

CHERYMAN: A MORAL PLAY

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Cheryman: A Moral Play by Margaret Steward

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MARGARET STEWARD

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Everyman
A MORAL PLAY



NEW YORK
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FOREWORD



THE Morality or Moral Play of "Everyman," here reprinted, was published first by John Scott, or Skot, of London, about the year 1529. A second edition by Scott and two editions by another Tudor printer or publisher, of the name of Pynson, appeared during the sixteenth century. Since then it has been not more than two or three times reprinted, most notably by Hawkins and by Hazlitt. The copy of the play in Hawkins's "Origin of the English Drama" was taken from a black-letter copy preserved in the library of "the church of Lincoln," sold afterwards, it is said, with others, to Dibdin, the bibliographer, for five hundred guineas. A German scholar, Goedeke, traces the de-

[v]

421764

velopment of the theme of the morality in his "Every-Man, Homulus and Hekastus," published in Hanover in 1865; and W. Carew Hazlitt added "Everyman" to his edition of Dodsley's "Old Plays," published in London in 1874. The text here used is that of Hazlitt's version, which was based upon a collation of the two editions of Pynson with one of Scott. The originals of the cuts here shown are the title-page and four figures of the Scott edition.

The composition of "Everyman" is of a much earlier date, probably, than that of the first editions. It is placed by J. Payne Collier, author of "The History of Dramatic Poetry and Annals of the English Stage," even so far back as the reign of Edward IV. The piece seems early to have had considerable vogue and popularity. It was translated into Dutch as well as into German and Latin, and no doubt in its own England was a favorite subject of representation by travelling companies at feasts and holidays, or by noblemen's troupes of players in the halls of castles. Within the last two years the Elizabethan Stage Society of London, under the direction of Mr. Ben Greet, has revived this beautiful morality and given

notable and touching performances of it, viewed by many hundreds of persons, in England and America.

"We may bring ourselves into relation with the motive of this play," says the late Mr. J. A. Symonds, in his "Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama," "by studying the wood-cuts in Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book, or any one of the Dances of Death ascribed to Holbein. The frontispiece to 'Everyman' recalls one of those remorseless meditations on the grave. A fine gentleman of the court of Henry VII. is walking, with his hat upon his head and a chain around his neck, among the flowers of a meadow. Death, the skeleton, half-clothed in a loose shroud and holding in his arm the cover of a sepulchre, beckons to this gallant from a churchyard full of bones and crosses. Life is thus brought into abrupt collision with the 'cold "Hic-jacets" of the dead,' and him who rules there."

The theme of "Everyman" is that of universal mortality. "The summoning of Everyman called it is." Every man that lives must some day die. The play begins with a sort of prologue, spoken by a mes-

senger, calling upon the audience to give ear to "our Heaven King." God speaks and condemns the world for its worldly-mindedness, covetousness, and sloth. He summons Death, his "mighty messenger," to go to Everyman and bid him make his pilgrimage. Death finds Everyman and delivers his message to him when he has Death least in mind. He offers Death gold to be let off, but gets only the privilege of asking certain of his friends if they will go with him upon his journey. He accosts, with this request, first Fellowship, then Kindred, Goods, and Good Deeds. Fellowship has no mind, however, for anything but dicing and drinking. Kindred sees no reason why he should follow "Cousin Everyman" on a way so weary, and Goods, greedy and of the world, will "follow no man in such voyages." Only Good Deeds would follow Everyman, but, alas! as she says:

"Here I lie, cold in the ground;
Thy sins have me so sore bound
That I cannot stir."

She is, however, of service to Everyman. She sends him to Knowledge, who in her turn leads him to Confession. When Con-

fession has shriven Everyman and given him a brown cloak of sorrow and penance, Good Deeds is strong again and "can walk and go," and accompanied by Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and Five Wits, Everyman, with Knowledge and Good Deeds, sets out on the inevitable path to the tomb. Yet at the brink of the grave Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and Five Wits too take fright and abandon him, as Fellowship, Kindred, and Goods had done. Everyman grows feeble-hearted at the desertion of these four false friends, but turns to Good Deeds with a new light:

Gramercy, Good Deeds, now may I true friends
see.

They have forsaken me every one ;
I loved them better than my good deeds alone."

Good Deeds stands by him even in the grave.

"All earthly things is but vanity,
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion do man forsake,
Foolish friends and kinsmen, that fair spake ;
All fleeth save Good Deeds, and that am I."

Supported and chastened by Good Deeds
Everyman, dying, commends his spirit into