"Everyman," a Play That Has Lived

By F. M. PADELFORD, Ph.D.

TO see the play which was chosen for presentation in St. Georges Hall, the imperial theatre of England, during the coronation season—a play that has been presented by special request before the universities of Oxford, Harvard and Yale, and that has won from the most honorable scholars, men of letters and ecclesiastics in England and America such praise as has never been bestowed on any other production in the history of the modern stage; a play strange, startling and impressive, that has established into a decaying Elizabethan stage of its day, by its dignified and every creed; a play of simple dignity and reverence that disdains almost every accessory of the modern stage and that compels admiration of every part to the spirit of the drama; a play that was searching with age when Shakespeare and Marlowe were yet unborn; a play that was produced by an age the ideals of which were foreign to our own, and the intense faith of which is in sharpest contrast to the spirit of the present day, which it rebukes—to see such a play as this in the unique experience which is offered to the people of Seattle this week, refer, of course, to the fifteenth century morality play, "Everyman," which is presented by the Ben Greet players of London.

Who are the Ben Greet players, what is a morality play and what is the plot of "Everyman" are questions which many people will be asking during the next few days. Mr. Greet is an English gentleman of education and ripe culture, of high standing as an actor, who has gathered about him a group of men and women of kindred spirit, who have such an ideal of dramatic art that they are willing to keep every note in their phase subordinate to the harmonious impression of the whole. Artistic unity and perfection of detail are the dramatic platform of this company.

Three years ago such conservative and careful English sheets as The London Times and The Saturday Review were vying with each other in unprecedented praise of the revival of the mediaeval play "Everyman," which at the solicitation of the Elizabethan Stage Society of England, Mr. Greet and his players had just presented at the Old Charter House of London and in the quadrangle of University College, Oxford. In 1902 the company came to America and began an unprecedented run in New York, playing for 150 nights before audiences that taxed the capacity of the large theatres. In the following spring Mr. Greet accepted the urgent invitations of Harvard and Yale universities to give outdoor performances of "As You Like It," and other Shakespeare plays, and the enthusiasm which these performances created led to the invitation to the same plays at Princeton, Cornell, Brown, Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr and Smith. In October of last year the Greek players came to San Francisco and presented "Everyman" at the dedication of the splendid Greek theatre at the University of California. This was followed by a month's performances at Berkeley, Stanford and in San Francisco that won for Mr. Greet such regard as California had never shown for any other play. His reappearance in California this fall has simply strengthened his hold upon the State. The season was inaugurated at the University of California with "Hamlet," played before an audience of 3,000, and closed with the new play "The Star of Bethlehem," which Professor Gayley, head of the English department in the university, arranged for the company from old English originals.

Wherever Mr. Greet has visited a prominent university center it has been customary for him to give his first performance before a university audience, and it is in accordance with this precedent that the performance of Wednesday evening will be given in Denny Hall, Seattle's college. Offers the ideal environment for such a company, and college people in general will doubtless prefer to see the play as presented under university auspices. In this connection it may be of interest to the public to know that Mr. Greet will lecture on "Everyman" to the university at the Metropolitan on Monday morning, at 10:30 o'clock. To this, as to all of the university exercises, the public is invited, and seats are reserved for them.

Morality plays are elaborated dramas which the clergy of the mediaeval centuries used for the improving instruction of the people. "Pilgrim's Progress" is an outgrowth of the moralities, and if you were to dramatize it it would closely resemble some of these early plays. The moralities were not the earliest church plays for they were preceded by the mysteries and miracles. Perhaps as early as the ninth century it was the custom in England on such feasts as Christmas and Easter for the priests to act out very simple the story of the day, either at the altar, before the high altar or in a side chapel. As time went on these little plays became more elaborate and there evolved the so-called mystery plays, of which there came to be whole cycles, embracing the dramatization of such stories from the old and New Testaments as were related in prophecy or retrospect to the mysterious redemption by the Nativity, Passion and Resurrection of Christ. So popular were these plays become that the guilds of the large cities vied with the ambition of them from a reluctant clergy, the performance of such plays lasted several days. The various guilds, the bakers, the mercers, the fishers, etc., had its own movable stage or wagon for the presentation of its own pageants. These were wheeled about the streets of the city and for the performances at intersection or on an open square, and once they was finished the scenes would be wheeled to the next station and the pageant next in order was placed in its place. In this way each company repeated its play many times, and, as we have them in York, Chester and Coventry, by collection of mysteries, gave in the series the full story of secular history from the revolt of the angels down to the last judgment. Events taken from the Old Testament, such as the stories of Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, of Job, of those happenings in the life of Christ and of the Virgin. Miracles, legends and stories were also a simple fabric for the insolent Herod as well as the thoughtless revel and swaggering with his sword of lath, and much amusement was occasioned when some hapless Jew was thrown by grotesque devils down into the yawning jaws of Satan.

