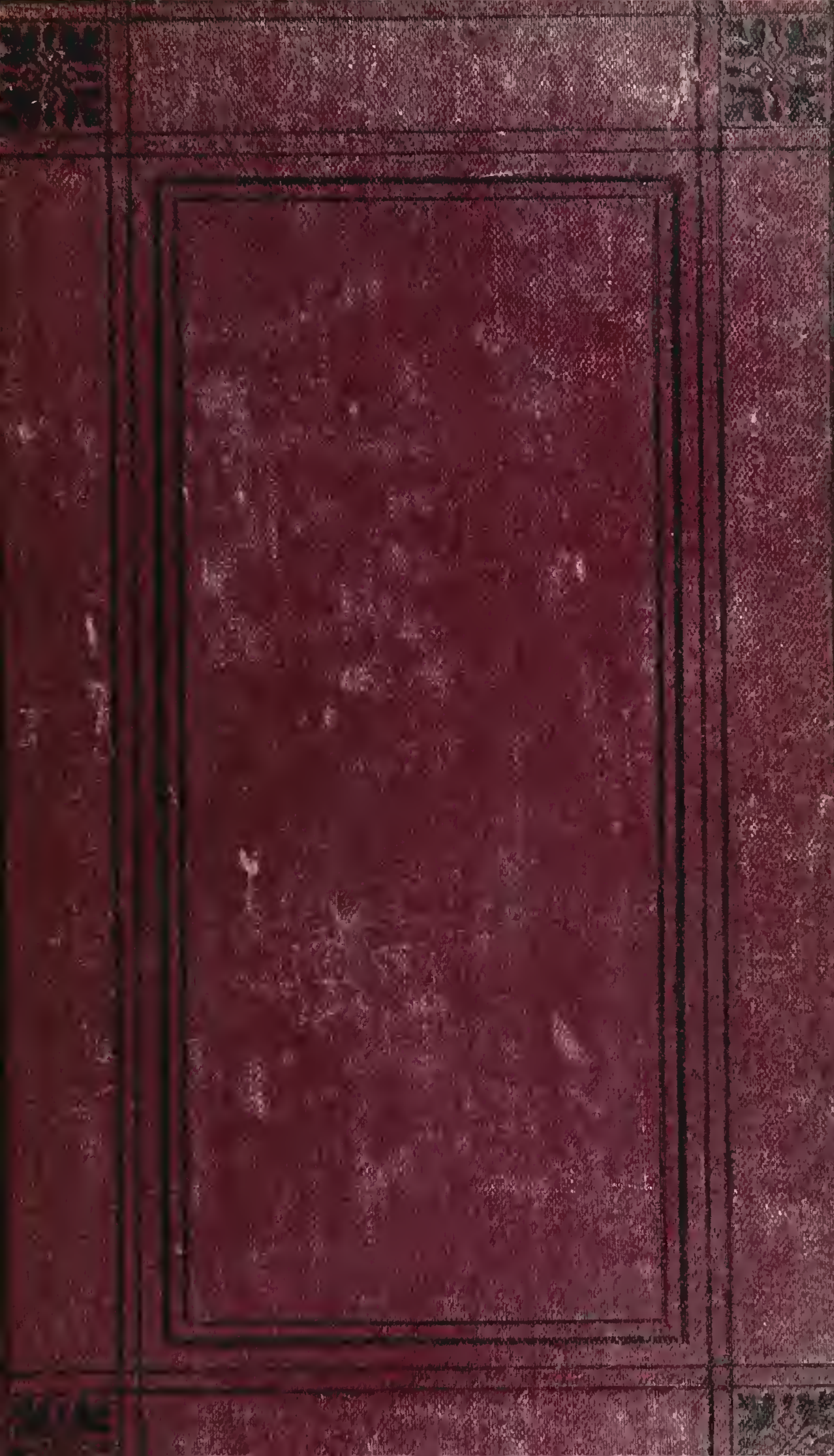

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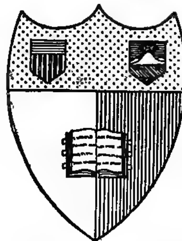

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To Miss Stokes

from her old friend

Jervaise Mortier

22d June 1875.

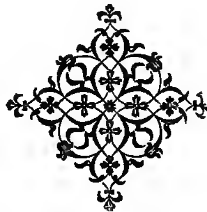
ESSAYS ON THE DRAMA.

ESSAYS ON THE DRAMA.

BY

THEODORE MARTIN.

"*Playhouses are more necessary in a well-governed commonwealth than schools; for men are better taught by example than precept.*"—Sir T. Overbury.



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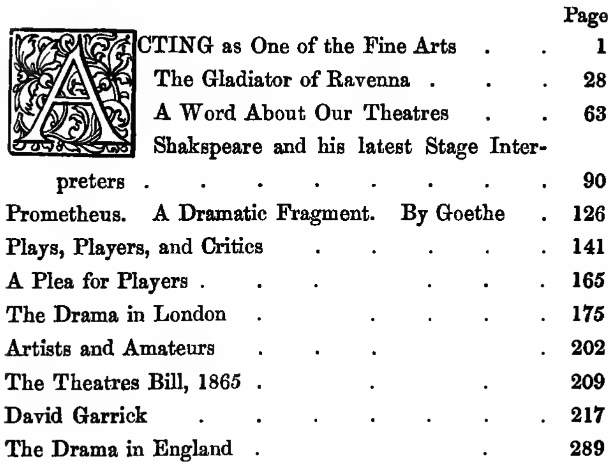

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ACTING AS ONE OF THE FINE ARTS.

(Dublin University Magazine, July, 1846.)

HAT the taste for the drama has been declining amongst us for many years, and is now at its lowest ebb, is a remark so familiar, that its soundness is never questioned. The *Syncretics*[1] tell us that the mind is wanting to follow them in their illustrations of the higher drama; and the managers are in despair, because the public will not reward with overflowing houses their assiduous efforts to illustrate the lower. The former never had, and never will have a public; the latter have lost theirs, in just retribution for pandering to a taste ephemeral in duration as it was coarse in its indulgence. The taste for such a drama as both are in the habit of presenting has declined among all the intelli-

[1] A name by which certain writers of this period were known, who wrote ambitious, but wholly unactable plays, describing "high actions and high passions" with more turgidity than force, and with a prevailing disregard to nature and probability.

gent supporters of the stage—or rather it never existed. But that the taste for the drama in itself—the love of the dramatic art, whether in author or actor, wherever it presents itself in a form worthy of the name—the delight in scenic representation, either when it is true to common nature, or when it transports us into those regions of the ideal where we instinctively recognize and bow before a higher truth—that these have not declined, is manifest to any one who has carefully watched the audiences of our theatres. Nay, to admit that they could by possibility have declined, would be to admit that we were behind our ancestors in our feeling for the earnest and the romantic in passion and emotion, and for the noble and beautiful in art and poetry—a position which, despite the mechanical tendency of the age, there seems to be no good warrant for admitting.

What the drama was to our forefathers, it is in a peculiar degree to us—a refuge from the dust, and drudgery, and commonplace of every-day life—where we may forget, in the "high passions and high actions" of the poet's world, how worn and weary, how petty and personal we become in this; and, catching new inspiration from the refreshing breezes of that better atmosphere, resume the routine duties of working-day existence with purer heart and higher purpose. For on us the burden of life presses more heavily every year as our civilization advances. Our faculties of thought and action are all tasked to the uttermost in the practical details of life; and we are swept along with the torrent, unable to do more than to cast mere

momentary glances towards those regions of ideal beauty which artists and poets—

> "Serene creators of immortal things,"

have conjured up for us, but towards which the spirit turns with a yearning, passionate in proportion to the obstacles to its gratification. We live too fast—we are forced to live too fast, to find leisure for contemplation. But the heart, the imagination, are immortal. Each will make itself heard, each will demand its gratification, let the world, with its practical strivings, absorb us as it may. And where, in all the realms of literature or art—where, amid the throng and turmoil of modern life, may both be satisfied so well and so readily as in a drama, rich like our own in all that can stimulate the feelings and quicken and irradiate the intellect? Here the necessity of our nature to escape from the real to the ideal finds an indulgence which it can find nowhere else. The drama is poetry in its highest, its most suggestive, as well as its most compact form. It places the joys, sorrows, passions, fears, struggles, temptations, triumphs, that are the essence of poetry, living before us, and makes every spectator as it were a poet for the time, by inspiring him with vivid sympathy for the passion or emotion of the scene. The drama must, therefore, always exercise an influence over an educated people, and never more than when they have little leisure, or are too much over-wrought, to pursue the calmer studies of the closet.

More peculiarly is this true as regards ourselves. The nation that produced Shakespeare, that cherishes

him as the supreme of poets, can never be indifferent to the acted drama. His plays were written for the stage, not for the study. Not only is he the first of poets, he is also first of dramatic artists, in skilful construction, in power of situation, in interest of action. Himself an actor, he loved and reverenced his art. He knew the power that lies in an actor's hands; and he trusted to that power to fill up his outline, to inform with the moving spirit of life the beings of his fancy, till they lived for other eyes and hearts truly and intensely as for his own. Rare, indeed, has been, and ever must be, the appearance of genius capable of fully carrying out our great poet's conceptions. Still, even from the most indifferent representation, some fresh ideas will be gathered—some clearer views of the general structure of the play, or of the characters that fill it. The public feel this, and they act upon the feeling. We see them attracted by his plays, even when these are put before them poorly, both as regards performers and scenic appointments; and wherever something like justice is done to his conceptions, they are never slow to recognize and reward the power.

Can any one who has watched the recent history of the stage doubt, that, if the tragic drama were to be placed before the public in worthy and suitable form, there would no longer be left the shadow of pretext for maintaining that the love of the drama had undergone any decay? Look, for example, at the success which attended Mr. Macready's admirable revivals of Shakspeare some years ago at Drury Lane. His manage-

ment was undertaken under serious disadvantages, both as regarded the circumstances in which he found the theatre, and in the materials for carrying out his purpose which lay within his command. For the first, the buffooneries, and indecencies, which had degraded what should have been the temple of national literature and of art into a haunt of folly and vice, had perverted the taste of that large class of play-goers who seek the theatre for mere excitement, whilst it had driven from its walls those to whom the drama was a study and intellectual recreation. The latter were to be won once more into the habit of visiting the theatre—the former were to be taught to find pleasure in something higher than the splendours of spectacle, or the meretricious fascinations of the ballet. On the other hand, the old companies of performers had all been broken up, and a company was to be brought together new to each other —in itself a drawback of a very serious kind—and for the most part unaccustomed to that long course of severe training which is necessary for the accomplishment of a good actor. Over these difficulties, the energy, intelligence, and predominating will of Mr. Macready, in a great measure triumphed. Mind resumed the place of "inexplicable dumb-show and noise" —spectacle was rendered subservient to the illustration of the poet. The public hailed the change with rapture, and seconded, most liberally, the efforts to establish a pure taste, and to present the masterpieces of dramatic art in a manner in some degree worthy of the poet's conceptions. These efforts were discontinued from causes, we believe, entirely private—public, at

least, only in so far as the public were losers by the result—certainly not from any lukewarmness on their part. Had they been continued, it may fairly be presumed that the cause of the drama would have been materially benefited. There were, no doubt, many and grave errors in Mr. Macready's management, which it is foreign to our purpose to consider, but it must always be regarded with grateful recollection by many, who then received higher and more vivid impressions of the capabilities of the stage than they had ever before imagined.[1]

The difficulties that would attend the revival of a similar enterprise are now infinitely augmented. Not that public support would be wanting—not that an equal amount of presiding intelligence could not be commanded. The resources of the antiquary, the machinist, and the scene-painter are equally ready now as before. The whole dead machinery of the stage, the framework of the picture, is equally at command. But where are the actors? We neither have them now, nor do we see much prospect of having them. It is they, we maintain, who have declined; not the taste for the drama. Place a Kemble, a Siddons, a Kean upon the stage, surround them with that cluster of able and practised artists who vied with them in their great delineations of character and passion, and see whether the public would be less forward than before to do

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[1] A mistaken idea is prevalent that Mr. Macready lost money by his management at Drury Lane. This was not the case. We had the denial from his own lips.

homage to their genius! So far is indifference to excellence from being characteristic of the time, that it seems to us, there is only too great an eagerness to hail even the semblance of power, and to crown it with the fame and rewards that should be reserved only for greatness. Some peculiarity of manner, some unusual vehemence of style, some mere trick of art—anything, in short, that is out of the usual run of commonplace, passes current as evidence of genius. But the prevailing curse of clever mediocrity has, with one or two brilliant exceptions, settled upon the stage, as upon literature and art, and we cast our eyes hopelessly around for evidence of that high ambition and patient striving towards greatness which made the stages of Drury Lane and Covent Garden illustrious during the last generation.

It seems as if greatness then produced greatness—genius fostered genius—as, indeed, we believe they ever will. Sympathy and emulation stimulated faculties, that had else lain dormant, to join in the glorious struggle for distinction,

> "Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> Noctes atque dies præstanti niti labore."—

The skill, intelligence, and enthusiasm of every labourer in the same noble field reacted favourably upon his fellows, and all attained a higher excellence than they could have reached, had each been left to pursue his aspirations singly and alone. We see the operation of this principle in the lyrical Italian opera of Her Majesty's Theatre. There all the performers are masters of the art,—all have risen to their position

by the labour and science of years bestowed in the cultivation of great original powers. Each individual is distinguished by some peculiar gifts. In combination they produce effects of surpassing excellence. The collision of the qualities of one performer with those of another corrects faults, develops new ideas, suggests new combinations. A school where even accomplished artists may learn is thus formed, and the public reap the results in the improved musical taste which is insensibly acquired under the influence of such consummate skill.

Let us imagine a national theatre with a company of corresponding excellence, with genius for the tragic drama equal to that of Grisi, Lablache and Mario in the lyrical, and with the same predominating taste and intelligence in all the details of the scene! Can it be doubted, that such a theatre would command the warmest support of all cultivated people, of all those sections of society who are at present repelled from our theatres by bad plays and worse acting? Unquestionably it would. But alas! the hope of such a theatre and of such actors is a remote one indeed.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is nevertheless the fact, that the increasing love for the drama has debased its quality and lowered the standard of excellence in the performers. The demand for the latter has outrun the supply, and inferior talent is consequently elevated to a position far above what it could formerly have obtained. So long as dramatic performances were limited to a few theatres, the leading actors were concentrated within their walls, and they were regarded

by the profession generally as the goal of honourable distinction for which it was their ambition to qualify themselves. Within these theatres a system of rigid discipline was maintained, and a high standard of excellence preserved. The ideas of the great performers of former times were handed down, and the genius of the actor availed itself of the conceptions and experience of his predecessors. The whole resources of art were then brought in aid of the original powers of the actors. In the provinces, again, the theatres of Edinburgh and other places were considered as schools for the training of young actors. The same high standard of excellence was there placed before them by the managers, and maintained by the occasional visits of the great actors, who kept alive within their younger brethren the ambition of distinction, while they illustrated the means by which it was to be obtained. Years on years were then not thought too much for the practice of the subordinate parts of the profession, years of severe application and study, in which habits of observation were acquired and ripened, and practical dexterity attained in an art where it is only to be arrived at by patient and persevering zeal. The plays, too, which then held possession of the stage were plays of character and passion. To embody them, knowledge of life and of the heart were indispensable, and the actor could not escape into that mere sparkle and dash of manner, which carries most of our performers successfully through the extravagance and caricature of the staple pieces of the present day. Under these circumstances, a class of performers grew

up,—well studied in the theory and practice of their art; and there was no leading provincial theatre which could not show within its company more than one actor of a higher stamp than will now be found in any except the leading metropolitan theatres.

But we have changed all this. Actors, like other people, live in a hurry now-a-days. The steps to greatness are forgot in the eagerness to achieve it. They must run before they can walk, and, like Bottom, put in for the topping parts without scruple. The patience of genius, one of its essential qualities, is clean banished from our theatres; and, if an actor can but command a trifle of applause in some minor part, he takes it as a sure sign that he has the stuff of a Kean within him, and that nature and his inborn greatness are wrongfully depressed by the jealousy and ignorance of his manager. Unfortunately, too, the demand for actors which the increase of theatres, especially under the recent Licensing Act, has created, gives only too much scope for the indulgence of this vanity, for it holds out a premium to any thing in the shape of talent, however raw, which acquirement and long years of experience were formerly unable to command.

In this way companies are perpetually changing—habits of patient perseverance and mutual emulation are lost. Acting ceases to be an art, and becomes the mere assumption of dress and language, without an attempt at impersonating character. Then, too, managers find that they cannot get up the sterling plays and comedies that filled their theatres of old, and seek a fitter occupation for the abilities of their performers in

melo-drama and burlesque. Matters grow worse and worse. The better class of playgoers desert the theatre; attractions of coarser grain must be found for those who remain. The powers of the actors themselves degenerate, because they have neither the ambition nor the scope to improve; and thus the majority of our provincial theatres threaten in the long run to fall under the control of the galleries, which, as matters now stand, have become their chief support.

How this state of things is to be reformed, and the drama to be restored to a condition commensurate with its own dignity and the intelligence of the time, it is not easy to see. It is not from without, we apprehend, that the remedy is to come. The public cannot supply dramatic or any other power—they can only encourage it, and encourage it they will, whenever it comes before them. The fault is not theirs, if the theatres be deserted, when they visit them only to be disappointed —perhaps disgusted. They cannot be expected to leave home, and home studies and enjoyments, and to lay out money for the privilege of seeing incapable actors and plays that minister neither amusement nor instruction. The evil is in this—that the stage, generally, is below the average intelligence of the time, not above it, as it should be. From itself, then, and from its professors, the reformation of its defects must flow. Let these rise to the level of the current taste amongst the educated classes. Let actors learn to appreciate the importance and dignity of their own art, and strive, as of old, to guide and elevate the taste and intelligence of their audience—let them remember that they may

become the exponents of the noblest poetry in the world, and exercise a sway over the hearts and minds of thousands, such as even great orators have it rarely in their power to exert; and they may then confer a lasting benefit on the nation, and make their profession at once lucrative and honourable to themselves.

The first step towards this result will be the steadfast contemplation of their profession as a great and ennobling art, the object of which is to pourtray the many-coloured forms of life and emotion in such a way as to refine the feelings, to elevate the mind, to educate the taste—an art that brings to bear on its exercise a wide and searching knowledge of the human heart; an acquaintance with the perfect forms and groupings of painting and sculpture; a vivid apprehension of the subtlest beauties of poetry in its highest form. In all things the actor must learn to think of his art first, and of himself as subordinate to it. Let him strive to raise it, and he cannot fail to rise with it. Let it be his first care that the work be presented to the spectator, lifelike and complete, as it was moulded in the poet's brain, each part carefully finished in itself, and bearing its due relation to those around. *Desdemona* is not to be sacrificed to *Othello*, nor *Jacques* slurred over, because *Rosalind* fills a more prominent place in the eyes of the audience. All are important, all worthy of a performer's best care in giving to them precisely that importance in the scene which the poet had in view.

We know how little of this spirit prevails on our stage now—how little of it has perhaps ever prevailed. Performers judge of plays and of parts, with reference

solely to their own share in them. The treatment of the subject of the drama, as a whole, never occupies their thoughts. It would be well if they would take a lesson in this from the continent. There a great actress will not hesitate to assume a subordinate part, and to throw her best powers into it, if need be; as we have known in the case of *Schröder*, who followed a majestic performance of *Lady Macbeth* on one night by undertaking *Lady Capulet* the next. What her views on this subject were may be gathered from her answer to a friend, who expressed surprise at her undertaking so insignificant a part. "Insignificant! a character of Shakspeare's insignificant!" So, too, when an actor of some eminence refused a minor part in one of Schiller's plays, at the Weimar Theatre, Goethe, as Eckerman tells us, answered him, "If you will not play it, I will play it myself;" and he would have done it, too, had the recusant not succumbed. Unfortunately, some of even our greatest performers appear to have possessed little of this spirit; they have felt a morbid dread of letting themselves down, by playing anything but leading parts; and by always acting upon this fear, they have, perhaps, made it well-grounded. At all events, they have done this prejudice to the cause of the drama, that they have accustomed audiences to go to see this or that particular performer, and not to see the play as a whole put upon the stage in all respects in the best possible style.

A reformation, such as we have pointed at, can only come by slow degrees; perhaps, only in another generation. It must be commenced by one or more of the

leading members of the profession, or by the efforts of some actor of genius, sufficient to arrest and direct the public taste, and to inspire a new feeling in the profession. There never was a time, we believe, more favourable to the attempt than the present, if the stage could but furnish the man or men to make it. The want of a good theatre for the higher drama is deeply felt in the metropolis, where both the great theatres have been handed over to opera and ballet, and the only other well appointed theatre, the Haymarket, is devoted almost exclusively, and indeed, has a company only adapted, to comedy. But strongly as it is felt, any imperfect attempt to establish a theatre to supply this void would, in all probability, fail; because nothing short of excellence will satisfy such an audience as it must depend on for success. And we do not well see how any attempt could, in the present state of things, be otherwise than imperfect, seeing that such talent as does exist could only be brought together at an expense which no theatre of proper dimensions could warrant.

Small as the grounds for nourishing it may be, we cannot surrender the hope, that a better race of performers may yet arise, with higher ideas of their art, and greater accomplishments, than are to be found in the majority of those now upon the stage. The prejudice against the dramatic profession has greatly diminished, and it is the fault of its own members that it is not already extinct in all quarters where its existence could be regretted. It holds out great prizes to ambition, in the shape both of fame and fortune. Excellence in it is a passport to good society; and it demands no more

labour in its study than is expended, too often thanklessly, in the education of the learned professions. That it does not number more educated men within its ranks is therefore surprising. Of course to be a great actor, as to be a great statesman or great lawyer, demands the rare gift of genius. But why should we not have as many highly accomplished actors, at least, as we have statesmen and lawyers, created more by the force of study and perseverance than by great natural powers? If our view of the art be correct, no scholar or gentleman need to blush at the adoption of the profession; nor will he turn back from it, despite the many disturbances to enthusiasm and self-respect which he may encounter within it. No doubt he will need all his enthusiasm, all the reliance on his own ideal of his art to sustain him through the degradations and discomforts that beset it. But no profession is entirely free from these, and the theatrical profession is not without compensations for its sorest trials.

For ourselves, it appears to us that there is almost no position which supplies so many gratifications of those tastes and motives which influence the best natures as those of a great actor or actress. Their greatness presupposes quick and keen sensibility, and sympathies warm and comprehensive. Their studies lie among the masterpieces of art, of learning, intellect, and poetry. The painter or sculptor is not more free to indulge his love for nature in its boundless variety of grandeur and beauty, or to follow the sportings of imagination through the bright world of dream, and poetry, and romance. Like the painter, too, great actors are the stewards of

the mysteries of nature, gifted to probe her most recondite recesses, to apprehend the spirit of all forms and passions. The human heart, in all its phases of power and weakness, is their kingdom. The pleasures and pains of many lives are theirs. The beings begotten of the poet's brain live again in them. They rise with their greatness—bend with their mighty griefs—are swayed by their passionate impulses—glow with their intense joys, that rush along the blood, and "feel almost like pain." They may shake off the trammels of vulgar life, and move in the pure regions of the ideal. They *are* the *Imogen* or the *Othello* of the hour. With all these internal and external resources, and incentives, and supports, they wield, too, an influence over the hearts of others—one hour of which many noble natures would almost purchase with life; an influence great as that of the greatest poets and artists, and, in the direct expression of the homage which it commands, second not even to that called forth by the highest oratory, inspiring and illuminating with eye, and voice, and language, and shaking, with its "oracular thunder,"

"The listening soul in the suspended blood."

In the plenitude of inspiration, and armed with language, the mere utterance of which is a potent spell, the great actor feels and knows that the minds of the listening thousands before him are within his grasp, and that he may turn and wind them which way he will;—fascinate, subdue, exalt, alarm, distract. Their very souls are his for the time. He sees his power in the smiling eye, the rigid muscle, or the rush of tears. An

impalpable sympathy convinces him of his triumph, and he leaves the stage with the deafening plaudits in his ears of men and women of all grades, and all degrees of mental and moral culture, whose will and feelings have been surrendered to his control for hours, pealing the assurance that he has put his idea into living action, and inspired his audience with the vivid image of some lofty character, that may affect their own being beneficially for life.

The actor may be above his audience; but he can always in some measure lift them towards himself—eye speaking to eye, and tongue to ear, and motion to sense, as we feel ourselves exalted in the presence of a nobler nature. Not so is it with the philosopher or the poet. They are in advance of their time. Their audience is to seek. Not in the flushed cheek and kindling eye of their fellow-men—not in outspoken plaudits or vivid sympathy, must they expect solace and support amid the doubts and depressions that beset genius, but in the light of their own high endeavours and noble studies. Calmly they abide their time, knowing the truth which Anster has beautifully paraphrased from Goethe—

> "The truly great, the genuine, the sublime,
> Wins its slow way in silence, and the bard,
> Unnoticed long, receives from after-time
> The imperishable wreath, his best, his sole reward."

Yet who shall say, which is the more desirable triumph—the actor's or the poet's—the assurance of success of the one—the misgivings of the other? And the fame itself! To how few is it more than a name; a name that leaves no stronger impression on the ear than those of Polos, or Œagros, or Roscius, the great

actors of antiquity, or Burbage, or Betterton, Garrick, or Siddons? Their spirits do not, it is true, "rule us from their tombs," as do those of Phidias, or Raphael, or Homer, or Milton. But is not their memory as familiar to us, as suggestive to our thoughts, as the great proportion of those illustrious names that do

> "On fame's eternal hederoll shine for aye?"

And surely not unmeet it is, that they should be so remembered, when it is considered how great and salutary their influence is upon the moral and intellectual being of a people, by implanting or fostering elevated and purifying sympathies, and by educating their tastes for the beautiful and noble in feeling and thought, in expression and in motion.

A great actor or actress! What qualities does this pre-suppose! A fine form, habitually graceful, and capable of dignity and grandeur—features flexible for the expression of the most minute shades of feeling, as of the strongest passion—a voice, full, clear, and resonant from its lowest to its highest tones—an instinctive knowledge of the outward expressions, in look, and act, and gesture, of all varieties of emotion—an ear refined to the most subtle cadences of verse—a heart and mind that can grapple with and quicken within themselves

> "All thoughts, all feelings, all delights—
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,"—

a cultivated taste that rounds and refines all its motions and gestures to the limits of what is beautiful or graceful or grand. Such qualities, we apprehend, constitute a

great actor or actress; and where such qualities exist, who shall estimate their wholesome and elevating influence on the minds of an audience? To this influence we would joyfully subject the plastic minds of our children, assured that they would reap a profit from it to their tastes and whole moral being, similar, but higher in degree, to that education of their eye for the beautiful in form and colour, which they would imbibe, if habitually surrounded by the masterpieces of ancient art.

We know that there have been great actors and actresses without many of these qualities which we have described. Genius, the lightning flame of mind, has made physical defect a matter of indifference. In their mood of inspiration, "Pritchard was genteel, and Garrick six feet high." And so it will ever be. But where these qualities are combined with genius, how glorious the result! In a greater or less degree, we believe, they must have been possessed by the great actors of former times. They shine conspicuously in the great living ornament of the English stage—Miss Helen Fancit,—a lady, whose recent performances in our Dublin theatre, during an engagement of unusual duration, have left us, in common with all who had the good fortune to witness them, under a debt of gratitude which we are proud to acknowledge.

Miss Helen Fancit is one of those rare creatures, "with gifts and graces eminently adorned," whom we feel it to be a privilege to have seen; and, whom having seen, we can afford to resign all regret at not having known her great predecessors. Her genius is of a class that renders comparison impertinent. She is original

in her greatness, and herself supplies the standard by which alone she can be fitly judged. It is not by reference to others who have gone before her that she is to be estimated, but to what she is in herself. She is not to be criticised, but studied, as we study the masterpieces of some great sculptor or poet. And she *is* the greatest poetess of our time, in the power, the variety, the beauty of the images which she places before us, of the sentiments which she awakens, of the memories to endure with life itself implanted in us by her "so potent art." Words, however powerful, produce no such impression, do not so permeate and steal into the very depths of our being, as the unwritten poetry of this lady's acting. It is not alone our fancy, our imagination, or our intellect that is excited—but with these our whole sentient nature is purified and refined. Her performances not merely send us away filled with brighter and higher conceptions of the creatures of the poet's world, whom she has embodied, but better men, inspired with something of the Ideal, the study of which has made her the great mistress of her art which she is.

Miss Helen Faucit's impersonations are nature itself; but they are nature as it appears to the poet's eye—nature in its finest and most beautiful aspect. She possesses in an eminent degree the physical requisites for her art—a person graceful and dignified, a voice supremely fascinating in its "most silver flow," yet equal to the expression of the most commanding passion—a face gifted peculiarly with that "best part of beauty, which a picture cannot express—no, nor the first sight of the life,"—a face, wonderful indeed, in the magic

and variety of its expression. Along with these, she possesses a complete command of all the resources which intelligence gathers from experience, and an obvious familiarity with the treasures of art, which has strengthened and exalted strong natural perceptions of the graceful and beautiful in form and motion. But greater than all these is the spirit by which they are vivified and swayed; the lofty impulses, the commanding powers of thought and feeling, the inspired energy, the pure taste, the exquisite ladyhood of nature which are conspicuous in all Miss Faucit's personations. It is such visions as she presents that bless the dreams of poets; and happy are we, who, in this dull mechanical time, have seen with our waking eyes a reality fair as imagination may picture.

The remembrance of these is fresh upon us as we write. Juliet, Rosalind, the Lady Constance, Portia, Lady Macbeth, "divine Imogen," Beatrice, all crowd upon our fancy; and after them Pauline, a character made more by Miss Faucit than by the author; Julia, Belvidera, Nina Sforza, and the Lady Mabel, that exquisite portraiture of all that can fascinate in womanly grace, or move in womanly suffering. To have seen Miss Faucit in these characters, is to have seen a whole world of poetry revealed, of which the most enthusiastic and intelligent study of their authors could have helped us to no idea. Henceforth they live for us—live in the most perfect form. Where the author has furnished but a barren outline, she pours into it the strength and radiance of her own spirit, and a noble picture glows before us. Nor is this true only in the case of inferior

poets. In dealing with Shakspeare, this great actress rises to the full measure of her strength. Her performances are revelations of the great master-poet's subtlest powers. When we have once seen them, there is a light evermore upon his page, which, but for the magic of this great commentator, would never have been there for us. Arden has a deeper charm in the shade of its "melancholy boughs;" for the smile of Rosalind, our own "very, very Rosalind," gleams through it, and the voice is near us, that wooed from Orlando, with its most womanly coquetry, the little remnant of his heart which he bore with him to the forest. We have stood beneath Juliet's balcony; we have heard the nightingale singing on the neighbouring pomegranate tree, and our eyes have trembled with Romeo's beneath the wonder of her face. We have followed her, as she rises heroically with every fresh disaster, and laid down our heart with hers, when she escaped from a life now nothing worth without the light of love. So, too, have we seen, as we could never have hoped to see, Lady Macbeth in the grandeur of her dauntless will, inflexible from its purpose; and when this was achieved, and the avenging furies lay their grasp upon her, maintaining a Spartan self-control, dying a daily death in the pangs of uncommunicated remorse, isolated from her selfish lord, to whom and to whose ambition she had sacrificed all. Miss Faucit's conception of this character, original and most powerful as it is, throws more light upon it than the sagacity of all the commentators. In it we see a will masculine in energy, a heart insensible to fear,—a mind subtle, prompt, and resolute, without religion,

without pitifulness, without sentiment in any shape,—and yet a woman, claiming some hold on our sympathies, in her wifely love, her endurance, and in the inevitable pangs of retributive conscience. Here, as in all other characters, she seems to have trusted to the instincts of her own genius and woman's heart, and the result has proved that the trust was not misplaced. It is, we know, a bold thing to say; yet believing, we must say it, that the genius is akin to Shakspeare's, that can so thoroughly realize his conceptions as Miss Helen Faucit does, clothing with very life the creatures of his imagination, and not one or two of these alone, but many—all various, and for the most part opposite in kind.

