

**Thomas Heywood**

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The world's a theatre, the earth a stage,<sup>[1]</sup>  
Which God and nature doth with actors fill:  
Kings have their entrance in due equipage,  
And some their parts play well, and others ill.  
The best no better are (in this théâtre),  
Where every humour's fitted in his kind;  
This a true subject acts, and that a traitor,  
The first applauded, and the last confined;  
This plays an honest man, and that a knave,  
A gentle person this, and he a clown,  
One man is ragged, and another brave:  
All men have parts, and each one acts his own.  
She a chaste lady acteth all her life;  
A wanton courtezan another plays;  
This covets marriage love, that nuptial strife:  
Both in continual action spend their days:  
Some citizens, some soldiers, born to adven-  
Shepherds, and sea-men. Then our play's begun  
When we are born, and to the world first enter,  
And all find exits when their parts are done.  
If then the world a theatre present,  
As by the roundness it appears most fit,  
Built with star-galleries of high ascent,



In which Jehove doth as spectator sit,  
And chief determiner to applaud the best,  
And their endeavours crown with more than merit;  
But by their evil actions dooms the rest  
To end disgraced, whilst others praise inherit;  
He that denies then theatres should be,  
He may as well deny a world to me.

Thomas Heywood.[\[2\]](#)

## **THOMAS HEYWOOD.**

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“If I were to be consulted as to a reprint of our old English dramatists,” says Charles Lamb, “I should advise to begin with the collected plays of Heywood. He was a fellow actor and fellow dramatist with Shakespeare. He possessed not the imagination of the latter, but in all those qualities which gained for Shakespeare the attribute of gentle, he was not inferior to him—generosity, courtesy, temperance in the depths of passion; sweetness, in a word, and gentleness; Christianity, and true hearty Anglicism of feelings, shaping that Christianity, shine throughout his beautiful writings in a manner more conspicuous than in those of Shakespeare; but only more conspicuous, inasmuch as in Heywood these qualities are primary, in the other subordinate to poetry.” In another note Lamb calls Heywood a “prose Shakespeare.” Allowing for the exaggeration with which an enthusiastic love for our then neglected minor dramatists charged the criticism of Charles Lamb, this verdict is in many points a just one. Heywood, while he lacks the poetry, philosophy, deep insight into nature, and consummate art of

Shakespeare—those qualities, in a word, which render Shakespeare supreme among dramatic poets—has a sincerity, a tenderness of pathos, and an instinctive perception of nobility, that distinguish him among the playwrights of the seventeenth century. Like Dekker, he wins our confidence and love. We keep a place in our affection for his favourite characters; they speak to us across two centuries with the voices of friends; while the far more brilliant masterpieces of many contemporary dramatists stir only our aesthetic admiration.[3]

Heywood, unlike many of his contemporaries, and in this respect notably unlike Dekker, seems to have kept tolerably free from joint composition. Of twenty-four plays, only two, *The Late Lancashire Witches* and *Fortune by Land and Sea*, were produced by him in collaboration, the former with Brome, and the latter with W. Rowley. Of all the playwrights of that period he was the most prolific. In 1633 he owned to having “had either an entire hand or at least a main finger” in two hundred and twenty dramas; and after that date others were printed, which may perhaps be reckoned in augmentation of this number. His literary fertility is proved by his *Nine Books of Various History concerning Women*, a folio of 466 pages, which appeared in 1624 with this memorandum: “Opus excogitatum inchoatum, explicitum, et typographo excusum inter septemdecem septimanas.” Kirkman, the book-seller, in his advertisement to the reader at the end of the second edition of his catalogue of plays, observes of Heywood that “he was very laborious; for he not only acted almost every day, but also obliged himself to write a sheet every day for several years together.” Besides

composing dramas, he delighted in the labour of compilation, and had for some time on hand a Biographical Dictionary of all the poets, from the most remote period of the world's history down to his own time. The loss of his MS. collections for this book is greatly to be regretted, since there was no man of that century better qualified by geniality and honesty of purpose for the task than the old playwright, who put into the lips of Apuleius:—

“Not only whatsoever's mine,  
But all true poets' raptures are divine.”