Following the mystery plays came the morality plays, similar characters, based upon the miraculous lives of the saints, and most effective were the moralities, in which moral truths were taught by the speech and actions of allegorical characters, which typified abstractly the virtues and vices.

On this last class "Everyman" is more, to a large extent. The theme is one of universal appeal—man's reluctant obedience to the inevitable, death and the mons of death. As Hamlet shrank from the dread on that unknown sea, and as poor Robby Burns sighed from a heavy heart,

"An forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess and fear."

so "Everyman" comes out to Death (death), the sure messenger of heaven, and pleaded cayore, whether shall I go? That might escape this endless sorrowe.

Now, gentyl Dethe, spare me tyll to morrowe,
That I may amende my
With yet advysement."

Briefly, the outline of the play is as follows: After an announcement by the messenger, God opens the play with the assertion that as men are so drowned in sin and wickedness, He will "smite with heavy forgotten Him. He has decided to do judgment on them and have a reckynge of every manner persone. He tells Death, his "mighty messenger," to find Everyman to prepare for his last pilgrimage. On hearing the unwelcome message Everyman tries by pleadings and threats to obtain respite, to obtain only permission to take companions, if they be good enough to accompany him. Fellowship enters and notice, in the Everyman series, makes his cause, vowing his readiness to go a foot with him. But when he hears his friends refuse, his readiness to go afoot with him, Everyman turns to Kinsmen and Cousin are no more successful, and the dearly loved Goods (riches) simply mocks at Everyman's distress. At last, in despair Everyman seeks his long-neglected friend Good Deeds, who, though lying prostrate and cold on the ground, so bound by his sins that she cannot stir, readily promises to do all that she can for him. She introduces him to her sister Knowledge, who undertakes to be his guide. She brings him before Confession, from whom he receives the Jewel "Penance, voyder of adversyte." The order of his supplicants and the Jewel of Penance free Good Deeds and so together they leave her, the latter to him on his journey. Having received the sacraments, Everyman sets forth dressed in the garment "contrycyon" and accompanied by Beauty, Strength, Discretion and the Five Senses. But Beauty refuses to go down into the open grave through which his path leads, Strength deserts him, Discretion follows Strength and Five Senses bids him farewell. In despair he cries: "Oh, Jesu, help, all have forsaken me!" Good Deeds, in a steadfast, and Knowledge explains that though she cannot accompany him in "for no manner of daunger." With the words "Go, Everyman, and rekyn thy spirit," Everyman sinks into the grave. Knowledge, anxious for that which he has suffered we shall all endure; an angel is heard singing his welcome to heaven, and the Doctor brings the play to a close by pointing its moral.

With this outline in mind the accompanying cuts are self-explanatory. In one Everyman is interrupted at his singing by the doleful summons of Death, as he taps on his hollow drum; in another, Everyman is beseeching Fellowship to make the journey with him; in the third, Good Deeds and Knowledge comfort Everyman just as he is ready to sink into the grave.

The scenery of the play is copied from an old print displaying the cloister of Salamanca Cathedral in Spain. It is simple but in keeping; the costumes are from Flemish tapestries, and the music was written in the thirteenth century, by the famous Adam de la Halle. "The instruments used are the organ and the celic. Upon the stage are symbolic "accessions." Thus, flowers denote cultivation of the soil; the little organ, yet the wheels, work; the candlesticks, reward for labor, and the candles, worship and thanks due. Many of the players enter from the audience. No curtain is used.

The quaint old play, rendered with such exacting fidelity, will give 40 many of those who seek in their first sympathetic glimpse into those much-misunderstood and contributory middle centuries which we are wont to regard with self-congratulatory condescension. That the common people were lamentably ignorant, that men tortured one another with the zest of savages; that the scientific acquisition of knowledge was made a dangerous thing, no one can deny, but yet these despised centuries, which we are pleased to denominate "dark," have left us in every realm of art works which, when seen, humble, while they exalt, the men of today. So you would understand this mystery you will perhaps find knowledge of an answer in attending this play of "Everyman."

