mele appeared the ſtage or proſcenion, conſiderably eleva­ted. No part of this theatre was covered except the ſtage, and a high gallery called c*ircys* set apart for the women. The Athenians, being expoſed to the weather, came uſually with great cloaks, to ſecure them from the rain or the cold; and for defence againſt the sun, they had the *ſciadion,* a kind of paraſol, which the Romans uſed alſo in their theatres by the name of *umbella ;* but when a hidden ſtorm aroſe, the play was interrupted, and the ſpectators diſperſed.

A sort of tent-work over the entire area of the edifice might have been contrived as a ſhelter from the rain and a ſhade from the sun. Such a covering would have obviated the inconveniences of roofed theatres, which obſtruct the free communication of the air, and of unroofed theatres, which do not keep out the weather. At Athens the plays were always repreſented in the day-time, which made the unroofed theatres leſs inconvenient.

Plays were repreſented only during the three feſtivals ſolemnized in honour of Bacchus. The firſt of theſe was ce­lebrated at the Piræus, where ſome of Euripides’s pieces were firſt performed. The ſecond, which laſted only one day, was kept at the end of January or beginning of Fe­bruary. The third, called the greater *Dionysia,* was cele­brated a month after. It continued ſeveral days, and at­tracted a great multitude of ſpectators. In the feſtivals which laſted only one day, five or six dramatic pieces, either tragedies or comedies, were performed. But in the greater IDionyſia, which continued longer, 12 or 15, and ſometimes more, were acted. The performance began early in the morning, and ſometimes laſted the whole day.

The chorus, according as the ſubject demanded, was compoſed of men and women, old men or youths, citizens or ſlaves, prieſts, ſoldiers, &c. to the number of 15 in tra­gedy, and 24 in comedy. The chorus came upon the ſtage preceded by a flute-player, who regulated their ſteps ; ſome­times one after the other, but in tragedy more frequently three in front and five in depth, or five in front and three in depth.

The ſame perſons performed both in tragedy and come­dy ; but, as among ourſelves, it was rare to meet with any who excelled in both. The pay oſ thoſe who had acquired great reputation was conſiderable. Polus gained a talent in two days (equal to L.225 Sterling@@\*). Players of eminence were ſolicited by different actors oſ Greece to attend their feſtivals. If, after making an engagement, they failed, they were obliged to pay a certain ſum of money ; and if they were abſent during the feſtivals of their own republic, they were condemned to a heavy fine.

The actors had habits and symbols ſuited to their parts. Kings wore a diadem, leaned on a ſceptre which ſupported an eagle on its top, and were dressed in long robes of purple or other ſplendid colours ornamented with gold. Heroes, beſides having their ſtature frequently increaſed to six feet Engliſh@@\*, and their bulk in proportion, were frequently covered with the ſkin of a lion or a tyger, and armed with ſwords, quivers, and clubs. All who ſuffered misfortunes wore a black, brow∙n, or dirty white garment, which fre­quently hung in tatters. There were various kinds or masks for tragedy, comedy, and ſatire. Theſe certainly took away the pleaſure ariſing from the expreſſion of the countenance ; but at any rate, little pleaſure could be derived from this circumſtance in a Grecian theatre, from its immenſe lize, and the great diſtance of the audience from the ſtage.

Dramatic entertainments were introduced at Rome in the year of the city 391. They were called *ludi ſcenici,* becauſe they were firſt acted in a ſhade formed by the branches and' leaves of trees. They were borrowed immediately from Etruria. whence alſo they received their firſt players. Theſe Etrurians at firſt only danced to a flute, without either ſinging or acting. The Roman youth ſoon imitated them at their ſolemn feſtivals, adding raillery in rude verſes, and geſtures adapted to the subject. Theſe verſes were called *Feſcennini,* from Fescennia, a city of Etruria. Livius Andronicus was the firſt poet who wrote a regular play in Latin. This happened in the year of Rome 512 or 514, about 160 years after the death of Sophocles and Euripides, and 52 after that of Menander. The Grecian model was after­wards introduced and cultivated much by ſucceeding dra­matic writers. This was the model of Menander, for the old and middle comedy was unknown at Rome. As the Ro­mans were only imitators of the Greeks in the dramatic art, as well as in moſt of the arts and sciences, nothing more is neceſſary to be ſaid in addition to the account which we have already given of the Grecian ſtage.

The origin of the Engliſh ſtage is hid in obſcurity. It was not, however, copied from the Grecian or Roman ; for it was evidently different in form as well as in matter, and may with more propriety be deduced from a Gothic origi­nal. It appears that there were theatrical entertainments in England almoſt as early as the conqueſt;@@ for we are told by William Stephanides or Fitz-Stephen, a monk, who in the reign of Henry II. wrote his *Deſcriptio Nobiliſsimae Ci­vitatis Londoniae,* that “ London, inſtead of the common in­terludes of the theatre, had plays of a more holy kind ; repreſentations of the miracles of confessors, and the ſufferings of martyrs. At this time there were alſo certain ſets of idle people, who travelled the countries and were called *Mummers,* a kind of vagrant comedians, whoſe excellence conſiſted altogether in mimickry and humour.

It is probable that, ſoon after this time, the dramatic repreſentations called *Mytseries* were exhibited: Theſe myſteries were taken from ſcripture-hiſtory : ſome repreſented the creation of the world, with the fall or Adam and Eve; ſome the ſtory of Joſeph ; and others even the incarnation and ſufferings of the Son of God@@. Theſe pieces were exhibited in a manner ſo ridiculous as to favour libertiniſm and infidelity, as appears by a petition of the chaunters of St Paul’s cathedral to Richard II. in 1378, praying, that “ ſome un­expert people might be prohibited from repreſenting the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament to the prejudice of the ſaid cler­gy, who had been at great expence to repreſent it publicly at Chriſtmas.”

In the year 1390, the pariſh clerks of London are ſaid to have played interludes at Skinner’s-well on three ſucceſſive days in July ; and, in 1409, to have acted for eight days ſucceſſively a play concerning the creation of the world, at the ſame place which thence acquired the name of *Clerk- enwell.*

Theſe Myſteries were ſucceeded by Moralities, in which there were ſome rude traces of a fable and a moral ; and ſome alſo of poetry, the virtues, vices, and other affections of the mind being frequently personified.

After theſe Moralities came what were called Interludes, which made ſome approaches to wit and humour. Many of theſe pieces were written by John Heywood, jeſter to Hen­ry VIII.

In the time of Henry VIII. one or two pieces had been publiſhed under the claſſical names of *Comedy* and *Tragedy,* but they appear not to have been intended for popular uſe. It was not till the religious ferments had ſubſided that the public had leiſure to attend to dramatic poetry@@. In the reign of Elizabeth, tragedies and comedies began to appear in form, and could the poets have perſevered, the firſt mo­dels were good. *Gorboduc,* a regular tragedy, was acted in 1561 ; and Gaſcoigne, m 1566, exhibited J*ocasta,* a tranſlation from Euripides, as alſo *The Suppoſes,* a regular

@@@[m]\* Plut. in X. Rhet.

@@@[m]\* Arist. in Ran. v. 1046. Athen. lib. v. cap. 7.

@@@[mu] Gentleman's Magazine for 1761.

@@@[mu] Cibber's Apology for his Life.

@@@[mu] Percy's Relics of Ancient English Poetry.