Even as it is, the few lines in Heywood's *Hierarchy of Angels* on the nicknames of the poets of his day are among the raciest scraps of information which we possess about those dramatists. The miscellaneous nature of Heywood's literary labours justifies us in classing him, together with Robert Greene, among the earliest professional *littérateurs* of our language. His criticism is often quite as valuable as his dramatic poetry. The whole of the running dialogue between Apuleius and Midas in *Love's Mistress*, for example, contains a theory of the relation of poets to the public, while the prologues to *A Challenge for Beauty* and *The Royal King and Loyal Subject* are interesting as showing to what extent the dramatists of the Elizabethan age pursued their art with conscious purpose and comparison.

We may notice how careless, in common with many of his contemporaries, Heywood was concerning the fate of his dramatic writings. Plays, and comedies in particular, were written, not to be read and studied, but to be acted. This we should never forget while passing judgment upon the unequal work of the Elizabethan playwrights. In the Address



to the Reader, prefixed to the *English Traveller*, Heywood complains that this tragi-comedy had been published without his consent, and apologises for coming forward to father it before the world, adding, not without a sly poke at Jonson and his school:—

“True it is that my plays are not exposed unto the world in volumes, to bear the title of works (as others); one reason is, that many of them by shifting and change of companies had been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors, who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print; and a third that it never was any great ambition in me to be in this kind voluminously read.”

In the preface to the *Rape of Lucrece* he repeats his complaints against the clandestine and unauthorised publication of his plays, with this declaration of his own habit of dealing with them:—

“It hath been no custom in me of all other men (courteous readers) to commit my plays to the press; the reason, though some may attribute to my own insufficiency, I had rather subscribe, in that, to their severe censure, than, by seeking to avoid the imputation of weakness, to incur greater suspicion of honesty; for though some have used a double sale of their labours, first to the stage, and after to the press; for my own part I here proclaim myself ever faithful to the first, and never guilty of the last.”

He then proceeds to show that the pirated editions of his plays in mangled copies have forced him to right himself before the public by superintending the issue of a certain number of his works. In the prologue to *If you Know not Me, you Know Nobody*, the same apology is reiterated in terms which throw a curious light upon the short-hand reporters of plays for the press, employed by piratical booksellers to the prejudice of authors and theatre managers:—

“Some by stenography drew  
The plot; put it in print (scarce one word true):  
And in that lameness it hath limped so long,  
The author now to vindicate that wrong  
Hath took the pains, upright upon its feet  
To teach it walk, so please you sit, and see’t.”

Of the twenty-three plays in Mr. Pearson’s collection, four—namely, the two parts of *Edward IV.* and the two parts of *If you Know not Me, you Know Nobody*—are histories of the old-fashioned sort, rudely dramatised from English chronicles, and seasoned with comic and pathetic episodes. Of the two series, *Edward IV.* has in it more of Heywood’s special quality; the interlude of the Tanner of Tamworth and the romance of Mistress Shore displaying his double power of dealing with drollery and passion in the simplest and most natural style. In truth, the second part of *Edward IV.*, which begins with a dull, confused account of that king’s wars in France, becomes a romantic drama on the legend of Jane Shore. This is chiefly remarkable for the way in which Heywood sustains the character of Master Shore, who is the very mirror of sound English middle-class Christianity. The erring wife’s portrait is touched with striking, if somewhat

sentimental, appeals to natural sympathy. Both are excellent examples of the dramatist's homely art and honest humanity, though nothing can be balder and more artless than the manner of their death together on the stage. *If you Know not Me, you Know Nobody* is a chronicle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, including her early dangers and the late glories of the defeat of the Armada. The whole series of scenes breathes the strongest English patriotism and the most enthusiastic Protestant feeling. It is a pity that, hastily and clumsily pieced together, a drama so interesting in its matter should almost be valueless as a work of art. It was published as a companion to S. Rowley's *When you See Me, you Know Me*, which has been reprinted by Dr. Karl Elze.