But this great actress's versatility is not confined to the romantic drama alone. Her *Antigone* stands out in the roll of her triumphs, simple and majestic, in severe beauty—consummate in its kind, as her *Imogen* or her *Constance*; but that kind how different! Here, twenty-three centuries after the poet who conceived it has gone to his rest, it is presented to us fresh and beautiful, like some magnificent statue dug up from the ruins of Time, perfect as when it left the sculptor's hand. The joy of the

> "Watcher of the skies,
> When some new planet swims into his ken,"

is a type of that, which every scholar and student of Greek life and literature and art must have experienced, when he first saw in the person of Miss Faucit the embodiment of this the noblest heroine of the Greek drama. It was the opening of a new world, or, more truly per-

haps to such a man, the vivifying of a dead but familiar one, when she first entered on the scene, "with face resigned to bliss or bale," and declared her determination to obey the dictates of nature in defiance of her uncle's decree. He saw before him the type of those beautiful forms, which sculpture has made immortal, in the majestic form, the simple drapery, the serene and noble features of the actress. She looked as one that had long been familiar to the sad thoughts of the destiny that hung upon her race, and under which her father had perished strangely before her eyes. And when she spoke, her voice, in its earnest tenderness, made richer music than the flowing numbers of the Grecian bard. Simple, noble, royal in her bravery of heart, she proclaimed to the tyrant the supremacy of the great law of Nature on which she had acted, in a manner which gave to the sublime thoughts of the poet all and more than all they lost in the feeble language of the translators.[1] But it is in the concluding scene that the powers of the actress rise to their height. The sisterly love that had sustained her till now is absorbed in the contemplation of the fearful doom that awaits her. Here the fervent imagination and wonderful power of Miss Faucit inspire her audience with a sympathy for the Greek girl, lively and intense as for the sufferings with which modern life is familiar. Dirce's clear-flowing stream, its many-coloured meadows, the rays of "golden Helios," all rise before our eyes, and we share the passionate ecstasy with which the young

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[1] We refer to the passage v. 450—*οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν.*

girl in the fulness of her life gazes on them for the last time. How shall we describe the tone, the gesture, with which her whole heart vents itself in that exclamation, in which is expressed the remorseless inevitable doom, that pursued the race of Labdacus.

> "Oh fate! The curse that fell on the maternal bed,
> That gave my father's mother's children birth,
> Was theirs, is mine."

"Ariadne passioning," Niobe with her slaughtered offspring around her, Cassandra in her prophetic mood, are the images that spring most readily to our mind. A sculptor that could have fixed the attitude in marble, though the deep pathos of the tremulous lip, and the eye that seemed to look through Fate, must have escaped him, would have earned lasting fame. The Greek stage could boast of no such acting—from its very character, such acting was impossible. But the spirit of Sophocles, speaking the voice of Nature, that was, and is, and ever shall be the same while the world endures, has found a home in the heart of an English girl, and thrills on English hearts with a force greater than could ever have been contemplated by the bard himself. Beautiful Antigone!—beautiful to us now in form and feature, as thou hast ever been in thy noble martyr spirit and great woman's heart!

The effect of such a performance on the taste and scholarship of a people cannot be over-estimated. The eye accustomed to beauty of form and to grace of motion so ideal, will shrink ever afterwards from the mean or the ungraceful. The mind into which the nobility of Antigone's character has been impressed by such fascinating

power, is permanently elevated. And for scholarship, it receives an impetus, and a flood of light from the living passion infused into the forms, that in the study have scarcely been associated with the idea of life, which no teaching could convey. It was well done, then, in the most eminent among us for learning and science, and the humanizing arts, to confess their gratitude as they did last year to this distinguished lady in the address which accompanied their appropriate gift of a classic *fibula*.[1] And it was better still, and a sight gratifying

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[1] The address was in the following terms:—

"TO MISS HELEN FAUCIT.

"MADAM—We beg to give expression to the unalloyed and sustained satisfaction which we have derived from your late performances at our national theatre.

"We have each and all endeavoured to promote the cultivation of classic literature, and the study of ancient art in this our city; and we feel that your noble representation of 'Antigone' has greatly advanced these important objects, by creating a love and admiration of the beauty and grandeur of ancient Greece.

"With the writings of the Grecian dramatists, it is true, we have long been familiar; but their power and their beauty have come down to us through books alone. 'Mute and motionless' that drama has heretofore stood before us; you, Madam, have given it voice, gesture, life; you have realized the genius, and embodied the inspirations, of the authors and of the artists of early Greece; and have thus encouraged and instructed the youth of Ireland in the study of their immortal works.

"We offer the accompanying testimonial to the virtues and talents of one, whose tastes, education, and surpassing powers have justly placed her at the summit of her profession.

"GEORGE PETRIE, V.P.R.I.A., Chairman.
JOHN ANSTER, LL.D., M.R.I.A. } Secretaries.
JOHN FRANCIS WALLER, M.R.I.A. }

"Dublin, 1845."

to all admirers of genius, to all who would wish to have learning prosecuted in an ardent and generous spirit, to see the youth of our university—the bud and promise of the mind of Ireland—crowding the theatre in a body, to learn from a young and beautiful woman to appreciate the genius of the Greek drama, and of one of its noblest masters.

When such a sight is to be seen, let us not be told that the taste for the drama is declining. Give us the drama as it should be given, and the public will do their part. Give us nature, and passion, and genuine art, and it will be seen that the spirit to appreciate, and the hand to reward them are not wanting.

[De Quincey, who saw Miss Faucit perform Antigone in Edinburgh, writes of it thus in his essay "On the Antigone of Sophocles" (Works, vol. 14):—"Suddenly—oh! heavens, what a revelation of beauty!—forth stepped, walking in brightness, the most faultless of Grecian marbles, Miss Helen Faucit as 'Antigone.' What perfection of Athenian sculpture! the noble figure, the lovely arms, the fluent drapery! What an unveiling of the ideal statuesque! Is it Hebe? Is it Aurora? Is it a goddess that moves before us? Perfect she is in form; perfect in attitude;

'Beautiful exceedingly,
Like a lady from a far countrie.'

It flattered one's patriotic feelings to see this noble young countrywoman realising so exquisitely, and restoring to our imaginations, the noblest of Greek girls."]

THE GLADIATOR OF RAVENNA.[1]

(Fraser's Magazine, March, 1857.)

N the barrenness of our present dramatic literature, it is pleasant to find that elsewhere in Europe there are authors to write and companies to act plays of a high class, like those contained in the edition of Friedrich Halm's works which has just been completed. One of these, *Der Sohn der Wildniss*, has been introduced to our own stage under the title of *Ingomar*, but not having fallen into the hands of capable actors, it has not taken the place which its originality and great dramatic beauty would otherwise have secured for it. Halm's *Griselda* was also acted in England several years ago with indifferent success; and his fine dramatic sketch, *Camoëns*, has been endenizened in the columns of *Blackwood*. Otherwise this author is little known in this country, and will probably remain so un-

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[1] *Friedrich Halm's Werke.* Vienna. London: Williams and Norgate. 1856.

less some of the Quarterlies shall devote the necessary space to a detailed criticism of his works. Such a task is quite beyond our limits, and we shall therefore confine ourselves to a notice of his last, and in some respects finest, play, *The Gladiator of Ravenna.*

This play was produced anonymously at the *Burg Theater* of Vienna, in October, 1854. It was then, and for a long time afterwards, ascribed to a certain Dr. Laube, till suddenly the authorship was claimed by a Bavarian schoolmaster, named Friedrich Bacherl, who alleged that in the play, which was then creating a *furore* throughout Southern Germany, he recognised the substance of a drama which he had some years before submitted to the director of the *Burg Theater*, and which had been returned by that gentleman as unfit for the stage. Great was the ferment which ensued, and in Munich the production of the piece led to something as like an O. P. riot as, under the limitations of Bavarian liberty, was possible. How the controversy ended we never learned, and the volume before us does not say, as the play quietly takes its place, without one word of comment, among Halm's other works. Possibly, as there were people to declare that

"Garth did not write his own Dispensary,"

there are still believers in Laube and Bacherl. All we can say is, that this play has a marvellous family resemblance to its companions, and that as it is published as Halm's, we believe it to be purely and simply his.

The story has evidently been suggested by two sen-

tences of Tacitus. In his mention of the first defeat inflicted upon the army of Arminius by Germanicus, when he entered Germany to avenge the signal overthrow of Varus in the Teutoburger Forest by the great German leader, that brilliant word-painter records that, among the prisoners then taken,—

"Inerant fœminæ nobiles; inter quas uxor Arminii, eademque filia Segestis, mariti magis quam parentis animo, neque victa in lacrimas, neque voce supplex, compressis inter sinum manibus, gravidum uterum intuens."—*Ann.* i. 57.

Arminius's wife, whose name was Thusnelda, soon after being taken to Rome to swell the triumph of Germanicus, gave birth to a son, who, according to Strabo, was called Thumelicus, and of him Tacitus says, "educatus Ravennæ puer, quo mox ludibrio conflictatus sit, in tempore memorabo." The lost books of the *Annals* no doubt contained the fulfilment of the promise here given, but of this son nothing further is known historically. Enough, however, is suggested in the words just quoted for the purposes of the dramatist, who, availing himself of the facts that a woman of the character indicated, the wife of the great German hero, gave birth in captivity to a son, and that this son was trained as a gladiator at the school of Ravenna, and actually made his appearance in the arena, has constructed a play full of life and action and interest, despite the remoteness of the period and the antagonism of most of the characters to modern sympathies.

The play opens in the gardens of Marc Antony in Rome, with the arrival of what a Virginian would call a "prime lot" of gladiators for the approaching games.

They are under the guidance of Glabrio, the master of the Ravenna School, who is as proud of his troop, and in much the same vein, as a dog-fancier in the present day is of his "toy" dogs. The various characters of his burly ruffians and their mutual jealousies are nicely individualized, and developed with great dramatic vivacity. Foremost among them are Këyx and Thumelicus; the former an old hand, and king of the school; the latter the most promising pet of the fancy, and described by Glabrio, to the disgust of the brawny Këyx, as—

"Handsome as Phœbus, blooming as a rose."

Këyx, it is plain, will not long hold his supremacy undisputed. Thumelicus is bent on reigning in his stead, stimulated thereto partly by ambition, and more strongly by the bravados of Këyx, that he is as intimate as himself in the good graces of *Lycisca*, a flower-girl of whom Thumelicus is enamoured. From words they fall to blows, and are only parted by the vigorous whip of their master Glabrio. The rest being dismissed to their quarters, Glabrio takes Thumelicus under his especial charge, soothing him by assurances that Lycisca is now in Rome, and true to him, and that she shall visit him forthwith. It is all-important that his favourite shall not get out of condition through fretting, and Glabrio coaxes him with the coarse sugar-plums of flattery and fawning. The animalism and degraded sensuousness of the whole party are brought out with great skill.

As Glabrio and Thumelicus retire, Thusnelda and

her kinswoman Ramis, who have been prisoners at large in the gardens of Antony since their first arrival in Rome, enter in conversation, and from them the audience learns the circumstances of Thusnelda's captivity; and that having meditated suicide rather than attend the triumphal car of Germanicus, she had forborne on finding that she bore another life within her own. Her boy has been torn from her in infancy, and she knows not where or how he has been trained, or indeed if he be alive. Germany has not forgotten, however, either the captive queen or her son, and *Merovig*, the brother-in-arms of Arminius, along with some other German chiefs, has entered the Roman service, and come to the capital for the purpose of effecting the release of Thusnelda and Thumelicus, and setting up the latter as their leader in a great scheme for liberating Germany, and establishing the unity of the kingdom. Merovig finds his way into the gardens, developes his designs to Thusnelda, and has just informed her that her son still lives, and that she will soon see him, when voices are heard approaching, and he is compelled to retreat before he can apprise her where and what her son is, leaving in her hands the sword of her dead husband. The act closes thus:—

> "THUSNELDA.—See him again!
> But one word, Merovig! See him again!
> Is 't dream? Or truth? No, no, it is no dream.
> This is Arminius' sword, and shall I not
> Within my son's hand place it, shall I not
> Incite his spirit to a hero's deeds,
> And set his father's image 'fore his eyes?
> I shall, I shall!—Ye great, ye righteous gods,

Oft in the silent night have I besought ye,
To lay within my hands, and on my soul,
Some mighty purpose, yet before I died,—
To entrust to me some mission high and grave,
That, undistraught by weakness or by hate,
I might unswervingly my task fulfil,
Might be Thusnelda still, Arminius' wife,
And worthy of the German name I bear!
This ye have done, ye have trusted to my hands
My country's might, her honour, and her future;
And here I vow—clutch ye this hand I raise
In witness of my oath, and hold it fast—
I will fulfil the task ye have enjoined,
This I will do, and if my powers shall fail,
I'll break, as breaks the oak before the blast,
But bend I will not, ever, ever more!

THUMELICUS (*entering*).—It is too hot within! I cannot sleep!
And I can't get that Këyx from my sight!
So ho! What woman's this here with the sword?

RAMIS (*returning from assisting* MEROVIG *to escape*).—
He has escaped!

THUS. Hush, hush! Look there! Ye gods!

RAMIS. What ails thee? What's amiss?

THUS. Dost thou not see?
Or is it only to my eyes revealed?
Look yonder, look!

RAMIS. By the gods' cloud-wrapt throne,
That is Arminius from crown to sole!

THUM. Why do you stare at me, ye crackbrained crones?
What want ye? Speak!

THUS. No, it is not the shade
Of my Arminius risen from the grave!
No, thine eye flashes, and thy voice rings clear;
Thou livest, thou art my son, and—hence, ye tears,
With your bedimming veils!—and let these arms
Enfold thee, clasp thee to my mother's heart!

THUM. What want ye? Let me—

THUS. Dost thou know me not?
But I, I know thee well—the dimple here,

And here the dark-brown mole. Sigmar, my son,
Dost thou disown the breast that suckled thee,
The arms that rocked thy infancy to sleep?
  THUM. Sigmar? I've heard that name before—
  THUS. Here, take
This sword! 'Tis thine! 'Tis thy inheritance.
Now flames a brighter lustre from thine eyes.
Oh, look upon me,—longer, closer still!
And let me steep and comfort my sick soul
In the deep liquid ocean of thine eye!
  THUM. That look! That voice! Is my brain turned?
  THUS. Hush! hush!
Music! These are the melodies of home!
How soft and sweet! Is the night come so soon?
I see thee not, yet do I hold thee fast.
We shall not part, my son—
  THUM. She totters, sinks;
Come hither! Quick!
  RAMIS. She faints.
  THUS. My son, my son!"

The second act passes in the Imperial Palace, where the scene opens upon a circle of Caligula's courtiers, who are discussing the most recent scandal and gossip of the Court whilst waiting for the appearance of the imperial tyrant. The period chosen is towards the close of Caligula's career, when his frantic excesses have become intolerable, and the conspiracy under which he fell is on the point of being matured by his favourite, Cassius Chærea, the prefect of the Prætorian Guard. This scene is throughout masterly in conception and details. It combines the charm of historical and poetical truth, and must be most effective in performance, full as it is of life, variety, and movement. We are prepared for the entrance of Caligula by the glimpses which we gather from the various speakers of

his cruelties, his excesses, the vanity which made him even insist on being worshipped as a divinity, and those other features of his character which are familiar to the scholar. This part of the scene is managed with an almost Shakspearian skill, delightfully in contrast with the prosy awkwardness of most German dramas. Let us step aside from the crowd with Cornelius Sabinus and Cassius Chærea, and listen to what the latter has to say of the tyrant, in answer to the remark of Sabinus, that the destinies of the world and of mankind are at the mercy of a blaspheming madman:—

"CASSIUS. It almost seems so! The plain truth is this;
Caligula is sick! He used to be,
Thou know'st, a man of brains and judgment, quick
To see and to decide, weighty in speech,
And loved the arts.—But for these last few weeks,—
In business or in converse, 'tis all one—
He drops by fits into a dream-like maze,
Stares right before him, then starts up anon,
Shouts, dances, leaps, then with a woful sigh
Cries, 'He is poison'd, that his life's assail'd!'
Then reels and staggers, till, quite spent, he sinks
Like a dead man into a breathless swoon.
By night he wanders sleepless through the halls,
Sees phantoms as he goes in every nook,
Stalks up to them, and babbles to the walls,
Answering their ghostly gibberish, which is heard
By no one but himself.
CORN. Crazed! As long since
He lost all stint and bound in his desires,
So to his troubled spirit outward things
Have lost their substance and coherency!
And this affrights thee! What delivers him
Into thy hand, disturbs thee?
CAS. Were he mad,
Quite mad, I should not care! But 'tis just this

Half blindness, this unsteady feeble glance
Of the soul's eye, this same paralysis
Of mind which wakes up suddenly to nerve
Its tiger spring, whose aim none can foresee,
'Tis this which scares me! The insane caprice
Which prompted him this morning to send out
Forty death-warrants, in some sudden fit
May on his tablets set my name. In brief,
I'll end this torture, and for ever!

CORN. How,
Thou wouldst, then—

CASS. He must hence, and quickly too!

(Cassius then developes his plan for the assassination of the Emperor, engages Sabinus to sound the Prætorians, undertakes to ascertain the views of the Senate himself; and continues :)

Hush! I see
The Cæsar coming. (CALIGULA *appears with his suite, and advances slowly.*)

CORN. Who are these with him?

CASS. That's Piso there, the same whose wife he stole
The other day, and Titus Marcius,
That idle prate-a-pace; the rest a troop
Of creeping things, that fawn and quake for life!
The old man with the bandage o'er his eye,
Who now adjusts the folds of Cæsar's robe,
Is Flavius Arminius.—Him thou knowest?

CORN. Arminius' brother, who our Varus slew
In the Teutoberger Forest?

CASS. Ay, the same;
And he adjusts the folds of Cæsar's robe!

CORN. In his place I should blush—

CASS. Psha, man, he is
Just such a German, as we sons of Rome!

(CALIGULA, *resting on the arm of* CAIUS PISO, *and attended by* TITUS MARCIUS, GALLUS VALERIUS, FLAVIUS ARMINIUS, *and other senators and equites, has meanwhile reached the centre of the stage; in the background, slaves.*)

CASS. (*after saluting* CALIGULA, *to the slaves*). The litter, ho!

CALIGULA. You'd have me to the bath?

No, Cassius, no! I'm thoroughly worn out,
So sick and weary, I feel like to drop.

CAS. Ho, slaves, a chair! A chair there, for the Cæsar!

CALIG. As I was saying, Piso, the dread weight
Of empire lies too heavy on my soul;
The duty of chastising irks my conscience,
The hourly claims on all my powers exhaust me.
Add, too, the perils, toils of the campaign
In Germany.

PISO. Yet such laurels followed them,
As even Germanicus, thy mighty father,
Did never win.

CASS. (*aside, to* CORNELIUS). He made some dozen slaves
Appear, disguised as Germans, in the scrub,
Whereon two legions presently must scour
The forest through, and set some trophies up.
That, friend, was his campaign in Germany!

CALIG. Yes, this campaign—thy hand, Arminius!
(*Supported by* ARMINIUS *and* PISO, *letting himself down upon the chair.*)
We achieved wonders, and our foemen fled—
Thou, Flavius, too, wert there.

FLA. I was, my liege.

CALIG. And saw them run, these German churls?

FLA. Oh, yes,
They ran, great Cæsar!

CALIG. Ha, your colour mounts,
You are a German—oh, I don't forget!

FLA. If love for mighty Rome, and loyalty
In Cæsar's service witness'd, make a Roman,
Then I am one!

CALIG. Well said, ay, very well!
Thanks, thanks! (*Pause.*)

CASS. (*approaching* CALIGULA). Thou'rt not in spirits; say, what care
Despoils us of thy smile?

CALIG. Vertigo, friend,
Simple vertigo! Strange! The old man stands
Before my eyes for ever.

CASS. What old man?

CALIG. I'll tell you.

(*He makes a sign; the bystanders fall back several paces,* PISO *and* MARCIUS, *who are stationed behind his chair, and* CASSIUS, *who stands before him, alone remaining.*)

Yesternight, when Livia
Had left my chamber,—hark you, in your ear,
That woman, Piso, is a paragon.

PISO. You make me proud, my Cæsar.

CALIG. She had gone,
And I lay sleepless on my couch, when, lo!
The curtain rustled, and comes gliding in
My uncle Drusus, who took poison—then
Silanus, my wife's father, who, you know,
Cut his own throat in the bath, 'stead of his beard;
And he held up the gory knife to me,
As though 'twas I had edged it for the fool;
And lastly came Tiberius, my uncle,
Bearing a pillow—yes, that very pillow
Which I, as those that love me not report,
Did smother him withal, and thereupon,
Grasping each others' hands, the three began—(*laughing convulsively.*)
I nearly died with laughing; 'twas, ye gods,
Too monstrous, too absurd—began to dance,
Slowly at first, then faster, faster still,
And still more close they span their circle round me,
And still approached me nearer as I lay.
(*With a shout.*) There, Cassius, look, look—there they are again!
Avaunt! Ye shall not—Hence,
Ye icy hands! Back from my brow, I say——

(*Sinks back in the chair in a frenzy.*)

PISO (*aside*). Horrible!

MARCIUS (*aside*). Fearful!

CASS. My hair stands on end,
The life-blood curdles at my heart! (*Aloud.*) A doctor,
A doctor, straight!

CALIG. (*starting wildly up*). A doctor? I'll have none!
As true as I am Caius Cæsar, none!
Off goes his head who babbles in surmise!

(*After a pause recovers his composure.*)

How fares it, my good Cassius, with my tawny
Hyrcanian whelps—the lions six, I mean,
Which Tubero sent me from Damascus—eh?

CASS. Now they have rested, they show fresh and fierce
As one could wish; thou may'st at any time
Employ them in the circus.

CALIG. That is well!
Something you said of gladiators, too?

CASS. Who from Ravenna have arrived to-day;
This scroll contains their numbers and their names!

CALIG. (*takes up the paper and runs his eye over it*).
Here's fifty named, and those from Capua,
From Nola—Good! They'll make a holocaust,
Life's ruddy juice will flow in copious streams,
And steam in fragrant vapours! Pah! Even that,
(*throws the scroll upon the table near him*)
How flavourless, how stale! There's no spice, none,
For a dull'd palate, no provocative
For unstrung nerves!

CASS. (*who meanwhile has retired up the stage*).
Room! Room! So please you, room
For the Augusta!

CÆSONIA (*attended by several women, who remain at the back, enters through the centre door*). Thanks to the gods that still
I find you here; I almost feared that I
Should come too late.

CALIG. Joy never comes too late;
And Beauty's welcome, come whene'er she may.

CÆS. And art thou well? Thou look'st so pale, my Cæsar.

CALIG. But thou art bright as Aphrodite's self!
This charming dress, that shows these noble limbs
More than it veils their symmetry; this head,
That on this snow-white neck so proudly sways!
And when I think that this most lovely head—

CÆS. Well, that this head?

CALIG. That it must fall if I
Command, a twofold rapture thrills me through!
But for the present—come, I'll rest me here!
(CÆSONIA *conducts him to the chair.*)

But for the present let this lovely head
Devise how we shall make the day run by!

CÆS. You will not to the bath, then?

CALIG. No, no bath!
(*Half aside, and mysteriously.*) It minds me of Silanus, who in the bath—

CÆS. Why fret about the dead? Compose yourself!
With music fortify your listless nerves.

CALIG. (*as before*). What! Thou'dst have music, for the ghosts to dance?

CÆS. (*aside, to* CASSIUS, *whilst* CALIGULA *lies back in the chair, his head dropped, and staring upon vacancy*).
These fancies fright me. Mark, O Cassius, mark
How fixedly he stares! How shall I stir
The stagnant waters of this flaccid soul?
I seek in vain, where'er I turn mine eye.

CAS. (*aside*). Yet need there is, that something should be found!
This brooding makes him savage in the end,
And the sick tiger no caresses tame.

CALIG. (*starting up*). Cæsonia, where art thou? Stay by me!

CÆS. (*advancing to him*). Come, let us to the gardens, sweet, and there
Amuse ourselves with tennis.

CALIG. No—Yes—No—
I cannot yet resolve to be resolved!
Let us, my goddess, first arrange the show
Of gladiators which I mean to give.
The rascals have arrived!

(*Unfolding the scroll which lies upon the table.*)

See, what is this?
Thumelicus—I seem to know that name;
How should I know it? H'm! Thumelicus—

MAR. (*comes forward*). 'Tis very like, that from Thusnelda's prayer,
Which I presented yesterday, the name
Has rested in your memory—

FLA. Thusnelda!

CALIG. Thusnelda? Was not that Arminius' wife,
Who on a time 'gainst Varus took the field?
And was it not my sire, Germanicus,

Who took her prisoner, when shortly after
His vengeance swoop'd upon the German woods?
MAR. 'Twas even so, and thy great sire, my liege,
Brought her to Rome.
CALIG. Tiberius, my uncle,
When she refused to attend the victor's car,
In the triumph of Germanicus, did he not
Command them tear the infant from her breast
She to Arminius bore in prison here,
And threaten—
MAR. Yes, he threatened her to slay
The child, unless in silence she obey'd
His every 'hest, my liege; and she obey'd!
CALIG. (*aside*). Ay, he had brains, the old man with the pillow!
(*Aloud*). And what does this Thusnelda want from me?
What prays she for?
MAR. A favour she implores,
As oft refused already as besought,
That, after many years, she once, but once,
May be permitted to behold her son,
Who by Tiberius' order has been train'd
Far from his mother at Ravenna's school.
CALIG. What say'st thou? Is it possible? In Ravenna,
Thumelicus—Thumel—
MAR. That is her son!
CALIG. Thumelicus, Arminius', Thusnelda's son!
FLA. (*aside*). Arminius' son, my nephew?
CALIG. See now, see!
How things combine! She longs to see her son,
And he is here. Arminius' son! Oh rare!
(*Bending back to* CÆSONIA.)
What do you think, love! Can we not devise
Something from this, of taste most exquisite?
A sport to charm and kindle,—a delight
To stir not merely sense, but spirit too,—
A sight more stimulating than the spices
Of Taproban and India, eh?
CÆS. What sight,
What sport, my Cæsar?

CALIG. How! What sport?
A combat, my sweet innocence! Just think,
A youth, that there before his mother's eyes
Fights, bleeds, and falls! Such sport was never known,
Since first the Circus' sand was drench'd in blood! (*Springing up.*)
FLA. (*aside*). Oh shame and grief! Oh horror and dismay!"

The project is scarcely conceived by Caligula, however, when it loses its attraction for his feeble will. The son of Arminius is, after all, only a gladiator, and what triumph can ensue from his death? To Cæsonia and Cassius, however, it is equally of importance to keep the imperial monster amused, and the former suggests to him that the execution of his plan will be the greatest of all triumphs, because it will demonstrate to the world that the race of the dreaded Arminius has ceased to be formidable, and that Germany has now for the first time been subdued, when her noblest children are not vanquished in the field, but treated as the jest and pastime of a Roman holiday. Kindling at the images thus suggested, Caligula exclaims:—

"CALIG. Yes, thou art right! That gives a meaning, yes,
A background, to the pastime, sharp and keen!
Now the whole picture stands before my soul:
Thusnelda, with the oak-wreath in her hair;
Her son, as German weapon'd and attired,
Stretch'd 'neath the blade of his antagonist.
Who bears my weapons, wears my purple too.
All this shall, loud as Jove's own thunder, speak
Caligula's triumph and Germania's fall!
CAS. (*aside, to* CÆSONIA). Now we are safe!
FLA. (*aside*). Help, rescue, O ye Gods!
CALIG. Wine, bring me wine, and let the music sound!
(*To* CÆSONIA.) Come to my arms, divine enchantress, come!
This thou, thou a mere woman, couldst devise?

Come to my arms! for now I am at ease;
A wish, an aim once more before me stands,
I still can will, and therefore still I live!

CAS. (*aside*). Ay! but not long, else Sylla's stars do lie!

CALIG. Wine, ho! Henceforth a festal day shall be
This day, which flung a new excitement's pearl
Upon my life's forlorn and arid strand!

(*Music heard without, which continues to the end of the scene.*)

Thou, Cassius, straightway shalt before me bring
These gladiators of Ravenna; thou,
Piso, away, and in my name salute
The Senate; tell the fathers I invite them
To Caius Cæsar's triumph, every man.
Why do you pause? Away!

(*Exit* PISO. *Enter slaves with golden goblets and cups.*)

CÆS. (*seizing a cup*). Here, here is wine!

CALIG. (*seizing a goblet, pours for* CÆSONIA).
Thanks, Hebe, thanks! This goblet to the fair
And happy issue of this sport of mine!

CASS. To whom dost thou confide the ædile's charge,
To see that all things needful are prepared
Beforehand at the circus?

CALIG. (*looking round the circle.*) The ædile's charge?
To whom confide it? (*After a pause.*) Flavius Arminius,
Approach!—To thee, who on the Weser once
Closed to thy brother's prayer thine ear and heart;
Thou, that all Roman art, German no more,
To thee do I confide the ædile's charge!

FLA. To me, my liege, to me—

CALIG. Hence to Thusnelda,
And to her take with you her long-lost son!
Let him be hers until the games begin;
Then he shall fight before his mother's eyes,
And she shall see him stricken by his doom!
This is my will, so bear it unto her,
And mark it to the letter be fulfill'd;
For should it prove that thou art more a German,
And less a Roman than thou late didst vaunt,
Then, hypocrite, by Kronion's thunderbolts,

(*Hurls the goblet to his feet.*)

Then shall thy head, even as this goblet, roll!
(*Aside to* CÆSONIA.) What say'st thou, dovelet? Now I have them all,
The whole stock of Arminius, in my net.
(*Aloud.*) And now away! Let the flutes shrilly sound,
Awake the pæan, let the goblets ring!
Till to Olympus high our revel mount,
And down to Orcus' depths its echoes clang!
I live again! To live is to enjoy.
So, rapture, let thy sparkling fountains flow,
And sweep us onwards in thy surging waves!"
(*Exit, leading* CÆSONIA; *the rest crowd tumultuously after them.*)

The gladiators soon learn the illustrious parentage of their companion, and make his position more unpleasant than before by their gibes and sneers at the Wild Man of the Woods, the Bear-Prince, and Beggar-King. Glabrio is driven to his wits'-end to keep him in good humour, and above all, to get him to consent to wear the dress and arms, the bearskin and the winged helmet of the Germans at the approaching games. In this strait he calls Lycisca, the flower-girl, to his aid, and the third act opens with a dialogue, in which she undertakes to coax her lover into compliance. To ensure the success of his design, Caligula has resolved that Thumelicus shall have for his antagonist the most expert gladiator of the time, Diodorus the Cappadocian. His death is therefore certain, and there is something frightful in the reckless wilfulness with which Lycisca, Dalilah-like, lures her lover to his doom. Life has lost its relish for herself, and she almost envies the fate she sees awaiting him. This character is managed with great subtlety in the scene with Thumelicus which follows. She tells him his antagonist is to be his rival

Këyx. Upon this his disgust at the German accoutrements, which the mockery of his companions has inspired, vanishes, and he is all impatience for the hour that is to place his rival foot to foot before him. The clouds pass from his brow, and he is struggling with Lycisca for a kiss, when his mother enters:—

"THUSNELDA. Who is that woman, boy?
LYCISCA. Is this thy mother?
THUSN. And thou, who art thou? Speak!
LYC. Why, like thyself,
A woman, only younger by a trifle,
Not high-born, but good-looking, smart and trim;
No princess truly, but a Roman; I
Am like the roses 'tis my trade to sell—
I have a bloom, and sundry prickles too!
Now, German princess, art content?
(*Throwing* THUMELICUS *a kiss.*) To-night! (*Exit.*)
THUSN. I know, my son, misfortune to base souls
Is but a mark for scoffing and for scorn;
Nor do I marvel that this creature, like
Her fellows, was most insolent and rude;
I marvel thou canst find her worthy thee,
And that thy love—attempt not to gainsay it—
Thou lovest her—
THUM. I? Well, yes! I like the girl.
She's pretty, very pretty, and beguiles
The dull hours—
THUSN. Do I hear aright? She is
Only the plaything of thy idle hours?
Thou lovest her not, scarce feel'st respect for her?
In Germany, my son, they honour woman;
In each and all the rudest warrior prizes
The mother who has borne him on her breast,
And in full faith expects prophetic words
From bashful maids' undesecrated lips!
THUM. Oh yes, in Germany, but we're in Rome."

