the 16th and 17th centuries a favourite kind of theatrical representation was in the form of “ masques,” with pro­cessions of grotesquely attired actors and temporary scenic effects of great splendour and mechanical ingenuity. In the reigns of James I. and Charles I. Ben Jonson and the architect Inigo Jones worked together in the production of these “ masques,” Jonson writing the words and Inigo Jones devising the scenic effects, the latter being very costly and complicated, with gorgeous buildings, land­scapes, and clouds or mountains, which opened to display mimic deities, thrown into relief by coloured lights. These masques were a form of opera, in which Ben Jonson’s words were set to music. Ben Jonson received no more for his libretto than Inigo Jones did for his scenic devices, and was not unnaturally annoyed at the secondary place which he was made to occupy : he therefore revenged himself by writing severe satires on Inigo Jones and the system which placed the literary and mechanical parts of the opera on the same footing. In an autograph MS. which still exists this satirical line occurs—“ Painting and carpentry are the soul of masque ” (see Cunningham, *Life of Inigo Jones,* London, 1848).

In Italy, during the 16th century, the drama occupied a more important position, and several theatres were erected, professedly on the model of the classic theatre of Vitruvius. One of these, the Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza, still exists ; it was designed by Palladio, but was not completed till 1584, four years after his death. It has an architectural scena, with various orders of columns, rows of statues in niches, and the three doors of the classic theatre, but the whole is painted with strong perspective effects which are very unclassical in spirit. Scamozzi, Palladio’s pupil, who completed the Teatro Olimpico, built another pseudo-classical theatre in 1588 at Sabbionetta for the duke Vespasiano Gonzaga, but this does not now exist.

In France the miracle play developed into the secular drama rather earlier than in England. In the reign of Louis XL, about 1467, the “Brothers of the Passion” had a theatre which was partly religious and partly satirical. In the 16th century Catherine de’ Medici is said to have spent incredible sums on the dresses and scenery for the representation of the Italian ballet ; and in the middle of the 17th century the regular opera was introduced at Paris.

At the end of the 18th century the theatres of San Carlo at Naples, La Scala at Milan, and La Fenice at Venice were the finest in Europe ; all these have been rebuilt in the present century, but have been eclipsed by the theatres of Paris, St Petersburg, and other capitals, both in size and architectural splendour.

In the modern theatre the auditorium has changed comparatively little, except that the stalls have gradually encroached upon and almost absorbed the pit. The arrangement of the boxes, stalls, balcony, and gallery are too well known to need description. Few people, have, however, any notion of the immense size and extreme complication of the space and machinery behind the proscenium, of which the visible stage occupies but a very small proportion. The stage-floor slopes upwards away from the audience, so that it may appear deeper than it really is by diminishing the foreshortening.@@1 Its extent behind the most distant plane of scenery is usually quite as great as that which the audience sees. In addition to this extension of the visible stage there are three other enormous spaces filled with the machinery to work the scenery.

1. Of these the first consists of the “wings” (Fr. *coulisses),* a series of chambers or platforms on each side of the stage, arranged many stories high, and reaching to more than double the height of the proscenium.
2. The “dock” or under-space (Fr. *dessous),* extending under the whole area of the stage floor, and about equal in height to the proscenium, is divided into three or four stories by suc­cessive floors, and contains long rows of immense windlasses (Fr. *gril)* for raising and lowering scenery, and also an elaborate arrangement of lifts by which actors can suddenly appear or vanish through the stage floor. A very ingenious device called the “star trap,” invented by an English mechanician (Fr. *trappe Anglaise),* allows an actor to vanish through the floor without any opening in it being visible. This is done by making the trap door of thin boards (something like a Venetian blind) fixed on to flexible bands of steel ; the weight of the actor makes these open in the middle and let him through, while the steel springs close the opening as soon as they are released. The whole movement is so rapid that the actor seems to sink through the solid floor.@@2 In all mechanical appliances for theatrical purposes England is far ahead of other countries, many of which have adopted English methods.
3. The third space, aud the largest of all, is that above the proscenium—the “flies ” (Fr. *dessus* or *cintre),* extending over the whole of the stage, and reaching sometimes to nearly double the height of the proscenium. This also is divided into many floors, and contains rows of great windlasses, by which scenery can be hoisted up out of sight, without folding or bending it. All these three parts of the building are filled with a complicated but most orderly series of ropes, lifts, and machinery of every sort, of which it is impossible here to give a detailed description.

The old method of fixing scenery was to slide it in two halves from the wings in grooves formed in the stage floor : these are no longer used, as much more realistic effects can be gained by sup­porting scenery from the top, or by building it up with supports of its own, so that, instead of a series of painted planes set parallel to the stage front, castles, cathedrals, or even whole streets are actually built upon the stage, and give striking effects of real perspective.

A rapidly growing tendency now exists to increase the mechanical perfection of the theatre. The extended use of iron instead of wood for the stage floor and the various machines has been a great gain in space and rapidity of work­ing. It is now considered a great object to drop the curtain as seldom as possible, and even the Grand Opera House of Paris is now left far behind in the modern competition for mechanical perfection,@@3 though from an architectural point of view it is the most magnificent and costly of all existing build­ings of its kind. See fig. 4.

The latest improvement to prevent delay between the scenes has been introduced in the Madison Square theatre in New York city, which has two stages, one above the other. During the performance of a scene the second stage floor is

“ tireynge-howse.” The upper galleries or boxes completely sur­rounded the stage, even the space over the green-room being occupied by boxes. This being the arrangement, it is easy to see why the octagonal plan was selected in most cases, though not in all,—the Fortune theatre, for example, was square. An interesting specifica­tion and contract for the building of the Fortune theatre is printed by Halliwell-Phillipps (*op. cit. infra,* p. 164). In all its details the Fortune is specified to be like the Globe, except that it is to be square in plan, and with timbers of heavier scantling. The walls are to be of wood and plaster, the roof tiled, with lead gutters, the stage of oak, with a “ shadow” or cover over it, and the “tireynge-howse” to have glazed windows. Two sorts of boxes are mentioned, viz., “gentlemen’s roomes” and “ twoo-pennie roomes.” A woodcut show­ing this arrangement of the interior is given in a collection of plays edited by Kirkman in 1672.

Much valuable information about the early theatres of London is given by Wilkinson, *Londina Illustrata* (1819), in which are engrav­ings of some of them. See also Collier, *Hist. of Dramatic Poetry,* 1879 ; Halliwell-Phillipps, *Life of Shakespeare,* 1883 ; Malone, *History of the Stage,* 1790, republished by Boswell in 1821 ; the publications of the New Shakspere Society ; the Ninth Report of the Historical MSS. Commission ; and a series of articles on early London theatres, by T. F. Ordish, in *The Antiquary,* vols. xi., xii., and xiv., 1885-86.

@@@1 This device was practised by the mediæval architects in most European countries, who frequently made the floor of cathedrals and other large churches to slope upwards from west to east, sometimes as much as from two to three feet.

@@@2 Other varieties of this, such as the “vampire trap,” allow an actor to vanish through an apparently solid wall.

@@@3 In 1883 Μ. Reyer’s *Sigurd* was refused at the Paris Opera House mainly on account of the absence of the necessary mechanical appliances.