The *Late Lancashire Witches* and the *Wise Woman of Hogsdon* are comedies of English life, without that element of romantic interest which Heywood usually added to the domestic drama. The plot of the latter play turns upon the quackeries and impostures of a professed fortune-teller; but to mention it in the same breath with Jonson's *Alchemist* would be ridiculous. The *Lancashire Witches*, though it attempts, in one scene at least, to touch the deeper interest of witchcraft, deals for the most part only with the vulgar and farcical aspects of the subject. It has nothing in common with *The Witch of Edmonton* or Middleton's *Witch*. A household turned topsy-turvy, a coursing-match spoiled, a farm-servant changed into a gelding, and a bridegroom bewitched with a charmed codpiece-point upon his wedding night, are among its insipid drolleries. In *Fortune by Land and Sea*, *The English Traveller*, *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, and both parts of *The Fair Maid of the West*,

Heywood displays to better advantage his predilection for homespun stories, dealing chiefly with the incidents of country life and the adventures of English captains on the high seas. Pure comedy and pure tragedy were neither of them suited to his genius. He required a subject in which the familiar events of English domestic life might be contrasted with the romantic episodes of sea-roving and of foreign travel. To interweave these motives with the addition of pathos and sentiment, was just what he could do successfully. No dramatist has painted more faithful *home* pictures. None have thrown more natural light upon the pursuits of English gentlemen in the first half of the seventeenth century. The merit of all these five plays is considerable. It would have been impossible even for Fletcher to realise a difficult scene with greater ease and delicacy than are displayed in the interview between young Geraldine and Wincott's wife in *The English Traveller*. A pair of lovers, who have been parted, meet again and renew their old vows in the bedroom of the girl just made a wife. The calm strength and honourable feeling displayed by this Paolo and his Francesca in their perilous interview are the result of unsuspecting innocence and sweetness. If the situation is almost unnatural and disagreeable, the poet has contrived to invest it with the air of purity, reality, sincerity, and health. *Fortune by Land and Sea* is richer in scenes which reveal Heywood at his best. The opening of this play is one of his most vigorous transcripts from contemporary English country life. Frank Forrest, a daring and high-blooded youngster, evades his careful father, and flies off to a neighbouring tavern, less for the sake of drinking than in

order to meet spirited companions. One of them picks a quarrel with him about his respect for his old father, and the boy is killed. The grief of old Forrest, the challenge given by the brother to Frank's murderer, the duel that ensues, and young Forrest's escape, are all set forth with photographic reality and force. Event huddles upon event, and the whole proceeds with the simplicity of truth. These scenes only form a prelude to the play, which, like most of Heywood's, contains a double plot; but at the same time they are its salt. The *Fair Maid of the West*, a romantic drama in two parts, sets forth the adventures of the Devonshire Captain Spencer and his love Bess Bridges, who is introduced to us as the mistress of a Plymouth inn. It may be said in passing, that few tavern-scenes in our Elizabethan drama, not even those of Dekker, are better painted than those which form the introduction to Act I. Battles with pirates, slavery in Fez, and adventures in Florence form the staple of the drama, which must have presented many attractions to an English audience of the age of Stukeley, Sherley, and Drake. The *Fair Maid of the Exchange* is another play belonging to what the Germans style *das bürgerliche Drama*. To my mind its sentiment is sickly, and its story, in spite of many beautiful passages, disagreeable. Phillis is the Fair Maid; and the real hero of the piece is a cripple, who saves her from a ruffianly assault, and who falls in love with her. She returns his love; but Heywood had not the courage to develop this situation. Therefore he makes the cripple plead the cause of another suitor to the Fair Maid, who at the end of the play transfers her affections with a levity and a complacency that would be offensive in real life. The charm of this comedy consists

in a certain air of April-morning freshness; it has, moreover, one of Heywood's most exquisite songs, a lyric that deserves to rank with Dekker's, and which is made for music: "Ye little birds that sit and sing."

The seven plays on English domestic subjects which I have now enumerated, are all of them eclipsed in their own kind by Heywood's masterpiece, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Leaving that, the finest bourgeois tragedy of our Elizabethan literature, for future comment, we come to another group of Heywood's plays, which may perhaps be best described as romances. Of these, *The Four Prentices of London*, a juvenile performance of the poet, is both the least interesting, and by far the most extravagant. Guy, Eustace, Tancred, and Godfrey, the four sons of the Duke of Boulogne, and at the same time 'prentices in London shops, start off like Paladins, and win their laurels in the first Crusade. Whether this absurd play was intended, like Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, for a parody of chivalrous romances, or whether, as its dedication to "the Honest and High-spirited 'Prentices, the Readers" seems to imply, it was meant for a hyperbolical compliment to the courage of London counter-jumpers, is not a very important matter. The latter is the more probable supposition. The plot is a tissue of sanguinary and sentimental adventures, with a certain admixture of good-humoured sarcasm on the London cits, that may have gratified their 'prentice-lads. The old quarto has for frontispiece a curious woodcut of the four knightly shop-boys. *The Royal King and Loyal Subject* is a drama with an ideal intention. Pretending to be founded upon English history, it really sets forth the contest of



