

**EVERYMAN; BEING A MORALLE  
PLAYE OF THE XV  
CENTURIE, NOWE DONE WITH A  
FOREWORDE AND MATER OF  
HELPE**

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Everyman; being a moralle playe of the XV centurie, nowe done with a foreworde and mater of helpe by Montrose J. Moses

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**MONTROSE J. MOSES**

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# Everyman

Being a Moralle Playe of the  
XV Centurie

Nowe Done With a Foreworde and  
Mater of Helpe

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## To the Reader.

When Christopher Columbus discovered America, and just a century before William Shakespeare produced his masterpieces, a morality play, corresponding in many ways with our "Everyman," was well known in the northern part of Europe. It was the Dutch play called "Elckerlyk," (i. e., every man) written by Peter Dorland, a monk of Diest. This play was at some time reproduced in Latin, under the name of "Homulus," by an author of uncertain identity. It is believed, however, from a black letter-copy of it now preserved in the library of Lincoln Cathedral, England, that "Homulus," was written or adapted by one of the abbots towards the end of the fifteenth century. The thread of the story, we are told, is to be found in the religious romance of Barlaam and Jehosphat, ascribed to John of Damascus, who died in 1090.

The first impression of "Everyman" is traceable to the year 1529; but there is good reason to believe it was in manuscript as early as the reign of Edward IV. An edition of the play was published early in the reign of Henry VIII., when it was evidently popular and often presented. The next edition is of a century later in date. The best known edition is that of Dodsley; and now there are no end of editions of "Everyman" in my country and in yours. This little book is got up carefully from the black-letter copy of Lincoln. Very few lines of the original have been omitted, and in one short scene there is a slight transposition of speeches.

There is no evidence that the play has been presented within the last two centuries until revived by William Poel for the Elizabethan Stage Society of England, at the suggestion of Dr. Ward, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge University. In 1901 productions were given in the Old Charter house of London, in the Quadrangle of University College, Oxford, and at Rugby and other schools. That

*"Everyman" should be first introduced to academic audiences was but natural. Yet while possessing the refinement of classic art, it exhibits a humaneness so comprehensive, so sympathetic and so moving as literally to leave its spell upon every man. Hence it has been given upon the regular stage in the chief cities of England, Scotland and Ireland. In London it was presented at St. George's Hall, The Imperial Theatre—during the coronation season—and more recently at the Coronet and Court Theatres.*

*The production of "Everyman" in America is due to Charles Frohman. Under his auspices the play was performed from October, 1902, to May, 1903: in New York for eighteen weeks, and later in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and Baltimore. In this country, as in England, "Everyman" has always found an open door at academic institutions. By special invitation, it has been given before the Universities of Yale, Princeton, Cornell, and Brown; also at Dartmouth, Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr and Smith Colleges. The play was also performed before Catholic clubs and before societies of other sects. We are now sending out two companies in the hope of giving performances in all parts of the United States.*

*The scenery, such as it is, is copied from an old print of a monastery—especially the cloistered part—such plays as this being presented in churches, in parts of religious houses, and at times even in the streets. The costumes are copied from Flemish tapestries. The little music introduced is that of the long ago by Adam de la Halle and Jacques Arkadek. One tiny verse attributed to Shakespeare is sung. The "ascensions" of the stage are symbolical: the flowers denote cultivation of the soil; the little organ, art; the wheel, work; the cushions, rest after labor; and the candles, worship and thanks due. For all such a double stage was generally used to denote any change of locality required, and will be used now when practicable. The characters—entering when possible from the audience—speak often in monotone, especially those representing abstractions, that being the primitive style of delivery. Those characters representing actual human types are allowed a little license of the stage.*

*You will doubtless agree that, in the play which follows, we have the drama in its integrity—where the art is all in all and its exponents ever secondary;*



that the span between this ancient adornment to our language and the regular drama is all too short to allow any doubt of an immediate connection; that light however dim cannot be too often shed upon the early gropings towards perfected dramatic composition; and that all this affords reason enough for a remark or so here upon the department of dramatic literature to which "Everyman" belongs. In passing to that, however, it is interesting to observe with what fidelity this ancient drama abides by the Aristotelian laws of tragedy. The action and versification are simple; the time of action is that of the performance; the scene is never changed and the stage never empty. Moreover, in stimulating religious feelings; in arousing the tragic emotions of pity and fear; in suggesting the Hellenistic fatalism that happiness is precarious, "Everyman," though predominantly Christian in teaching, is informed with the atmosphere no less than by the structure of classic tragedy.

But the place of "Everyman" is not primarily with the classic drama of antiquity but with the religious drama of the mediæval age. Though not always sharply distinct from one another either in subject matter or form of expression, three groups may be made of as much of the religious mediæval drama as is extant. There is, first, the mysteries which, based upon the Old and New Testaments, explain in what manner the world was mysteriously redeemed by the Nativity, Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Closely akin to these are, second, the miracle plays, which had for their substance stories, legends and incidents drawn from the lives of the saints, the historical books of the Bible and the traditions of the Church. The province of the mystery and miracle plays, then, was to inculcate christianity by inference; to set before the layman the careers of good men and induce him to contrition by a comparison of his own life with theirs. But there was yet lacking a suitable medium for a cogent indication, not alone of the true way, but the perils attendant upon any other. In short, with the tale adorned, it remained to point the moral. Hence the third and last stage in the development of mediæval religious drama was the enforcement of moral truths, not by scriptural or legendary history, but by the speech and action of allegorical characters each typifying abstract virtues or qualities, and this was the morality play, the crown of which is "Everyman."

*To "Everyman" is ascribed the source of Hans Holbein's canvas "The Dance of Death." And our little work was surely in John Bunyan's mind when he wrote "Pilgrim's Progress". But not to exceed farther my necessary limits, there is here for us, as for the people of earlier time, matter for all that are human. Here may we all, tranquilly and sympathetically lending to its sway our minds and spirits, absorb new import upon that vast text—life.*

*Ben Greet*

*July, 1903.*

THERE BEGYNNETH A TREATYSE HOW THE  
HYE FADER OF HEVEN SENDETH DETHE  
TO SOMON EVERY CREATURE TO  
COME AND GYVE A COUNTE  
OF THEYR LYVES IN  
THIS WORLDE, AND  
IS IN MANER OF  
A MORRALLE  
PLAYE.