Small prospect here of sympathy between mother and son; and from this point the antagonism between them, in which the future interest of the play centres, may be said to commence. Rome has done her work of vengeance surely; the moral sense is stifled in the child of her formidable foe,—his nature, "like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it works in." This, however, Thusnelda has yet to learn. Thumelicus has not told her what he is, and she is about to question him, when they are interrupted by the entrance of her brother-in-law, Flavius Arminius. Traitor though he had been to Arminius and his country, he comes with pity in his heart to communicate the dreadful project of the Emperor. His presence rouses all the slumbering indignation of Thusnelda, who launches the thunderbolts of her scorn at the recreant and traitor. Stung by her words, he dashes forth Caligula's command that she shall appear in the circus to-morrow, in her royal apparel, and with an oak-wreath in her hair, to see her son make his first public display of his craft. Her horror at the discovery that Thumelicus is a gladiator, gives way to dismay as, penetrating the purpose of Caligula, she sees that it is her country's shame he has in view in the indignity to which her son and herself are to be exposed. She declares her resolution to defy his order. To this Flavius replies:—

"Woman, thou'rt crazed! When Cæsar has said 'Ay,'
Who ever ventured to gainsay him?
THUSN. I!
Go tell thy lord, Thusnelda never shall,
Robed for a holiday, stand forth to see

Her child's dishonour and her country's shame!
And never shall this youth, Arminius' son,
Equipped, in mockery, with his father's arms,
Do battle in the circus for his life!
Never, I tell thee, never! He is my son,
And shall not fight—

THUM. How! I not fight! Not fight!
Wilt drive me frantic?

THUSN. Oh ye eternal gods!

THUM. I not to fight, when Cæsar in his grace
Has given me Këyx for my antagonist?
Not fight? I craven-like to skulk at home,
Whilst my companions in the circus give
The death-salute triumphantly to Cæsar?
Shall Këyx, Këyx point at me in scorn,
And flout me as a faintheart and poltroon?
Not fight, not fight, indeed? I'd sooner die!

FLA. (*aside*). Oh, happy youth! He does not feel his shame!

THUSN. Sigmar,
'Tis meet that men be brave, and thou art brave,
And thou shalt prove thy valour too, I vow,
On this proud Rome, right gloriously and soon;
Only not now; thou shalt not waste thy might
And bravery on base juggling shows like these!

THUM. What names are these? Base juggling shows! ye gods!
When Rome puts on her festal bravery—
When Cæsar, senate, all the Roman knights,
In solemn order to the circus wend,
Within whose vast expanse a surging sea
Of forms and voices has since sunrise roar'd—
When now at Cæsar's nod the lists are flung
Wide open to the combatants, and all
Grows hush'd, hush'd low as tongue had never spoke,
And now the signal shrills, the blows fall thick—
One presses on, the other with a jerk
Clips his opponent's helmet in his net,
Who struggles free, and is enmeshed again—
Then striking now, now stricken, bleeds and reels,
And striking bares his bosom to the foe,

Receives his stroke, and makes an end; and when,
As suddenly as hursts a storm-charged cloud,
Cheers, pealing thunder, shakiug all the earth,
Re-echo round the victor's giddy head,
And here rain roses down, and laurels there—
The Cæsar nods applause, and "Victor, hail!"
Rings from a thousand tongues through all the air.
And this is but a base, a juggling show?
'Tis victory, woman, victory, glory, life!

THUSN. Thou dream'st of victory, deluded boy;
Thou see'st not, they but mean to murder thee,
To avenge the father's victory on the son.
And thou—thou couldst—

THUM. I am resolved to fight!

THUSN. And Germany, which thou dost load with shame,
Thy father's name, which thou dost desecrate—
Thy mother's hopes, which thou dost turn to tears,—
Are these all nought? Art thou a gladiator
Because Rome call'd thee such, and such has train'd thee?
Thou art Arminius' son, thou art a German,
And thou art ours!

THUM. What's German, Roman—Psha!
I'm a gladiator; fighting is
My trade; and if on Germany's account
Thou art ashamed of my vocation, know,
No less ashamed am I of my German name,
Of being a barbarian; there! know that!
And here I now, once and for all, renounce
The name and kinship of my German race!
In Rome, Rome I was born, Rome brought me up;
I am—

THUSN. No more, unhappy boy, no more!

THUM. I am a Roman, Roman will remain!
And therefore get thee hence, and tell thy lord,
Thou Cæsar's messenger, that I will fight
To-morrow in the circus, as he bids—
To conquer, if the gods vouchsafe success;
To fall, if on my head their doom has pass'd!" (*Exit.*)

Flavius quits the stage, overcome with pity for Thusnelda, on whom the whole tragedy dawns, which has ensued from what she deems her weakness in sparing her own life for the sake of her son's. The act closes upon the following soliloquy:—

> "I knew it well! Shame is the fruit of weakness!
> I should have died! If now my son will turn,
> Renouncing his own people, to the foe,
> And recklessly disgrace his father's name,
> Mine is the guilt! Yet have no fear, Arminius,
> Thy name shall never know the blur of shame;
> Not thus, not thus thy son shall end his days!"

The conflict thus opened is continued throughout the fourth act. Merovig, who has learned from Ramis the incidents of the previous scene, has almost abandoned his hope of raising Thumelicus into a fit successor to his father. Thusnelda struggles against his arguments; but in the midst of an eloquent defence of her son, his voice is heard from within, mingling in Bacchanalian revelry with Lycisca in this wise:—

> "Burning kisses, spicy wine!
> Now the grape's red blood to sip,
> Now the purple of thy lip!
> Burning kisses, spicy wine,
> Make a mortal all divine.
> Io, Bacchus, Io! Fill high, Lycisca!"

Time presses. A decision must be taken, and Thumelicus is summoned by Ramis to his mother's presence. Flushed with his revel, and angry at the interruption, he bids them make short work of what they have to say. To the promise of a kingdom—of all the nations between the Danube and the Rhine united under his

banner—he turns a scornful ear. He is equally insensible to the call to avenge his own and his country's wrongs by the destruction of Rome :—

> " And wherefore Rome ? What ill has Rome e'er done
> To me, or Germany what good, that I
> For Germany should fall to feud with Rome ?
> What's Germany to me ?
> THUSN. How, boy ! the land
> For which thy father bled—the land in which
> Thou'rt born to empire, a Cheruscan prince !
> Dost thou renounce thy birthright ?
> MER. Can it be ?
> How ! Shut thine eyes when thy home beckons thee ;
> Close up thine ears when she, thy mother, calls !
> Thou canst, thou wilt not——
> THUM. Wherefore can I not ?
> If Germany, my mother, as you call her,
> Through twenty years took neither thought of me,
> Nor of her there, that was Arminius' wife,
> Why, in the name of all the gods, should I
> Not turn my back upon this raven mother ?
> What's Germany to me, I ask again ?
> I am no German, no Cheruscan prince ;
> I was, and am, and ever will remain,
> Thumelicus, the gladiator of Ravenna."

Not deterred even by this outburst of passion, Merovig essays once more to tempt him by the offer of an army of power sufficient even to secure for him the purple of the Cæsars. For a moment a flash of ambition passes through the young man's brain. To-morrow he will talk further of their plans. To-morrow, replies Merovig, will be too late ; to-morrow Thumelicus fights in the circus, and should he even survive, Germany will never place itself under a leader who has disgraced

himself by wearing the wreath flung by the populace of Rome to the victorious gladiator. Infuriated by this contemptuous allusion to what has hitherto been the highest aim of his ambition, Thumelicus declares that he never will be the leader of the Germans though it were to secure the universe.. Although all Germany lay imploring at his feet, he is going on to say, when Thusnelda interrupts him thus:—

"Stay! Germany never did, nor ever shall,
Lie at the foot of any he that lives,
To beg of him to be her lord and chief!
No, Germany will ne'er entreat! But I,
Thy mother, I beseech thee, oh, my son,
I, that in sorrow brought thee forth, in grief
Did suckle thee, and in despair's dark hour
Lost thee—I, I, my son, implore thee now,
Make not the day that gave thee back to me
More bitter than the day that saw my loss!
Betray me not, my dearest, fondest hope;
Spare me the last, the deadliest of all pangs!
Oh, let me not survive my only child!
For, fight to-morrow, fall away from us,
And from that hour thou in my heart art dead!
Far sooner would I see thee cold and stark,
A gashed and mangled corpse, than that thy head,
At once dishonoured and with victory crowned,
Should bear aloft the gladiator's wreath!

(*After a pause, approaches* THUMELICUS, *who stands with his face averted.*)

Thou'rt wroth, my son! Thou shouldest not be wroth
With me! I lived for thee, ay, lived when death
Offered me fame and freedom; then live now
For me! Repay the sacrifice I made!
Thou wear'st thy father's lineaments, belie
Them not! Fair art thou, be in soul as fair!
Be thou a man, no gladiator churl;

And as thy birth proclaims thee for our own,
Be ours indeed! Come! (*Seizing his hand.*)
'Twas denied to me
To lead the feeble footsteps of the boy,
Now let me be the guide unto the man!
Come, Sigmar, come!
THUM. (*spurning her hand*). No, no, I tell thee, no!
THUSN. Go, then!
THUM. I will! Call me not back again,
Nor hope to make me change, no, not one jot,
For what I've said, I've said for good and all!"

Merovig now tries to persuade Thusnelda to escape alone with him. She refuses, dismissing him in language which no doubt has awakened a deep echo in the hearts of many a German audience:

"I stay. Return thou home. Yet, there returned,
Tell them, whilst they in council sat, and paused
And pondered, a most noble spirit here
In slavery's stress and thraldom dire was wrecked!
Tell them, they came to a resolve too late,
And warn them, lest this same 'Too late, too late!'
Prove not our country's curse throughout all time."

Merovig retires, and the sound of Lycisca's voice in the orgy to which Thumelicus has returned, suggests to his mother the hope that he may yet be saved through love. She resolves to subdue her pride, and, Lycisca soon afterwards appearing, appeals to her to use her influence with Thumelicus to persuade him to fly from Rome. To Lycisca she promises that she shall share the royal honours of her lover. Lycisca replies:—

"Thy hope is but a dream, thy prayer
Impossibility. No. Nor for me,
Nor for thy son is rescue possible!

THUSN. No rescue possible! When even now
All's ready for our flight, true friends at hand
To bear us home? No, no, I do not dream;
'Tis but thy fear. Nothing's impossible
To woman's love, or to a man's resolve!

LYC. Ay, there, deluded one, the mischief lies!
I am no woman, a poor flower-girl I.
We love not, neither are we loved! And he,
He is a gladiator: not a man;
The scourge instructed him; he can obey,
But not resolve. Whatever destiny
His home may offer, glorious and pure,
He lacks the glance that sees the right at once,
The soul that presses forward, the staunch heart
That never flags till it achieves its task!
And I—enough of words! This learn, that she
Who has sunk like me, can only—go on sinking!

THUSN. Art stung with shame? Well, then, revenge thyself.
Is thy life fleck'd with spots? then wash them off
With Roman blood! The weapons are prepared,
And hosts stand ready to obey thy nod!
Come, follow us; save—save my son, and Rome
Shall pay thee for the wrongs which thou hast borne.

LYC. Say, can revenge give back what I have lost?
And you barbarians, would you scorn me less
Than do the sons of Rome? No, no. If e'er
It be decreed by Fate that I shall rule,
'Tis here in Rome, not in your forest shades;
And if shame be my lot, at least Rome proffers
The bitter potion in a golden bowl.

THUSN. And he—my son!—who, who shall save my son?
Of all that live on earth, thou only canst.
Look on my sorrow, let a mother's prayers
Subdue thee—else I must—Ay, ay, I must!
(*Falls at her feet.*) Behold me here a suppliant at thy feet!
Have pity on me! Pity! Do not leave
The last shoot of a noble stem distraught,
To perish in the circus like a beast.

LYC. Stand up! Kneel not to me! It nor beseems

Thyself, nor touches me! Be not alarmed.
No word shall 'scape my lips of what thou'st said.
Nay more! Secure his freedom, if thou canst,
And lead him home; but hope no aid from me.
If Fate with ruthless hands shall seize on thee,
And drag thee down into the mire of woe,
As though, like us, thou hadst been born in it,
I will not aid, yet will I not prevent!
Even misery yearns for fellowship, and if
To sink must be my doom, drown thou as well!" [*Exit.*

Every hope is now at an end, and in the passion of her grief, Thusnelda prays for power to roll back the wheels of time to the hour when she stood before Germanicus, and first felt the stirring of a second life within her breast. At this point Ramis enters with the purple robe and oak-wreath which Caligula has sent for Thusnelda to wear in the circus on the morrow, with intent that all shall see in her the personification of her country. The act closes as follows:—

"THUSN. I am to be Germania!
RAMIS. So he said.
THUSN. O that, in sooth, I were Germania!
With all Germania's courage in my soul,
With all Germania's anger in mine eye,
And all her giant vigour in my arm!
Then, craven-hearted Rome, then shouldst thou quake
Deep as the marrow of the earth that bears thee!
Then —— Hark! Who speaks? What voice rings in mine ears?
Or does it speak within me? 'Up! accept
Germania's wreath, and do what she would do
To keep its noble leaves unstain'd and pure.
The wheels of time thou backwards fain wouldst roll?
'Tis well, we give that day to thee again,
And see thou use it better than at first!'
(*Puts out her hand to take the wreath.*)
I will be Germany! Give me the wreath!

(*Recoils.*) No! Hence! The leaves are bloody. Hence!
RAMIS. It is
The reflex of the purple cloak, Thusnelda!
What ails thee? Calm thyself!
THUSN. Be still, my heart,
And gather all thy strength, my weary soul!
How ran the vow which to the gods I made,
So they, before I died, a mission grave
And mighty purpose in my hands should lay?
'I will fulfil your task'—these were my words—
'This I will do, and if my powers shall fail,
I'll break, as breaks the oak before the blast,
But bend I will not, ever, ever more!'
(*Seizing the wreath, and pressing it on her head.*)
Come, then, Germania's wreath, and rustle here,
A Teutoburger Forest round my brows!
RAMIS. What is thy purpose? Speak!
THUSN. To keep my word!"

The fifth act opens on the morning of the games. Thumelicus has quitted the bath, and is urged by Glabrio to repose for awhile, until the emperor shall arrive to conduct him to the circus in state. Anxiety that his pupil shall do him credit is the only idea in Glabrio's head, and his parting words are a direction to Thumelicus to receive the death-stroke in a graceful attitude, if the chances run against him. Left to himself, Thumelicus runs over the crowded events of the last few hours, and some promptings of remorse for his rough demeanour to his mother at their last meeting find their way to his lips:—

"My head is all
A-spin! And that is why I was so harsh,
So savage to my mother! Oh, I do
So long to get some rest; the day is sultry,
And thinking makes one drowsy—

(*Observes* THUSNELDA, *who appears at the side door, in a white robe, with a purple mantle, and an oak-wreath in her hair; he springs up, and advances to her.*)

Ha, see there!
'Tis thou! I did not hear thee come, but thou
Art come, I think, to herald my success,
For, as the song says, Joy comes light of foot,
And Bliss is wing'd with air!

THUSN. 'Tis wing'd indeed!

THUM. How beautiful thou art! How stately shows
Thy wreath; how brilliantly the purple flames!
These trappings are well timed, for Cæsar's self
Intends to lead us to the games in state.
We must not shame him, must we?

THUSN. Nor ourselves.

THUM. These are the weapons, see, I am to wear!

THUSN. Oh, speak not of the future as 'twere past;
The future to the gods pertains!

THUM. One word.
I am, so Glabrio says, to keep quite quiet,
But first all must be clear between us. You
Are wroth with me, I see, for yesterday;
You're wroth, because we follow different roads,
Because what I have been I must remain!
Nay, be not so! Thy counsel may be wise,
Thy road the better one; but can I therefore
Walk in it? can I be what I am not?
Were I the man for these great schemes of yours,
No doubt I'd feel the impulse for them too.
I don't! A gladiator I will be,
The foremost of my peers, and of the time.
Worthy of thee, I'll prove myself as such;
And, let him try his utmost, can a man
Be better or more perfect than he is?
So pardon, not *what* yesterday I said,
But *how* I said it; that which I've resolved,
I cannot help, so therefore hate me not!

THUSN. Hate thee! This heart can wither in its woe,
It can despair, can nourish murderous thoughts—

But hate thee—hate my child! Eternal gods,
Ye witness if I hate him!

THUM. That's all right,
So let my fortune find me my own way;
The thing that is, it is; the gods so will it.

THUSN. Can nothing, nothing turn or hold thee back?
Is, then, thy purpose fixed to fight to-day?

THUM. How often must I tell you? I will fight!

THUSN. The future to the gods pertains! Proceed!

THUM. Resign yourself to the inevitable,
And be no longer wroth! Give me your hand,
Let us not part in anger.

THUSN. Part! No, no;
We go the selfsame road. Not in farewell,
Bnt as thy guide I give my hand to thee,
As thy companion kiss thee, to my heart
Enfold thee, and if e'er a blessing lay
In tears, such blessing overflows thee now.
Why was I doom'd, ye gods, to lose him? Why,
Lost for so long, to find him thus again? (*Pushing him from her.*)
Enough! Away!

THUM. I understand you not,
And never shall, I fancy! But the time
Is slipping by, and I must rest! I need it!
(*Flings himself upon the couch.*)
Oh, yet there's something! Keep my sword for me!

THUSN. Arminius' sword? Thou givest it me thyself?

THUM. You'll keep it for me, eh! for Glabrio vows
It's quite unfit for the arena!

THUSN. For
The arena—truly 'tis for that unfit.

THUM. (*pointing to the sword upon the couch*). Here 'tis, and mind you take good care of it.
And now, I've nothing more to say. (*Letting his head drop.*)
Sleep, sleep,
Now take me hence!

THUSN. (*turning away*).—Ay, sleep, sleep!

THUM. Going? How!
No, stay, you don't disturb me! Stay, and if

You know a song, a pretty one, you may
Sing me to sleep.

THUSN. I know no songs!

THUM. Have you
Forgotten them? You knew some well of old!
Upon my eyelids hangs a weight of lead.
How ran that song, Lycisca, yesterday?—

Burning kisses—spicy wine—
Juice of grape—and mingling kisses—
Burning kisses—all divine— (*Falls asleep.*)

THUSN. (*after a pause, returns to the side of the couch*). The hour's at hand, and what is to be done
Must be done now! He sleeps! How sweet, how still!
How often has he lain on this same spot,
A rosy infant on my breast, whilst I
Have lull'd his sleep, and covered up his face
When the chill night-winds swept along these halls,
And if a fly came I have brushed it off,
And waked him if ill dreams disturbed his sleep!
And now I stand beside him threatening ill,
My hand uplifted, and my purpose steel'd
To cut him off in his youth's perfect bloom,
Even as a wither'd bough from the tree of life!
The wild beast of the woods fights for her young,
The snake stings if you pluck the rose away,
And I—Yes, I will kill the innocent sleep;
I, I, a mother, murder my own child!

(*Rushes to the front of the stage.*)

No, no, ye righteous gods! Give back my vow—
I cannot pay it—give it me again!
I cannot, where I gave life, take it away,
Nor murder, murder, where I'm bound to love!

(*After a pause, returns to the couch.*)

Whither, perturbèd spirit, dost thou stray?
What would I now, but as in that old time
To shield thee from the winter frost of life,
To wake thee from existence' troublous dream,
To guard thee from the fly-swarm of the passions,
Which come to all men, even the happiest?

What but to shield thee from the deathblow, dealt
By a vile butcher's mercenary hands?
No, Sigmar, no!—If that this trembling hand

(*Seizes the sword, which is lying on the couch.*)

Strikes to thy heart, it is not hatred; no,
'Tis love, ay, love, that little recks to ask
How bitter is the potion, so it save,
And therefore—

(*Raises the sword to strike, but recoils, and lets it fall.*)

No! I cannot!

(*Drops on her knees, while music is heard at a distance of a gay Festival March, which gradually comes nearer.*)

Ye eternal gods!
If for my country's weal ye claim his life,
Then take it! Let the atmosphere he breathes
Be turned to poison; bid the earth to quake,
That these walls toppling may entomb us both;—
Blast us to ashes with your lightning's fires!
The power is yours! Accomplish your high wills!
But in my hands place not his destiny,
Demand not from the mother her son's blood!

(*Listens, and then starts up.*)

Hark! what was that? If mine ear cheats me not,
'Tis music! 'Tis—it is Caligula.
They come to fetch him. The thronged circus heaves
And roars! Rome claims her gladiator, but
I will not give him up. I am a woman,
Helpless and weak, but will not give him up.
See, who shall tear him from me? (*Snatches up the sword.*)

If, ye gods
That dwell on high, ye will not launch your bolts,
So be it, then I will guard my country's honour!
Sport on, sport on in revelry and mirth!
Around my brows the oaken chaplet stirs,
I am Arminius' wife—a German, I,—
And these I was before I was a mother.
You claim Thumelicus, the gladiator?
Sigmar, my son is called, mine, mine he is,
And mine he shall remain unto the last.

Here with this blow I strike his fetters off! (*Stabs him.*)
THUM. Woe's me!—that Këyx—Mother— (*Falls back and dies.*)
THUSN. Oh my child!"
(*Veils her face in her mantle with her left hand; her right drops, holding the sword.*)

Here the main interest of the play ends; but the scene is continued by the entrance of Caligula, who is compelled to listen to a somewhat tedious invective which Thusnelda winds up by stabbing herself. Cheated of the two chief morsels of his vengeance, Caligula gives orders for Flavius Arminius to be thrown to the lions in the circus; but here too he is baffled, that worthy having, in a spasm of remorse, fallen upon his sword in true Roman fashion. Caligula goes off with a flourish of trumpets, leaving on the scene Cassius and Cornelius, who intimate that the morrow shall see the close of the tyrant's career. The reader is disappointed that the play does not include Caligula's fall; and after the prominence given in the second act to the conspiracy against his life, this omission is a decided flaw in the construction of the piece. There is somewhat too much also of Thusnelda, in the latter acts; but with powerful acting, and with the element of a strong national interest, this is perhaps not felt in Germany as any drawback. In this country, where the stimulus of nationality must be wanting, the play would probably, after all possible curtailment, be found unsuited to the English taste. If, however, we have done anything like justice to it in our rapid survey, its great merits, both dramatic and literary, must be apparent to every reader.

This play, like most of Halm's, is dedicated to the performer who sustains the principal part. In this case Julia Rettich, the impersonator of Thusnelda, receives the tribute in the following graceful sonnet:—

> "Aims that are noble fate doth still befriend,
> As worn and mazed in trackless wilds and drear,
> The traveller sees some friendly soul appear,
> Comfort and help at sorest need to lend.
> So I beheld thee on my path descend,
> Nurse my first shoots of song, and when in fear
> I gave them to the crowd, thou didst ensphere
> My dream in form, and with thy being blend.
> I gave the words; thou didst with life complete,
> With grace's witchery, and the glow of truth;
> And as I lay in homage at thy feet
> My work, great Artist, 'tis my thought that then
> I pay no votive tribute, but in sooth
> Give only back thy gift to thee again."

This generous recognition of the power of a great actress to give to the poet's conception a fuller and higher life than it had within his brain, is the more honourable, that the poet in the present case has supplied no meagre outline, but a firmly-limned and amply-developed character. English writers for the stage, of immeasurably inferior powers, are wont to talk contemptuously of actors, as if not only did they give nothing to the poet, but at their best could not rise to the measure of his conceptions. To this conclusion of a shallow vanity the public do not subscribe, for they know how much a great actor can give even to Shakespeare, and how entirely some of our most popular plays have been beholden for their success to the power which created a character where the author had sketched

a watery outline. In Germany and France, where authors and actors are alike artists, co-operating on equal terms, and mutually instructing, this truth is frankly recognized; but we do not remember to have seen it more cordially and gracefully acknowledged than in the dedicatory verses prefixed by Halm to his plays in their collective form. In the history of our own modern drama we are aware of no parallel instance.

A WORD ABOUT OUR THEATRES.

(Fraser's Magazine, February, 1858.)

STRANGER in London after dark is not a man to be envied. Should he wish to escape from the bad air of an unventilated hotel, or the miseries of a dismal lodging, where is he to turn for recreation? If, indeed, his tastes be grovelling, there is no lack of temptations for their indulgence; if coarse, the Cider Cellars and the Casinos will not be without their charm; if vulgar, he is pretty sure to have them gratified to the full at one or other of the theatres. But if, on the other hand, he shrinks, at once by education and instinct, from such delights as we have indicated, he is sure to find himself, after the first day or two, anticipating the closing-in of night with dread. How many must find themselves daily in this position! It is calculated that upwards of a million of strangers enter London every month. Of these, many thousands must nightly be thrown adrift for amusement; and surely it is of some consequence to us socially, as well as for our credit in the estimation

of foreigners, that the amusements within their reach should be of the best and highest kind which intelligence can devise. Place the same stranger in any continental city: he is at no loss for the means of winding-up his day of sight-seeing or business in some way that is delightful for the time, and will bear to be looked back upon with pleasure. In the concert-room or the theatre—more especially the latter—he is sure to find an unfailing source. At an easy price, he sees a fine play acted with intelligence and conscientious care. His imaginative sympathies are agreeably roused; his heart and brain are both touched with beneficial excitement. He returns to his hotel satisfied with himself and all the world; and the worst of his dreams, if he be very susceptible, is a vision of the fair representative of *Emilia Galotti* or *Thekla*, or of some *Angélique* or *Célimène*, whose sparkling graces may have made him forget for a moment the more retiring charms to which he is devoted at home. Who does not remember his pleasant evenings at Paris, Vienna, Munich, Dresden, or Berlin, where for a few shillings a whole world of poetry in action has been placed at his command?

Nor was it always different among ourselves. Time was when the visitor to town was pretty sure, if his evening hung heavily on his hands, that he had but to go to the Haymarket, or one or other of the great theatres, to have his *ennui* dispelled. We will not speak of the great artists who were there to minister to his delight. Time has done its work with them, and if they have left no successors, we must be content to wait until a fresh constellation of actors equally gifted

shall appear. Great genius comes in no regular succession. We may lament its absence; to complain of it would be absurd. But it was not only the presence of unquestionable genius which in those days illuminated our theatres. They were under the guidance of men who had a pride in the national drama, and upheld it with a vigorous hand. The actors might not all be good, but they all looked up to certain standards in their art, and worked to the full measure of their ability, to make the representation as complete as possible. To occupy a place in one of these theatres was a distinction to which the hard-working country actor looked forward as the brightest aim of his ambition; but it was at the same time one at which the most gifted was careful not to grasp until he felt assured he could maintain it. A London audience in those days was not to be trifled with. Forward incapacity found no mercy at the hands of the pit. Pretentious weakness was certain of detection. Actors and audience thus acted and reacted upon each other. A high standard of aspiration in the one, and of judgment in the other, produced the finest development of histrionic art which England has ever seen. The metropolitan stage gave the law in language and in deportment. It was trodden by men and women of great culture and refinement, indefatigable in their art, and emulous of each other's excellence. We had then, in short, what Berlin and Vienna have now, a stage directed by intelligence and culture, and filled with patient and highly-trained artists.

How entirely we have lost this is but too well known. The enthusiasts who shouted for and obtained free-trade

in theatres must, we think, have long since mourned over their own success. What can their chief pioneer, Sir E. B. Lytton, say to the present state of things, when it is almost impossible to get one of his own plays acted respectably in London? He can scarcely fail to look back with some regret upon the condition of the metropolitan stage before the abolition in 1833 of the patent rights of the two great theatres, at which the traditions of the Shakspearian drama were still treasured, and a struggle made to maintain a high standard of art against the encroachments of ignorance and conceit. It may be that the great increase of the population and of theatres in the metropolis, had made a change necessary in the law which confined the performance of the higher drama to the patent theatres. But the effect of destroying their monopoly, and with it the ambition of the actor to be admitted into their companies, was fatal to the actor's art, as Charles Kemble and others had predicted it must be. Every theatre began to compete with its neighbour for one or other of the performers who had occupied a leading position in the great theatres. The temptations of money and vanity were irresistible. The companies were broken up, and the starring system, as it was called, came into full play. The country theatres, which had formerly been the training schools of actors, soon felt the pernicious effects of the change. Every Horatio forthwith became a Hamlet; every Macduff grew a moustache and imperial, and usurped the sceptre of Macbeth. By degrees the great representatives of the artist school of actors died out. There were no longer models to emulate,

traditions to preserve; or, if any yet remained, the ready-made actor of modern days was superior to what either could teach. He despised education, study, and the patient practice of an art, for which of all others these are especially necessary. He was himself his own great exemplar; and so from bad to worse the vocation of the player has sunk, with a few conspicuous exceptions, as low as at no very distant period it was high.

The present degradation of our theatres, like all great changes, is owing doubtless to a variety of concurrent circumstances. But of these the injurious influence of the Act of 1833 is undoubtedly one of the most considerable. The altered habits of society, the increase of cheap books, the late hours of dining, the great distances from the theatres to which it is now the fashion for all classes to remove, have all combined in some measure towards the same result. Not a little, too, of the change may be owing to the tendency to individual and domestic isolation, which is one of the least healthy of our social symptoms. All these causes, by withdrawing from our theatres the better part of the audience, and leaving them almost exclusively to the idle and the frivolous, have aided in bringing down the character of the performances to a level suited to those who are their chief support. At the same time, it is from no want of public encouragement that our drama has declined. Never was more money spent upon theatres than now. There are in London some seven-and-twenty of them, all more or less flourishing; and the crowds, on all occasions where a sufficient attraction is presented, demonstrate very clearly that the blame lies

with the managers and actors themselves, more than with the public, if theatres have degenerated so far that people of intelligence and culture can no longer count upon them as the means of a delightful and instructive recreation, but are in fact driven away from them by the wretched style of entertainment, and the incompetence and careless conceit of the performers.

Let any one, for example, who has undergone the penance—and it is no slight one—of going to see the burlesques, which, either alone or as introduction to pantomimes, are now filling the West-end theatres, ask himself if they are exhibitions which he can with propriety take any woman or child to witness. The sickening vulgarity of the jokes, the slang allusions, the use of words and phrases unknown in the vocabulary of ladies and gentlemen, the ridicule of associations which are all but sacred, the outrageous caricatures of grave passions, the exhibition of crowds of girls in costumes only suitable for the *poses plastiques* of Leicester Square, above all, the way in which young actresses are made to say and do things which must destroy every shred of modesty and feminine grace in them, make these burlesques pernicious alike to performers and audience. When, too, as we generally find, they are based upon some drama or poem that is hallowed by every association with which genius and art can invest it, the contempt and disgust which they provoke in all educated men inevitably recoil upon the theatre where they are presented. How should it be otherwise? If the stage has a purpose at all, it is to elevate, not to debase; to lift the real towards the ideal,

not to drag down the ideal into the very mire of a sordid reality. It is meant to educate, not to pervert; and if the character of the audience declines where such fare is presented, who can be surprised?

What wonder either if, with such pieces to represent, even actors of ability degenerate. The actor, who can portray character with genuine truth to nature, may at times disport himself in an extravaganza without injury to his style. Leonardo da Vinci was great in caricature; so, too, was our own Hogarth. But the staple of both was human character, delineated in the one case in its highest aspects, in the other, with careful fidelity to every-day truth. They could afford to unbend in occasional absurdities. But the constant or even frequent practice of mere grotesque and caricature is destructive of the actor. He must exaggerate; he must distort; he must strike false tones; he must make serious things ludicrous, and noble things absurd. In so doing he loses the enthusiasm, the faith in genuine emotion, the nicety of outline in his delineation of character, and the delicacy of finish in expression, which distinguish the artist from the puppet. But where actors begin, as they so often do now-a-days, at the wrong end, embodying only caricatures, and never characters, their case is indeed hopeless. They become confirmed in a light, flippant, exaggerated manner; and when by any chance they are required to impersonate a part for which some knowledge of human nature and some strength and mastery of expression are indispensable, the breakdown is painful to contemplate.

The truth of these remarks seems to us to be strongly

borne out by the case of Mr. Robson,—an actor who has attracted much attention, and been praised quite to the measure of his deserts, but who unquestionably possesses powers which, under a different handling, might become most valuable on the stage. That he is, or ever can be, the great actor some critics have alleged—a possible Kean, who has only to make the attempt in order to electrify the world as Shylock or Overreach[1]—is a proposition we should be sorry to endorse. The capability of real and sustained passion, the dignity of conception, the mastery of voice, features, and gesture, the continuous development of character, which are necessary for the tragic drama, are something very different from those fitful bursts of intensity and vehemence in Mr. Robson, which are mistaken by many for a high order of histrionic power. The absence in this performer of good taste, of the instinct which knows where to stop, has always made us distrustful of his power to rise to any great eminence even as a comedian; and the constant tendency in serious parts to exaggerated vehemence in his expression of emotion makes us doubt, whether he has not permanently injured himself by the habit of caricaturing feeling and passion in those miserable travesties which have generally kept him before the public. His faults do not disappear with time, but rather increase; and it is to be feared, unless this promising artist turns a deaf ear to his flatterers, and devotes himself to a careful study of life and character, he may sink into a manner-

[1] Vide *Essays on the Drama.* By W. Bodham Donne.—p. 151.

ist, who will go on reiterating his "effects" long after the public have grown callous to them. If he is to do any good, he must give up burlesque and mere farce, at least for a time, and try to get himself fitted with characters which will test his capabilities, and task them to the uttermost.

