

**FIVE MIRACLE PLAYS,
OR
SCRIPTURAL DRAMAS**

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Five Miracle Plays, Or Scriptural Dramas by J. Payne Collier

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J. PAYNE COLLIER

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FIVE

Miracle Plays,

OR

SCRIPTURAL DRAMAS.

110 /
PRIVATELY PRINTED

UNDER THE CARE OF

J. PAYNE COLLIER, F.S.A.

LONDON:

1836.

H E

INTRODUCTION.

A Miracle Play is the oldest form of our national drama: whether such productions were originally written and performed in this country in Latin or in French is a point that has been considered in the "History of English Dramatic Poetry and the Stage," vol. II. p. 129.

The five pieces here for the first time printed are among the earliest in our language. The MS. of "The Harrowing of Hell" is as ancient as the reign of Edward II., or Edward III.; three other Miracle Plays—"The Sacrifice of Abraham," "The Adoration of the Shepherds," and "The Marriage of the Virgin"—are from the MSS. of the time of Henry VI.; and although the MS. of "The Advent of Antichrist" is not older than the close of the reign of Elizabeth, there is no doubt that it had been performed considerably before the Reformation.

MS. A. 9. 1. 1947

Only twenty-five copies of each of the Dramas have been printed, and even this very limited impression has been found more than equal to the demand in this country, from any interest taken in the important and curious subject. The Editor will, therefore, have it in his power to comply with the wishes of several foreign universities, especially in Germany, where the origin and progress of English Dramatic Poetry is considered an inquiry worthy of zealous, learned, and accurate investigation.

J. P. C.

THE
HARROWING OF HELL,

Miracle Play.

NOW FIRST PRINTED FROM

MS. HARL., 9253.

This is believed to be the most ancient production in a dramatic form in our language. The MS. from which it is now first printed is upon vellum, and is, certainly, as old as the reign of Edward III., if not older. It probably formed one of a series of performances of the same kind, founded upon Scripture history.

The Prologue and Epilogue were delivered in his own person, by the Actor who had the part of the Saviour. The Prologue continues to the line "Harde gates hauy gon:" the Epilogue commences at the line "God, for is moder lone." The Dialogue between the nine characters, Dominus, Sathan, Janitor, Adam, Eve, Abraham, David, John the Baptist, and Moses, occupies the interval.

Some extracts have been given from this Miracle-play in the "History of Dramatic Poetry and the Stage," II., 213; but so remarkable a literary relic merits to be printed entire. According to the Appendix to Scott's *Sir Tristram*, the Auchenleck MS. contains a copy of this production, but imperfect.

A few curious particulars, not included in "The History of Dramatic Poetry and the Stage," respecting the performance of Miracle-plays, may here be added.

The trading companies of London seem at an early date to have had plays represented before them at their entertainments. On the 9th November, 1483, when "Henry Somere, Baroun of the Chekeker" and others were feasted by the Brewers' Com-

pany, "four Pleyeres and three Menstrales" were present. On the 14th November, 1435, the sum of 6s. 4d. was paid to "four clerkis of London, for a play." They dined among the "straungers," and in the entry in the Book of Expences they are called "four pleyers with here servaunt," besides "one menstraille syttyng at mete."

If the existing records of other companies were examined, no doubt similar information would be derived from them.

The most minute intelligence on this subject is found in the accounts of the Churchwardens of Heybridge, John Stocke and William Datte, under date of 1532: it confirms the position, that at that period there was scarcely a town in the kingdom where Miracle-plays were not represented, especially at Whitsuntide. The statement first includes the sum of £10 13s. 2d. collected at church, and in the town and neighbourhood, in money, meat, drink, and materials, in order to bear the charges of the performance: it then sets out the subsequent "paymentes," in a hand-writing far from legible, which include several singular items.

Paide to some of Malden for — quarter of beffe	0	3	8
Item for a quartere of wheat	0	3	8
Item for 4 dosen of potts	0	2	2
Item for the Pagentt players	0	13	4
Item for goulde ferrall	0	0	3
Item for baryng of the boke	0	0	6
Item to the payeyntt player for hys rewarde	0	1	0
Item to 5 payr of gloves	0	0	7
Item to the minstrell	0	0	10
Item to John Wytford	0	0	4
Item towards the gylderyng of the tabernakel	0	6	8
Item paide to Colben for his labor	0	0	2
Item for payntyng of the cote armes	0	0	4
Item for 7 kylderkyne of dobell bore and 9 of synggyl	0	12	8
Item for a Locke	0	0	3

Item for a gret lathe	0 0 2
Item for a locke for the porche dore	0 0 4
Item for 2 payer of ——— (not legible)	0 1 6
Item to floowe that played the folle (fool)	0 1 8
Item for 100 of 8 penny mayle	0 0 6
Item for 2 ——— (not legible)	0 0 1
Item for a calfe skynne for the bell ropes	0 0 6
Item for a packe of whyte salte	0 0 2
Item for 4 cawfys (calvos)	(not legible)
Item for 3 shepe	0 0 9
Item for halfe a pownde of pepper	0 0 11
Item for drynkyng in the towne	0 0 2
Item for tape	0 0 1
Item for paper	0 0 2
Item for 2 loads of wode	0 2 0
Item to the cookes	0 1 0
Item to she that turned the spitt	0 0 8
Item to the hasteler	0 0 4
Item to Goodays wyfe for good aile	0 1 4
Item to Goodays wyfe for mett and drynke for the pageant players and 3 that bothe them	0 0 4
Sum	2 5 11

Hence it appears, deducting £23 5s. 11d. for expences from £10 18s. 2d. collected, that the sum of £7 7s. 3d. remained in the hands of the churchwardens, to be applied to the general purposes of the parish.

The term "bearing of the book" was technical, and described the office of the prompter. The items of a "lock for the porch," and of "a calf-skin for the bell-ropes," seem to show that the performance took place in the church. The fact that a "fool" was at this date employed in Miracle-plays, for the amusement of the audience, deserves especial remark.