WOMEN AS ACTRESSES.--There seems no doubt that actresses did not perform on the stage till the Restoration, in the earliest years of which Pepys says for the first time he saw an actress upon the stage. Charles II. must have brought the usage from the Continent, where women had long been employed instead of boys or youths in the representation of female characters. Tom Coryat, in his "Crudities on Travels," 1611, as Mr. Lee says, saw actresses performing on the stage at Venice. John Chamberlain, in a letter to Dudley Carleton, 1602, relates a hoax or swindle played upon the public by a person who proposed, at a high price of entrance, to exhibit actresses in a theatre. Chamberlain ventures to think he had heard of actresses before in England. Mr. Lee says women did perform in masques which were played before royalty or among the aristocracy by persons of nobility. Henry VIII. is mentioned in the "Chronicles" of Hall, 1512, as having introduced masques into England, and having taken a part in them himself. Edward III., however, is said to have given a precedent to the dramatic masque, which flourished during the sixteenth century in England. Masques are said to have been taken from Italy. Henry VIII., with a Spanish wife who participated in them, may, however, have been adopting the manners of Spain and Portugal. Instances of women acting in plays and of royal personages taking their parts in them are afforded in Portugal by Gil Vicente, who, in the beginning of the sixteenth century wrote dramas in the Castilian language, which gave rise to the Spanish theatre, and anticipated Lope de Vega and Shakespeare by nearly a century. It is related of him, "His plays were enacted at the Court of King Emmanuel, and the first of them was performed in 1504. They had great success, which increased during the reign of Emmanuel's successor, John III., who often played a part in them. It appears that Gil Vicente acted himself in his dramas, and it is certain that his daughter Paula (lady of honor to a royal Princess) was the first dramatic performer of her time in Portugal." Gil Vicente wrote *autos* or religious plays, comedies, tragi-comedies, and farces. Being the only dramatic author of his time, he gained a European reputation, and Erasmus learned Portuguese in order to read his works. It appears, therefore, that in 1602 the public were not averse to seeing actressess on the stage, as in their disappointment they wreaked vengeance on the furniture of the theatre, breaking to pieces what was in it. This was different from what happened near 30 years afterward, in 1629, when, as Mr. Collier relates, a French company were not permitted by the public to perform because they had actresses to fill women's parts. This marks the progress of Puritanism.—*Notes and Queries.*

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