Our space forbids us to refer to other actors and actresses of some promise on the London stage, who are suffering by the habit of performing in burlesque; but all the disadvantages which affect an actor of Mr. Robson's power must necessarily affect them in a still greater degree. Most especially is it injurious to our young actresses. Mere saucy flippancy titillates so many fools in every audience, that a smile or round of applause is often obtained by what makes those who think well of their sex shrink almost with a feeling of shame. This is a species of success which they should especially dread if they have any ambition in their art. It is of all others at once the most ephemeral, and, if aimed at, the most fatal to their ever impressing an audience with any of the higher and sweeter graces of womanhood. There is scarcely a theatre in London which does not afford painful illustrations of this truth, and in none is it more conspicuous than in the theatres at the West-end.

Among the influences from which the drama has suffered of late years, none, we believe, have operated so strongly as the resort to splendour of spectacle as the great source of attraction. The question, how far scenic illustration and care in costume may be carried, is one of vital consequence to the drama, and to which,

in these times, so little reflection is given, that in dealing with it we are forced to call attention to the merest truisms in criticism, and to ask our readers to consider for a moment what the drama really is.

The higher drama, then, is poetry in action; the lower drama is a delineation of life in its every-day aspects, under certain conditions of emotion or excitement, which raise it above the level of commonplace. In both cases what we have to deal with are human beings, in their various moods and humours,—human sufferings, sorrows, perplexities, joys, or eccentricities. Men and women are the primary objects of interest. So true is it that landscapes, architecture, furniture, and dresses are the mere adjuncts, that the finest dramas in the world, those of Shakespeare, were produced for a stage where the scenic appointments were of the most meagre kind. To make these picturesque, and to keep them from offending by incongruity or unsightliness, is the first consideration. If they can also be made beautiful, without obtruding too much on the attention, then, it seems to us, every object is gained. The moment they go beyond this point, the moment we are made to think more of the scenery, dresses, groupings, and processions, than of the actors and the development of the human interest, the fundamental law of the drama is violated, and the play degenerates into the spectacle.

As if in prophetic anticipation of the abuses of the last fifteen years, Sir Walter Scott, in his delightful review of Boaden's *Life of Kemble*, stated the principle by which these things should be governed in words which cannot be too often repeated:—

"The muse of painting should be on the stage the hand-maid, not the rival, of her sister of the drama. Each art should retain its due preponderance within its own proper region. Let the scenery be as well painted, and made as impressive as a moderate-sized stage will afford; but when the roof is raised to give the scene-painter room to pile Pelion upon Ossa; when the stage is widened that his forests may be extended, or deepened that his oceans may flow in space apparently interminable, the manager who commands these decorations is leaving his proper duty, and altering entirely the purpose of the stage."

Further on, while Sir Walter admits that the use of "dresses suited to the time and country, and of landscape and architecture equally coherent" must be advantageous, he does so only under the qualification, "that this part of theatrical business be kept in due subordination to that which is strictly dramatic."

"Processions and decorations, he adds, belong to the same province as scenes and dresses, and should be heedfully attended to, but at the same time kept under, *that they may relieve the action of the scene, instead of shouldering aside the dramatic interest.*"

All lovers of the drama remember how Mr. Macready carried scenic illustration to the very verge of what was legitimate. Even under his management it was upon occasion somewhat in excess; but still the acting and actors were of primary account. Mr. Macready was not the man to allow the dramatic interest to be wholly "shouldered aside" for the sake of picturesque grouping, or antiquarian niceties. If a scene of peculiar beauty was introduced, this was generally done "to relieve the action," or where, as in the *Acis and Galatea*, there was no call upon the intellectual sympathies of the audience. How far Mr. Macready might have been carried, had he remained at Drury Lane, by the popular

love of display which he stimulated, it is hard to say. Like another Frankenstein he might have become the slave of the demon he had evoked. But we have lived to see a very different order of things from what prevailed under his management not only established at one of the most popular theatres in London, but even extolled *ad nauseam* by the press as an act of honour and worthy homage to the genius of Shakspeare. What is more serious still, we have seen actors grow worse and worse under the influence of the system, to which this bad and successful example has given countenance, and audiences and critics becoming less and less sensitive to what our Shakspearian acted drama ought to be.

Of Mr. Kean's merits as an actor, it is not our purpose to speak at large. We do not admire him; but that is perhaps a whim of taste. In melodrama he is effective, and he turns his knowledge of the stage to excellent account. To our notions, however, of what the Shaksperian drama demands, powers both natural and acquired of a kind very different from those of Mr. Kean appear to be indispensable. He has been painstaking, industrious, and we doubt not well-intentioned. Fortunately for him, he has for many years been without competitors. Measured against himself, and always before a good-natured public as a zealous manager, it is no wonder he has become widely popular. But when his injudicious friends arrogate for him the praise of being the great upholder of the Shaksperian drama, unless they will allow the phrase upholder its colloquial meaning of "upholsterer," they must not

expect his claims to pass unchallenged. Surely to uphold the drama of Shakspeare is, not to use it as a peg on which to hang the results of antiquarian research, or as a pretext for showing how large a number of expensively-dressed puppets can be put in motion before well painted scenes, or under the unnatural glare of the Bude light; but to take care that the best available actors are got together to clothe his poetry and passion with life and motion, and that these actors are made to do their very best to send home the poet's intentions to the hearts and brains of the audience.

It is on the stage alone, although we are well aware of the often cited opinion of Charles Lamb to the contrary, that Shakespeare can be studied thoroughly, and thoroughly appreciated. That no writer ever left so much for the actor to do as Shakspeare, is not less true, than that none ever gave the actor such fine things to speak. He knew, as no man ever did, how much all good plays must depend upon the filling up of the actor; and we can regard only as affectation the remark so constantly repeated, that Shakspeare can only be really studied in the closet. The poet himself furnishes conclusive evidence against this theory. Why should he not have entrusted his works to the press rather than to the stage, were it not that he believed the stage to be the true medium for preserving them for after times, and securing for them their only thorough appreciation?

A greater than Lamb—we mean Coleridge—took a view of this subject very different from his friend. He looked to the stage "for sending a large portion of the

indefinite all which is contained in Shakspeare, into the heads and hearts, into the very souls of the mass of mankind, to whom, except by this living comment and interpretation, it must remain for ever a sealed volume, a deep well without a wheel and windlass." And if Coleridge so thought, it was because he knew well the magical power which a great actor exercises upon the souls of his audience:—

> "What would appear mad or ludicrous in a book (he says), when presented to the senses under the form of reality, and with the truth of nature, supplies a species of actual experience. This is indeed the special privilege of a great actor over a great poet. No part was ever played in perfection but nature justified herself in the hearts of all her children, in whatever state they were, short of absolute moral exhaustion or downright stupidity. There is no time given to ask questions or pass judgments; we are taken by storm; and though, in the histrionic art, many a clumsy counterfeit, by a caricature of one or two features, may gain applause as a fine likeness, yet never were the very thing rejected as a counterfeit."

What, then, has Mr. Kean done towards that "living comment and interpretation" which must be the great aim as well as pleasant duty of all truly great actors? To us it seems he has not only done nothing, but worse than nothing, for he has deliberately and with tremendous energy of purpose, "shouldered aside" the poet for the sake of mere scenic effects. Of Mr. Kean's own acting in his so-called revivals of Shakspeare we had rather not speak. It presents nothing for criticism to illustrate, much as it offers for reprobation. But we ask in what single instance in all his revivals has he presented to the public either actor or actress capable of filling the characters entrusted to their care? Who of

them all is remembered in any one part as having thrown light upon Shakspeare's intentions, or sent his poetry home to the soul with the unerring force of genuine sympathy? Who of the many thousands who have flocked to these revivals remembers anything of the acting, and does not remember the glare and glitter, the strut and fanfare of the pageantry? Who that was familiar with Shakspeare, ever carried away a valuable idea from the Princess's? Who that knew him not was ever led to peruse him by the exhibitions there, even though the study of the text was smoothed and brought down to the shallowest capacity by the recension and commentary of Mr. Charles Kean's editions of the plays?[1] Look over the glorious list of dramas

[1] Mr. Kean's editions of his revived plays are among the curiosities of literature. Here are a few of his notes to *The Tempest.*—"*Full poor cell*—*i.e.*, a cell in a great degree of poverty." "*So dry he was for sway*—*i.e.*, so thirsty." "*My quaint Ariel*—quaint means brisk, spruce, dexterous, from the French *cointe.*" "*As wicked dew*—*wicked*, having baneful qualities." "*For aye*—for ever." "*Gaberdine*—the coarse frock or outward garment of a peasant." Indeed! "*Sea-mells*—a species of sea-gulls." "*Ban, Ban, Ca—Caliban, has a new master—Get a new man*—in allusion to Prospero, who must now find a new servant, as he (Caliban) is about to serve a new master." "*Wezand*—*i. e.*, throat." "*Art thou afeard?*—to afear is an obsolete verb." Where did Mr. Kean make this discovery? "*Our frustrate search*—frustrate, frustrated." "*Presently?*—now? at once?" "*Faded*—vanished." "*Pard*—leopard." "*Ye elves*—fairies and elves are frequently in the poets mentioned together." "*Coragio!*—an exclamation of encouragement." For what order of intelligence does Mr. Kean dole out such crumbs of knowledge? He must either have marvellously small learning himself, or a very low opinion of that of his audience. The more ambitious notes are even more preposterous.

on which he has laid his hand,—*King John*, *Macbeth*, *Winter's Tale*, *Midsummer's Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Richard the Second*. Surely out of all these there was some scene noticeable for the display of the power of moving tears or pity, passion or imaginative sympathy, which might be recorded in the fleeting annals of histrionic success. We rack our memory in vain to find one, while instances "without number numberless" throng upon us of violence done to the poet by suppression, by misrepresentation, and by acting such as fifteen years ago would have been impossible in a metropolitan theatre of any pretensions.

But, indeed, of what matter can it be how a play is acted, if it is to be overwhelmed by the mere accessories according to Mr. Kean's system? If Garrick himself were to reappear with the Siddons by his side, their genius would be thrown away amid such surroundings. You may have a fine show, or you may have fine acting, but you cannot have both together. Where the eye is distracted at every turn by elaborate architectural details, by novelty of costume and splendour of pageantry, the mind is in no state to work in sympathy with either poet or player. With a stage thronged to excess with javelin-men and ladies in silk tights, even an Edmund Kean would have felt his spirit "quite o'ercrowed." The actor must have space and quiet, if he is to hold his faculties at command, and he must, at the same time, have the assurance that his audience are giving him their attention. People, however, go to the Princess's to see a show, and the actors there are no doubt conscious that this, and this only, is the attraction. What they have

to say is cut down to the narrowest shreds, consistent with the progress of the scene. How they say it is of very little moment, because people's minds are intent upon other matters. Let them wear fine dresses, fit well into the processions and groups, and the manager's aim is achieved. How destructive such a state of things must be to an actor's ambition, how fatal to his power of moving an audience, needs no argument to demonstrate. Those who have watched the decline of the company at the Princess's have the best possible illustration of its baneful effects. Those who, like ourselves, sometimes drop into the theatres of our chief towns out of London can see the same influence at work there. Country managers have followed in Mr. Kean's footsteps. They spare no expense upon spectacles; they take no pains to get good actors, or to make those they have do their best.

Nor are Mr. Kean's sins against the Shaksperian drama those of omission merely. Those of commission are of a deeper die. He has never scrupled to crush the poet, in order to introduce a gorgeous procession or other show, or even to utilize a popular actress. What were his *Florizel* and *Perdita*, his *Ferdinand* and *Miranda?* With what regard to poetic truth has he presented the "dainty Ariel?" How has he banished from *The Tempest* all the gorgeous hues in which Shakspeare's imagination has steeped the enchanted island, by the intrusion of clumsy mechanism and the lumbering efforts of the hundred and forty supernumeraries by whom, his bills inform us, it is worked!

Or let us take a still more flagrant instance, not only of the absence of poetic feeling, but of the spirit of vulgar

display, by which these revivals have been regulated. On the stage there is, perhaps, no scene more quietly beautiful, in reverential hands, than the last scene of the *Winter's Tale.* Sixteen years are supposed to have elapsed since we, with Leontes, beheld Hermione. Then she was borne off to die, as it was thought, under the wrong inflicted by the wilful jealousy of her husband. All that "wide gap of time" has been passed by him in profound remorse,—less would not have sufficed to purge away the stains of a fault so great—and, touched by his affliction, Paulina consents to solace it in a degree by exhibiting to him the "dead likeness" of her whom he so deeply mourned. She yields this boon reluctantly; and so careful has Shakspeare been to invest the situation with a solemnity almost sacred, that he calls the apartment in which it takes place a "chapel." Stillness, solitude, and trembling reverence are the proper accompaniments of such a scene; and none but privileged eyes might behold a reunion so touching in its pathos as that of the lady, sanctified by these long years of suffering and seclusion, with him who had done her the heaviest wrong possible for man to inflict upon a noble woman. Shakspeare has been at peculiar pains to indicate all this in the most unmistakeable way; making even Hermione silent, except at the close of the scene, when she speaks only to invoke a blessing on her daughter. So all other managers have felt and represented it; and many an audience has been quickened to the feeling of its unrivalled beauty by the simple arrangements which usually accompany its representation.

It was left for Mr. Kean to drag down this exquisite conception to the level of a noisy pageant,—to crowd the stage with drums, trumpets, torches, and a confused mass of fantastically dressed supernumeraries, and to bring Hermione from her pedestal under the livid glare of a Bude light, amid the shouts and gesticulations of a mob, to receive an exaggerated embrace from a spasmodic Leontes, and to close the play with a few inarticulate words.

Such is one of the many feats for which the press call upon us to admire Mr. Charles Kean as a great actor and illustrator of Shakspeare! With those who can so deem of a man who could be guilty of such an act of poetical sacrilege, it would be idle to argue. The good sense and good taste of all who love Shakspeare, and who think of what his plays, represented conscientiously and with intelligence, might be, have long since recorded a very different verdict. This verdict Mr. Kean may afford to despise, so long as he fills his theatre; but let him not think he has established a title to our gratitude as a benefactor to dramatic art, or to the memory of Shakspeare. That he has coupled his name inseparably with Shakspeare's is an undeniable fact; but whether with lasting honour, "Time, the old justice, who examines all such offenders," will prove.

Whatever his other claims to direct the Shaksperian tragedy at the recent festival performances[1] may have

[1] Given at Her Majesty's Theatre on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Royal to Prince Frederick William of Prussia, Jan. 1858.

been, it was very unwise to rest them on his services to the drama of Shakspeare. On this ground Mr. Phelps was certainly far better entitled to the distinction, for he has stood alone in the metropolis, since Mr. Macready left Drury Lane, in endeavouring to illustrate Shakspeare by careful acting and thereby to make him familiar to the hearts and lips of the public in a theatre on which an outer darkness as to Shakspeare and a healthy drama had previously rested. At Sadler's Wells the play and the actors are not sacrificed to the costumier. All needful care is bestowed upon the scenic accessories; but the hearts and souls of the audiences are aimed at, as well as their eyes and ears. No pains seem to be spared to make the performance as complete as the actors under Mr. Phelps' command can make it. Each does his best, and a good intention may always be descried, even where the execution is imperfect. It has done Mr. Phelps little good, we fear, as an actor, to have been so long away from collision with performers and audiences of the first class, and his performance of Macbeth on the occasion we have mentioned was not what his well-wishers would have desired. Still it was a comfort to get rid, if only for a night, of the rubbish of antiquarianism, and the preponderance of dresses and decorations over the dramatic interest; and to show in the Lady Macbeth of Miss Helen Faucit, that we still possess an actress almost without a rival in Europe. Here is a lady who rises to the measure of Shakspeare's finest creations, both in comedy and tragedy, with a sweep of power, we believe, beyond what has won the reputation of Rachel and Ristori in the inferior drama of Racine and Alfieri;

and yet such is the state of our London theatres, that there is apparently not one at which this power can be made available. How great the loss is to the public all must have felt who witnessed her impersonation of Lady Macbeth, where not even indifferent acting around her and a divided interest in the house were able to dull the fire of her genius or to impair her hold upon the audience.

Give us performers who prosecute their art, we do not say with the same powers, but with the same high ideal constantly before them, as Miss Faucit, and even now we should not be afraid of bringing back the multitude from cumbrous pageantry and show to nature and Shakspeare. At the same time, it is idle to disguise that this achievement, if ever effected, will be effected against heavy odds. The palate which has been ruined by stimulants, will turn for a time with sickly indifference from wholesome fare. So thoroughly imbued has a large section of the public become with the appetite for costly scenic effects, that it is all but impossible, even if the actors were at hand, that the plays of Shakspeare or any other great dramatist could now be properly represented. Ability and knowledge must be highly paid on the stage as elsewhere, and no manager can pay for these, and also sustain the nightly charges of a costly spectacle. If he prefers to have the good actors, he must, therefore, be prepared to run a great risk, if not to sustain a serious loss, at the outset of his speculation.

Who is to venture on so perilous a task with a public depraved in its tastes looking coldly on his efforts, and

a press ready to cry up the dramatic "upholsterer," and to denounce Shakspeare as slow without the relief of dances, Bude lights, processions, and costumes for each of which a voucher can be produced? To these guides of public opinion, we doubt not the display of *Titania's* graces as a ballet-dancer is much more congenial than all the poetry in the world. With that kind of knowledge of the actor's art which is picked up by lounging at side wings and discussing small green-room scandal with the Belvawneys and Folairs of second-rate theatres, they can appreciate any strong effect, or exaggerated piece of declamation; but of the art, as practised by the race of accomplished actors, the last of whom are fast disappearing, or of the literature of the real drama, they know nothing. To these, Shakspeare, Goldsmith, or Sheridan, is slow, as Bacon, Milton, or Jeremy Taylor is slow. They adapt farces from the French, and call themselves dramatic authors. They have managers to conciliate, and even where their better judgment must condemn, personal interest ties up their tongues.

The editors of our leading journals obviously think it of no moment how questions of art are dealt with, and we have become the laughing-stock of Europe for the ignorant, and not rarely dishonest, trash to which they give currency as criticism. In no department is this discreditable feature more conspicuous than in that of dramatic criticism. The press, which should be the great check upon the abuses of the stage, has for long contributed to foment them. While it is loud enough in its moans over the decay of the drama, it rarely lifts

its voice against the causes of this decay. Bad pieces and worse acting are praised; good pieces and good acting are as often as not passed over in silence. The vicious management of our leading theatres is not denounced. At one of these, for example, we may see a Lady Teazle with the airs of a *lorette*, and a Charles Surface with the manners of a clown, but the papers of next morning will probably extol the refined grace of the one, and the gentlemanly ease of the other. Again and again within the last few years have we been called upon to admire actresses whose talent for costliness of wardrobe was supreme, but who could neither speak, walk, nor look like ladies; nay, who were continually violating, with an unconsciousness truly astounding, the simplest rules of Walker and Lindley Murray.

What else, indeed, could be expected from the uneducated pretenders who have latterly filled the places which, until the last change in the management of our leading Comedy Theatre, were occupied by gentlewomen of culture and experience, who respected themselves and their vocation? An honest press would have made it impossible for a manager to insult the understanding and good feeling of the public by thrusting such vulgar incapacity upon them. It would have told those "Cynthias of the minute," who did not know the rudiments of grammar, much less the rudiments of the dramatic art, to find another sphere for the display of their fine dresses and tawdry manners. It would have compelled managers to see that their actors did not trifle with their parts, and made actors feel that they could not do so with impunity. But this it has not

done; and we can hope for no improvement until the criticism of the stage is in the hands of men who are not only competent to judge, and have nothing to hope for from managers, but who also keep themselves entirely aloof from all personal association with actors.

We press this point urgently, because we feel assured that if our stage is ever to rise again, the momentum in a great degree must be given by the press. Performers still adorn it of high powers and accomplishments, more especially in comedy, and it must be that in so numerous a profession there are many yet unknown to fame who, under fair encouragement and judicious criticism, would do honour to the stage. Let the press do its duty. Let it speak out honestly what it thinks of the pretenders, and give a helping hand to the modest and laborious artist. It could soon crush that crop of noisy declaimers each of whom advertises himself as "the greatest tragedian of the day." It could soon convince the flaunting Fotheringays, that something more than diamonds and satin are requisite for a leading actress, and that these, however magnificent, will not disguise ignorance and want of breeding. It could drive buffoonery at all events from our leading theatres, and teach managers to look as much for success to good pieces, and the finish which can only be achieved by careful rehearsals and harmonious action, as to comediettas in which no phase of any actual society is depicted, or to coarse extravaganzas and a redundant display of feminine symmetry. It could force actors to hold the public and their own art in some degree of reverence, and to culti-

vate by the study of men and books those qualities which used to make the actor respected as a gentleman, not less than he was admired as an artist. Let the *Times*, the *Post*, and the other leading journals deal with plays and players from a point of view as exalted and independent as that from which they handle social questions, and so surely will a marked change speedily come over the spirit of the scene.

But while the press may do much, the regeneration of the drama must, we believe, come mainly from actors themselves. As a body, they are behind the time. They have not kept pace with its culture, and they do not seem to be at any pains to make up the leeway they have lost. Their ranks have not of late years been recruited from the better educated classes, and it may be that there is little encouragement for ladies and gentlemen to join a profession where doubtful virtue in the one and forward pretension in the other seem for the time to carry off the prizes, and where the class of plays in vogue offers so little to dignify the actor's art. But it is impossible that, possessing as we do the noblest drama in the world, and with the great love of the stage inherent in the people, this state of things should go on much longer. The want of a better stage is felt by all thinking men to have become intolerable. As an engine of popular education, especially of that instruction of the heart which in these times is too much neglected for that of the head, it is invaluable. As an amusement, the world has never devised one that can compete with it. We waste our money on opera, but the drama is our natural element. An Englishman

cannot go on for ever "laying down his understanding at the door," as Lord Chesterfield said he must do, when he enters the opera-house.

At no time were good theatres more longed for. People begin to find out that they may read too much, that they may be too much alone;—that to be transported out of the round of their own persecuting and petty cares into sympathy with the creatures of the dramatist's fancy, and to be moved to tears or laughter in company with their fellow-men, is better than to have a smattering of all the ologies. Most cordially, we believe, would the men who are the moving spirits of our time, second the efforts of any manager who should rest his claims to popularity on good plays and thoroughly trained actors. Men of ability would then write plays, who are now deterred from doing so, because they know they cannot be acted, and we might hope to see a drama arise which would be at once a reflex and a monitor to the times. An intelligent audience before the curtain would operate beneficially behind it, and in time a new cluster of artists would spring up to rival the Kembles, Mundens, Glovers, and Farrens of recent times, or those great delineators of character and manners of a former period, with whom the pictorial record at the Garrick Club has made us familiar. We can only give a voice to the dissatisfaction with the prevailing abuses of our theatres, which we know to be widely felt, and to the longing, not less widely felt, for a better order of things. We have done so frankly, and without fear or favour. Whence or

when the reformation is to come, it is impossible to foresee. But the time is ripe for it, and those who bring it will assuredly not be left to sink as martyrs in a thankless cause.

SHAKSPEARE, AND HIS LATEST STAGE INTERPRETERS.

(Fraser's Magazine, December, 1861.)

HATEVER the state of the drama may be, there can be no doubt as to the flourishing condition of our theatres. Never were so many open, never so many well filled. A few good actors, and a few good pieces, such as reasonable and educated men might feel they were not abusing their time by going to see, might not be amiss. Some flashes of intelligence and talent here and there scarcely suffice to irradiate the Bœotian atmosphere, which too generally pervades our theatres. Were it not that the public are only too tolerant of incapacity, too ready to be pleased, most of them must long since have closed their doors. But in this London of ours, there is such a vast multitude of over-worked and over-idle people, eager for amusement upon any terms, that an actor of fair abilities, or a drama with even a tolerable amount of interest, is sure of success.

Were this not so, how could the *furore* be explained which has been excited by such a drama as *The Colleen Bawn?* With no merit, except neat construction, one scene of novel effect, which works strongly upon the sensations of the audience, and respectable acting in two or three of the parts, it has had a run and produced a profit to the theatre quite unprecedented in the annals of the stage. Moreover, every provincial town in the kingdom has rushed to see Myles-na-Coppaleen's "tremendous header," and all Paris is at this moment agape at this astounding achievement of histrionic genius. Thirty-six thousand pounds, says rumour, is the harvest already reaped from this one source by Mr. Dion Boucicault. A drama which can boast of such results, obviously transcends criticism. As Jules Janin exclaims, criticising in the *Débats* the reproduction of the piece at the Ambigu, "Neuf cent mille francs! Nous n'avons rien de mieux à dire; il n'y a pas d'éloquence, il n'y a pas de critique, il n'y a pas de feuilleton au-delà de ces neuf cent mille francs!" Before the genius of success, the genius of critic or of poet must in these days both bow; and that success Mr. Boucicault possesses in a pre-eminent degree. He has seen that our modern audiences must be attracted through the eyes; through their sensations rather than their emotions. Give them sufficiency of action, a story, suspense, excitement, thrill their nerves with some strong effect, just short of absolute horror, please their senses with fine scenery, and they are content. Poetry, passion, elevation of character or thought, are of little or no account. Infuse, if you will, a dash of these, or

of something that looks like them, just to give your piece an air of literary respectability. Touch the hearts of your audience, if you can, but by all means gratify their senses, and work them up into a fever of physical excitement. On this principle Mr. Boucicault has wrought, and being a master in the technical requisites of his craft, his piece has proved a very gold mine to him.

There was a time when this sort of thing was reserved for the minor theatres. Unhappily the same spirit has for a considerable period pervaded all the houses. Nor is this state of things peculiar to England. In France and Germany the stage has undergone a similar degradation; and the wail of those who mourn over the decay of our own poetical drama has its counterpart in the lamentations of the critics of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. Love of spectacle, over-attention to *mise-en-scène*, has brought its own retribution there as here. The art of acting has declined, while archæology and pictorial skill have been usurping its place; and if plays of a high class were now to be written, they could not have justice done to them on a foreign stage any more than upon our own, for want of actors capable of grappling with character and passion in their higher forms.

It was left for England, however, to turn the plays of Shakspeare into mere vehicles for scenic effects. Neither in France nor Germany have they as yet been handed over to the upholsterer and dress-maker to deal with after their ideal. That species of "revival" was reserved for the region of Oxford Street and the fine

imagination of Mr. Charles Kean. Propitious was the hour for the London stage when that gentleman, after having done his best to reduce every tragedy of Shakspeare which he "revived" to a show, and every comedy to a farce, retired from the administration of the Princess's Theatre, and fell back upon his native powers, unaided by the splendours of spectacle, and unenforced by the "divinity" which somehow or other seems always to hedge a managerial king. Like other shows, Mr. Kean's revivals were speedily forgotten. Who thinks of all their glare and glitter now? But the mischief was done. His example, applauded as it was by reckless critics and a credulous public, had spread through every provincial theatre. Good acting was at a discount. The player was elbowed out of sight by the scene-shifter. The art of declamation was being rapidly lost, and the consequences were miserably apparent whenever an attempt was made to represent a Shakspearian play on a London stage. The merest pretenders, who at no very remote period would not have been admitted, even as subordinates, to any of the principal theatres, rushed into the leading places. The old standards of excellence were forgotten, and no new ones had arisen. Any actor or actress, however illiterate or unschooled, might make a dash at the most difficult parts. So accordingly, for example, have we seen at a leading theatre a Beatrice or a Rosalind whose treatment of the aspirate was enough to raise Lindley Murray from the tomb, and who showed in exquisite combination the pronunciation and manners of a barmaid. Of the Benedicks and Orlandos, it is enough to

say that they formed appropriate pendants to such a principal. Elsewhere matters were not much better.

But never, perhaps, was a more pitiable spectacle presented to a Drury Lane audience than the plays produced there last winter during the performances of Mr. Charles Kean. It was not alone that the scenery and costume were beyond measure contemptible. In the presence of careful stage arrangements and good acting these might have been overlooked. But both the stage arrangement and the acting were bad beyond belief. The miserable declamation and utterly unreal and affected style, which had in some measure escaped notice on a crowded stage and in the midst of pageantry, stood out in ghastly prominence. Mr. Kean's satellites, whom he has schooled into all the vices of his own manner, showed themselves in all their native weakness; and Mr. Kean himself, in the exaggeration which was there perceptible of all the defects which had distinguished the performances of his earlier career, proved how much he had become the victim of that vicious system of which he had long been the master-spirit, and under which he had sacrificed nature and poetry to false glitter and melodramatic effect.

Of this his Hamlet was a signal example. Apparently regarded by Mr. Kean himself as one of his best parts, the critics during a long series of years have told us that it was a performance not only unrivalled, but perfect. They told us so again last season, when Mr. Kean re-emerged to "the upturned wondering eyes" of his admirers upon the stage of Drury Lane. The Hamlet of Mr. Kean's early days was a showy per-

formance: the action was showy, the declamation showy. It had all the cleverness which a natural aptitude for stage effect gives to all this gentleman's performances; but it was entirely without poetry or truth. Mr. Kean's Hamlet in 1861 has all the vices of his youthful performance indurated and engrained in such a degree that, in the absence of the youthful aspect, it seems altogether of a coarser fibre. It is a hard, commonplace, stagey reading of the part, very attractive possibly to those who think the best acting is that which is the farthest from nature, but as unlike the young Lord Hamlet of Shakspeare's imagination as it is possible to conceive. A young prince sulking about the Court of Denmark, as he depicts him, would have been a nuisance so intolerable that every one must have been anxious to get him out of the way. Rosenkrantz would have cut him; Horatio declined the discomfort of his acquaintance; and most assuredly Claudius, a gentleman not accustomed to stand on trifles, and who in this case would have been sure of strong backing, would have felt it necessary to get rid of him on any terms. Mr. Kean labours undoubtedly under great disadvantages. He is not "the mould of form," and his deportment, either from want of that natural grace for which his father was conspicuous, or from bad stage habits, is more that of "the harlotry player," than the high-bred and sensitive prince. The repose of the gentleman is never indicated; he thrusts himself into prominence when he should be retiring; he attitudinizes, he distorts his features in the most meaningless and unpleasant way, dropping his jaw, and gazing vacantly

into vacancy, whenever he wishes to express mental abstraction; he shouts with superfluous energy, he deals in the most redundant gestures, does everything, in short, which a man of Hamlet's temperament and culture would not do. The performance is an inharmonious tissue of shreds and patches, full of claptrap effects and showy emphasis; but presenting no development of the man Hamlet under the novel and trying circumstances which pass before our eyes.

Everything is set and artificial, glaring and unreal. His first entrance on the scene is made with a demonstrativeness unbecoming to the situation. King, queen, and court are sent on before; and when they are all ranged along one side of the stage, Mr. Kean stalks on and takes up his position in the centre of the scene, as if he, and not Claudius, occupied the throne of Denmark. Hamlet's very first speech in reply to his mother's remonstrance, is spoken with a tone and emphasis utterly foreign to the situation. Here, as indeed throughout, Mr. Kean's sole aim seems to be to send home what he thinks the strong speeches of the part with a kind of sledge-hammer force, without considering whether, under the circumstances, this is consistent with probability or not. There is no gradation, no ebb and flow of emotion, no reserve; and therefore, when passion is called for, it is so mere an echo of ill-judged vehemence, previously squandered on what should have been calmly handled, that it loses all its effect. The miserable ambition of making "points" to catch applause—that vice of the incapable actor trying to imitate the grand and intuitive culminations of

passion by which true genins electrifies its audience—besets the whole conception. Even in the presence of the ghost, it betrays Mr. Kean into absurdities of action and delivery. He cannot talk of "the ponderous and marble jaws" of the monnment from which the restless spirit has escaped, without drawling forth the words, as if the whole weight of the cenotaph hung upon each particnlar syllable. Again, the declaration that the ghost cannot harm his soul, that "being a thing immortal as itself," is given with the old stage start and strut, which may be very effective with the upper galleries, but is quite unseemly in the presence of so awful a manifestation. An actor capable of interpreting Shakspeare could not fall into absurdities like these. It is not that he would merely scorn such cheap effects; they would be for him simply impossible.

