Werk

Titel: Schelling, Felix E.: Elizabethan Drama. 1558-1642

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äußere Umwelt eines Bühnenwerkes mit den Mitteln der illudierenden Bühne zu gestalten und zu verlebendigen. Der Verfasser verlangt vom Regisseur eine genaue Kenntnis der gewerblichen Technik und bespricht die verschiedenen Forderungen, die an den Regisseur als «Architekten und Landschafter», als «Beleuchter», als «Maschinisten» und als «Farbenkünstler» zu stellen sind. Man wird den Ausführungen des Verfassers, die von künstlerischem Feinsinn und Geschmack getragen sind, in allen Hauptpunkten zustimmen können und nur wünschen, daß den vielfach etwas abstrakten Darlegungen das konkrete Beispiel öfters belebend zur Seite getreten wäre. Auch die Heranziehung der neuesten Versuche, eine durchgehende Reform unserer szenischen Einrichtungen anzubahnen, insbesondere der Tendenzen, wie sie im Münchener Künstlertheater zutage getreten sind, wäre sehr erwünscht gewesen. Der Abschnitt über «Schauspielkunst und Kinderkomödie» steht zwar mit dem eigentlichen Thema des Büchleins nur in losem Zusammenhang, bringt aber an sich sehr beachtenswerte Gedanken vor zu einer würdigeren und weniger schablonenhaften Behandlung des Kinderstücks.

München. Eugen Kilian.

Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama. 1558—1642. A History of the Drama in England from the Accession of Queen Elizabeth to the Closing of the Theaters, to which is prefixed a Résumé of the Earlier Drama from its Beginnings. 2 Vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1908. pp. XLIII, 606, and X, 685.

For something more than a generation the student of Elizabethan drama has found his Bible, dictionary, and encyclopaedia in Ward's "History of English Dramatic Literature". Its service has been very great, and will continue; but its qualities have made only more apparent the need also of a service of another kind. Ward's method is literary, chronological and biographical: his eye is fixed pretty steadily on the individual play and date and author. For an adequate view of the dramatic activities and development of the time we have needed, to supplement this and to correct its inevitable misleadings, a study devoted to the development of dramatic species and currents, a study longitudinal rather than cross-sectional, a history proceeding not by the method of annals, but by a synthesis of the various forces in the living drama. Such a study and history we now have in this book, from the hands of a high authority.

What Professor Schelling has attempted is set forth in his preface. "It is the purpose of this investigation to relate not only those facts .... which are usually comprehended under the term history, but likewise to determine the development of species among dramatic compositions within the period; to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the character of each play considered, and refer it to its type; to establish its relations to what had preceded and to what was to follow; and definitely to learn when a given dramatic species appeared, how long it continued, and when it was

superseded by other forms." How he has proceeded may be indicated by the titles of some of his earlier chapters: The Old Sacred Drama, The Morality and the Earlier Secular Drama, Early Dramas of School and Court, The London Playhouse, The New Romantic Drama, The National Historic Drama, Domestic Drama, Romantic Comedy. To the body of the work is prefixed an Introduction, given to definition and general description of the field; and it is followed by an admirably lucid and effective summary in retrospect. To this are added a Bibliographical Essay, an invaluable List of Plays, and a satisfactory Index.

A competent criticism of such a work within these limits is of course impossible. It would require not only very large space, but a knowledge of the field equal to the author's own—and he has read practically every play of the period, so that we have here an analysis "quantitative as well as qualitative". The book must largely be left to be tried out by years of use. This notice must be confined to a rapid consideration of its most prominent features.

The reader's attention will first be focussed on the method. It has to be confessed that it is something of a shock, and that one trained in Ward may at first experience a strong sense of loss. It is somewhat discouraging to the student of Shakespeare or of Jonson to have to seek his work, play by play, through hundreds of pages and with the necessary assistance of an index. But the result of such a search more than compensates for the initial difficulties. One finishes with an ampler knowledge and more definite appreciation of what these men were, as forces in their time, and of what their plays were, not only individually but as manifestations of a common dramatic life. What above all Schelling accomplishes by his method is that the drama is beheld not merely as plays and playwrights and players, but as a revelation of actual human life. The method is not to be judged as though it were offered as the only one applicable. Its fruits in the book are its more than sufficient warrant; and if it does not enable us to dispense with Ward, it proves itself indispensable.