generosity between a monarch and one of his great nobles. In the course of this play Heywood has used some of the motives that add pathos to *Patient Grissil*; the King of England exposes the Lord Marshal to a series of humiliations and studied insults before, as a climax to the favour he intends to heap upon him, he unites his own family and that of his subject by a triple bond of marriage. The whole situation is better in conception than in execution. I take it to be one of Heywood's earlier dramatic essays. *A Challenge for Beauty* tells the tale of a proud Portuguese Queen, who thinks herself the fairest woman of the world, but who is brought at the end of the play to admit that she is vanquished as much in beauty by an English lady as her husband's captains are surpassed in courage and courtesy by English gentlemen. The most interesting portion of the drama is subordinate to the subject which supplies the title. The contest of generosity between a noble Spaniard, Valladaura, and an English captain, Montferrers, who has been sold into slavery together with a friend that he dearly loved, displays all that innate gentleness and chivalry which Lamb recognized as the fairest of Heywood's characteristics. Valladaura finds his old enemy Montferrers in the slave-market, pays down his price, and sets him free. Montferrers cannot accept freedom while his friend remains a slave. Valladaura buys them both, taking Montferrers with him to remain, an honoured guest, in his own house. Now begins the duel of courtesy between the two men. Valladaura loves a lady, Petrocella, and beseeches the Englishman to plead his suit with her. Montferrers executes the task, though he also loves Petrocella, and discovers in the course of his

wooing that she returns his passion. The use he makes of her avowal is to bind her over to accept the Spaniard's suit. But Valladaura is no whit less chivalrous. He resigns the lady to the man who has deserved her best. Those who have not studied the working out of such strained situations in the *Lustspiele* of Heywood or of Fletcher, can hardly imagine what flesh and blood reality these poets gave to almost inconceivable improbabilities. The vigorous and natural play of passions under strange disguises and painful conditions—the hesitations of divided allegiance—confusions of sex—contradictory emotions, pleased our play-going ancestors; and the dramatists had the skill to display the truth of human nature beneath the mask and garb of romantic fantasies. Under other hands, or in an age of less directness, such motives would have been ridiculous or offensive. *A Maidenhead well Lost*, is a romance of this type with Italian characters. While challenging comparison with similar comedies by Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, and others, it is but a tasteless and feeble production. Heywood was so thorough an Englishman that, for the full exercise of his poetic faculty, he needed a subject smacking of his native soil.

Having now described Heywood's Histories, Domestic Dramas, and Romances, it remains for me to speak of the fourth group into which his plays may be divided. At the same time, I should observe that these divisions are, after all, but incomplete and artificial. Many of those which I have classified as Domestic Dramas, for example, borrow largely from the element of romance, while two of them are virtually comedies of farcical intrigue. The *Golden, Silver,*

*Brazen*, and *Iron Ages* form a series of four plays, in which Heywood has dramatised antique legends, following principally Homer and Ovid in the selection of his material. Though there are many passages of graceful poetry and of humorous burlesque in these long-winded mythologies, they cannot be said to have much value either as dramas or as descriptive poems. That Heywood felt a natural predilection for this kind of composition may be seen in the rhyming versions he has made of Lucian's Dialogues. Some of these, especially the conversations of Jupiter with Ganymede, and of Juno with Jupiter, deserve attention for their plain, straightforward rendering into racy English of the witty Greek. *Love's Mistress*, which is a dramatic translation of Apuleius's tale of Cupid and Psyche, is written in the same mood. It takes the form of a long allegorical masque; and here the poetry is sustained throughout at a higher level. Last of all these classic dramas in my list comes the *Rape of Lucrece*. Here Heywood quits the epic or allegorical treatment of classical subject-matter for the domain of tragedy. Yet he has given to this episode of ancient Roman history more the form of a chronicle-play than of the legitimate drama.

