special foolish-ness, or the chief strong feeling in a man. This is one of Jonson's weaknesses as a dramatist. His characters are walking humours, and not really human. In this play Kitely, a merchant, has a pretty wife and his humour is jealousy. He suspects a young man, Knowell, of having ideas about the pretty wife. Knowell's father also has a humour: it is anxiety about his son's behaviour. Bobadill, a cowardly soldier, is one of Jonson's best-drawn characters.

Jonson wrote about twenty plays alone, and others with oth:r playwrights. His tragedy *Sejanus* was played. at the Globe Theatre m 1603 by Shakespeare's company. *Volpone the Fox*, a comedy, was also acted at the Globe, and at the two old universities in 1606. Jonson was also one of the best producers of masques. at this or a.ny other time. These masques are dramatic enteramments with dancing and music, which are more important than the story and the characters.

Jonson was proud and rude. He said, in effect, 'Here is my play.

It's good. If you don't like it, that's your fault.' He scorned much Of the other dramatic work of the time, but not Shakespeare's. Of him Jonson said:

Soul of the Age!

The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage! My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge” thee by Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room.

Thou art a monument." without a tomb",

And art alive still, while thy book doth live, And we have wits? to read, and praise to give.

A place (you beside) B gravestone c grave D skill

Jonson believed in the unities of place, time and action. That is to say, he thought that the scenes of a play ought all to be in one place, or at least not too far from each other. If the audience were supposed to travel a few hundred miles between one scene and the next, he did not think it reasonable. The unity of time meant that the events of a play ought not to spread over more than twenty-four hours; and most of his own plays follow this rule. The unity of action meant that nothing outside the main story should be allowed into the play. He crossed out a fine speech in the original Every Man in his Humour because it was in praise of poetry and did not suit the rest of the action.

Among his other plays are Every Man out of his Humour (1599), Epicoene, The Silent Woman (1609), The Alchemiser" (1610) and Bartholomew Fair (1614). They are all remarkable plays, but it is hard to find a single ordinary person in them.

Other dramatists of the time include JOHN WEBSTER, who depended a lot on violence, revenge, murder, wrong-doing, and so on. His best two plays are The White Devil (1611?) and The Duchess of Malfi (1614), both of which are frightening. He is not afraid of showing almost unbearable suffering; yet his work contains groups of words that stay long in the mind. Among these are, 'The friendless bodies of unburied men', from The White Devil, and 'I am Duchess of Malfi still' and 'I know death hath ten thousand several doors for men to take their exits!', from The Duchess if Malfi.

FRANCIS BEAUMONT and JOHN FLETCHER together wrote a number of plays at this time, and perhaps Fletcher also worked with Shakespeare. With Beaumont he produced The Knight of the Burning Pestle” (1607), a comedy which helps the modern reader to understand the theatre and stage of those days. The two men also wrote tragedies, such as The Maid's Tragedy (1611).

I traged)' a very sad event (adj. tragic); a tragedy is a play with an unhappy ending, usually written in fine language and concerned with the fate of great men.

2, humour, the way of seeing things which, when expressed in words or actions, makes other people smile or laugh.

3 philosopher, a man learned in philosoph)” the study of reason and of the causes and real nature of things and events.

4 ghost, a dead person's spirit appearing to men's sight (and hearing).
5 rhythm, the 'beat' of English verse - the way the words or parts of words pronounced with greater or slighter stress (force) follow each other to make a regular pattern of sound.

6 plot, plan of a story or play - the choice and use of events for that story.

7 twins, two children born at the same time to the same parents. 8 shrew, noisy and troublesome woman.

9 duke, a nobleman of high rank; in old plays, etc., the ruler of a country. His wife is a duchess.

10 structure, the way something (a play) is built; when we consider the plot (see page 39), we are interested in the actions and events, but in discussing structure we are looking at the effect of the chosen arrangement on the thoughts and feelings of the audience or reader.

11 crisis, the turning point in a play, when the effect on the feelings of the audience is strongest.

12 conspirator, a person who has joined in a plan to harm or kill a ruler or great man.

13 hero, the character (man) in a story or book who has the special sympathy of the reader or audience; heroine, the woman character who has such sympathy.

14 flatter, (n. flattery), to praise insincerely.

15 tempest, storm.

16 inspired, showing unusual powers of the mind, as if influenced by some outside spirit; inspiration, such an influence.

17 alchemist, an early scientist.

18 exit, a way out.

19 pestle, instrument for beating