The only source of greatness in acting—entire sympathy with the nature to be portrayed—is wanting throughout Mr. Kean's whole performance. We see merely the actor; we catch no glimpse of the true prince of Denmark. Mr. Kean is thinking of his effects, when he should be leaving them to find an outlet for themselves. Thus it is that we miss in him all those natural transitions from feeling to feeling, which are so subtly modulated in the Hamlet of Shakspeare, and which were left by him to be wrought by the performer into perfect expression by play of feature, inflection of the voice, and by action. Of this nicety of touch we find nothing in Mr. Kean. His lights are glare; his shadows, gloom; his tenderness is unmanly; his pathos, maudlin; his passion, rant.

Such being the Hamlet which has for many years held the leading place upon our stage, Mr. Fechter did wisely in selecting this part as his assay piece, when he invited the English publio to appraise his laudable ambition of becoming an interpreter of their great poet. They were familiar with what a merely conventional treatment had made of the play. Mr. Fechter, hampered by no traditions, and looking at the character with the eye of a student of human nature, educated by long and assiduous familiarity with the resources of the histrionic art, seems to have foreseen with what eagerness a fresh and truly sympathetic rendering of the part would be hailed by a public like ours, which, however tolerant it may be of bad acting, is quick to appreciate good. In this play, too, everything turns upon Hamlet himself, and the actor is less dependent than in any other play of Shakspeare's on those around him. As the company of the Princess's Theatre were not to be relied on in any more hazardous venture, this consideration was probably not without its effect upon Mr. Fechter's decision. The public, ingratiated by the grace, and spirit, and finish which he had displayed in *Ruy Blas* and other romantic parts, were predisposed in his favour. He made his venture, and a verdict all but unanimous pronounced it a great success. Nothing so fresh and stimulating had for many a day been seen upon our stage. The ancient dreary routine had been abandoned in the whole arrangements of the scene. So skilfully, too, had Mr. Fechter contrived to arrange their work for the very inefficient performers who surrounded him, that their shortcomings were less conspicuous than they must otherwise have

been. The scenery and costumes illustrated, and did not overwhelm the action. Each character was brought into due subordination to the rest. Hamlet himself fell into his place as one of the court. His first appearance was conspicuous, not by his making his entrance alone, but by the mere force of the interest excited by his look and bearing. The spectator's eye had to seek him out, but having once found him it was fixed for the rest of the scene. In the same spirit the whole performance was conceived. The character grew and expanded before our eyes, swayed to and fro, now alive with energy, anon dreaming into irresolution and apathy, modulating itself to the incidents of the scene and the personages with which it was in collision, passionate, tender, courteous, sarcastic, brilliant, meditative, as the occasion demanded. Whatever Mr. Fechter did seemed to be true to the situation, and done without regard to effect, even when the effect was greatest. Whatsoever he said was said so as to bring out the author's meaning with full but not exaggerated emphasis. Picturesque and graceful without apparent effort, Mr. Fechter pleased the eye and stimulated the imagination by such insensible degrees, that the audience soon forgot—as the action of the play proceeded, and they became lost in a sense of its reality—the strangeness of the foreign accent, which for the first few minutes had disturbed their enjoyment. The freshness of originality gave new force and significance to the old situations, and to language which from mere familiarity had lost some of its impressiveness. It was manifest that the actor had taken a strong and comprehensive grasp of

the part. He had plumbed its depths, he had "plucked out the heart of its mystery." It had mirrored itself sharply and clearly within his mind, and he contrived with rare skill to body forth to his audience the image which he had created for himself.

And yet, admirable as this impersonation was, and great as were its claims upon our gratitude for having emancipated our stage, as it did, at one stroke, from the wretched conventionalisms under which the play had been so long smothered, it did not leave upon the mind a feeling of entire satisfaction. It was not merely that the ear missed the fine rhythmical cadences of the verse, which perhaps no ear but an English ear can thoroughly feel, and no tongue but an English tongue do justice to. That Mr. Fechter failed here could scarcely be charged as a fault to him, when we remember what difficulties he must have overcome to speak our language as he does. But it *is* a flaw, nevertheless, and one the full effect of which it is hard to estimate. Who shall say how much of our impression of any character in its moods of excitement or of passion is dependent on the due inflections of the language in which these clothe themselves? The accentuation of a few words, nay, even of a syllable, may make the difference between commonplace and poetical suggestiveness. In passages of high passion, more particularly, a clear and resonant utterance is all-important. If these be not given with vibrant tones and a full and rhythmical cadence, the soul from which they issue will never seem to be otherwise than shallow and small.

Judged by his Hamlet alone, we should say that Mr.

Fechter is not penetrated by the subtle melodies of Shakspeare's language, either in their tenderer or their grander tones. The scene at Ophelia's grave showed that he has not strength of voice for, even if he felt, the latter; and in the calmer soliloquies we never found him lingering upon and evolving the richness or sweetness of the former. Besides the natural inaptitude of the foreigner to appreciate the subtler beauties of the verse, something of this defect might, we feared, be due to a latent hardness in his own nature. His intelligence seemed to be more active than his imagination, his feelings to be quick rather than profound. So it was, that while he evolved a perfectly well defined and consistent conception in his Hamlet, it appeared, even to those who admired it most, to want that undefinable something which constitutes ideality, that subtle pervading essence which escapes the grasp of analysis, but which we demand, and have in our own days found, in the impersonators of the characters of our poetical drama. Here and there an excess of familiarity might be perceived. The tone was too colloquial; Hamlet was on too easy terms with his friends and fellow-students. There was a little too much resting on the arm of one, of hanging on the shoulder of another, which dragged the play somewhat too much down into common life, and took from the dignity of the young prince. In passing from the extreme of formality with which the part had been so long treated on our stage, it seemed as if Mr. Fechter had somewhat overstepped the rules of art in an opposite direction. However, in the general satisfaction inspired by so fresh and brilliant an embodiment

of the character, all misgivings were forgotten; and it was welcomed with enthusiasm, not only by the general public, but even by those severer judges who had not forgotten the great actors of a former time, and with whom Shakspeare had been a life-long study. Men who had forsworn theatres in disgust for many a day, returned and found in Mr. Fechter one who could make "the ancient founts of inspiration well within their spirits" with much of their ancient vigour. Once more were refined and educated audiences made to feel that for the thorough understanding of Shakspeare the theatre is the only place; and that it is only when their imaginations are roused by witnessing the progress of the action, and they are under the spell of an actor penetrated by the genius of the poet, and kindling with the inspiration of the scene, that the length and breadth of the poet's purpose can be fully estimated, or the deeper beauties of his delineation be thoroughly felt.

It was therefore with no common interest that the public looked forward to the next appearance of Mr. Fechter in a Shakspearian character. And when that character was understood to be Othello, and it was rumoured that Mr. Fechter intended to prove by his arrangement of the piece how mistaken our ideas had hitherto been of the way it ought to be represented, curiosity was still further stimulated. Simultaneously with his appearance in the part, an edition of the play, called "Charles Fechter's Acting Edition," was published, in which so much of the text is given as he considers essential for scenic purposes, accompanied by minute instructions as to what is technically called the

business of the scene. In other acting editions these directions are confined to certain cabalistic indications as to exits and entrances, and such-like matters, which actors of course understand, but nobody else does, or need care to do. This is not Mr. Fechter's notion, however, of an acting edition. If a character has to speak, the peculiar expression is indicated which is to be given to what he says. Thus Desdemona is told to exclaim, "Nor I!" "with a sad resignation," and Iago cheers Cassio "with deceitful friendliness." The movements and gestures of the performers are all regulated in the same way. Iago "takes Cassio by the arm with great show of frankness and confidence," and claps Roderigo on the shoulder "with an air of patronizing pride." The whole play is studded with directions of this kind.[1] Thus, although Mr. Fechter in a prefatory

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[1] Mr. Fechter must rate very low the intelligence both of his readers and of his "comrades in art," otherwise he would scarcely venture to tell them in this way how every passage is to be spoken and acted. An actor fit to play any one of the leading parts of this play will, of course, find all these things out for himself. What, for example, can be more absurd or more superfluous than such a passage as this in the last scene?

"OTH. I think she stirs again. No; [*Trying to collect his thoughts.*]
What's the best?
If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife:—
[*Repeating his own words as if another had spoken them.*]
My wife! my wife! what wife?
[*With heartrending accent of grief.*]
I have no wife!
Oh insupportable! oh heavy hour!
[*Crossing his hands over his head, as if to defend himself from the wrath of heaven.*]"

dedication takes credit for not having given "a single annotation to swell the number of those myriad comments which already encumber the different texts of Shakspeare," he does in fact give more than most editors in the way of commentary as to what Shakspeare intended to be understood from the action, or meant to convey as to the nature of his various per-

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The man who cannot learn from his own soul how to express this passage, will never learn it from such schoolboy tutorings as these. Mr. Fechter is probably not aware that this grotesque style of stage direction, which in former days prevailed in Germany, and for a brief period in England, when German plays like *The Stranger* and *The Robbers* were first brought over, was exploded by the ridicule of Canning in *The Rovers of Quedlinburg*, published in *The Anti-Jacobin*. It would not be difficult to extract from Mr. Fechter's book passages of which the following, from that admirable burlesque, is scarcely a caricature:—

"WAITER. Sir, here is a person who desires to speak with you.

BEEFINGTON. [*Goes to the door, and returns with a letter which he opens. On perusing it his countenance becomes illuminated, and expands prodigiously.*] Hah, my friend, what joy! [*Turning to Puddingfield.*]

PUDDINGFIELD. What! tell me—let your Puddingfield partake it.

BEEF. See here! [*Producing a printed paper.*]

PUDD. What? [*With impatience.*]

BEEF. [*In a significant tone.*] A newspaper!

PUDD. Hah! what say'st thou? a newspaper!

BEEF. Yes, Puddingfield, and see here [*shows it partially*], from England.

PUDD. [*With extreme earnestness.*] Its name?

BEEF. The *Daily Advertiser*.

PUDD. Oh, ecstasy!

BEEF. [*With a dignified severity.*] Puddingfield, calm yourself—repress these transports—remember that you are a man.

PUDD. [*After a pause, with suppressed emotion.*] Well, I will be – I am calm!"

sonages. Accordingly, without seeing Mr. Fechter's Othello, a man may readily gather from this book what it is likely to be, and how far his interpretation of the whole play is in accordance with the text of Shakspeare. And viewing it in connection with the actual performance, we can be in no doubt about Mr. Fechter's conception not merely of the character of Othello, but also of the principles on which the representation of this and other Shakspearian dramas should be conducted. If Mr. Fechter be right in his views as embodied in this first of his series of an acting edition of Shakspeare, the rest of the world has hitherto been greatly wrong, and it is at all events of some consequence to see where we stand, before a further advance is made in this reformation of our stage.

Mr. Fechter in his introduction says:—

> "Here is simply an Acting Edition, entirely to the purport, and for the use of the stage; free from all pretence to compete with the elaborate publications intended for the library. Shakspeare's plays were certainly written to be acted, not recited. I therefore offer to the public, who have so kindly and effectively supported me in my bold attempt, and to my comrades in art, who are willing to accompany me along the path I follow, the fruit of nearly twenty years' unceasing 'labour of love' for the scenic representation of the Great Master! Too happy if they find it easy of digestion, yielding some food for the intellect and profit for the future.
>
> It is now for others to press forward, to sap the foundations of that worm-eaten and unwholesome prison, where dramatic art languishes in fetters, and which is called '*Tradition!*'"

Modestly as this seems to be couched, and modestly as we doubt not Mr. Fechter meant it, it had much better, we think, have been left unsaid. If he be correct in saying that Shakspeare's plays were written to be

acted, not *recited*, he ought to have seen that a text so crammed with practical commentary as his, if accepted and acted on by himself and his "comrades in art," does not only compete with "the elaborate publications intended only for the library," but does so with such enormous odds in its favour, that it is of the last consequence to the interests of literature that it should be sound in its readings, and "well digested in its scenes." Mistakes in such matters are of serious moment. False impressions conveyed from the stage as to Othello, Macbeth, Lear, and Benedick, and of the plays in which they appear, injure the taste of the public in the most vital point. Of such false impressions we have already had too many. Mr. Fechter would have done well to have tested his conceptions a little more thoroughly before committing them with so much confidence to a record which he obviously trusts will become permanent.

Again, that "Shakspeare's plays were written to be *acted*, not recited," is a mere truism in words, but it involves a fallacy in the idea which Mr. Fechter manifestly seeks to convey. The first part of the proposition is one that can never be too strongly dwelt upon. Shakspeare wrote for the stage, and the full worth of what he wrote can never be sent home to the heart and soul except from the stage. The ablest and most imaginative reader cannot depict to others—nay, he cannot realize to himself—one half of what even an indifferent performance, conducted in an earnest spirit, will show him, either directly or by suggestion. Acted, then, these plays should be; and so far Mr. Fechter is

unquestionably right. But *action* is not all, or anything like all. The action of these plays is, no doubt, for the most part masterly. The story is interesting, the plots admirably developed, the contrast of character, the conflict of interest and of passion, unrivalled; but if this were all, they would not have risen above the region of melodrama. What the characters are in semblance and in bearing, what they say, and how they say it, is not less important than what they do. Strong emotion or roused passion expresses itself in language elevated and full of rhythm. The actor cannot illustrate the poet who has not at command the voice and skill to bring out into full relief the rise and fall, the undulating play and swell, the pauses, the onward stress, the culminating bursts of passionate speech. Emotion and passion take many shapes. It is not alone in short broken spasms of utterance that they find a vent. Quite as often they express themselves in the "long resounding march and energy divine" of sustained and resonant eloquence. A tragic actor, therefore, who cannot "recite," or, more properly, "declaim," will never reach the summit of his art. Wanting this power, he will be likely, like Mr. Fechter himself in Othello, to act too much—that is, to fritter away his effects, and to distract his audience by too much action, too abrupt and trivial varieties of gesture, too much dependence on the mere accessories of the scene. When we find Mr. Fechter cutting out from Othello large sections of the noblest passages of poetic utterance—passages, too, which are essential either to the due development of the scene or of some leading character, we feel the more bound to protest

against his proposition. We have seen this creed already too long and too fatally acted upon by Mr. Kean, who in his "revivals" cut down everything in the shape of declamation to the scantiest limits, leaving little more of the dialogue than was sufficient to carry on the story, and so vulgarizing tragedy into mere melodrama. It is because the working of the same principle, applied, it is true, with a more delicate hand, peeps out in Othello as represented by Mr. Fechter, that we dread its further extension to what he calls "the scenic representation of the great master."

The praise which was given to Mr. Fechter's Hamlet for its freedom from convention, has apparently encouraged him to believe that whatever is "traditional" is wrong. It is not because our stage has been given over for many years, in so far as the poetical drama is concerned, to mere incapables—echoes of echoes, whose frothy declamation and clumsy artifices were the mere burlesques of better men—that we are to assent to his sweeping abuse of tradition. In every art there are traditions; for traditions are nothing more than the methods which genius has discovered, and experience approved. The painter, the sculptor, the poet, all prize the traditions of their art. Nor are they less precious to the actor. It is not because it is over-ridden by "traditions," but because it has in a great measure lost them, that our stage has suffered. Is it to be thought that an art graced by so much ability, and energy, and skill, whose professors were well read in men and books; an art transmitted down from Shakspeare's time through an unbroken series of able men, should have

failed to accumulate traditions as to the rendering of the master-pieces of the stage, which no performer, however gifted, should despise, and on which he certainly could not improve? Assuredly it was not left for an actor of these days—and that actor not an Englishman—to discover for the first time how "the scenic representation of the great master" is to be handled. Nor does an innovator who denounces all tradition ingratiate our sympathy, when we find that, in sweeping away what he calls tradition, he sweeps away with it considerable portions of Shakspeare himself. *Stare super vias antiquas* is a sound maxim, when duly qualified, in art as in politics; and Mr. Fechter will find, if, indeed, he has not already found, that the farther he deviates from the track of his great predecessors in all essential points, the more likely is he to go astray.

With them it was the tradition, that the development of character is the primary purpose of a tragic actor's art. Nature, truth, and probability, were always to be kept in view, but trivial action and commonplace truthfulness were most carefully to be avoided. Not everything which might be looked or done by the personages they represented was to be given. In the actor's, as in all other arts, the principle must prevail of selecting whatever is best and fittest to produce what ought to be the dominant impression. The eye is not to be too much distracted, and the feelings too much disturbed, by unimportant accessories. We are to be shown men and women, as far as possible, to use the laureate's words, at their "best and greatest," and not to be too constantly reminded, in the midst of great scenes of

passion or tenderness, of the things that surround us in the common goings-on of life. All that tends to convey an idea of elevation should be turned to account; all that has an opposite tendency should be kept as much as possible in the background.

It would, of course, have been most easy for a Garrick or an Edmund Kean to elaborate his stage arrangements as Mr. Fechter has done; to dispose chairs, and tables, and couches, on which to lean and sit about, and so to give an air of so-called reality to the scene. But they knew well that to use these accessories so freely would have been to violate an important principle of art; and not merely this, but also to run counter to nature, with which all art worthy of the name is ever in unison. For when men are under strong emotion, they do not loll or sit. They stand, that their voice may better speak out their emotion, and their gestures have fuller play. It is not natural, for example, for Othello to speak, sitting, the speech

"Oh, now, farewell the tranquil mind, &c."

Neither is it consonant with art to do so, the sitting posture being fatal both to the expression which face and figure should lend to the language, and to the unimpeded use of the voice in sending home the language to the spectator's heart. Mr. Fechter sits while he speaks this passage, and the opportunity for creating a great impression on his audience is utterly thrown away.

Again, in this constant effort to be what is most wrongly called natural, such realists as Mr. Fechter,

like their counterparts of the modern pre-Raphaelite school, are continually doing what is most unnatural. We might illustrate this proposition from nearly every scene of Othello. Take, for example, that of Desdemona's landing in Cyprus. She enters on her way to the citadel, and hitherto she has always on the stage retained the standing posture throughout. A skilful actress can never be at a loss to engage the attention of her audience during the somewhat lengthened dialogue that ensues. Indeed the scene is important, as affording an opportunity, while she is prominently in the eye of the audience, for impressing them with that attractiveness and dignified simplicity of character which had subdued the stern soldier in Othello. Mr. Fechter has no thought of this. He places the scene upon a quay; and Desdemona and Emilia, in their robes of satin and velvet, are made to sit down upon dirty bales, to listen to the sarcasms of Iago. Their position, too, is so arranged, far back upon the stage, that they are virtually lost to the spectators, whose whole attention is concentrated on Iago, as he leans on his elbows over a capstan between the ladies, jerking out his sentences, now at the one, now at the other, with an air of coarse impertinence which must have made Shakspeare's Desdemona recoil from him in disgust. Yet has this been applauded as a most skilful and natural arrangement of the scene!

But an innovation which is, if possible, more unjustifiable, has been introduced in the opening of the third act, with the view of giving a greater air of *vraisemblance* to the scene. We do not enter upon the ques-

tion of Mr. Fechter's general division and scenic arrangements of this act. These are full of incongruity, and directly contrary to the express indications of Shakspeare's text, from which it is clear that the greater part of the action can only take place, not in a chamber of the castle, but in the open air. But the consideration of this question would carry us into too wide a field. Cassio has been dismissed, and has thrown himself in the way of Desdemona to solicit her intervention with Othello for his pardon and re-instatement. Abashed at his own folly, and dismayed at its consequences, he is sunk in profound dejection, while she is full of tender sympathy for one whom she has had the best reason for knowing to be the valued friend and companion of her husband. Yet how does Mr. Fechter deal with this situation? During the whole dialogue between Cassio and Desdemona, she is seated, "winding off silk, which Emilia holds to her," while Cassio stands over her, leaning his hand upon her chair!

To say nothing of the utter improbability of Cassio being in Desdemona's boudoir while in disgrace with Othello, what are we to think of an innovation which so outrages all probability? What lady, while listening to even the least important suit, would, in common courtesy, wound the feelings of her suitor by going on with any occupation, much less with one so trivial? And when the suit was one like Cassio's, and when the man who made it, and she to whom it was addressed, were what they are depicted by the poet, is not this pitiful aiming at reality an insult to our understandings, and a great wrong to the intentions of Shakspeare?

The same scene contains another gross violation both of Shakspeare and tradition, and, what is not a little strange, most of the critics have applauded it as a great discovery. It is the scene, as our readers remember, where Iago first sets in motion his plans for rousing Othello's jealousy. At the close of the previous scene, he has told us how he is to open his attack.

> "My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress,
> I'll set her on!
> Myself the while *to draw the Moor apart,*
> *And bring him* jump where he may Cassio find
> Soliciting his wife."

Plainly this was only to be effected when the Moor was at leisure; at some moment, at least, when his attention was not absorbed in business. At no other time was he to be "drawn apart" and "brought" where Iago wished him. Shakspeare, who placed the scene in the open air, knew well how to keep his action consonant with probability. He so shaped it, therefore, that we might presume the scene to be the garden or terrace of the citadel, where Cassio might naturally hope to come across Desdemona's path, and where Othello might easily be led by Iago, now his lieutenant, when the business which had employed them was over. But this would not have allowed sufficient scope for that kind of action which finds favour with Mr. Fechter. Accordingly, he introduces Othello "opening despatches and petitions," and during the first half of his dialogue with Iago, divides his attention between these and his tempter's inuendoes. Thus while Iago is levelling his

poisoned shafts at him, he is still "busy with his papers." As he utters the words—

> "By heaven, he echoes me,
> *As if there were some monster in his thoughts,*
> *Too hideous to be shown;*"

words which show as clearly as words can show anything, that his attention is not only fully roused, but that he is already seriously uneasy, and has a vague divination of Iago's drift, Othello merely "*looks up at him, playing with his pen as he speaks.*" This mode of treatment is very showy. It affords room for a great deal of movement, and picturesque arrangement. But how dearly is all this purchased! Shakspeare and probability are outraged; and what is not the least evil, the opportunity is lost, which all this portion of the dialogue affords, of showing the gradual progress from roused attention to uneasiness, doubt, and miserable distrust.

But of all Mr. Fechter's innovations, none is perhaps worse than one little incident in the last scene of the play. Desdemona is discovered asleep, "*with a small toilette-glass fallen from her hand, lying on the bed.*" Of the most mistaken purpose for which this is introduced, we shall hereafter have occasion to speak. That concerns Mr. Fechter's conception of Othello. It is with his view of Desdemona we have at present to do. Following "tradition" in this respect, he has omitted from his arrangement of the play the scene, unmatched for pathetic beauty, at the close of the fourth act, in which Shakspeare shows us Desdemona preparing for what is so soon to prove her death-bed. If omitted on the stage,

this scene cannot, however, be dismissed from our memory. In it Desdemona seems to have some dim foreboding of impending calamity. She has ordered Emilia to lay her bridal-sheets upon her bed. She is haunted by the dirge-like cadences of the song of "Willow." Othello has commanded her to go to bed, with a stern calmness the more impressive from the whirlwind of passion that preceded it; and we may well conceive how sad and solemn must be the thoughts which possessed her when, stunned with grief, she sank into the slumber from which she was to be so fearfully wakened. Was this a time, then, for her to be thinking of her looks, or dallying with a toilet-glass, like a silly girl? The heart must be strangely dead to all that is finest in these closing scenes, which could, for any cause whatever, introduce an incident so trivial in itself, so fatally untrue to the character of Desdemona.

When, too, the motive for its introduction becomes apparent, we are driven to surmise that its author understands the character of Othello quite as little as that of Desdemona. Mr. Fechter, having advanced to the bed, takes up the glass, and, seeing his bronzed face in it, exclaims, "*with bitter despair*"—

"It is the cause! It is the cause, my soul!"

as if his Moorish visage were the cause of Desdemona's unchastity—and then hurls the glass out of the window! How pitiful is this! How far wide of the feeling with which Othello is possessed! He has rushed into Desdemona's chamber from the spot where, as he thinks, vengeance has overtaken her paramour; but face to

face with that "cunning'st pattern of excelling nature," his purpose begins to falter. Is it a murder or a sacrifice which he is about to execute? He has to persuade himself anew that it is the latter. "She must die, or she'll betray more men!" and he that loves her more than life, is to bring down the "sword of Justice" upon her guilty head. It is a renewal of the conflict which we have witnessed in the previous scene between his absolute love and his fierce sense of wrong. "This sorrow's heavenly," as he says a little further on in the same soliloquy. "It strikes where it doth love,"—words of rare beauty, which Mr. Fechter omits. To nerve his hand, he has to summon up before his imagination the enormity of her sin, and to persuade himself that it, and it only, "is the cause" of his deadly resolution. Of any want of physical attractiveness in himself, Othello has long ceased to think. Had there been fifty mirrors in the room at such a moment, he would have had no eyes to see his visage in them.

This is but one of a series of monstrous perversions introduced by Mr. Fechter into this scene. According to his book, for example, Desdemona springs out of bed, and makes repeated attempts to escape. Othello "*whirls his sword over her head, and she falls to the ground as if struck by the lightning of his blade.*" Again she makes for the door, "but he stops her passage, *carries her to the bed, on which he throws her;* then stifles her cries with the pillow," &c. These stage directions make one think rather of the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes, than of Othello and Desdemona. Had Mr. Fechter put his own convictions to the proof, had this portion of

"the fruit of nearly twenty years' unceasing labour for the scenic representation of the great master" been actually carried out before an English audience, the days of his Othello would have been indeed few and stormy. Still, this is his deliberate view of how the scene should be presented, and so, we must assume, he would have represented it, could he have had his will. By this view, therefore, he must be content to be judged as an interpreter of Shakspeare. That all this outrageous extravagance is suppressed in the performance, is probably due to the intervention of others. But even now there is too much violence. Why should Desdemona spring out of bed, to be brutally thrust back into it? Why drag into prominence the physical parts of the tragedy? Why divest it of the vague horror which always attends a deed of death, suggested rather than seen? This is not tragedy. It is melodrama, and melodrama of the coarsest kind. "Tradition" was right in placing Desdemona's couch at a remote part of the stage: Mr. Fechter is wrong in bringing it so far forward that every detail is thrust painfully on our senses. "Tradition" was right in confining Desdemona to her couch: Mr. Fechter is wrong in hazarding the ludicrous effects of the opposite course. It is true, that to act this part of the scene in the old way demands the highest powers in actor and actress. Can it be that the innovations of Mr. Fechter, here and elsewhere, are merely artifices to conceal his want of these in the tumult of violent action?

False in his treatment of this scene throughout, Mr. Fechter closes it with another new reading, which is

false to the character of Othello, and contrary to common sense. At the line,

"And say, besides, that in Aleppo once," &c.

he draws his poniard, and seizing Iago, forces him, "*still bound, but smiling with bold effrontery,* to *kneel* before *Desdemona;*" then, having stabbed himself, he "*throws the dagger at the feet of Iago, who shrinks in terror, as if struck on the face by the blood of Othello.*" So Mr. Fechter's book, and so we saw him act it, regardless of the obvious argument that Othello, who has jnst been deprived of his sword and arrested, would never have been allowed by Lodovico and the guards to do this. We have heard that this is now changed, and that they interfere to stop Othello; bnt if so, what becomes of this fruit of twenty years' study and of Mr. Fechter's contempt for tradition? But judged from the higher ground of art, and truth to Shakspeare, how does this innovation jar with the poet's purpose! When Iago is first brought in a prisoner, Othello yields to the momentary impulse of revenge, and strikes at him with the words,

"I look down towards his feet, hut that's a fable.
If that thou be'st a devil I cannot kill thee.
[*Wounds Iago. Lod. wrenches his sword from him.*
IAGO. I hleed, sir; but not kill'd.
OTH. I am not sorry neither: I'd have thee live;
For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.
LOD. Oh, thou, Othello, that wert once so good,
Fall'n in the practice of a damnèd slave,
What shall be said to thee?
OTH. Why, anything:
An honourable murderer, if you will,
For nought I did in hate, but all in honour."

All this, so vital to the true understanding of the character of Othello, is omitted by Mr. Fechter. We see in these words that Othello's resolve is taken. Life has lost its hold on him. To Iago he will not even speak again; and in the very next sentence he says to Lodovico,

> "Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil,
> Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?"

Was he likely after this to defile his touch with fingering the "pernicious caitiff," and this, too, at the moment when he is to strike the stealthy blow which is to lay him by the side of Desdemona? What is Iago to him? His thoughts are already with his "ill-starred" bride. Her forgiving spirit stands ready to receive him. He flings himself down beside her.

> "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee: no way but this,
> Killing myself, to die upon a kiss. [*Dies.*
> CAS. This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon,
> For he was great of heart."

Words which prove beyond all question that Mr. Fechter's mode of winding up the play is directly in the teeth of the original text. "Tradition" made no such mistake. It felt, with Shakspeare, that at the climax of this most awful of tragedies, Iago was rather to be kept out of view than dragged into prominence; that the terrible discords which had gone before were to be resolved into harmony; that we were to be left with the final impression of the reunion of the noble Moor with her whom he "had loved not wisely but too well;" and that as we "look'd on the tragic loading of that bed," we should think of a beyond, where these

rare creatures, so fitly matched as they were in soul, should know each other as they truly were, and be for evermore as one.

Of Mr. Fechter's general conception of the character of Othello we must speak very briefly. An artist of such unquestionable ability cannot fail to present many points of excellence in whatever he undertakes. In look, in costume, he is of course all that could be wished. In the skilful working out of details in such of the scenes as he esteems of importance,—in picturesque vigour, in occasional bursts of passion, in individual strokes of feeling, such as his "Not a jot! not a jot!" he is admirable. Looked at from his point of view, his Othello is most logically worked out. But without entering into such an analysis as would be necessary to do justice to his conception, and to show fully wherein we think he is mistaken, let us say at once that it appears to us to have two capital defects. It fails to impress us with the sustained dignity and self-centered strength of the Moorish general of royal blood, to whom "the flinty and steel couch of war" has been a "thrice-driven bed of down,"—the somewhat stern and rugged soldier, to whom even the magnificoes of Venice bow with respect, unskilled in courtly observances, but swayed by the natural courtesy of a noble nature, who for the first time has felt the charm of being loved, yet who is so enamoured of his warrior's life, that, as he says himself,

> "But that he loves the gentle Desdemona,
> He would not his unhoused free condition
> Put into circumscription and confine
> For the sea's worth."

Again, Mr. Fechter equally fails, in our opinion, to show how utterly and absolutely this love has penetrated Othello's whole being. Weak in these two points, the full grandeur of Othello's passion, on the one hand, when it breaks the barriers of self-control, into which years of hard service and responsibility have schooled it, is not brought out; whilst, on the other, the essential tragic element of the play, which consists in the torture of love struggling with disgust and rage, and in the overthrow of two natures so excellent and so devoted to each other, by the machinations of a heartless "demi-devil," escapes from his hands. We are not moved with terror or pity, as we ought to be, because we are not made to feel how noble is the nature whose wreck we are called upon to witness; how deep, how all-pervading the love which is worked on to its ruin. Never have we seen so few tearful eyes in an audience at the close of any performance of *Othello*, as of Mr. Fechter's. This fact seemed to us the best of all criticisms.

There are probably many reasons why Mr. Fechter fails in the points we have noticed. His bearing, for example, lacks dignity. He does not keep sufficiently aloof, like a man accustomed to trust to himself. He leans now on Iago's arm, now on Cassio's shoulder. He allows himself to be easily chafed, whereas Shakspeare most studiously makes us feel that even under great provocation, Othello is self-possessed and calm, and shows not a trace of a hasty or splenetic nature. Mr. Fechter's inability to render in their majestic simplicity the exquisite speeches of Othello when before the

Council also detracts from the general elevation of the character; and this is aggravated by a misinterpretation of the words "Rude am I in speech," as if Othello meant, not that he was unskilled in speech, but so plain-spoken as to be apt to give offence. He is tetchy and irritable when roused by Cassio's brawl. The same characteristic shows itself through all the great scenes of the fourth act, where the passion is that of a fiery, splenetic, tiger-like nature, rather than the successive convulsions of a noble heart goaded to madness, and a mind, too ingenuous for suspicion, swept hither and thither by the storms of angry passion.