As to the classifications—indicated by the chapter titles—one feels more doubt. The difficulties are many. A single play often contains elements of various classes: what is to be considered primary, what secondary, is not easy to determine. Nor are the principles of Schelling's classification always visible. Sometimes he divides according to form and treatment, sometimes according to matter. Thus on the one principle the Comedy of Humors is distinguished from the Comedy of Manners; on the other, National Historical Drama is separated from Historical Drama on Foreign Themes. Though emphasis on the national impulse is valuable, that something is lost by the latter separation is clear. And Schelling is not quite always careful to explain why he locates a play in one possible class instead of another: we ask in vain why *Antony and Cleopatra* is treated under Romantic Tragedy while *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* are assigned to History and Tragedy on Classical Myth and Story. "Marlowe's tragic masterpiece", *Edward II*, finds its place under National Historical Drama, *Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* under The New Romantic Drama, *Tamburlaine* and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* under both The New Romantic Drama and Romantic Tragedy.

In the distinction between History and Tragedy Schelling classifies according to "material, treatment and origin, rather than dramatic or poetic excellence" (I, 151), and admits the "unreality" while maintaining the "desirability" of his classification. The commonest distinction of all, that between tragedy and comedy, he often appears to regard as artificial, and to seek to free himself from it. It certainly presents not always recognized difficulties: but the distinction is so fundamental, so resides in the inmost nature of the drama, that its neglect is bound to bring greater loss than gain. Material and origin cannot be as helpful criteria, so far as the study of an individual play is concerned, as the logical forms and methods by which the drama secures its aims as art and interprets life. It is evident, too, that Schelling does not define "treatment" broadly enough.

But in all this matter it is very easy to be too emphatic. With material so complex, a wholly logical system is impracticable. It is not an interpretation of the Elizabethan drama as art at which Schelling aims, so much as a truer and completer understanding of the period and its greatest men in the light of their environment. In judging the work one must not lose sight of the author's declaration that "all classification is but a means to an end, like a scaffolding necessary to the erection of the structure, but, like other scaffoldings, to be discarded when the structure is complete". And certainly, whatever objections may lie against the builder's methods, it is an orderly and unified structure that he has erected. He has shown the drama as a living growth, with its roots far back in mediaeval times, and as developing to the end out of previous conditions, alike as to subject, method and presentation.

So much for the method of the book. Among the most interesting points made by the author are the following.

In the chapter on the London playhouse, in spite of some misinterpretation of allusions, notably Dekker's, a strong case is made out for the very early Elizabethan use of scenery much like our own. That there was such a thing as a typical stage is denied, and likewise that the «alternation" method of using front and back stage had any serious effect upon the construction of plays. The discussion is not complete nor quite convincing, but it is decidedly enlightening. The myth concerning Marlowe's death is examined, with the conclusion that we must abandon the traditional notion that he was "an atheistical blasphemer against high heaven".

The discussions of Shakespeare's work afford abundant opportunity for both dissent and praise. We ask, for example, Why the clause "if ever", in the statement "seldom, if ever, did he (Shakespeare) go anywhere else" than to Holinshed for his history? We wish that we could feel as sure as Furness and Schelling of the relation between *Twelfth Night* and *Laelia*, which Schelling calls on I, 374 a "probable source" and on II, 77 "the undoubted immediate source" of Shakespeare's play. We cannot agree to the extreme statement of "the total absorption of Shakespeare's attention in character, with the negligence of story, plot and all else" (II, 31); or think *The Merchant of Venice* "the last of Shakespeare's plays to show traces of an art other than his own" (I, 372). But elsewhere the author renders important service, as in showing Shakespeare's supremacy in his idealistic