Readers of this article may care for an estimate of the play and the players by one who has seen it this year, for last the loss of Miss Matthewson, who played Everyman, in Seattle, prevented this seriously injured the presentation. The following is from a prominent California paper:

"A wonderful sermon, strange, thrilling and impressive in one act, one scene, without orchestral accompaniment and without a single curtain call, applause or enthusiasm on the part of the audience, yet holding very rapt and spellbound during the one hour and forty minutes requisite for its presentation, briefly sums up the allegorical picture of Everyman, as portrayed by Ben Greet's superb company of players at the Ivy, last evening. Impossible, impossible, as words cannot do justice to the impressive, indelibly lasting picture in mind, and which, once seen, will never be forgotten, as the spectator becomes so absorbed by the grand work of this company that he almost forgetting himself, imagines himself as the principal actor, who is about to take his final step into immortality, and that is just exactly the object and moral of the play—to impress the beholder with the manner in which he should live, in order to answer the call unexpected, when it shall reach him that everything in earthly life will crumble at the grave, with the exception only of his good deeds, which will hail him on the other side, and be his companion throughout his long and arduous journey to the great unknown.

"Everyman should be seen by every man, as he must be, to obtain the vividly impressed and the lesson taught so conducive to morality and righteousness that this play—written centuries ago—will undoubtedly do more good to humanity, and lead to elevate the status of the higher manhood, more than anything ever before presented, and is a grand lesson to mankind.

"The members of the company are all good, the execution of each is clear and distinct and such is necessary to the support of the work. Miss Constance Crowley, who portrays the said part of "Everyman," is a wonderful clever actress, who has an immense amount of work, but never once does it appear as awaited by her listeners, and as she approaches the final moment, the change upon her face clearly tells all that the hand of death is upon her, and nothing seems to remain but for her to sink into the grave, yawning to receive her. Mr. Ben Greet, head of the company, takes the character of the Doctor in a forceful way and points the moral at the end in a most convincing manner."

The Japanese Way of Holding Up Correspondents.

The Japanese gave no open hint of unwillingness to have us go—no hint that we were not to go very soon. We were urged to get passes for ourselves, interpreters and servants at once. Most of the men obeyed at once, bought horses, outfits, provisions and wrote farewell letters—wrote more than once. This was the middle of March. Ever since we have stood at the Imperial Tomb in Tokyo—the Imperial Hotel is the name it calls itself—under heavy expense to ourselves here and to the dear ones at home who sent us here; unable to go away; told every so long from one to the next ion days we would most likely go, and told on no day that within the next two we should not go. And it was soon "very soon"—in English, and then it was "tadaima"—in Japanese.

Tadaima! That, too, meant "soon," when I first put stumbling feet on the tortuous path of Japanese thought and speech. The unwary stranger will be told a dozen times a day "tadaima," and as such in dictionaries he shall find it. But I have tracked "tadaima" to its lair and dragged it, naked and ashamed, into the white light of truth. And I know "tadaima" at any time refers only to the season next to come. Early in March, for instance, it means literally—"next summer about 2 o'clock."

All this was somewhat of a strain in the way of expectation, disappointment, worry, wasted energy—idleness. And so with a worried consciousness of expense to the above-mentioned dear ones at home, and the home that some relatives might yet be made to them: through a good deal of weakness and a good deal of reluctance to go home and get "frayed," we stayed on and on. In May came the battle of Nanshan and the advances on Port Arthur. In June followed Wiahiao. Both battles say eran would have gladly risked his life to see, and I really think it would have been well for the Japanese, granting their accounts of the two battles as accurate—Russian atrocities in one, undisciplined Japanese valiantry in both—if impartial observers had been there to confirm. Instead, the Japanese say "you did"—the Russians say "we didn't"—and there the matter will end.—From "Making for Manchuria," by John Fox, Jr., in the Christmas (December) Scribner's.

Veronese a Great Decorative Painter.

The instinct that has caused him to be called a decorator is a perfectly sound one. A decorator he was generally, and the great intellectual and technical qualities we have been enumerating, are, after all, only the equipment of the greatest of decorators. If, however, he could make all these things subservient to a decorative end, and, could include in a thoroughly successful decoration so much which we have thought it necessary to eliminate, it is evident that there must be something wrong, or too limited, in our ideas of decoration. We have thought that respect for the fleshness of the wall demanded of us the elimination of modeling and of light and shade, but here is a man who models perfectly and plays with light and shade and yet never loses the fairness of his wall. We have thought that decoration demanded the sacrifice of realism, but there is a great decorator who is one of the greatest of naturalists. Does it not behoove those who are interested in the revival of decorative painting in this country to consult this painter as to what are, in reality, the essentials of his art?—From "Veronese," by Kenyon Cox, in the Christmas (December) Scribner's.