It cannot be denied that the effects of negligence in composition and over-strained fertility are traceable in all that Heywood wrote. He has produced no masterpiece, no thoroughly sustained flight of fancy, no play perfect in form, and very few absolutely self-consistent characters. His finest passages seem to flow from him by accident, as the result of a temporary exaltation of his talent, rather than of settled purpose. His best scenes are improvised. Nor is it possible to

evade the conclusion, quaintly phrased by Kirkman, that “many of his plays being composed loosely in taverns, occasions them to be so mean.” These defects, indeed, Heywood shared in common with his contemporaries. Not many dramatic compositions of the seventeenth century can boast of classical finish or of artistic unity. Yet there is in the best works of such men as Marlowe, Webster, Ford, and Fletcher, a natural completeness, an unstudied singleness of effect, which Heywood almost invariably misses. With all our affection for him, we are forced to admire his poetry in fragments and with reservations. Perhaps he shows to best advantage in the extracts made by Lamb.

No dramatist ever used less artifice. The subjects which he chose are either taken straight from real life, or else adopted crudely from the legends of ancient Greece and Rome. In each case Heywood’s manner and method are the same. He uses simple, easy English, and sets forth unaffected feeling. The scenes have no elaborate connexion. They cohere by juxtaposition. The language is never high-flown or bombastic; rarely rising to the height of poetical diction, and attaining to intensity only when the passion of the moment is overwhelming, it owes its occasional force to its sincerity.

His means of reaching the heart are of the simplest; yet they are often deep and effectual. He depends for his tragic effects upon no Até, no midnight horrors, no sarcastic knave. Yet his use of some mere name—*Nan, Nan!*—and his allusions to Christ and our religion, go straight to the very soul. His men are all gentlemen; and it may be said in passing that he had more understanding of men, especially

high-spirited young men, than of women. Nothing could be finer than the bearing, for example, of young Forrest when he challenges Rainsford, or of Valladaura and Montferrers, or again of Frankford and Sir Charles Mountford in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Now and then he touches the spring of true poetic language, as in these phrases:—

“Oh, speak no more!

For more than this I know and have recorded  
Within the red-leaved table of my heart.”

Or again:—

“My friend and I  
Like two chain bullets side by side will fly  
Thorough the jaws of death.”

Or yet again:—

“Astonishment,  
Fear, and amazement beat upon my heart,  
Even as a madman beats upon a drum.”

The last line of this quotation is a splendid instance of the way in which the old dramatists heightened horror by connecting one terrific image with another of a different sort, yet no less terrible. The fury of a lunatic hideously rattling his drum with fantastic gestures rushes across our mind without distracting our attention from the anguish of the man who speaks the words. The simile does but add force to his bewilderment.

Though not a lyrist in any high sense of the word, Heywood at times produced songs remarkable for purity and freshness. To one of these in the *Fair Maid of the Exchange* I have already called attention. Not less beautiful is a morning ditty, which begins “Pack, clouds away,” in the

*Rape of Lucrece*. The patriotic war-song in the First Part of *King Edward IV*, "Agincourt, Agincourt, know ye not Agincourt?" is full of fire; while a humorous catch, "The Spaniard loves his ancient slop," must have been a favourite with the groundlings, since it occurs in both *The Rape of Lucrece* and *A Challenge for Beauty*. There is plenty of proof that Heywood could write good words for street melodies. That his English style is generally free, flowing, and vernacular admits of no question; yet such were the contradictions of the age in which he lived, that he must needs at intervals display his erudition by the pedantic coinage of new phrases. Such words as "trifurk," "diapason," "sonance," "cathedral state," "tenebrous," "mœchal," "monomachy," "obdure" for "obdurate," all of which occur in *The Rape of Lucrece*, demand for their inventor the emetic which Jonson in *The Poetaster* administered to Marston, and prove conspicuously how a little learning on the lips of an honest playwright is a dangerous thing.

*The Rape of Lucrece*, as I have before hinted, is nothing but the narrative of Livy divided into tableaux with no artistic consistency. It contains the whole story of Tullia's ambition and the death of Servius, the journey of Brutus to Delphi, the fulfilment of the oracle, the betrayal of Gabii, the camp at Ardea, the crime of Tarquin, the rising of the Roman nobles, the war with Porsena, and the stories of Horatius and Scevola. The characters are devoid of personal reality. Lucrece herself is more a type of innocence than a true woman. Of the minor characters which fill out the play, by far the most original is Valerius. His part must have been a