Mr. Fechter treats the whole of the two first acts too lightly, forgetting, apparently, how essential they are to the effect of those which follow. He throws away his opportunities of enlisting our sympathies for the Moor, and most especially of making us feel his love for Desdemona. His demeanour to her is full of gallantry, the thing which of all others Shakspeare's Othello was incapable of; but we miss the profound devotion which speaks in the eye, and trembles on the voice. He shows towards her the small attentions of a carpet knight, but not the deep, watchful, yearning tenderness of the large-hearted man of mature age. The exquisite scene of the meeting with Desdemona at Cyprus is hurried through, as if it were of no moment, while, in fact, no pains should be spared to send home to the eyes and hearts of the spectators every word that is written, and every emotion that is indicated by the text. It is the culminating point of happiness, from which Iago's victims are to be dragged down to misery

and death. That we may appreciate the fall, we must be made to see the paradise. Othello, fresh from the perils of a storm, more awful to him because he had every reason to fear his Desdemona might fall a victim to its fury, finds her, to his surprise, awaiting his arrival, although she had sailed from Venice a day later than himself. Every reader of Shakspeare can recal the exquisite dialogue that ensues. Othello's ecstasy vibrates through every word. He is overborne by his emotion—

> "If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate."

Prophetic words, every syllable of which should be made to sink into the hearts of the audience. Mr. Macready's fine performance of this scene is still fresh in the memory of playgoers. His eager advance to Desdemona, the utterance trembling with emotion, the long deep gaze of ecstasy, the passionate embrace, the turning ever and anon from the magnates of Cyprus to gaze on his bride, the rapturous distraction—

> "Oh, my sweet,
> I prattle out of fashion, and I dote
> In mine own comforts;"

these were all masterly touches, and formed a fine prelude to the jealousy and despair of the succeeding acts. Nothing of this is given by Mr. Fechter. He comes in followed by a crowd of attendants who distribute themselves closely around Desdemona and himself. They

are thus confounded with the multitude, and the dialogue is scrambled through, as though Othello and his bride had been parted only for an hour. We cannot think that if Mr. Fechter had a true conception of the main purpose of the play, he would deal in this slovenly manner with a scene of such paramount importance.

We are the more impressed with this conviction, from the fact that he does not in the succeeding scenes come up to the measure of Shakspeare in depicting the fluctuations of Othello between his still recurring love for, and faith in Desdemona, and the wild frenzy of jealous rage. Surely it is in this that the great interest of the character centres. The jealousy of Mr. Fechter's Othello, once kindled, has no recurring access of tenderness or admiration until the last scene. When restoring portions of the first scene of the fourth act—a wise restoration, for which we are his debtor—we regret that he did not also restore this passage, where the tossing to and fro of Othello's mind is so grandly shown :—

"OTH. Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; for she shall not live : no, my heart is turned to stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter creature: she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.

IAGO. Nay, that's not your way.

OTH. Hang her! I do but say what she is : so delicate with her needle! An admirable musician! O she will sing the savageness out of a bear!—Of so high and plenteous wit and invention!

IAGO. She's the worse for all this.

OTH. O, a thousand, thousand times :—and then, of so gentle a condition!

IAGO. Ay, too gentle!

OTH. Nay, that's certain : But yet the pity of it, Iago! O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago!"

This complexity of emotion Mr. Fechter makes no attempt to portray. His Othello is a creature of much simpler elements. Once roused, he rushes madly on—fierce, cruel, relentless—a picturesque and impressive impersonation, but not, to our thinking, the Othello of Shakspeare.

That we have dwelt so long on this theme, is the best evidence that, however far short we may think Mr. Fechter has fallen of his great original, his performance is worthy of deliberate study. It is because we fear his power for evil on the one hand, and entertain a sincere admiration for his ability and great artistic skill on the other, that we have thought it necessary to protest thus early against some of the principles by which he seems to think the representation of our great poet's masterpieces should be regulated. If we have not said all in his praise we could have wished to say, it is because space has failed us. Others have said it, moreover, and said it well. It is of greater moment, and truer service, to him and to the public, to point out the errors of one who has so firm and well-grounded a hold upon popular favour.

PROMETHEUS.

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT.

BY GOETHE.

(Dublin University Magazine, November, 1850.)

HIS fine fragment is written by Goethe in the irregular, unrhymed metre, which the genius of the German language enabled him to adopt with remarkable success in this and other poems, but to echo which, in our less plastic language, is nearly, if not altogether, impossible. In the following version every effort has been made to follow Goethe's rhythm, where it was possible, and to present the best equivalent where it was not, preserving, at the same time, the simplicity and concise energy of the original, which has all the effect of exquisitely chiselled sculpture standing against a crisp, clear sky. The state of mind in which the poem took its rise is thus described by Goethe himself in his Autobiography (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, B. 15):—"The common burden of humanity, which we have all to bear, more or

less, must be heaviest on those whose mental powers are the earliest and most widely unfolded. We may grow up under the sheltering care of parents and of kindred; we may lean on brethren and friends; we may be amused by acquaintances; we may be made happy by those we love; yet to this conclusion do we come at last—that man is turned back upon himself. And it appears as if even the Divinity had chosen to place himself in such a relation to man, that he cannot always respond to man's reverence, confidence, and love —at least, not in the moments of the greatest urgency. Often enough in my youth I have experienced that, in the moments of my uttermost need, a voice cried aloud to us, 'Physician, cure thyself!' And how often was I not forced in bitterness of heart to sigh, 'I must tread the wine-press alone!' When I looked around for some support to my self-dependence, I found that the securest foundation for it was my productive talent. For some years this never deserted me for an instant. What met my waking senses frequently recurred to me by night in regular, connected dreams; and as soon as I opened my eyes, either a new wondrous whole, or a part of what had already appeared, presented itself to them. I wanted nothing but an occasion that had some character in it, and I was ready. And now, when I thought over this gift of nature, and found that it belonged to me as a quite peculiar profession, and could neither be helped nor hindered by any foreign influence, I willingly sought to make it the ground or basis of my whole existence. This notion transformed itself into an image; and I bethought me of the old mythological

figure of Prometheus, who, severed from the gods, peopled a world from his workshop. I felt most distinctly that nothing considerable could be produced without self-isolation. Those things of mine, which had gained such applause, were children of loneliness. . . . The fable of Prometheus had a living existence in me. I cut down the old Titanic garment to my own stature, and, without farther reflection, began to write a poem, in which is depicted the incongruous relation in which Prometheus stood to the new gods, inasmuch as he had formed men with his own hand, had animated them, with the aid of Minerva, and had founded a third dynasty. . . . . In this strange composition appears, as Monologue, that poem which is become important in German poetry, as having furnished the occasion which led Lessing to declare his opposition to Jacobi on some weighty points of thought and feeling. But though, as it thus appeared, this poem may be made the subject of moral and religious discussion, yet does it properly belong to the province of poetry alone. . . . . Milton's 'Satan' has always the advantage of a subaltern position, inasmuch as his whole efforts are directed towards the destruction of the magnificent creatures of a higher being. Prometheus, on the contrary, stands on a vantage-ground, from having the power to create and to model, in defiance of higher beings. It is a beautiful thought, too, and most consonant with poetry, to trace the creation of man, not to the highest rulers of the world, but to an intermediate being, who, however, as descendant of the elder dynasty, is majestic and important enough for such a work. And, indeed, the

Greek mythology affords exhaustless riches of divine and human symbols. The Titanic, gigantic, heaven-storming character, however, afforded no material for my vein of poetry. Rather did it suit me to depict that peaceful, plastic, and ever-patient resistance, which owns a superior power, but seeks to equal it."

FIRST ACT.

PROMETHEUS—MERCURY.

PROMETHEUS. Tell them, I will not!
Once and for all, I will not! Their will 'gainst mine!
One against one, methinks, is equal match.

MERCURY. This message to thy father Jove? thy mother?

PRO. What father—mother?
Canst tell me whence thou comest?
I stood, when first I noted consciously
My feet did stand—those hands of mine held out,
When first I knew that I had hands to feel,
And found my footsteps tended, watch'd by those
Whom thou call'st father, mother.

MER. Found, too, all
The needful aids of infancy to thee
Were minister'd by them.

PRO. And therefore had they
My infancy's obedience—free to turn
And twist the puny twig, now here, now there,
With every shifting gust of their caprice.

MER. They shielded thee.

PRO. From what?
From perils which they feared.
But did they guard the heart
From serpent fangs that gnaw'd it inwardly?
Steel'd they this breast, to bid
Defiance to the Titans?
Hath not almighty Time, my lord and yours,
Welded and forged me to the man I am?

MER. Oh, miserable man! This to thy gods,
The Infinite?

PRO. My gods? No god am I,
Yet can my spirit soar as high as theirs.
You infinite? almighty?
What can you do? Can you into my hand
Toss me the huge expanse of earth and sky?
Have you the power to part me from myself?
Have you the power to make my soul dilate,
And stretch its compass out into a world?

MER. Remember Fate!

PRO. Dost thou its power acknowledge? So do I.
Away, I serve not vassals! [*Exit* MERCURY.

[*Turning to his statues, which are distributed up and down throughout the grove.*

A moment squander'd, ne'er to be retrieved!
Torn, and by fools, from your society,
My children!
Whate'er it be that stirs within your breast,

[*Turning to the figure of a girl.*

That breast should bound and leap to meet with mine!
The eye speaks even now!
Oh, speak, dear lips—be voluble to me!
Oh, to inspire you with the conscious sense
Of what ye are! [*Enter* EPIMETHEUS.

EPIMETHEUS. Hermes has been complaining bitterly.

PRO. If thou hadst had no ear for his complaint,
Without complaint had he gone trooping back.

EPI. My brother, just is just!
This time the gods did proffer fair, methinks.
They are content to leave Olympus' heights,
For thee to fix thy habitation there,
And thence to rule the world!

PRO. To be their sentinel, and ward their heaven?
More fairly, much more fairly, proffer I.
They wish to share with me, and I opine,
That I have nothing I can share with them.
That which I have, they cannot wrest from me,
And what they have, that let themselves uphold.

Here mine, here thine; and so we stand apart.
  EPI. How much is thine, then ?
  PRO. The sphere my energies have power to fill—
Nought less, and nothing more!
What right of sway have yonder stars o'er me,
That they do gape at me ?
  EPI. Thou stand'st alone !
Thy wayward spirit will not let thee know
The bliss must needs ensue, if thou, thy gods,
Thy kindred, earth, and universal heaven,
Were link'd in one close-knit and conscious whole.
  PRO. All that I know !
I prithee, brother dear, pursue thy bent,
And leave me to myself. [*Exit* EPIMETHEUS.
Here is my world, my all !
Here do I feel myself ! My every wish
Clothes itself here in a corporeal form,
My soul imparted to a thousand shapes,
And centred wholly in my children dear. [*Enter* MINERVA.
Thou venturest, dear goddess ? Venturest
To visit thus thy father's enemy ?
  MINERVA. My father I revere ;
Prometheus, I love thee !
  PRO. And to my soul thou art
What he is to himself. Yea, from the first,
Thy words have been celestial light to me !
Still while thou fed'st mine ear with thy discourse,
'Twas as my soul held commune with herself,
As though she found a tongue, and harmonies,
Awaking to the magic of thy voice,
Rang forth response in golden cadences ;
Yea, 'twas as though a deity discoursed,
The while I dream'd 'twas only I that spake—
And, dreaming 'twas a deity that spake,
Lo, 'twas myself discoursed ! And thus with thee
And me, so one, so blended soul with soul,
My love for thee burns everlastingly !
  MIN. And I am everlastingly with thee.
  PRO. As doth the mellow roseate shine

Of the departed sun
Stream up behind yon dusky Caucasus,
Steeping my spirit in delightful calm,
Though absent, with me everlastingly;
So have my powers gain'd strength with ev'ry breath
That I inhaled of thy celestial air.
And they presume,
These haughty dwellers on Olympus, they,
To school and lord it o'er my powers at will ?
No; they are mine, and mine shall be their use.
Not one step will I move, this way or that,
No, though the chief of all the gods command !

MIN. These are the phantasies of power.

PRO. I, goddess, too, have phantasies,
And power, as well as they !
Besides, hast thou not seen me oft and oft
In self-elected bondage, bear the load
They laid in solemn earnest on my back ?
Day after day did I not moil and drudge,
Doing the letter of their stern command ?
And why ? Because I thought
They saw the Past, the Future, in the Present;
Because I deem'd their guidance, their behest,
Was pure, primeval, and unselfish wisdom.

MIN. Thou wert content to serve, in order thus
To make thee worthy of thy liberty.

PRO. Nor would I barter that
To be the bird of thunder,
And haughtily in servile talons clutch
My master's levin bolts.

MIN. Thy hate's unjust !
Unto the gods, as lot, Duration fell,
And Might, and Love, and Wisdom.

PRO. All these they have,
Yes, but not they alone. I, too, endure
As well as they. We are immortal all !
Of my beginning memory have I none,
No impulse or desire have I to end,
Nor do I see the end.

Therefore am I immortal, for I am !
And Wisdom— [*Leading* MINERVA *round among the statues.*
Look on these brows !
Hath not my finger stamp'd and moulded them ?
And the strong heart within this bosom swells,
To grapple with the dangers that besiege
The children of my hand on every side. [*Stops before the statue of a woman.*
And thou, Pandora,
Sacred receptacle of every gift
That is to be desired
Beneath the spacious heaven,
Upon the boundless earth,
All that of throbbing joy e'er gladden'd me,
Or in cool umbrage e'er
With freshness laved my soul,—
Type of all soft and delicate desires,
Which love for the bright sun, spring's rapturous flush,
The low, soft music of the murmuring sea,
Have fed, and fann'd, and foster'd in my breast,
Reflex of all that ever I have known
Of pure celestial radiance, and the calm
Delighted trances of a soul at peace—
The all—all—my Pandora !

MIN. Jove hath engaged to clothe them all with life,
So thou accept the tenders that he makes.

PRO. 'Twas this alone that made me hesitate.
But——I should be a vassal—and, like all,
Avow the sway of yonder Thunderer !
No ! By their lifelessness though fettered now,
Yet are they free, and I—I feel their freedom !

MIN. And they shall live !
To Fate, not to the gods, doth it belong
To give the gift of life, or take away.
Come, I will lead thee to the source of life,
From which not Jove himself can bar us back.
They shall live, and through thee !

PRO. Through thee, my goddess !
To live, to feel that they are free, to live !
Thy thanks shall be their boundless happiness !

SECOND ACT.

UPON OLYMPUS.

JUPITER—MERCURY.

MERCURY. Oh, monstrous, Father Jupiter! High treason!
Minerva, Sire, thy daughter,
Aids and abets the rebel!
The fount of life hath she
Unseal'd and shown to him,
And round him hath his court of loam,
His world of potter's clay,
With animation fired.
Like us they move, ay, every one;
And round about him sport, and cry,
As round about them we.
Thy thunderbolts, oh Jove!

JUPITER. They are! And, being, shall be!
And it is meet they should.
O'er everything that is
Beneath the spacious heaven,
Upon the boundless earth,
My sovereignty extends.
This race of worms augments
The number of my servants. Well for them,
So they be led by my paternal hand;
Woe to them, should they thwart my royal arm!

MER. Father of all! Thou fountain of all goodness,
That dost forgive to sinners their misdeeds,
Be love to thee, and praise
From all the earth and sky!
Oh, send me to proclaim
To this poor earth-born race,
Thee, father, thee, thy goodness and thy power!

JUP. Not yet!
In the first glow and new-felt flush of youth,
Their souls conceit themselves as peers for gods.
They will not hearken unto thee, till they
Have need of thee. So leave them to their life!

MER. As wise as gracious!

(*Scene changes to a valley at the foot of Olympus.*)

PRO. Look downwards, Jove,
Upon my world! It lives!
In mine own image have I moulded it—
A race that may be like unto myself,
To suffer, weep, enjoy, and to rejoice;
And, like myself, unheeding all of thee!

[*The human race are seen scattered up and down the valley. Some are climbing trees and plucking fruit, some bathing in the river, some running races in the meadows; girls gather flowers and twine chaplets.*

Enter to PROMETHEUS *a man bearing a young tree, which he has pulled up by the roots.*

MAN. Here is the tree, as you desired.

PRO. How got'st it from the ground?

MAN. With this sharp stone I sever'd it
Close by the roots.

PRO. Off with the branches first!
Now thrust it down aslant into the ground,
Then place this portion here across it—so!
Now bind them at the top! Now other two
Behind these, and then one across the top.
Next bring the branches downwards from above,
Until they reach the ground; entwine them close,
Then turf all round, and branches over these,
And pile them thickly, until neither sun,
Nor rain, nor wind, can penetrate within.
Thou hast, my son, a shelter and a hut.

MAN. Thanks, father, thanks—a thousand thanks! But say,
Are all my brethren to have right to live
Within my hut?

PRO. No! Thou hast built it, and it is thine own.
Share it thou may'st with whomsoe'er thou wilt.
Who would have huts must build them for themselves. [*Exit.*

[*Enter two men.*

1*st Man.* Thou shalt not have a morsel of my goats,
They are all mine?

2*nd Man.* How so?

1st Man. All yester day
And night I scrambled o'er the mountain side,
Caught them alive by dint of toil and sweat,
Watch'd them till dawn, and here have penn'd them up
With stones and branches.

2nd Man. Give me only one!
I caught one yesterday, and made it ready
Upon the fire, and ate it with my brethren.
To-day thou need'st but one;
We shall catch more to-morrow.

1st Man. Back from my goats, I say!

2nd Man. Not I!

[*First man tries to thrust him back. The second man knocks him down, seizes one of the goats, and exit.*

1st Man. Outrage! Ah me, ah me!

PRO. (*entering*). What is the matter?

MAN. He's stolen my goat! Blood trickles from my head.
He dash'd me down against this stone.

PRO. Take some of yonder lichen from the tree,
And lay it on the wound!

MAN. So, father dear!
The pain is gone already.

PRO. Go, wash thee!

MAN. And my goat?

PRO. Leave him alone!
If his hand be, my son, 'gainst every man,
The hand of every man will be 'gainst him!

[*Exit man, and enter* PANDORA.

PRO. What aileth thee, my daughter? Why thus moved?

PANDORA. My father! Ah, what I beheld, my father!
What I have felt!

PRO. Say on!

PAN. Oh, my poor Mira!

PRO. What has befallen her?

PAN. Oh, feelings without name!
I saw her go into the forest brake,
Where we are wont to pluck our garland flowers;
I followed her, and, oh!
As from the hill I came,

I saw her in the vale beneath
Lie stretch'd along the ground.
It chanced, Arbar was in the wood.
He clasp'd her close within his arms,
He raised her from the dewy grass,
And with her sank adown.
Her lovely head fell back,
He kiss'd it o'er and o'er,
And hung upon her lips, as though
He'd breathe his soul through hers.
Grief fill'd my heart, and I
Sprang forward with a scream.
My scream brought life into her limbs;
Arbar withdrew; she started to her feet,
And ah! with eyes that seem'd to melt,
She fell upon my neck.
Her bosom beat as it would burst—
Her cheeks were all on fire,
Her lips were parch'd and dry,
Her tears in torrents flow'd.
I felt her knees give way again—
She would have fallen; I held
Her up, oh! father dear!
She clasp'd me, and her kisses' glow
Along my veins diffused
A thrill so strange, unknown till then,
That all confused, in trouble and in tears,
At last I left her, left the wood and field,
To come to thee, my father!
Tell me, I pray,
What is all this that shook her so, and me?

PRO. Death!

PAN. What is that?

PRO. My daughter, thou hast tasted many joys.

PAN. Yea, thousands! And to thee I owe them all!

PRO. Pandora, child, thy breast
Hath throbb'd to hail the onward-pacing sun,
And silver footing of the wandering moon;
And in the kisses of thy playmates thou

Hast felt the purest joy.
PAN. A joy unspeakable.
PRO. What lifted in the dance
Thy body lightly from the ground?
PAN. 'Twas joy!
As every limb, thrill'd through by song and lute,
In undulation moved, I seem'd to float
Dissolved upon the tide of melody.
PRO. And all at last dissolves itself in sleep,—
All—joy as well as sorrow.
Thou hast felt the scorching sun,
The parching pang of thirst,
The wearied knee's distress,
Hast wept a lamb that from thy flock hath stray'd,
And how didst moan and tremble, when
A thorn in yonder forest pierced thy heel,
Before I cured thee!
PAN. Life's joy and grief, my father, well I know,
Have many shapes!
PRO. And in thy heart thou feelest,
That there be many joys,
And sorrows many thou hast never known.
PAN. Oh yes! This heart
Yearneth full oft, alas! with vague desires,
As though it long'd to enclasp the universe.
PRO. There is a moment that makes perfect all,
All we have dream'd, hoped, panted for, and fear'd.
Pandora, that is death.
PAN. Death?
PRO. When shaken to thy spirit's inmost depths,
Thou feelest in one paroxysm all
That joy or sorrow ever brought thy soul,
When thy heart heaves, an ocean tempest-toss'd,
And seeks to find a wild relief in tears,
Whenever hotlier burns its glow, and all
Reverberates against it, quakes and reels,
And to thyself thou seem'st to swoon away,
And sinkest down, and everything around
Fades and evanishes in night, and thou,

In one keen throe of wilder'd ecstasy,
Dost hold an universe within thine arms,
Then dies the merely human.

PAN. (*clasping him round the neck*). Oh, father, let us die!

PRO. Not yet, not yet!

PAN. And after death?

PRO. When all—desire, and joy, and pain—hath been
Dissolved in stormy rapture, and awhile
Sleeps, to awake refresh'd, a joyful sleep,
Then in immortal youth thou livest again,
Anew to fear, to hope, and to desire!

THIRD ACT.

PROMETHEUS (*in his workshop*).

Curtain thy heavens, thou Jove, with clouds and mist,
And, like a boy that moweth thistles down,
Unloose thy spleen on oaks and mountain-tops;
Yet canst thou not deprive me of my earth,
Nor of my hut, the which thou didst not build,
Nor of my hearth, whose little cheerful flame
Thou enviest me!

I know not aught within the universe
More slight, more pitiful than you, ye gods!
Who nurse your majesty with scant supplies
Of offerings wrung from fear, and mutter'd pray'rs,
And needs must starve, were't not that babes and beggars
Are hope-besotted fools!

When I was yet a child, and knew not whence
My being came, nor where to turn its powers,
Up to the sun I bent my wilder'd eye,
As though above, within its glorious orb,
There dwelt an ear to listen to my plaint,
A heart, like mine, to pity the oppress'd.

Who gave me succour
Against the Titans, insolent and fierce?

Who rescued me from death—from slavery?
Thou, thou, my soul, burning with hallow'd fire,
Thou hast thyself alone achieved it all!
Yet didst thou, in thy young simplicity,
Glow with misguided thankfulness to him,
That slumbers on in idlesse there above!

I reverence thee?
Wherefore? Hast thou ever
Lighten'd the sorrows of the heavy laden?
Thou ever stretch'd thy hand to still the tears
Of the perplex'd in spirit?
Was it not
Almighty Time, and ever-during Fate,
My lords and thine, that shaped and fashion'd me
Into the MAN I am?

Belike it was thy dream,
That I should hate life—fly to woods and wilds,
For that the blossoms of my brooding thought
Did not all ripen into goodly flowers!

Here do I sit, and mould
Men after mine own image,—
A race that may be like unto myself,
To suffer, weep, to enjoy, and to rejoice,
And, like myself, unheeding all of thee!

PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND CRITICS.

(FRASER'S MAGAZINE, DECEMBER, 1863.)

F the evidence of crowded houses and of newspaper critics might be believed, these are indeed the palmy days of the British drama; and fine actors are as plentiful as blackberries. Never had London so many theatres as now, and all prosperous; never before were so many "great conceptions grandly embodied" to be seen upon its stages. The language of hyperbole is racked to describe everything and everbody connected with our theatres. Every house has its man or woman of genius, electrifying the audience in their "great characters" of Leah, or Bel Demonio, as the case may be. Every leading character, in fact, is "great;" melodramatic effects are "grand conceptions;" scenery is of nothing less than "ideal beauty;" and processions or dances, in which the largest number of female legs can be introduced with effect, are "strokes of genius." So the critics tell us; so the playbills, echoing the critics, tell

us; and the plaudits of the crowds that nightly throng all the West End theatres enforce the same conclusion.

In the midst of this jubilee of admiration, here and there voices may be heard of occasional dissent. Not yet have all been driven from the theatres, who remember the days when more was done for the glory of the drama, and less was talked about it; when the art was foremost, and after it, in his own thoughts, as well as those of the public, came the artist; when, to ennoble the impulses, to expand the heart, to rouse the whole nature through imaginative sympathy to its highest states of tension, was no small part of what our best English actors aimed at, and not seldom achieved; when the language of poetry found apt and musical utterance on the stage; when the pursuit of a noble art gave dignity and grace to its professors; when the triumph of mind over mind, not of mere display over the senses, was the ambition of the true actor; and when success and position were achieved by merit, and not by those vulgar arts of puffery which have for some years past made theatres and actors contemptible and ridiculous. Not yet, we say, have those who remembered these days been driven from the theatres. It is hard for them to forego a recreation endeared by so many associations, and capable of such admirable influences. Through all the chaos into which theatrical affairs have fallen, they discern here and there symptoms, not unhopeful, of a return to a better state of things. Above all, they see an eagerness on the part of the audiences to recognize genuine merit wherever it has a chance of being heard—an eagerness which in its haste

often mistakes for genius what is no more than talent and accomplishment of a secondary kind. When it confounds a Ristori with a Rachel, or a Stella Colas with an O'Neill, we may regret the delusion; but watch that crowd giving its heart up in its simplicity to the false prophetess, and you feel sure that it would answer with unerring instinct and profound emotion to the inspiration of genius. Deluded by shams it may be, but it will never fail to recognize the true thing. Therefore is it that the lovers of the higher drama never despair; but in these its dark days are content to lift up their voice where they may, in protest against the false systems and the false idols of the present hour, believing that the minds are not few in which their protest finds an echo.

Such a protest it has been our duty more than once to make in these pages. When nearly all the world were bowing down to worship Mr. Charles Kean for his so-called "revivals" of Shakspeare, we were at pains to point out, not so much the desecration of the poet—for that was self-evident to all who knew and reverenced his works—but the violation of true art, the abiding injury alike to actor and to audience, which must ensue from making impersonation subservient to upholstery, and what was essential subordinate to the merest accessories. It was easy to foresee that the system which trusted to interesting the audience through the eye, while ruthlessly "shouldering aside the dramatic interest," must sooner or later result in weariness to the spectator and failure to the manager. Neither actor nor manager, however brilliant, ever debauched the

public taste with impunity; and Mr. Kean, while he left himself without actors to sustain the poetical drama, created a false appetite for spectacle and display, which all his powers and influence were unable to gratify without ruin to himself. So the managerial sceptre passed from his grasp, and others have become the favourites of the hour, who carry spectacular display to a higher pitch, and infuse into it the zest of a melodramatic dash, from which even Mr. Kean's taste recoiled.

Keenly as we have suffered at the Princess's Theatre in the days of that gentleman's dynasty, where season by season he laid his hand upon some one of Shakspeare's noblest works, and crushed the poetry out of it under the heel of scene-painter and *costumier*, we have since seen cause to know that in that "lowest depth" of suffering a still lower was to be reached; for have we not within the same walls witnessed Mr. Fechter's Othello and Miss Stella Colas's Juliet? Of the former this magazine has said its say,[1] and the public has long since ratified its damnatory verdict. The "brilliant Frenchman's" Othello is dead and buried.

> "Let it sleep in the shade,
> Where cold and unhonour'd its relics are laid."

Indeed, our gratitude to Mr. Fechter for leaving Shakspeare for the more congenial society of Paul Féval is such that we would not for the world evoke one recollection of his travesty of the noble Moor. But we are threatened not only with a return of Miss Colas to

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[1] See Paper on "Shakspeare and his latest Stage Interpreters," *ante.*

our stage, but another French Juliet is talked of as at hand, in the person of Madame Duverger from the Odéon; and as all the journals, the *Examiner* alone excepted, have told us that the London public of this age have now for the first time seen in a Frenchwoman the Juliet of Shakspeare, it may not be amiss to say what is thought of French acting of Shakspeare in general, and especially of Miss Colas's Juliet, by those who, like ourselves, profess such knowledge of Shakspeare and of English acting as may be gathered by the study and wakeful observation of many years.

That a French play will be best acted by Frenchmen, a German by Germans, a Spanish by Spaniards, is a proposition so obvious, that the boldest lover of paradox will scarcely venture to dispute it. Had we performers on our stage equal to the greatest that ever adorned it, who will venture to assert that they could do the same justice to a play of Molière's as the ordinary *troupe* of the Théâtre Français, or to a tragedy of Goethe's or Schiller's as the performers of the Burg Theater of Vienna? There is in all national literature a something indigenous, which can never be thoroughly felt, and therefore can never be thoroughly expressed, but by a native—a something which is due to the national character and life, and which no readiness of sympathy or quickness of apprehension in a stranger can supply. We feel it vividly upon occasions in the subtleties of a phrase, in a turn of sentiment or thought, nay, in the rhythmic involutions of a verse; but, like life itself, it pervades and gives expression to the whole work, yet defies the finest analysis to seize or to define.

If this be true, as unquestionably it is, even of the minor dramatists, with how much more force must the principle apply to Shakspeare? Admirably as his plays are acted in some of the great theatres of Germany, even in the best there is a want of vital force and individuality in the representation, which demands from an Englishman the most liberal allowance. How hard it is for one nation thoroughly to appreciate the dramatic truthfulness of another we have often felt, when we have beheld a Berlin audience convulsed with laughter by a Falstaff, destitute to our apprehension of one ray of natural humour, or moved to tears by a Desdemona, whose milk-and-water insipidity was chiefly remarkable from its contrast to the robust vigour of her person. And yet the Germans may almost be said to have been suckled upon English literature, and Shakspeare fills a much larger space upon their stage than he does upon our own. But simply because he is English, and they are Germans, they never can thoroughly fathom him in all his breadth and depth.

That they are the greatest critics of Shakspeare is one of the many stupid cants about the great master, which are propagated without thought from mouth to mouth, upon the strength of the names of Goethe, Schlegel, Horn, Gervinus, and others. A few incisive sentences of the Coleridges, father and son, and of many other Englishmen who might be named, flash more light upon the nature of Shakspeare's characters, or the purpose of his plays, than pages of the misty twaddle of Ulrici, or the dry prosing of Gervinus. It is not in the studio of a German professor, or in the narrow arena of German

life, that Shakspeare is to be mastered. To comment fitly upon him, a man must have English blood in his veins, must have grown up in an English home, have lived the broad, free, energetic life of a well-trained Englishman; and above all, must have learned in English maids and matrons to appreciate and to love the qualities which make "Shakspeare's women" stand alone and apart, as the ideal of all that is tenderest and purest, most fascinating and most exalted in womanhood. And if this be true of a critical commentator, it is true in a tenfold degree of that best of all expositors, the actor or actress, who are to supply the living commentary of breathing passion and moving grace on which the dramatist relied for the full development of his meaning.

So little characteristic of French female nature are simplicity and quiet strength, that it would indeed be marvellous, were a Frenchwoman, however gifted, so to identify herself with any of Shakspeare's characters as to make us feel that in her we had the poet's conception placed living before us. But if this character were Juliet, the wonder would become a miracle. Mrs. Cibber, one of our greatest English actresses—herself the most celebrated Juliet of her day—used to say that "no woman knew how to play Juliet till she was too old to do so"—a forcible mode of expressing what all experience proves, that of all the characters of Shakspeare this tasks most severely the genius and resources of the actress. Why this is so would demand more space to show than we can afford; but at the very threshold of the inquiry one reason strikes us, and it is this—that Juliet has to run through the whole gamut of the

passions, from the deepest joy to the most frenzied despair. The girl has to expand before our eyes into the loving, suffering, self-centred, heroic woman, great in brain as in heart, in will as in devotion. We see the rosebud burst into the perfect flower, and then swept into destruction, while the dews of morning still linger upon it, and every petal still exhales the most delicate perfume. Rarely endowed in mind and body, then, must she be in whom the "wonder of Verona" shall be truly incarnate. Not lightly, therefore, should the character be approached by any actress; not lightly should any attempt to embody it, before a London audience at least, be dealt with by the critic; and yet when Miss Stella Colas—a young lady incapable of pronouncing one line of English with a pure cadence or a true accent—made a dash at the most difficult part in our drama, we were informed by the papers, in every form that panegyric could adopt, not only that nothing so good had been seen on our stage, but that in her was embodied the true, the ideal Juliet.

The value of such opinions would suffer a heavy check could we only know how many of the writers had ever seen a good English Juliet, or what was their abstract idea of what Juliet should be. Sorely as our performers have degenerated—thanks to the system that makes scenery and effects the all in all, and allows neither scope nor encouragement to good acting—there are yet, we trust and believe, to be found on our stages actresses who as far eclipse Miss Stella Colas in real power, as she is herself eclipsed on the French stage by many who are nevertheless not intrusted there with

more than subordinate parts. But then, unhappily for them, they can speak English as their native speech; they think that coquettish artifice is scarcely in accordance with the love by which Juliet's whole being is possessed; and they know too much of real passion to let it overflow into the noisy vehemence which our newspaper Aristarchs so constantly mistake for power.

