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"Interludes"

In the beginning of the sixteenth century when the moralities were still in vogue, there arose another form of drama which dealt with the lighter aspects of life. This came to be known as interludes. The interludes stand between the moralities and the regular drama. Interludes were short dramas to be performed during the intervals of a banquet or other entertainments. The dramas provided comic relief. The moralities were disguised sermons whereas the interludes aimed at amusement and entertainment. The interludes which at first accompanied a feast gradually became the forerunners of regular drama in England. It was John Heywood who during the reign of Henry VIII gave a definite place to the interludes not only in literature but also in the evolution of drama. The inter-

ludes were meant for the educated and the intelligent people.

John Heywood was the first dramatist who gave an important place to the interludes in the history of English drama. It was Sir Thomas Moore who got him a place in the King's court where his work was to produce entertainments for the pleasure of the King. The interlude of the 'Four P's' the Palmer, the Pardoner, the Pottery and the Pedler is the best known of the interludes. The dramas in those days were in the form of speeches. The 'Four P's' is nothing but long speeches by the four characters. A more known play by John Heywood is 'The play of the Wether'. Another interlude by Heywood is 'The merry play between the Pardoner and the Frere'. The growing demand for the interludes led to the formation of the company of the

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actors. These companies were maintained by the noblemen. The successful interludes were produced before the public too provided the actors were given leave to do so. The interludes, besides entertaining the Tudor gentlemen and ladies also gave some instructions to them. The humour of the interludes was crude and the action clumsy. It is a very remarkable fact that the miracles, the mysteries and the interludes continued to be popular even when the new ambitious dramas had captured the stage. It is true that the dramatists drew inspiration from the classical dramas but these new dramas were not as popular as the miracles and other early dramas. According to Moody and Lovett "The interludes, as a whole, afford a clear illustration of the growing intellectual curiosity of the Renaissance, as

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well as the popular devotion
to the dramatic form."

The end.

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