favourite with the London audience, for on the title-page we read: "with the several songs in their apt places by Valerius, the merry lord among the Roman peers." Instead of fooling, sulking, or gaming, as the other nobles do beneath the Tarquin tyranny, he does nothing but sing. It is impossible to extract from him a word of sense in sober prose. But love songs, loose songs, drinking songs, dirges, street cries, a Scotch song, a Dutch song, and pastoral ditties, with rhymes on the names of public houses, public women, ale, wine, and so forth, flow from him in and out of season. He is the most striking instance of the licence with which the poets of the time were forced to treat their subjects for the sake of the gallery. Some of his verses are full of exquisite feeling; others are grossly coarse; some are comical, and others melancholy; but all are English. When Valerius first hears of the outrage offered to Lucrece, he breaks out into a catch of the most questionable kind, together with Horatius Cocles and a Clown. The whole matter is turned to ridicule, and it is difficult after this musical breakdown to read the tragedy except as a burlesque.

*Love's Mistress* is a Masque in five acts rather than a play proper. In its day it enjoyed great popularity, for it was represented before James I. and his queen three times within the space of eight days. Its three prologues and one epilogue are remarkable even among the productions of that age for their fulsome flattery. The story of Cupid and Psyche, on which the Masque is founded, could not have failed to yield some beauties even to a far inferior craftsman than Heywood; and there are many passages of delicate and tender poetry scattered up and down the piece. Indeed,

the whole is treated with an airy grace that has peculiar charm, while its abrupt contrasts and frequent changes must have made it a rare spectacle under the wise conduct of

“that admirable artist, Mr. Inigo Jones, master-surveyor of the king’s work, &c., who to every act, nay, almost to every scene, by his excellent inventions gave such an extraordinary lustre—upon every occasion changing the stage, to the admiration of all the spectators—that, as I must ingenuously confess, it was above my apprehension to conceive.”

Still, even in *Love’s Mistress*, Heywood betrays that lack of the highest artistic instinct, which we discover in almost all his work. He cannot manage the Court pageant with that exquisite tact which distinguishes the *Endimion* and the *Sapho* of Lyly. The whole play has a running commentary of criticism and exposition, conveyed in a dialogue between Apuleius, the author of the legend, and Midas, who personates stupidity. Apuleius explains the allegory as the action proceeds; Midas remains to the end the dull unappreciative boor, who “stands for ignorance,” and only cares for dancing clowns, or the coarse jests of buffoons. Apuleius is the type of the enthusiastic poet, whose wit is “aimed at inscrutable things beyond the moon.” Midas is the gross conceited groundling, who, turning everything he touches to dross, prefers Pan’s fool to Apollo’s chorus, and drives the god of light indignantly away. Both of them wear asses’ heads: Midas, because he grovels on the earth; Apuleius, because all human intellect proves foolish if it flies

too far. There is much good-humoured irony in this putting of donkey's ears on the poet's head. This contrast between art and ignorance is paralleled by a series of subtle antitheses that pervade the play. Immortal Erôs finds a balance in the stupid clown, who boasts that Apollo has given him music, Cupid love, and Psyche beauty; but who remains untunable, unlovable, and hideous to the end. The juxtaposition of heaven and hell within our souls, the aspirations and the downfalls of our spirit, the nobility and the vileness of men around us, the perpetual contradiction between the region toward which we soar in our best moments, and the dull ground over which we have to plod in daily life: such are the metaphysical conceptions which underlie the shifting scenes and many-twinkling action of the masque. It would be unfair to institute any comparison between *Love's Mistress* considered as a poem, and the delicate version of the legend in the *Earthly Paradise*. Yet there are touches of true poetry here and there throughout the play. The haunted house of Love which receives Psyche and where Echo and Zephyrus are her attendants, the visit of her three sisters, and the midnight awaking of wrathful Cupid, are all conceived with light and airy fancy. Cupid in his anger utters this curse on women:—

“You shall be still rebellious, like the sea,  
And, like the winds, inconstant; things forbid  
You most shall covet, loathe what you would like  
You shall be wise in wishes, but, enjoying,  
Shall venture heaven's loss for a little toying.”

There is another aspect under which *Love's Mistress* may be viewed—as a very early attempt at classical burlesque.

Cupid, for example, is the naughty boy of Olympus. He describes Juno's anger against Ganymede:—

“The boy by chance upon her fan had spilled  
A cup of nectar: oh, how Juno swore!  
I told my aunt I'd give her a new fan  
To let Jove's page be Cupid's serving-man.”