In the reading of this lady, Capulet's daughter loses every charm which distinguishes her from a mere wayward girl—at first impatient for a toy, and then borne away by peevish passion when she is bereft of it. Her love is without tenderness, her sorrow without pathos, her despair without grandeur. That in Juliet, Shakspeare shows us the rapid onward development of a noble nature under the pressure of great and sudden trials, is an idea which never seems to have suggested itself to the actress. She treats the play as a medium for displaying the attractions of youth, a pretty face, the coqnetry of the French *ingénue*, and the rodomontade of a Boulevard theatre. The result is a patchwork of tawdry prettiness and nnmaidenly vehemence, happily so wide of all that we associate with the idea of Shakspeare's Jnliet, that it can never enter the mind in connection with it. That the actress is clever no one will deny; but where Shakspeare is involved, cleverness will carry a performer but a little way.

Well might the Parisian public, who are familiar with Miss Colas as a third-rate actress of the Théâtre Français, be amazed to find her all at once recognized by our critics as a great interpreter of "the divine Williams." They felt as we should feel were we to

hear of Miss Louisa Keeley or Miss Woolgar taking Paris by storm as Phèdre or Camille. How the journalists of Paris—Edouard Thierry, Jules Janin, or Théophile Gautier—would have dealt with such an attempt! And how fit they are for their duty as public guides the Parisians well know. But they do not know that among the art critics of the London press the counterparts of these writers are not to be found, and that the London public has no protection in its journals against incapacity, however great, or presumption, however daring. They were thus left to one of two conclusions—either that they had failed to recognize a pearl of price, when it was before their eyes, or that paste passes current for gems on this side of the Channel. Which of these conclusions their self-esteem was certain to adopt it is needless to say; and hence the placid stolidity of John Bull is likely to provoke an inroad of fair foreigners, all ready to teach us in broken English how to read and interpret our national poet. Miss Colas is promised to us as soon as St. Petersburg can spare her; and Madame Duverger, as we have said, with her fine eyes and finer diamonds, quits "the cold shade" of the Odéon for the smiles and plaudits which may be assumed to await her here in sunny Albion.[1]

It is time, however, that this sort of thing should have an end. If our stage is to be overrun with a confusion of tongues, let them find employment on meaner matter than the poetry of Shakspeare. Were there a

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[1] This lady, fortunately for us and for herself, on further consideration abandoned the design.

hope of any stranger giving us glimpses, however imperfect, of the soul of any of his characters, we might bear the mangling of the verse; but that which Talma and Rachel feared to do, that which Ristori has not feared to do, but has signally failed in doing, no Colases or Duvergers should be permitted to attempt. If our critics knew their duty, and led the public taste by speaking what is thought and felt and spoken about such performances, in all circles where art and poetry are studied and understood, such pretenders would be swept from our stage, or at least kept in the subordinate position which alone they are competent to fill.

It is indeed time to make a protest against the utterance of English poetry being intrusted to strangers, when not only is every species of barbarism in pronunciation tolerated, but the very power of delivering a blank verse line is all but extinct. Who has not experienced the delight of merely listening to the French tongue as it is spoken at the Comédie Française? There a pure standard is still preserved, as in past days the standard utterance of our own speech was preserved at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Now all is chaos, and the chances are that, whatever the play, we shall hear, before the second act, every variety of accent and utterance, from the broken English of the foreigner, the nasal drawl and harsh vowel sounds of the American, down to the kitchen English of that large class of actresses who have been promoted of late years, upon the strength of a shapely ankle or a pretty face, from the ballet into speaking parts. Is this sort of thing to go on for ever unrebuked?

This wellnigh universal carelessness in speaking is but one of the many evils which have resulted from the system of substituting fine dresses and sensation scenes for good acting and the delineation of character. The actor has felt himself thrust aside by the scene-painter. How he played his part or spoke his speeches was of little moment, where he was used merely to stop a gap while the scene-shifter and ballet-master arranged their effects. Under this malign influence actors of promise have sunk into hopeless mannerists, without power to conceive or skill to execute; and our stages have by degrees become overrun by a tribe of uneducated and brainless puppets, who, happily for our ears, are for the most part inarticulate, whenever they have a sentence to speak of more than half a dozen words. There is obviously no authority now in any of our theatres to enforce at rehearsal the simplest laws of Walker, not to speak of the elementary rules of delivery; and there are no critics conscientious enough to tell these illiterate blunderers of faults which would bring disgrace upon a national school. Chief among the offenders in this direction are those—actresses we cannot call them but—overdressed puppets, who, to the shame of many of our managers, on the strength of influences which will not bear to be spoken of, usurp the places which were erewhile filled by intelligence and virtue. What boots it to have driven the social evil from the saloon of the theatre, if it is allowed to proclaim itself in silks and diamonds from the stage? The theatre will probably under any circumstances have its Woffingtons, its Oldfields, and its Abingtons; but the women we have named were

greater than their vices, and their brilliant talents threw their immoralities into the shade. They could act, and they won their way to public favour by wit, or tact, or manners—in short, by force of ability and hard work. Their successors have no one of these qualities to justify their pretensions; yet managers put them prominently forward, and the critics of our journals assign to them every excellence which can adorn the stage.

Indeed, it would be ludicrous, were it not pitiable, to note with what recklessness of anything like moderation or a guiding standard the praises of the press are lavished in these days upon both performers and on pieces. Let either be barely tolerable, and epithet is piled upon epithet to secure the admiration of a public, too eager to be amused to care much about the means. Of this the play of *Leah*, now performing at the Adelphi, is a signal example. What it may be in its original German we have no means of knowing; but under the double manipulation which it has undergone, first for America, and afterwards for this country, any literary merit it may ever have had has evaporated. The language is inflated yet feeble, rhapsodical yet cold, and the situations, where not commonplace, are simply impossible. Two of these admit, however, of powerful treatment, and in any hands could scarcely fail of producing an effect. The heroine is a Jewess, who having in the fourth act imprecated upon a Christian lover, by whom she has been deserted, a curse nearly as comprehensive as that in Holy Willie's Prayer, is moved by womanly pity at the sight of his child and happy home to pray for its removal in the fifth. In these two scenes

lies the sole interest of the piece. All that precedes is insufferably tedious, and made even more tedious by the passionless and unartistic representation of Miss Bateman, a lady who comes heralded to us as the greatest tragic actress of the day. So many of these have already come to us across the Atlantic, that the initiated know pretty well what such a designation portends; nor, despite the noisy eulogies of Miss Bateman which salute us on every side, do we find in her any great superiority over her predecessors from the land of the West. She is neither more nor less than a thoroughly trained actress, of fair abilities, without any great natural gifts of voice or person, and without one spark of genius. You never can lose sight of the actress in her Leah, and for the simple reason that she never loses herself in the part. A great actress becomes for the time the being she represents, feels with her heart, thinks with her soul, loses her own identity in the creature she has imagined. Miss Bateman is always Miss Bateman. Whether she is telling her lover how she adores him, or levelling her curse at his head, the audience is ever visibly prominent to her thoughts. She is neither absorbed in her lover in the one case—indeed, throughout a long passionate address to him, her eye rests on the audience, and is not once turned to him—nor is she absorbed in her fury in the other. The very curse does not leap from her lips with the passionate vehemence bearing down all before it, and with it the moral consciousness of the speaker, in the eclipse of which alone it could have had its birth, and which alone could make it endurable, but is delivered with a measured monotony

that revolts, but does not appal. Give Rachel such a curse to deliver, and we should not have been surprised to see her faithless lover lie blasted at her feet. Even Ristori is terrible in this scene. That Miss Bateman is effective is the utmost that can be said. There is a strong natural pathos in the situation of the dying and relenting woman in the last scene, which no acting can spoil, and which good acting can scarcely enhance. People are moved by it, and give to the actress much of the credit which is due to the situation.

The play, in short, is a very fair piece of melodrama, and the performance such as twenty years ago would have been considered respectable for the Adelphi or the Surrey. Nothing can more surely demonstrate to how low an ebb the taste both of critics and the public has fallen, than that the former should make such a parade about it as they have done, and that the latter should have been cajoled into believing their report. Contrast it, for example, with Knowles's *Hunchback* as a piece of writing, and the demands which it makes upon the actress with what is required from the Julia of that play. Call up to mind what Fanny Kemble, or in later days Helen Faucit, were in the last two acts of that play, and then say if Miss Bateman is worthy to be named in the same breath with either? And yet who would have dreamt of loading their performances with the eulogies for which language is ransacked to speak the praises of Miss Bateman?

In the same spirit of extravagance the journals have vied with each other in extolling the doings of Mr. Fechter at the Lyceum. If this gentleman's head is not

turned by all the fine things that have been said about him, it must be proof against the intoxication of flattery. A few mechanical improvements on the stage, in the chief of which he is only following the example of other managers, are trumpeted as great public benefactions. Superlatives of every shade of intensity have been applied to his "scenery, machinery, dresses, and decorations;" to his new piece *Bel Demonio*, and to his own acting in it. The public rush to his theatre, but if the groans of impatience around us, when we saw it, had any meaning, the great majority of his audience have recorded a very different verdict as to the merits of what they see. Better scenery has often been presented in London. Its chief characteristic seems to be the introduction of staircases at every turn, up and down which the actors are eternally moving, to the discomfort of their own limbs and the bewilderment of the spectators' brains. Indeed, the torture to which a venerable cardinal is put in this way is carried to a pitch which, coupled with the actor's unfitness for the part, reduces the successful candidate for the papal chair to the rickety imbecility of a pantaloon. Moreover, the pauses between the acts, occasioned, we presume, by the adjustment of these dreary staircases, are utterly insufferable. They occupy almost as much time as the action of the play. On the night we saw it, a pause of twenty-five minutes was followed by an act which occupied scarcely ten. No degree of scenic beauty justifies such an abuse of an audience's patience; and if it cannot be arrived at otherwise, the sooner Mr. Fechter abandons built-up scenes, which are no more like the true thing than the

less ambitious canvas and lath of the ordinary stage, and gives his admirers good pieces and good acting instead, the happier for them and the better for his own eventual interests.

Whatever flatterers may say, *Bel Demonio* is utter trash; an incomprehensible farrago of trumpery surprises and effects, without any binding chain of interest, or true dramatic development. Neither does the acting carry off its defects. Mr. Fechter himself has never been seen to less advantage. His Bel Demonio is a very sketchy piece of work, feeble in outline, and made out in none of its details—a sorry contrast to the artistic portraiture of his Don Cæsar de Bazan or his Ruy Blas. We have too sincere an admiration for his fine powers to accept such slovenly commonplace at his hands, or to believe that he will be content with filling his theatre without regard to the intrinsic merit of his pieces. It is no fault of his if such dreary stuff as *The Duke's Motto* crammed his house for nine months; but the masterly impersonator of Hamlet might surely use his command of popular favour for higher purposes than the production of flashy melodramas. We will not believe that he means to write over the treasury of the Lyceum the creed of the manager in the Prologue to Goethe's *Faust*:—

> "Put then, whatever else you may,
> Enough of incident into your play.
> Plenty to look at, that's what people like;
> 'Tis what they come for; tickle, then, their eyes
> With bustle, plot, spectacle, things that strike
> The multitude with open-mouth'd surprise;
> 'What breadth! what force!' they cry. 'Superb! sublime!'
> And you become the lion of the time."

Mr. Fechter is just now the "lion of the time;" people are sure to go to see whatever he produces; but, if he wishes to retain a lasting hold on public favour, he must be true to his own powers, and strike at higher game than the *Duke's Motto* or *Bel Demonio.*

It is pleasant to turn from the highly-varnished vulgarity of the latter to *Manfred*, as presented at Drury Lane. Despite Byron's determination to make his poem unactable, he has certainly not succeeded. The first act, no doubt, is all in that way that he could have wished; but in the second and third a weird interest in the crime and lonely defiant suffering of Manfred is developed, which takes hold upon the spectator with a strange fascination, and nightly keeps in breathless suspense the crowded area of our one fine theatre. The spectacle is undoubtedly not without its effect in drawing these crowds; indeed, a scenic illusion more poetically suggestive has rarely been seen than the apparition of the Witch of the Alps. But it is obvious to any one who watches the audience, that it is the grandeur of the author's conception, and the splendour of his verse, not unfamiliar manifestly to a large proportion of those present, which forms the dominant attraction. Would that managers and actors would profit by the indication, and trust for success to moving the brains and hearts of audiences rather than to dazzling their eyes or stunning their senses! Mr. Phelps is not much at home in Manfred, but the declamation of blank verse with intelligence and a just appreciation of its rhythm, is so rare a quality that, when we meet with it as in the present instance, we are fain to overlook other short-

comings. One word, too, of praise is due to the Astarte of Miss Rose Leclercq. Her utterance of the word "Manfred," in answer to his passionate adjuration to say if she still loves him, is a thing not soon to be forgotten. Its charm lies not alone in the wailing sweetness of the tones, that come upon the ear like some far-off wind-swept echo, but in an accent so finely struck that it suggests at once the deepest tenderness and the most agonized rebuke. Whether this is due to deliberate intention or to happy accident it is impossible to argue from anything this lady has formerly done. We gladly construe it in the handsomest sense.

No better piece of its class has been produced for many a day than Mr. Tom Taylor's *Ticket-of-Leave Man*, a very thorough piece of dramatic workmanship, and acted with conspicuous ability in all its parts. It is worth a thousand *Leahs* and *Bel Demonios;* and, though probably far less "triumphantly successful," it has met a cordial recognition, and raised the various performers in it very considerably in public favour—and most deservedly, for every character is a study, well individualized and completely made out. The piece is a cheering evidence that we have still actors among us who know something of their art, and will spare no pains "to hold the mirror up to Nature," if only the dramatist will give them an outline to fill, and a substantial human interest to illustrate. The same praise may be given, in a modified degree, as regards the author, to a little piece called *Miriam's Crime*, now being acted at the Strand Theatre.

Such pieces as these are very well, and we are thank-

ful for them, as we are in a sister art for the pictures of Wilkie, or the sketches of John Leech. But just as we require a Francia, or Raphael, or Delaroche to satisfy our higher aspirations in painting, we long to see "high actions and high passions" embodied in the poetical drama. Why should we not have Henry Taylor as an acted dramatist as well as Tom Taylor? Browning, Troughton, Marston, as well as Craven, Oxenford, and Stirling Coyne? Why, at least, should we have no theatre in which Shakspeare might always be presented in a manner for which his countrymen need not blush? Not surely because an audience fit, and not few, could not always be found to reward the good taste and enterprise to which such an altered state of matters would be owing.

At no time has the want of such a theatre been more deeply felt, at no time could its influence upon public taste have been more salutary. But where are the actors? Gone from the stage, or scattered through the provinces, subduing their natures to work in the hopeless journey-work of sensation pieces, in despair of ever realizing their dream of filling an honourable position on a metropolitan stage. And even the good actors left in London are being rapidly unfitted for taking any part in the poetical drama. The very prosperity of the theatres has been their ruin. When pieces which do not tax their energies run for six, ten, or sixteen months, the hopeless reiteration of the same pointless dialogue and trivial action works like a narcotic on their sensibilities, and reduces to tedious mechanism what should be always the vivid expression of a strong conception.

A fine actor would not submit to such drudgery; an ordinary one withers under it. Thus it is that we everywhere see such a dead level of indifference and commonplace upon the stage, and fair actors spoiled, who, under better auspices, might have become valuable supporters of a higher drama.

Then, too, the critics of the journals, themselves, unhappily, for the most part manufacturers of farces and flimsy comediettas, have for years found it for their interest to denounce as "slow" every dramatist who set up for himself higher aims than their own. They have had their triumph. They have banished poetry from our stage, and with it the aspiration after any high order of excellence among the professors of the histrionic art. And yet mark the consistency of these public instructors! In one moment they tell us that the poetical drama is not for the stage, but for the closet; and in the next write eloquent paragraphs about Shakspeare, and the necessity of some great national monument in his honour.

The poetical drama not for the stage! Did Shakspeare know his business? Did the greatest dramatist of any age write what he believed could never be adequately shown upon the stage? This is another of the many cants in which the criticasters, who talk more about Shakspeare than they study him, are so apt to indulge. It was not so that Coleridge, his finest critic, thought or wrote. Again and again has he expressed the opinion that the full worth of Shakspeare can never be brought home to the souls of his countrymen, except through the medium of the stage—a truth which cannot be too often enforced, when we find even able men (too

young probably to have much practical experience of the stage) speaking of the theatre merely as a place of amusement, and acting as a pastime, made up of tinsel show, and respectable declamation. "Who," says the writer of an able essay on "Shakspearian Studies" in a recent article in the *Times*, "who expects a clever actor to throw new light upon the plays, or to show us much more than we can all find for ourselves? It is enough if he will place vividly before us some one of Shakspeare's characters, so that we can see it vital on the stage as we have seen it many times already. If he does this with ability, we thank him for a good evening's amusement."

Betterton, Garrick, Pritchard, Siddons—we forbear to speak of names within our own time—how was their reputation won, if such a theory be true? A great actor, by temperament, by constitution, by study, by living instinct roused through strong imagination, and by the revelations which the very action of the scene flashes upon him, is raised to the level of his author in a way that no student can ever be; and his "roused soul" kindles the souls of his audience into an intensity of insight that but for him they would never have known. It is because Shakspeare, himself an actor, knew this better than any other man, and, knowing it, deliberately and of purpose left the actor to bring out what his words could often only suggest, that his plays have been at once the triumph of fine actors, and have received, and do always receive more vital colouring and force from great, or even merely good acting, than the plays of any other writer.

Had he thought the poetic drama unfit for the stage, what hindered that he should not have written tragedies of common life, or, like many of his compeers, strung together mere extravaganzas of passion and action, much akin to the sensation pieces of our own day? But he knew the human heart and his own countrymen better. They wanted then, and they want still, something more than to be merely amused by the theatre. They want to be lifted above the petty personalities and absorbing interests of everyday life into "the ampler ether and diviner air," in which his Imogens, Juliets, Hamlets, and Othellos moved.

Monuments to Shakspeare! Have we forgotten Milton's noble lines?

> "What needs my Shakspeare for his honoured bones
> The labor of an age in pilèd stones?
> Or that his dusty relics should be hid
> Beneath a starry-pointed pyramid?"

He needs no other monument than that living one which he has reared in our "wonder and astonishment." But let us show that we know how to value him by encouraging his poetic art. If all England is to be asked for contributions to a Shakspeare monument, why should these not be used to found and endow a Shakspeare Theatre, to which the honourable ambition of actors might look forward, as the arena to show that they too, like him, have seen visions of humanity in its noblest aspects, and the mere admission to whose stage should be a diploma of honour? By such a theatre, aloof from the intrigues or sordid aims that seem at present to beset the theatrical profession, and managed, as it might

be, by those who had no object but that of maintaining the histrionic art at its highest level, and doing all that could be done with such resources as might be available for giving the fullest expression to dramas of the highest class, we should indeed erect a monument, and the only fitting monument, to Shakspeare.

More precious by far than Brompton Museums and shows of art treasures; more wholesome, more pervading in good influences, would such a theatre be. Long and arduous, no doubt, would be the task to organize it, and work it up to a point worthy of its name and object. But, once organized, it would not soon be destroyed, and would make memorable in England the tercentenary of Shakspeare's birth.

A PLEA FOR PLAYERS.

(SATURDAY REVIEW, DECEMBER 5, 1865.)

N the December "Cornhill" Mrs. Fanny Kemble has given us what we may assume to be the final result of her experience and meditations "On the Stage." The utterances of a Kemble on such a subject are sure to carry weight; and it is solely for this cause, and not for their intrinsic value, that we are tempted to examine the merits of this lady's essay. It professes to deal not so much with the drama as with the actor's art—a subject on which, in these days, when we look round in vain for any practical standard of excellence, it is not undesirable that some clear ideas should be arrived at. Some help towards these might have been expected from one who combines no small literary practice with the actual experience of a histrionic career. But, unhappily, the lady seems not to have very clear ideas on the subject herself, and is so constantly upsetting in one paragraph the propositions of another, that it is very hard to make out what she would have us think about the qualities that

go to the making of a great actor, or the rank he holds among other artists.

In one breath, she claims for him the highest qualities of mind and person, original and acquired; and, in the next, she tells us that his "art requires no study worthy of the name; it creates nothing, it perpetuates nothing." "His labour consists in exciting momentary emotion." "His most persevering efforts can only benefit, by a passionate pleasure of at most a few years' duration, the playgoing public of his own immediate day." These are sayings hard enough to reconcile; but yet one can understand how even a Kemble, not gifted with imagination, should disparage an art that leaves no results which the hands can touch or the eye can rest on. But it is indeed hard to understand how any Kemble—most of all one who owes her position, and what little celebrity she may have achieved, solely to the name she bears—should have summed up her conclusions as to the followers of the art which ennobled that name in the words, "They are fitly recompensed with money and applause, to whom may not justly belong the rapture of creation, the glory of patient and protracted toil, and the love and honour of grateful posterity."

If spirits could be evoked, the indignant manes of Mrs. Kemble's ancestors might be expected to rise in vehement protest against a doctrine so dishonouring to themselves and to their art. Had their aims been no higher than money and applause, their names would never have risen above the common herd. Had money and applause been their fit and only recompense, Mrs. Fanny Kemble would never have emerged from the

obscurity which attaches to very ordinary literary ability. But they had higher aims, and therefore they are remembered; and posterity, with an instinct of unconscious reverence, has rated beyond their value the powers of the only member of the family who is now prominently before them. Had the conclusion to which Mrs. Kemble brings us been as just as we hope to show it to be unjust, surely it was not for her, of all people in the world, to draw it. If she had nothing better to say of the stage and its professors, she would have done well to have mistrusted her own judgment, and held her peace. Never, moreover, was any doctrine more thoroughly ill-timed; for never was it of greater moment than now, when everybody seems to fancy that neither peculiar natural gifts nor special study are necessary for the stage, that some authoritative voice should speak in warning to the shallow pretenders who seek it from the vulgarest motives, and of encouragement to those who are led to it from higher aims, but find only too many discouragements in a state of things which has given over our theatres to scene-painters and sensation dramas.

Mrs. Kemble says rightly, that "the combination of the power of representing passion and emotion with that of imagining or conceiving it is essential to make a good actor; their combination in the highest possible degree alone makes a great one." This is only saying, in other words, that a good actor must not only have the poet's vivid sympathy with the passions and emotions of natures other than and different from his own, but must possess the art of presenting lifelike and consistent

portraitures of ideal personages under the influence of these passions and emotions, in such a manner that all shall recognise their truth to nature, however much aloof from ordinary experience. What the poet indicates, from the very nature of the case, imperfectly in words, the actor has to complete by voice, and action, and deportment. It is manifest that a power of this order can no more be common than a kindred power in painting, sculpture, or poetry. The imagination to conceive and the skill to execute in perfection meet only in the few, whose names escape the oblivion that awaits all artists, however gifted, in whom they are not combined. But the power, even in a modified degree, is, by the mere statement of what it has to do and can do, one of a very high order. It implies deep sensibility; strong, yet tempered imagination; an almost intuitive faculty of observation; and a sense of fitness which subordinates its conceptions to the laws of good taste, and keeps a firm mastery over passion in its very "tempest and whirlwind."

But, while Mrs. Kemble implicitly admits this, she denies all originality to the actor. "The most original process," she says, "of the actor's art—that is, the conception of the character to be represented—is a mere reception of the creation of another's mind." And is this, looking at it from the lowest point of view, so simple a matter? Men of great gifts have won a name by attempts, more or less successful, to develope, by way of critical commentary, a just conception of our great dramatist's characters. Hours and years of study are given by many of us to working out similar conceptions

most imperfectly for ourselves. But the actor must do more than this. It is not enough that he shall receive the creation of another's mind into his own. He must create it anew for himself. He must throw himself, as it were, into the nature of the man he is to represent; he must feel with him, think with him, act with him, as that man would have thought, felt, and acted under the given circumstances of the drama. He must, by strong imagination, identify himself with, and be, in fact, the creature of the poet's brain. Unless he can do this, he will never be more than a clever declaimer. Do this, and he becomes a Betterton, a Garrick, a Talma, or a Kean.

Set an actor or actress of this stamp before us, and what floods of light do they flash upon the poet's page. What was Racine's *Phèdre*, for example, to us of this age, till Rachel made her live before us? How undefined, how colourless even the "divine Imogen" and "heavenly Rosalind," till they were made realities for us by our own Helen Faucit? It may be said of either painter or sculptor, with equal truth, that he does not create, but merely receives what has been created by the eternal mind. Sky, mountain, and sea, and

> "Sun, and moon, and stars, throughout the year,
> And man and woman,"

are far more glorious than anything that brush or chisel ever portrayed. But do we deny originality to Claude or Turner, to Phidias or to Gibson, because they have received into their own minds some of nature's grandeur or beauty, and given it forth again on canvas or in stone? Just as their work bears on it the stamp of

their own individuality, so is a great actor's impersonation of a poet's conception pervaded by his own distinctive genius. In the abstract it may be true, as Mrs. Kemble says, that "the character of 'Lady Macbeth' is as majestic, awful, and poetical, whether it be worthily filled by its pre-eminent representative Mrs. Siddons, or unworthily by the most incompetent of ignorant provincial tragedy queens;" just as it is true that Palestrina or the Lake of Nemi remains perennially beautiful, whether painted by a Turner or by the feeblest of Dick Tintos. But even as Turner fixed for us on canvas that beauty which he alone of all men saw in these scenes, so, for those who saw Mrs. Siddons, Lady Macbeth was infinitely more majestic, awful, and poetical than she was in the poet's pages. The ablest men and women of her time admitted this, and were grateful to the genius that brought them by the force of its conception to a truer comprehension of the poet's purpose.

And let it not be forgotten that the sister arts of sculpture and painting have never accomplished a similar result. Innumerable painters of unquestionable genius have striven to embody on canvas their conceptions of some one mood or aspect of Shakspeare's men and women. Which of them has ever succeeded? And yet actors and actresses have presented us with full and living embodiments which left us nothing to wish for but this—that some medium could have been found to give them perpetuity. And if actors have done this for Shakspeare, what have they not done for inferior dramatists? Every playgoer's memory must supply him with instances where the actor has, in the strictest

sense, created the part which has made the fortunes of the poet's play. Search his pages; you may find the action and the situations, it is true, but of the man or woman whose image has been most deeply impressed on your remembrance by the performer's skill, you will discover but the faintest trace. This has been true at all periods of the stage. In mercy to the sensibilities of still living dramatists, we forbear from illustrations from our own time, otherwise it would not be difficult to show that the great actor does not merely "receive the creation of another mind," but himself originates the conception which he embodies.

When Mrs. Kemble tells us that the art which can do this "requires no study worthy of the name," we are indeed amazed. If this were true, for no art can heaven-born genius be so essential; in no art can success be so entirely due to pure inspiration:—

> "It requires," says Mrs. Kemble "in its professors the imagination of the poet, the ear of the musician, the eye of the painter and sculptor, and, over and above these, a faculty peculiar to itself, inasmuch as the actor personally fulfils and embodies his conception; his own voice is his cunningly modulated instrument; his own face the canvas whereon he portrays the various expressions of his passion; his own frame the mould in which he casts the images of beauty and majesty that fill his brain; and whereas the painter and sculptor may select, of all possible attitudes, occupations, and expressions, the most favourable to the beautiful effect they desire to produce, and fix, and bid it so remain fixed for ever, the actor must live and move through a temporary existence of poetry and passion, and preserve throughout its duration that ideal grace and dignity, of which the canvas and the marble give but a silent and motionless image."

Mrs. Kemble might have added, that while poet, painter, or sculptor may select their times and seasons,

may try and try again until the effect they aim at is achieved, the actor must attack his task, whatever his mood, and must hit his aim at once, with a hundred unsympathetic eyes and ears bent in judgment on each change of feature, and awake to catch every inflection of his tones. His failures must not be seen; "the marks of his brush"—to borrow a painter's phrase—must not be permitted to catch the eye. And yet this art "requires no study worthy of the name!" What does Mrs. Kemble mean by study worthy of the name? To enlighten and strengthen the moral nature, to enrich the memory and the imagination with all that is best in the history of our race, to familiarize the eye and the thoughts with all that is fairest in nature and in art, so that he should be

> "Complete in feature and in mind,
> With all good grace to grace a gentleman,"

would seem to be the studies natural, and indeed essential, to any man, however gifted, who aspired to be what Mrs. Kemble has said a good actor must be. And had Mrs. Kemble taken pains to study the history of the dramatic art, she would have learned that such were the studies of the best actors of the past.

Mrs. Kemble says that their art has "neither fixed rules, specific principles, indispensable rudiments, nor fundamental laws." Of this outsiders like ourselves have perhaps no right to speak. But if this be so, it is certainly strange that even great actors rarely attain to excellence save after much practice and long and laborious exercise of their vocation. Mrs. Siddons herself failed when she first appeared in London, and this even

after she had been long upon the stage. What she had become by study and practice in the interval between that failure and her next appearance made success certain. One cannot but surmise that, before she had reached this point, she had mastered certain "specific principles and fundamental laws." All artists must begin with learning the use of their tools. Raffaelle went through many studies, and grew familiar with many common rules, before he produced the Madonna di San Sisto. Mario had to get rid of much, and to learn much, before he had all the resources of the actor's art so thoroughly at command as to enable him to delight Europe with his fine impersonation of *Raoul.*

That other authorities as competent as Mrs. Kemble do consider the actor's art to be governed by fundamental laws we gather from the remark, which she mentions as having been made of herself, towards the close of her theatrical career, "by one of the masters of the stage of the present day"—that she was "ignorant of the first rudiments of her profession." However this may be, it is certain that she failed signally as an actress, though ushered to the stage with every advantage of education, and under such kindliness of encouragement from the public as no one perhaps ever enjoyed. Had it been possible for so self-assured a person to be troubled by any of those misgivings which beset true power, it might ere now have occurred to Mrs. Kemble that this failure was probably due to her neglect of the understood rules of the actor's art, not less than to that ever present consciousness of self so conspicuous in her books, which is fatal to excellence in

all creative art, and in none more than that which she so unwisely disparages.

Readers of Mrs. Fanny Butler's *American Journal* have not forgotten the contemptuous spirit in which she spoke there of the actor's vocation, at a time when she was actively engaged in it. She could never forget the glare of the footlights. The property-man and the scene-shifter put her out. The boarding and canvas of Juliet's balcony upset her "vivid and versatile organization." Why was all this? Simply because she lacked the primary requisite of a great actress—the strong imagination which can live in its own conceptions, which can, with Juliet, hear the nightingale "nightly sing in yon pomegranate tree," and look beyond the most incapable of stage Romeos to the very Romeo of Juliet's love. Therefore was it that Mrs. Fanny Kemble was, among the actresses of her time, one of what she would call the most "theatrical," but what is better described as the most stagey. She was never in earnest, never genuine. She had neither the intuitions of genius nor its patient striving after perfection. She thought herself above her art—it was "repugnant to her"—when she was, in fact, far beneath it. To her, no doubt, did not belong "the rapture of creation, the glory of patient and protracted toil;" but not, therefore, have these been unknown to the great ornaments of the stage, whose names carry with them "the love and honour of grateful posterity," which never denies this tribute to those who added lustre to their own generation, and whom its sires and grandsires delighted to honour and to love.

THE DRAMA IN LONDON.

(Fraser's Magazine, January, 1865.)

"POOH! Punch has no feelings!" said Johnson, in one of his surly fits, speaking of his friend Garrick—the affectionate, generous, sensitive Garrick, whose delicate health and early death told a very different tale. Johnson knew he was wrong, and felt he was brutal—doubly so, as the remark was made to Garrick himself in answer to a remonstrance with Johnson for putting him out in *King Lear* by talking too loud at the side of the scenes. But much as the great critic liked "little Davie," he could never quite forgive him his success, or regard his art with any sympathy; so, like all sayers of good things, he sacrificed truth to a pithy sarcasm. When his friend's death made him look the truth straight in the face, he made him splendid amends. But somehow the phrase has stuck; and, as people generally write and speak of the actor and his art, it is plain that in their hearts they are quite of the opinion—"Punch has no feelings!" Painters,

sculptors, novelists, poets, orators—all workers by the imagination—may feel, nay, if the world is to care about them, they must feel. But the actor, of whom, above all others, it is true,

> "Si vis me flere, dolendum est
> Primum ipsi tibi,"

gets no credit for his emotions. The wear and tear of sensibility and passion are nothing to him. It is only acting. "Pooh! Punch has no feelings!"

