

**EARLY ENGLISH  
DRAMATISTS; SIX  
ANONYMOUS PLAYS,  
FIRST SERIES (C. 1510-1537)**

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Early English Dramatists; Six Anonymous Plays, First Series (c. 1510-1537) by John S. Farmer

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**JOHN S. FARMER**

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Early English Dramatists

SIX  
ANONYMOUS PLAYS

FIRST SERIES (c. 1510-1537)

COMPRISING

*Four Elements—The Beauty and Good Properties of  
Women (usually known as Calisto and Melibœa)—  
Every Man—Hickscorner—The World and the Child—  
Thersites—Note-book and Word-list*

EDITED BY

JOHN S. FARMER

London

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FEB 17 1959

A NEW INTERLUDE AND A MERRY OF  
THE NATURE OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS,

*declaring many proper points of philosophy natural, and of divers strange lands, and of divers strange effects and causes; which interlude, if the whole matter be played, will contain the space of an hour and a half; but, if ye list, ye may leave out much of the sad matter, as the Messenger's part, and some of Nature's part, and some of Experience's part, and yet the matter will depend conveniently, and then it will not be past three-quarters of an hour of length. London: John Rastell.*

## The Names of the Players

*Here follow the names of the players.*

The Messenger, Nature Natura[ti]e, Humanity, Studious Desire, Sensual Appetite, the Taverner, Experience, Ignorance; also, if ye list, ye may bring in a Disguising.

*Here follow divers matters which be in this interlude contained.*

Of the situation of the four elements, that is to say, the earth, the water, the air, and fire, and of their qualities and properties, and of the generation and corruption of things made of the commixtion of them.

Of certain conclusions proving that the earth must needs be round, and that it hangeth in the midst of the firmament, and that it is in circumference above 21,000 miles.

Of certain conclusions proving that the sea lieth round upon the earth.

Of certain points of cosmography, as how and where the sea covereth the earth, and of divers strange regions and lands, and which way they lie; and of the new-found lands, and the manner of the people.

Of the generation and cause of stone and metal, and of plants and herbs.

Of the generation and cause of well-springs and rivers; and of the cause of hot fumes that come out of the earth; and of the cause of the baths of water in the earth, which be perpetually hot.

Of the cause of the ebb and flood of the sea.

Of the cause of rain, snow, and hail.

Of the cause of the winds and thunder.

Of the cause of the lightning, of blazing stars, and flames flying in the air.





## INTERLUDE OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

*Mes.* Th' abundant grace of the power  
divine,  
Which doth illumine the world environ, [cline  
Preserve this audience, and cause them to in-  
To charity, this is my petition;  
For by your patience and supportation  
A little interlude, late made and prepared,  
Before your presence here shall be declared,  
Which of a few conclusions is contrived,  
And points of philosophy natural.  
But though the matter be not so well declared,  
As a great clerk could do, nor so substantial,  
Yet the author hereof requireth you all,  
Though he be ignorant, and can little skill,  
To regard his only intent and good-will;  
Which in his mind hath oftentimes pondered,  
What number of books in our tongue maternal  
Of toys and trifles be made and imprinted,  
And few of them of matter substantial; [shall  
For though many make books, yet unneth ye  
In our English tongue find any works  
Of cunning, that is regarded by clerks.  
The Greeks, the Romans, with many other mo,  
In their mother tongue wrote works excellent.  
Then if clerks in this realm would take pain so,

Considering that our tongue is now sufficient  
 To expound any hard sentence evident, [tongue  
 They might, if they would, in our English  
 Write works of gravity sometime among;  
 For divers pregnant wits be in this land,  
 As well of noble men as of mean estate,  
 Which nothing but English can understand.  
 Then if cunning Latin books were translate  
 Into English, well correct and approbate,  
 All subtle science in English might be learned,  
 As well as other people in their own tongues  
 did.

But now so it is, that in our English tongue  
 Many one there is, that can but read and write,  
 For his pleasure will oft presume among  
 New books to compile and ballads to indite,  
 Some of love or other matter not worth a mite;  
 Some to obtain favour will flatter and glose,  
 Some write curious terms nothing to purpose.  
 Thus every man after his fantasy  
 Will write his conceit, be it never so rude,  
 Be it virtuous, vicious, wisdom or folly;  
 Wherefore to my purpose thus I conclude,  
 Why should not then the author of this inter-  
 Utter his own fantasy and conceit also, [lude  
 As well as divers other nowadays do?  
 For wisdom and folly is as it is taken,  
 For that the one calleth wisdom, another  
 calleth folly,  
 Yet among most folk that man is holden  
 Most wise, which to be rich studieth only;  
 But he that for a commonwealth busily [law,  
 Studieth and laboureth, and liveth by God's  
 Except he wax rich, men count him but a daw!  
 So he that is rich is ever honoured,  
 Although he have got it never so falsely.

The poor, being never so wise, is reproved.  
This is the opinion most commonly [why;  
Thoroughout the world, and yet no reason  
Therefore in my mind, when that all such daws  
Have babbled what they can, no force of two  
straws!

For every man in reason thus ought to do,  
To labour for his own necessary living,  
And then for the wealth of his neighbour also;  
But what devilish mind have they which,  
musing

And labouring all their lives, do no other thing  
But bring riches to their own possession, [tion;  
Nothing regarding their neighbour's destruc-  
Yet all the riches in the world that is

Riseth of the ground by God's sending,  
And by the labour of poor men's hands;  
And though thou, rich man, have thereof the  
keeping,

Yet is not this riches of thy getting, [more,  
Nor oughtest not in reason to be praised the  
For by other men's labour it is got before.

A great-witted man may soon be enriched,  
That laboureth and studieth for riches only;  
But how shall his conscience then be dis-  
charged?

For all clerks affirm that that man precisely,  
Which studieth for his own wealth principally,  
Of God shall deserve but little reward, [gard;  
Except he the commonwealth somewhat re-  
So they say that that man occupied is  
For a commonwealth, which is ever labouring  
To relieve poor people with temporal goods,  
And that it is a common good act to bring  
People from vice, and to use good living  
Likewise for a commonwealth occupied is he,