Vulcan appears at his forge with more orders than he knows how to deal with:—

“There's half a hundred thunder-bolts bespoke;  
Neptune hath broke his mace; and Juno's coach  
Must be new-mended, and the hindmost wheels  
Must have two spokes set in.”

He thinks of making Venus “turn she-smith,” but

“She'd spend me more

In nectar and sweet balls to scour her cheeks,

Smudged and besmeared with coal-dust and with smoke,

Than all her work would come to.”

This is, of course, very simple fooling. Yet it contains the germ of those more thorough-going parodies in which the present age delights.

The play in which Heywood showed for once that he was not unable to produce a masterpiece is *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. All his powers of direct painting from the English life he knew so well, his faculty for lifting prose to the border-ground of poetry by the intensity of the emotion which he communicates, his simple art of laying bare the very nerves of passion, are here exhibited in perfection. This domestic tragedy touches one like truth. Its scenes are of everyday life. Common talk is used, and the pathos is homely; not like Webster's, brought from far. Tastes may

differ as to the morality or the wholesomeness of the sentiment evolved in the last act. None, however, can resist its artless claim upon our sympathies. The story may be briefly told. Mr. Frankford, a country gentleman of good fortune, marries the sister of Sir Francis Acton, and receives into his house an agreeable gentleman of broken means called Wendoll. They live together happily till Wendoll, trusted to the full by Frankford, takes advantage of his absence to seduce his wife. Nicholas, a servant, who, with the instinct of a faithful dog, has always suspected the stranger, discovers and informs Frankford of his dishonour. Frankford obtains ocular proof of his wife's guilt, and punishes her by sending her to live alone, but at ease, in a manor that belongs to him. There she pines away and dies at last, after a reconciliation with her injured husband.[4]

In the *genre* Heywood had predecessors, but none of his rivals surpassed him. The chief interest of the play centres in the pure, confiding, tender-hearted character of Frankford. His blithe contentment during the first months of marriage, and the generosity with which he opens his doors to Wendoll, form a touching prelude to the suspicions, indignantly repelled at first, which grow upon him after he has weighed the tale of his wife's infidelity related by Nicholas. He resolves to learn the truth, if possible, by actual experience. Here is interposed an admirable scene, in which Frankford and his wife, with Wendoll and another gentleman, play cards. The dialogue is a long *double entendre*, skilfully revealing the tortures of a jealous husband's mind and his suspicious misinterpretation of each casual word. When they rise from the card-table, Frankford

instructs Nicholas to get him duplicate keys for all his rooms. Then he causes a message to be delivered to him on a dark and stormy evening, and sets off with his servant, intending to return at midnight unnoticed and unexpected. His hesitation on the threshold of his wife's chamber is one of the finest turning-points of the dramatic action. At last he summons courage to enter, but returns immediately:—

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

Then, with a passionate stretching forth of his desire toward the impossible, which reveals the whole depth of his tenderness, he cries:—

“O God! O God! that it were possible  
To undo things done; to call back yesterday!  
That Time could turn up his swift sandy glass,  
To untell the days, and to redeem these hours!  
Or that the sun  
Could, rising from the west, draw his coach backward,  
Take from the account of time so many minutes,  
Till he had all these seasons called again,  
Those minutes, and those actions done in them,  
Even from her first offence; that I might take her  
As spotless as an angel in my arms!  
But oh! I talk of things impossible,  
And cast beyond the moon. God give me patience!



For I will in and wake them.”

The following scene, in which Frankford pleads with his guilty and conscience-stricken wife, is full of pathos. Its passion is simple and homefelt. Each question asked by Frankford is such as a wronged husband has the right to ask. Each answer given by the wife is broken in mere monosyllables more eloquent than protestation. We feel the whole, because not a word is strained or far-fetched, because the tenderness of Frankford is not merely sentimental, because he does not rave or tear his passion to tatters; finally, because in the profundity of his grief he still can call his wife by her pet name.