One of the Greatest Venetians.

But he was far more than a painter of the pageant of life. He was a great painter of noble and heroic themes—a master of figure painting in the grand Italian manner. He was a draughtsman, a stylist, and a man of true and lofty feeling. In mastery of drawing he had no equal in Venice, unless it were Tintoretto, and no superior anywhere except one or two of the greatest Florentines. Now and then he is careless, or perhaps his pupils intervened, and there is a kind of meaginess in the adjustment of the wrist which is a frequent failing, but there is no Michelangelesque shortening into which he cannot throw his figure, no line he cannot make it take, and with this a sure feeling for posturing or the Michelangelesque affectations of Tintoretto. Rather there is a large simplicity of gesture, one might almost say a divine awkwardness, which is inimitable. His men are gorgeously mailed, his women are tall, flushed Venetian type, white and soft, with double golden heads, but with a firmness of line and modeling that is almost Greek. The attendants of Europa are nearly as fine as those of Phedias, while in the figure of Pharaoh's daughter, in the "Finding of Moses," he has combined a magnificent amplitude with an elegance prophetic of the eighteenth century. Always he has a curvilinear sweeping his style, and his naturalism is never left behind in the place.

His range of subject and treatment is wide. In "The Finding of Moses" he is gay and fanciful, in "The Crucifixion" he is plastically noble, while he can rise to great dignity and even to tragedy. He has all the Venetian sensuousness, but he never shirks a nudity, as Titian sometimes does. He can be solemn, and to my feeling, profoundly religious, but he is never morbid or grotesque. Grave or playful, he is always manly, always serene, a great, frank, healthy, brave minded, tender spirit. One feels that he was not only a painter of consummate skill, but a man one could have loved, and, in one of few painters who awaken the kind of personal affection that Virgil inspires.—From "Veronese," by Kenyon Cox, in the Christmas (December) Scribner's.

A Type of Fashionable Portrait Painter.

Mr. Mungall's freshly soaped and scented, with a neat plaze of gentility, extending from his varnished boot-tips to his glossy hat, looked like the "deferred" portrait of a common man—just such an idealized presentment as his own brush might have produced. As a rule, however, he devoted himself to the portrayal of the other sex, fascinating ladies in syrup, as Arras said, with their bumptious children leaning against their knees. He was as skilled a dressmaker at catching new ideas, and the style of his pictures changed as rapidly as that of the fashion-plates. Year after year his sitters were done on oval canvases, with saucy draperies on the background of clouds; the next they were seated under an immense tree, caressing enormous dogs obviously conducted out of dog-carts. Whatever their occupation they always looked straight out of the canvas, giving the impression that their eyes were focused on an invisible camera. This gave rise to the rumor that Kennedy Mungall copied traits from photographs; it was even said that he had invented a way of transferring an enlarged photograph to the canvas, so that all that remained were to fill in the colors. If he had done this charge he took it calmly, but probably it had not occurred to the high spheres in which he moved and in which he was esteemed for painting pearls better, and suggesting a worried consciousness of error, than any of his fellow-craftsmen. Mr. Mungall, in fact, was proud of one of his professional duty to study his sitters in their home life; and as this life was chiefly led in the homes of others, he was too busy dining out and going to operas to paint much of his acquaintances.—From "The Pot Boiler," by Will Irwin. Both battles say eran would have gladly risked his life to see, and I really think it would have been well for the Japanese, granting their accounts of the two battles as accurate—Russian atrocities in one, undisciplined Japanese valiantry in both—if impartial observers had been there to confirm. Instead, the Japanese say "you did"—the Russians say "we didn't"—and there the matter will end.—From "Making for Manchuria," by John Fox, Jr., in the Christmas (December) Scribner's.

The Associated Reform Synod of the South has broken off the negotiations for union with the United Presbyterian, owing, apparently to a lingering feeling on the old slavery dispute.

New York's new subway is said to be so open to outsiders that it reaches churches, since it enables persons living at a distance to attend them conveniently.

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Death summons Everyman.

Good-Deeds and Knowledge comfort Everyman.

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