groups of actors were divided into two great companies, specially licensed and belonging respectively to the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Admiral. Under the new arrangement the earl of Leicester’s actors (who, as already stated, after the earl’s death in 1588 found for a time a new patron in Lord Strange @@1) became the servants of the Lord Chamberlain. James Burbage had already retired from the company, his place being taken by his more cele­brated son Richard Burbage, the Garrick of the Eliza­bethan stage, who acted with so much distinction and success all the great parts in Shakespeare’s leading plays. In order that the Lord Chamberlain’s company might have houses of their own both for summer and winter use, Richard Burbage, his brother Cuthbert, and their associates, including Shakespeare, undertook in 1599 to build a new theatre on the bank side, not far from the old Paris Garden circus. We know from a subsequent document, which refers incidentally to the building of this theatre, that the Burbages had originally introduced Shakespeare to the Blackfriars company. He had indeed proved himself so useful, both as actor and poet, that they were evidently glad to secure his future services by giving him a share as part proprietor in the Blackfriars property. The new theatre now built by the company was that known as the Globe, and it was for fifteen years, during the summer and autumn months, the popular and highly successful home of the Shakespearian drama. Three years earlier Richard Burbage and his associates had rebuilt the Blackfriars theatre on a more extended scale ; and this well-known house divided with the Globe the honour of producing Shakespeare’s later and more important plays. Shakespeare’s position indeed of actor and dramatist is identified with these houses and with the Lord Chamberlain’s company to which they belonged. On the accession of James I., this company, being specially favoured by the new monarch, received a fresh royal charter, and the members of it were henceforth known as the King’s servants. In the early years of Shakespeare’s career the national drama had thus a permanent home in theatres conveniently central on either side of the river, and crowded during the summer and winter months by eager and excited audiences. Even before the building of the Globe, the house at New­ington where three of Marlowe’s most important plays and some of Shakespeare’s early tragedies were produced was often crowded to the doors. In the summer of 1592, when the *First Part of Henry VI.,* as revised by Shake­speare, was acted, the performance was so popular that, we are told by Nash, ten thousand spectators witnessed it in the course of a few weeks. It is true that even in the best theatres the appliances in the way of scenes and stage machinery were of the simplest description, change of scene being often indicated by the primitive device of a board with the name painted upon it. But players and play­wrights, both arts being often combined in the same person, knew their business thoroughly well, and justly relied for success on the more vital attractions of powerful acting, vigorous writing, and practised skill in the construction of their pieces. In the presence of strong passions expressed in kindling words and powerfully realized in living action, gesture, and incident, the absence of canvas sunlight and painted gloom was hardly felt. Or, as the stirring choruses in *Henry V.* show, the want of more elaborate and realistic scenery was abundantly supplied by the excited fancy, active imagination, and concentrated interest of the spectators.

The dramatic conditions of a national theatre were indeed, at the outset of Shakespeare’s career, more com­plete, or rather in a more advanced state of development, than the playhouses themselves or their stage accessories. If Shakespeare was fortunate in entering on his London work amidst the full tide of awakened patriotism and public spirit, he was equally fortunate in finding ready to his hand the forms of art in which the rich and complex life of the time could be adequately expressed. During the decade in which Shakespeare left Stratford the play­wright’s art had undergone changes so important as to constitute a revolution in the form and spirit of the national drama. For twenty years after the accession of Elizabeth the two roots whence the English drama sprung—the academic or classical, and the popular, devel­oped spontaneously in the line of mysteries, moralities, and interludes—continued to exist apart, and to produce their accustomed fruit independently of each other. The popular drama, it is true, becoming more secular and realistic, enlarged its area by collecting its materials from all sources,—from novels, tales, ballads, and histories, as well as from fairy mythology, local superstitions, and folk­lore. But the incongruous materials were, for the most part, handled in a crude and semi-barbarous way, with just sufficient art to satisfy the cravings and clamours of unlettered audiences. The academic plays, on the other hand, were written by scholars for courtly and cultivated circles, were acted at the universities, the inns of court, and at special public ceremonials, and followed for the most part the recognized and restricted rules of the classic drama. But in the third decade of Elizabeth’s reign another dramatic school arose intermediate between the two elder ones, which sought to combine in a newer and higher form the best elements of both. The main impulse guiding the efforts of the new school may be traced in­directly to a classical source. It was due, not immediately to the masterpieces of Greece and Rome, but to the form which classical art had assumed in the contemporary drama of Italy, France, and Spain, especially of Italy, which was that earliest developed and best known to the new school of poets and dramatists. This southern drama, while academic in its leading features, had nevertheless modern elements blended with the ancient form. As the Italian epics, following in the main the older examples, were still charged with romantic and realistic elements unknown to the classical epic, so the Italian drama, con­structed on the lines of Seneca and Plautus, blended with the severer form essentially romantic features. With the choice of heroic subjects, the orderly development of the plot, the free use of the chorus, the observance of the unities, and constant substitution of narrative for action were united the vivid colouring of poetic fancy and diction, and the use of materials and incidents derived from recent history and contemporary life. The influence of the Italian drama on the new school of English play­wrights was, however, very much restricted to points of style and diction of rhetorical and poetical effect. It helped to produce among them the sense of artistic treat­ment, the conscious effort after higher and more elaborate forms and vehicles of imaginative and passionate expres­sion. For the rest, the rising English drama, in spite of the efforts made by academic critics to narrow its rangeand limit its interests, retained and thoroughly vindicated its freedom and independence. The central character­istics of the new school are sufficiently explained by the fact that its leading representatives were all of them scholars and poets, living by their wits and gaining a somewhat precarious livelihood amidst the stir and bustle, the temptations and excitement, of concentrated London life. The distinctive note of their work is the reflex of

@@@1 This is maintained by Mr Fleay in his recent *Life and Work of Shakespeare.* But the history of the early dramatic companies is so obscure that it is difficult to trace their changing fortunes with absolute certainty.