Mrs. Frankford is no Guinevere, nor, again, like Alice in *Arden of Feversham*, is she steeled and blinded by an overwhelming passion. Heywood fails to realise her character completely, producing, as elsewhere in his portraits of women, a weak and vacillating picture. She changes quite suddenly from love for her newly-wedded lord to light longing for Wendoll, and then back again to the remorse which eats her life away. Wendoll is drawn more powerfully. We see the combat in his soul between the sense of duty to his benefactor and the love which invades him like an ocean, drowning all the landmarks he had raised to warn him from the perilous ground. Adultery has been three times treated by Heywood. In *The English Traveller* Mrs. Wincott sins with the same limp and unexplained facility as Mrs. Frankford. In *Edward IV.* Jane Shore is meant to raise the same sentimental pity as Mrs. Frankford on her death-bed.

Thomas Heywood was a Lincolnshire man, presumably of good family, though I cannot find that the Visitations of that county record any pedigree of his name. No poet of his age showed a more intimate acquaintance with the habits of country gentlemen, and none was more imbued with the spirit of true gentleness. He was a Fellow of Peter House, Cambridge, where he probably acquired that learning which sat upon him so lightly. He began to write for the stage as early as 1596, and in 1598 we find him engaged as an actor and a sharer in Henslowe's company. Little else is known about his life, and, though it is certain that he lived to a ripe age, we are ignorant of the date of his death. Like many authors of his period, he adopted a motto for his works, to which he adhered, placing on his title-pages, *Aut prodesse solent aut delectare*. We may still say, with truth, that what he has written almost invariably succeeds in both these aims. His plays are defiled with very few unpardonably coarse scenes, those to be found in *A Royal King and Loyal Subject* being an exception to prove the rule. While concluding these introductory remarks, I can only express my regret that the editor has not been able to include more pieces of Heywood in the Mermaid Series; for Heywood is essentially an author whom we love the better the more we read of him. It is impossible to rise from the perusal of his plays without being refreshed and invigorated. May the five here presented, out of the twenty-four which bear his name, induce students to carry their researches further. They will, I feel confident, discover that three other sets of five plays are no less worthy of perusal than the five here chosen for their recreation.

John Addington Symonds.

∴ The text of four of the plays contained in this volume is substantially that of Pearson's reprint (1874); the exception is *The Fair Maid of the West*, reprinted from the edition by Collier, though I have felt it necessary to dissent from Collier's readings in several places. For the convenience of the reader I have attempted to indicate the changes of scene in the whole of the plays, marking also the probable locality of each scene, and altering the rather vague and unsatisfactory stage directions of the old copies. My thanks are due to Mr. S. W. Orson for many valuable suggestions.

A. W. V.

## **THE RED BULL THEATRE.**

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Heywood's Plays were frequently acted on the stage of the Red Bull Theatre, of which Kirkman supplied an illustration in his collection of *Drolls and Farces*. This illustration has been reproduced as a frontispiece to the present volume. The theatre was one of the oldest in London; originally it was, as the name indicates, an inn yard, converted into a regular theatre during Elizabeth's reign, and, like several contemporary playhouses, often used for other amusements; it was never considered a high-class theatre, but it was very popular. Its site was on a plot of ground, between the upper end of St. John Street and Clerkenwell Green, during the eighteenth century still called Red Bull Yard, and named Woodbridge Street at the beginning of the present century. In 1819 a writer who

carefully investigated the matter could find no trace of the theatre; though he indicated a field of search by suggesting that its exact position might perhaps be set forth in existing leases.

Various companies played at the Red Bull at different times. In 1623 the Queen's company (under the jurisdiction of the "now Earl of Leicester, then Lord Chamberlain of the Household of the said late Queen Anne of Denmark") gave place to the Prince's, so called after Prince Charles. In 1629, women actors (who also appeared at other theatres) played at the Red Bull. In 1639 the Red Bull Company got into trouble. A complaint was made to the king "that the stage-players of the Red Bull have lately, for many days together, acted a scandalous and libellous play, wherein they have audaciously reproached, and in a libellous manner traduced and personated, not only some of the Aldermen of the City of London and other persons of quality, but also scandalised and defamed the whole profession of Proctors belonging to the Court of Civil Law, and reflected upon the Government." For this they received "exemplary punishment." In the following year the company which had been playing at the Fortune Theatre changed to the Red Bull.

This was the only theatre that lived on until Restoration times, though not without many difficulties. Such items of information as the following (1655) are not uncommon:—"At the playhouse this week many were put to the rout by the soldiers." "The actors, too," Kirkman writes, "were commonly not only stripped, but many times imprisoned, till they paid such ransom as the soldiers should impose upon them." Although the Red Bull survived the Commonwealth it