It is quite true that actors in general live long—a circumstance which may at first seem incompatible with great sensibility. Some of the most eminent have done so, as, for example, Betterton, Quin, Macklin, Mrs. Siddons, Mdlle. Mars. But as there never was a great actor yet, who did not start with an exceptionally fine constitution, and maintain it by temperate habits, this is not remarkable. Quite as many actors of distinction have died comparatively young—Burbage, Bracegirdle, Woffington, Lekain, Lecouvreur, Garrick, and Rachel. In dealing with a question of this kind, one can, of course, only look to the case of the leading ornaments of the stage—the spirits which were "finely touched, and to fine issues,"—the true artists, whose work was all, more or less, vivified by the fire of genius. In the actor's, just as in the painter's, or any other artistic vocation, the rank and file are at best but mechanics, all tolerably well versed in the technical part of their profession, and doing their work with varying degrees of respectability, but not possessed by "the shaping spirit of imagination," or troubled by too keen sensibilities. The amount of nervous force which they exhaust can

never be very great. But Garrick never played *Lear*, or Rachel *Phèdre*, without giving a good part of their lives to the inspiration of the hour; and no actor, even of greatly inferior mark, can do his work conscientiously without drawing much more largely on his vital forces than is done in the every-day work of most of those professions which are classed as artistic. The strain on their nervous system is necessarily sudden and intense. It is only the finest organizations that can prosecute the histrionic art in its higher walks, and not break down early. An actor of genius, without commensurate physical force, drops as surely into an early grave as a Raphael or a Keats.

The truth of this position has lately received an illustration in the early death of an actor, who, of late years, ministered more perhaps than any other to the amusement of the public. It is but as yesterday since Mr. Robson took the town by storm. Many saw, or thought they saw, in him the possibilities of an order of tragic power almost equal to the elder Kean's; and even those who knew too much of the actor's art to share in such an estimate, recognized in him that faculty of impersonation—rough and unmodulated, it is true, but genuine—which in the main justified his popularity. In the long dearth of true histrionic genius he was naturally hailed with enthusiasm. But while the crowds that flocked to see him at the Olympic Theatre were amused with the quaintness of his humour, or startled by his electric bursts of passion, or surprised into tears by the touches of his pathos, they little dreamed that what yielded them so much pleasure was rapidly undermining

the poor little fellow's constitution, and destroying all hope of his ripening into a really great actor. Mr. Robson had not that fine balance of mental and physical resources, without which the highest powers can never be developed. His brain was too large, his capacity of emotion too intense, for his frame. When success came, and with it an undue strain upon his strength, he was not enough of an artist to know how and when to economise his resources; for that is a knowledge which must either be learned from such wise teaching as Mr. Robson never had, or by the thoughtful observation which probably was awakened within him only when it was too late.

Thus it was that he squandered his vital forces in fierce sallies of passion and pathos, or in the reckless humours and extravagance of burlesque, where one-half of the same energy, well managed, would have told with even greater effect.

He never made any reserve of his power on the stage, and he was never off it. The public *would* see him. Unhappily for himself, he was the sole stay of the theatre to which he belonged, and had apparently no choice but to conform to that monstrous practice of the modern stage of playing the same piece for long "runs," no matter at what peril to the actor's art, or even to his health. Week after week, month after month, year after year, he went on doing his heavy taskwork without intermission. Had he been a mere machine, common prudence would have counselled more economy in his use. But, endowed as he was with a quick conceiving brain, and a sensibility which once set

in motion manifestly slipped beyond his control, what marvel that his physical powers gave way, and that, after mocking the stage for a time with the pale spectre of his former self—the voice and frame refusing to fulfil the conceptions of the busy brain—he sank into a premature grave, and is even now wellnigh forgotten!

But the public must be amused—the exchequer of the theatre filled. What matter if we kill our favourites by insisting on seeing them too often? Talk not of an actor's overtasked brain, or overwrought feelings. "Pooh! Punch has no feelings!"

We have killed in Robson one actor of genius by forcing too much work out of him; and we should kill more if we had them. For the system of working every success to death, which destroyed him, continues to rule the hour. In our theatres, as elsewhere, to make money, on any terms, is now the dominant rule; and the mischief is aggravated immensely by the vast expenditure on scenic appointments, which can only be reimbursed by running a piece for a very lengthened period. Paradoxical as it may at first sight seem, it is strictly true, that a great success is most detrimental to the growth of good acting. Heaven help the players, indeed, at any theatre where a piece makes a hit! However the managers may court such an event, it must, we should think, be contemplated with dismay by every actor or actress above the level of the veriest drudge.

Night after night, for one, two, three, or even four hundred nights, to go on repeating the same parts, in pieces for which they must often find it difficult, even

at the outset, to feel much interest, must reduce the most elastic spirit, and the most lively imagination, to a state of sullen torpor. All zest in his part must be crushed out of the performer; and without pleasure to himself, no actor can give pleasure to his audience. He may try to bear up against it. If he has real histrionic power, he may even preserve his freshness for a time; but the end with all must be fatal monotony and dead indifference. The life, the variety, the impulsiveness, which form the soul of good acting, are impossible under such conditions. Good actors are spoiled by it; indifferent ones made worse; and those who might have become good, degenerate into hopeless mannerists. They are not, in the literal sense, "done to death," like poor Robson; but they are so, to all intents and purposes, as artists.

It would be easy to illustrate this by numerous striking examples from every class. Indeed, which of our theatres does not furnish one or more? But, as we regard the actors in this particular not as delinquents, but as the victims of a vicious system, for which the public are not without their share of blame, we forbear all mention of names. In the days of great actors the profession was never subjected to so cruel an ordeal. Indeed, in any state of things, in which acting and not scenic effect is the paramount attraction, the system could not exist, for the simple reason that no constitution could stand it. Had we two or three great actors now, we might hope to see the system broken down, at least at some of our theatres. But, as it is, managers have it all their own way. All pride in acting as an art is foreign to them. Actors seem to be regarded as so

many machines, grinding out so much dialogue, with appropriate gesture and action, at so much a head per night. Intelligence, culture, ambition, art, are out of the calculation, so that the public be only got to fill the house. The scene-painter and costumier must indeed be deferred to; for on them "the run" of the piece depends. The actor may protest, as Garrick did to Johnson—"You destroy all my feelings." The answer is ready: "Pooh! Punch has no feelings!"

The system has destroyed good acting throughout Europe. Paris and Berlin are as loud in their complaints upon the subject as London. The same causes are at work there as here, and this, although both France and Germany have a current dramatic literature of some vitality, which we have not, and have organised establishments for securing something like an adequate representation of the higher drama. But if we look at the history of our metropolitan stage for the last ten or a dozen years, can we wonder that our actors have become, what for the most part they are, little better than monotonous mannerists, or mechanical drudges? If Shakspeare has been presented, acting has been shouldered aside to make way for scenery, masses of supernumeraries, effects of Bude-lights, and the vanity of some individual performer. And in the plays which have commanded the greatest success—those of which *The Colleen Bawn*, *The Duke's Motto*, and *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* may be taken as the types—what scope has been afforded for the actor to delineate actual life and manners, or to put into practice what he should be learning by daily study and observation of the ways and workings of the human heart?

A man cannot be always at work among trifles and unrealities without becoming as trivial and unreal as his work. Excellence in acting, as in everything else, can only be attained by constant practice on good materials, coupled with constant aspiration. Where neither motive nor opportunity for either exist, the actor must degenerate into a commonplace worker for mere subsistence, without enthusiasm or pride in his vocation.

The first essential for keeping alive good acting is the existence of good plays—plays that deal with human nature, and with probable situations—in which true character can be shown and genuine emotion be elicited—in which the imagination is roused, and the affections healthfully "refined by pity or terror." Have we had such plays of late years? Have those which have formed our principal fare been of a kind to stimulate the ambition of any educated man or woman to adopt the stage as a profession? Can we point to one that has taken a permanent place in literature? Is there one in which a great actor or actress would have found scope for the exercise of their power, and added to our stock of indelible remembrances? Flashy dramas—brilliant successes in their day—we have had in abundance, in which strong situations and exaggerated passions abounded. But these have only had the effect of injuring the style of actors, and vitiating the public taste. And if by any chance an old play has been revived, or a new play produced, which demanded and gave room for fine acting, as a natural consequence it has invariably found our theatres without actors equal to the work. Those who under a better system might

have been so, were found to have fallen back, and to be incapable of rising to the level which their natural powers under proper culture would have made it easy to attain, while the youngest members of the profession acquitted themselves like amateurs, alike ignorant of and indifferent to the first rules of histrionic art.

Nor is the public free from blame in this matter. Actors influence public taste, but public taste quite as certainly influences actors. The public have been far too tolerant, not only of bad pieces, but also of bad acting. Had they shown due intelligence and independence in their judgment, our stage and the dramatic profession would have been in a much healthier condition. But they have allowed themselves to be cajoled by every species of puffery into accepting both pieces and actors, not because they liked them or felt them to be good, but because they were either too indifferent or distrustful of themselves to act upon their own dim convictions in the face of the loud panegyrics, of which a stock somehow or other seems always to be procurable to order.

There was a time when a London audience was to be feared. A bad piece was remorselessly extinguished, so that no manager dared insult the public by putting it again before them. A slovenly actor was equally certain of reprobation. If he did not respect himself and his vocation, he speedily learnt that he must at least respect his public. Good work, it is true, though always appreciated, could not always be secured; but good endeavour was at least required. The applause of audiences of this stamp was worthy of an actor's ambi-

tion. They judged for themselves, and they did not scruple to express their judgments. No manager or actor would have ventured in those days to dictate from his playbills, as we now see done every day, what the public were to think of their pieces or their acting. It was their duty to supply the best which they could command of both, and to leave these to make their way with the public without note or comment of any kind. A little firmness on the part of the press, and a few vigorous symptoms of disapprobation from the audience, might speedily restore matters to their pristine healthful state in these respects, and teach managers and actors that the resources of Barnumism, in which they are now so fertile, would no longer avail them in foisting wretched pieces and villainous acting upon a public that has been tried by both beyond the limits of endurance.

The practice of recalling actors at the close of a scene or act is one of the most pernicious features of the system by which spurious reputations are manufactured, and which the public have done wrong in submitting to so long. Actors of a certain class seem to make this the aim and end of their existence. Their ambition is not to do their work thoroughly and well, but to secure a call. So far does this go, that an advertisement in *The Times*, by one of the most successful actors of the day, has recently informed the public that he has been recalled in Liverpool at the end of each act of what all theatrical London knows to be a bad piece, badly acted, as if that single fact set the seal upon his greatness.

Under no circumstances whatever, even where the call is an honest outburst of enthusiasm, is the practice of calling for an actor before the end of the play to be justified; for it is fatal to that illusion in both actor and spectator which is the basis of all enjoyment in the theatre. Acting does not consist in wearing the dress of a certain character, and uttering a certain number of words. It is the impersonation of a human being, marked by distinct peculiarities, governed for the time by certain humours, passions, or emotions. The audience is for the time content to "make-believe" in the reality of the action and the personages. But the actor must go further if he is to do any good; and, by his own absorption in the character, give to this "make-belief" something like a feeling of reality. He must, therefore, for the time, be more or less, according to his power of imagination, the being he represents. The proper state of abstraction once gained, nothing should be allowed to break its continuity.

If this principle be true, and it will hardly be disputed, what can be more outrageous than for a person who has just left the stage in a transport of grief to re-appear before the curtain bowing and smiling like a guest at a wedding-breakfast? Or, more preposterous still, for two personages to re-appear hand in hand, and arrayed in smiles, who have a few seconds before been separated by some cruel turn of fate, which has to be resolved in succeeding acts, or by some conflict of passion, which has put an impassable abyss between them? At the opera, where, as Horace Walpole said, one leaves his common sense at the door, this is bad enough.

But in a theatre, into which we may still hope to carry our brains with us, we are entitled to ask, what, under such circumstances, must become of the actor's own belief in what he is engaged in, or of that of the audience in the quasi-reality of the play? We are thinking of Juliet, or Othello, in their agonies, and have no wish to be reminded, at least until the play is over, of *Miss Fotheringay* or *Mr. Crummles.*

The practice is one which must be odious to all true artists; and we observe that, as might have been expected, it has been resolutely resisted by our one great actress during her recent performances at Drury Lane. It is of purely foreign growth, and a sorry substitute for the hearty, spontaneous, irrepressible acclaim, good for audience and actor both, which used to greet a performer when the play was over, and the public wished to thank him for the hours of imaginative pleasure he had given them. The sooner it is put down the better. Nothing can be simpler, if the intelligent, independent portion of the audience do their duty, and, instead of suffering a few noisy fools or injudicious friends to have things all their own way, will raise a decided protest, and let the actor, who appears in defiance of it, know unmistakably that his presence is not desired. The majority of all audiences has long seen through the farce of the whole thing. Why should they go on submitting with a silent shrug of the shoulders to its being played off to their discomfort, merely that a mischievous stimulus may be ministered to the vanity of indifferent performers? Let us, if we wish to keep them up to their work on the stage, keep our own wits

at work, and, if need be, speak our minds freely, before it. Amuse us, ladies and gentlemen, with your humours; delight us with your well-graced speech and bearing; thrill our hearts with pathos or passion, and you will find us sympathetic and grateful. But a truce to all this fooling of recalls and preconcerted bouquets! Earn applause honestly, and you shall have it to your hearts' content; but don't fancy you have been working wonders, because a stupid few—how composed, you know very well, it will not always do to inquire—insist on your coming forward to be cheered, and pelted with flowers, wherever you have availed yourself to the uttermost of some opportunity to "tear a passion to tatters."

It is satisfactory to observe that the daily and weekly press have latterly begun to show, by their notices of the theatres, that they have teeth, and can bite. They have much to answer for in not having long since trodden down, as they might so easily have done, the Barnumisms which had become rampant in theatrical matters, and for not having spoken out their minds frankly about plays and players generally. Our audiences have been so long unused to testify disapproval, that they have grown timid. But if the press will only speak out boldly, call a bad piece bad, charge pretenders with presumption, assign those who usurp front ranks their places in the third and fourth, and above all, never hesitate to tell an actor or actress where they are either wrong or trifle with their parts, audiences would soon recover their independence, and the condition of our theatres would be infinitely more satisfactory.

Punch has feelings, and we respect them; but if he cannot bear the strong truth of honest and intelligent criticism, let him retire into private life. Why should he be fed on comfits, like a parrot, unless, indeed, he be but a parrot, while the rest of mankind are forced to take the sours of their vocation with its sweets?

However unpalatable for the time, no artist, whatever his excellence, but is the better for being frankly told how the people who are hardest to please are impressed with his work. And of all artists, the actor especially needs the counsel of wise criticism to point out his shortcomings, and to encourage him where he is right. We say "wise criticism," because a man is not a judge of good acting, more than of good pictures or good poetry, by the mere light of nature. Combined with a natural instinct, and a knowledge of life and manners, he must have culture, experience, and taste. Such critics can never be very numerous, but their advice would be indeed precious, both behind and before the curtain. The quick intelligence of the actor will profit by their teachings, but not more rapidly than the public. For in the main the public instinct is right; it only wants guidance. Of course there will always be a section who will prefer bad acting to good, just as the sprawling extravagance of Bernini is more admired by the ignorant than the delicate truthfulness of Phidias. But in the end Bernini goes to the wall even with the mass, and a Macready will always carry the day against an N. T. Hicks. "No part," says Coleridge (*Lit. Rem.*, vol. 2, p. 51), "was ever played in perfection, but Nature justified herself in the hearts of all her children,

in what state soever they were, short of absolute moral exhaustion or downright stupidity. There is no time given to ask questions or to pass judgments; we are taken by storm; and though in the histrionic art many a clumsy counterfeit, by caricature of one or two features, may gain applause as a fine likeness, yet never was the very thing rejected as a counterfeit."

The experience of the last fifteen years has amply verified this truth. We have seen many counterfeits accepted for true men,—many false reputations manufactured. But what has become of them all? One after another they have dropped into oblivion. The public, dazzled for a time, has found them out. The imagined genius has turned out to be a very commonplace monster after all. As with actors, so with pieces. A course of Shakspearian revivals, and a few years of sensation pieces, have so palled upon the public taste, that we are now beginning to vote the latter a bore, and are becoming anxious to have our Shakspeare dressed up for us in a simpler fashion.

It is not well to speak ill even of dead dramas, and we shall not therefore do more than allude to some of the most conspicuous failures of the last year. But it is impossible not to note the fact that mere scenery and splendid appointments are no longer able to command success. This has just been conspicuously shown in the case of *The King's Butterfly*, at the Lyceum. Nothing more beautiful has been seen upon any stage than some of the scenes in this drama. They were marvels of excellence in their kind, and as a background to a noble or interesting plot, would have been most com-

mendable; but the pictorial were painfully disproportionate to the literary merits of the piece. And yet the piece was no worse, on the contrary, it was in some particulars better, than either *The Duke's Motto* or *Bel Demonio*, and certainly it was not worse acted than either. Still it failed, while they succeeded; and failed, as might have been predicted, because people weary of nothing so soon as mere excitement of the senses. London audiences have been glutted with pretty pictures, fine dresses, and rapid action; and not all the sparkle of Mr. Fechter's *Fan-fan* could lure them to his theatre. It is to be hoped this gentleman will take the hint to heart, and trust for the future to plays with a substantial human interest in them, and to better acting than he is likely to get out of his present company.

The new managers of the Olympic will certainly not establish their undertaking on a sound basis, if we are to take *The Hidden Hand*, on which they have thrown their strength, as a sample of the plays to be expected at this theatre. Here again the scene-painter and stage-carpenter have done their work admirably, in some respects, we should say, almost too well, because they distract the attention of the audience too much from the actors. But why should all this wealth of scenic decoration be lavished on a piece which, without it, would certainly not be endured? It is utterly base and vicious to the core—French, and in the worst French manner. The plot turns on the suspicion of two detestable crimes, which attaches to a neglected wife: the one of being unfaithful to her husband

(which, in truth, she is in heart, if not in act), and the other of poisoning her own child, presumably because that child is betrothed to the man she loves. No dramatic or histrionic skill can make such incidents otherwise than revolting to any one whose moral sense is not hopelessly obtuse. Things are not only hinted at, but broadly discussed on the stage, from which all delicate feeling recoils. And yet this is the sort of thing which is offered for the recreation of English ladies and gentlemen. Who would knowingly permit any young girl to witness such a piece?

If the state of the house on the night we saw it be any criterion, the wholesome instincts of pit and gallery had recoiled from it, for they were but scantily filled. The more numerous occupants of the boxes and stalls were probably too torpid or too *blasés* to be conscious of the moral taint; but such languid enjoyment as the piece seemed to afford to them was no great compliment to the very good acting of the principal performers. Such a heroine as we have described is scarcely what one could wish to see the promising abilities of Miss Kate Terry employed upon; neither is it calculated to be beneficial to her in the practice of her art. It is too unreal and spasmodic, and affords little scope for that gradual evolution of character, which makes the plays of all great dramatists, and especially of our greatest, at once the touchstone of power and the school for training it to its highest development. It is not the successful treatment of one or two strong situations which proves the genuine excellence of an actor. To this Miss Terry shows herself quite equal; but the extreme praise

which has been lavished on her in this part must be justified by something of a much higher order, if she is to take a leading place in her profession. In two of the other actors in the same piece, the mischievous effects of having to play for four hundred nights or so in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* are painfully conspicuous. The *Tom Brierly* of the latter crops out at every pore of Mr. Neville's *Lord Penarvon;* and the style which made Mr. Vincent's *Melter Moss* excellent, thrusts itself perforce into his *Madoc Goch*, to its destruction. If these actors are not permanently injured as artists, it will say much for their capacity and address.

Of *The Streets of London*, another French piece, adapted by that prince of conveyancers, Mr. Boucicault, there is nothing to be said. As a drama, and as acted, it is worthless. To this the manager is probably indifferent. The play draws, as such plays always will draw, houses of the class of persons who go to theatres only to see, and to be excited, no matter how. Its success has apparently provoked Mr. Webster into trying whether a piece of a similar character, and with similar strong scenic effects, would tell as well in the Strand as in Oxford-street. Instead, however, of adapting the French dish to the English palate, he has transferred it pure and simple—mere excision apart. But the atmosphere of the *Boulevard Montmartre* cannot, unluckily for him, be transferred with the piece. The twang of extravagance which one expects and relishes at the *Porte St.-Martin* jars painfully in the more prosaic region of the Adelphi. Our audiences are happily not yet quite up to the high-fever mark, which is the normal register

there. The exquisite imbroglio of vice and virtue, of sublime sentiment and degraded action, which our French neighbours dress up with such admirable skill, and savour with such infinite relish, to our colder and more analytic natures looks but a raw-head-and-bloody-bones business at the best. Englishmen are a little squeamish on certain matters, and heartily concur in the Horatian maxim that there are incidents which are better transacted off the stage than on it. We cannot get up sympathy for suicide, and until now no West-end stage, at least, has seen a *jeune premier* recommended to our sympathies for breaking an engagement with one young lady who is desperately in love with him, because he resolves rather late in the day to make an honest woman of another whom he has seduced. The tangle is not a pretty one, especially as the respective mothers of the gentleman and the frail fair one take an active part in its unravelment. This is a species of dirty linen which we English do not like to see washed in public for the amusement of our wives and daughters. Neither will such moral obliquity be compensated by the dreary didactics against drunkenness into which the authors of this piece have thrown all their force.

Mr. Webster himself plays admirably one of those cool, grey-headed, amiable-looking, old, wealthy scoundrels,—men of "one virtue and a thousand crimes,"—with which the stage is familiar; but his fine powers are thrown away in trying to give vitality to a piece which is not worth the trouble. The same may be said of Mrs. Stirling as the outraged mother, who throws away a great deal of that intensity which ought to be

employed upon worthier materials. The rivals for the hand of the *jeune premier* are doubtless very charming, as played in Paris, where the spasm-and-gasp style of performance is refined almost to an art; but here it is no discredit to Miss Woolgar and Miss Sims to say, that, being Englishwomen, they aggravate the agony of their sorrows to a point which, to say the least of it, oversteps the boundaries of the sublime.

Strange to relate, two pieces of purely native growth have recently been produced in London, better than anything of French origin which has been lately seen here. These are the *Milky White* of Mr. Craven, at the Strand, and the *Sybilla* of Mr. Palgrave Simpson at the St. James's.

The former is as admirably, as the latter is indifferently, acted. Indeed, so little justice is done to Mr. Simpson's piece that it is difficult to estimate its merits. The character of Sybilla, in which a certain grave intensity lies beneath the outward semblances of a coquette, is quite beyond the grasp of Mrs. Charles Mathews; and as the other performers,—Mr. Frank Mathews excepted, whose humour is somewhat of the dreariest,—obviously think their parts beneath them, it is no wonder that they convey the impression of being considerably beneath their parts.

It is not so with Mr. Craven's piece, in which all concerned act with care, and produce a satisfactory impression of truth and nature. The character of Milky White, a surly, deaf old man, suspicious and litigious, who is humanized by sorrow and the sympathy of people he had mistrusted, is no new conception; but it has been

well worked out by Mr. Craven, who, in this case, is both author and actor. It is no discredit to him that he makes us think at times how much more would have been made of the part by Mr. Robson, for whom it was written, and whom it would have fitted to a nicety. In the early and more marked situations of the piece the difference is less perceptible than in the latter portions, where the stubborn heart of the man is broken down, and where there is less to say, but much to be done, by those fine touches of expression in look, in tone, and action,—those little seemingly unconscious strokes of nature,—in which Farren excelled, and in which Robson was his not unskilful follower. These are just the things which distinguish the artist from the ordinary actor. They are not to be acquired by mere practice; but high excellence in them cannot be attained without a larger experience than Mr. Craven has had.

Foreign artists have apparently not yet learned that although our dramatists are only too ready to take their plays, the English public are not so ready to take their actors from the French, otherwise why should we have had another Parisian actress trying to take a position by acting in a language she cannot speak, which she was unable to gain by acting in one which she could. Mademoiselle Beatrice, on whom the Haymarket Theatre has for the last two months depended for its attraction, never offends, and occasionally even pleases. Her chief merit, however, lies in the fact that she bears herself like a lady—a merit, unhappily, too rare of late years on the Haymarket stage: for she has obviously neither the mental nor physical requisites for an actress of a

high class. Her figure is handsome, but wants flexibility and grace; her voice is sweet, but without the power or penetrating quality demanded for the display of passion or varied emotion. In none of the three characters, moreover, in which she has appeared—and they were quite sufficient to test her powers—has she shown either originality of conception or vigour of treatment. Actresses of this stamp are not so rare that we need go out of England for them; and unless this lady is content to forego all claim to pre-eminence, and to take her place among ordinary working companies, she had better seek reputation elsewhere. The infinite bad taste of Mr. Buckstone in proclaiming her in his playbills as the only worthy successor of Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neill, in the part of Mrs. Haller, while doing Mademoiselle Beatrice great disservice, has shown what liberties successful managers think they may take with the public unrebuked. The public showed their sense of the impertinence by leaving the lady to perform the part—which she did very sweetly and feebly—to nearly empty benches.

A great effort has been made by the lessees of Drury Lane to meet the growing desire to see the higher drama restored to our stage. With this view they have got together a company, not certainly good, but probably as good as under present circumstances was within their reach. Hitherto, with the exception of some farces, bad almost beyond belief, they have confined their operations to the reproduction of Shakspeare. The First and Second Parts of *Henry the Fourth*, and *Othello*, were respectably put on the stage; but, except in the

case of Mr. Phelps's Justice Shallow—the best since Farren's, but oh! how far behind his—presented in the acting no features of salient interest. Still they met with a measure of success, which showed how ready the public are to second any well-directed endeavour to raise the character of theatrical entertainments.

This became still more conspicuous when the engagement of Miss Helen Faucit enabled the managers to place *Cymbeline* and *Macbeth* upon the stage with the certainty that full justice would be done to two of Shakspeare's noblest conceptions. Those who remember Miss Helen Faucit in her noviciate, under Mr. Macready's reign, at Drury Lane, and in her occasional appearances, whenever a poetical drama was produced, such as Browning's *Colombe's Birthday*, or Marston's *Marie de Méranie*, have found all the charm of their recollections brought back with tenfold force, while the younger generation have seen for the first time what true acting is, and may form an idea of its value in developing and sending home to the hearts of the audience the conceptions of the dramatist's brain. No one, however familiar beforehand with the characters of Imogen and Lady Macbeth, can have seen them impersonated by Miss Helen Faucit without feeling that they have derived a higher and clearer idea of the poet's intention than they could possibly have done without such living illustration. No critic, with the utmost fulness of comment, could do for the elucidation of the poet what is done swiftly and surely by an actress whose conceptions are so pure and delicate, yet well defined, and who is gifted with such rare natural qualities of voice and expression, and is

"in form and moving so express and admirable." After a few hours of exquisite enjoyment one feels that not only has he made a priceless addition to his pleasures of memory, but that his insight into Shakspeare has been greatly quickened, his imagination permanently raised.

This is especially true of Miss Helen Faucit's Imogen, a character so difficult to portray, from the fine qualities of person as well as the great variety of refined power which it demands, that it has generally been avoided even by actresses of great name. *Cymbeline,* though lavish in the display of poetical power, fails in closeness and concentration as a drama; but Imogen has always been the ideal of womanly sweetness, dignity, and devotion; and Shakspeare's genius was never put forth more strongly than in her creation. She is clothed with nearly every womanly grace; she is subjected to nearly every trial which can test a woman's worth; and she passes through them all triumphantly. Royal in blood, refined in culture, so rich in all the graces of person and mind, that she touches with something like reverence even the unhallowed thoughts of that most "super-subtle" of sensualists, Iachimo, and impresses all with whom she comes into contact with loving admiration,—impassioned as Juliet, with all Juliet's resolute will, but with a finer judgment, and rarer powers of self-denial,—playful, yet dignified—in her deepest sorrow most thoughtful for others, and bearing up against despair only in the hope to find some reason for the perversion of her husband's faith,—it is no wonder, that Imogen has rarely found an ade-

quate representative. This, indeed, could only be expected in an artist of the highest class, so penetrated by the subtle beauty of the character that she may be said to have absorbed it into her own. Such an artist is Miss Helen Faucit; and it speaks well for the taste of our audiences, that the play, on the revival of which no care had been expended, and which, certainly, was most inadequately acted in some of its principal parts, has been much more cordially received than when produced by Mr. Macready, with himself as Iachimo, Mr. Anderson as Posthumus, Mr. Phelps as Belarius, and Mr. Elton as Pisanio, and with every scenic accessory which scholarship and good taste could supply.

The same may be said of the *Macbeth;* for although Mr. Beverley's skill had done all that the painter's art could do to illustrate, without overlaying, the author, and although considerable pains had in other respects been taken in putting the play on the stage, there was no particular evidence in any of the scenic arrangements of originality or artistic skill. Indeed there was much that was clumsy and commonplace; as, for example, in the whole arrangement of the banquet scene. Who ever before saw a dais erected across the centre of a hall; or what could be more fatal to all richness of effect than placing the banqueting tables in lines parallel to the proscenium, instead of carrying them diagonally across the stage? Or who, that had any appreciation of the text, would in this scene have placed Lady Macbeth at the side of the stage, when the action of the scene requires her to dominate it from the centre?

Macbeth is a character beyond the reach of any but

the greatest actors; and it is assuredly not one of Mr. Phelps's successful efforts. It recalls the Macbeth of Mr. Macready, but only by the absence of all that was fine in that gentleman's performance. Whatever Mr. Phelps's conception may be, the picture which he presents is that of a man without even physical courage, ignoble in demeanour and in thinking, unmannerly, loud, and by no means the person to inspire either fear or respect. Such a man could never have moved Lady Macbeth to love him, nor won the confidence of the gracious Duncan. And why will Mr. Phelps play such tricks with his voice? He speaks as no man ever spoke in real life. His gestures, too, are far too redundant, and carry the licence of the stage to the utmost limits of improbability. If any general were to strut and shout as his Macbeth does in the last act, not only would "the thanes fly from him," but the veriest kern would decline to act for one hour under his orders. How very different is all this extravagance of bluster from the fitful and wayward, but intense and headlong, passion which Shakspeare has painted!

In marked contrast to the stagey unreality of her lord was the Lady Macbeth of Miss Helen Faucit, who has cast aside all stage traditions of the part, and sought its true reading in Shakspeare's own "unvalued book." In her Lady Macbeth we see a will masculine in energy; a heart insensible to fear; an iron self-control; a mind subtle, prompt, and resolute; without religious feeling, but yet a woman, eager, impulsive, unselfish, claiming a hold on our sympathies, by her love for her husband, by her silent endurance, and by the terrible tortures of retributive conscience. Her ambition is for her hus-

band. To secure that on which his heart has long been set, she for a time unsexes herself. That aim once gained, she is no partner in his cowardly and bloody assassinations. Very soon she finds her mistake in thinking of him as too full of the milk of human kindness. The man she had believed to be too full of scruples proves, to her dismay, to be wholly without pitifulness or mercy—a man for whose ideas of his own good "all causes must give way." Her very hold on him is lost. She finds him selfishly indifferent to what she is suffering. The horrible dreams of the past which are shaking her slumbers nightly find no sympathy in her husband, whose sleep, if broken, is only broken by miserable fears of future danger. Absolute isolation of heart and life is the only fruit of her great crime. The pitiable breakdown of her hopes, affections, energies, culminating in the "slumbery agitation" of the sleep-walking scene, in which she is doomed for ever and ever, like a spirit in bale, to rehearse the horrors of which she had, in order to dispel her husband's terror, formerly made so light, is a representation which fulfils in perfection the great object of tragedy, as defined by Aristotle—"the purification of the soul by pity and terror."

In the interests of that art of which Miss Helen Faucit is so distinguished an ornament, and which she presents in its most ennobling aspect, as well as in the interests of the public, for whose taste such performances are the best education, let us hope that she may before very long be persuaded to present us with fresh embodiments of Shakspeare's women, as nobly beautiful as those which we have recently seen.

ARTISTS AND AMATEURS.

To the Editor of the "Pall Mall Gazette."

SIR,—I have just read the paper in your number of yesterday on "Amateurs and Artists." The writer is obviously an amateur, and, with all his endeavours to hold the scales evenly, cannot divest himself of his amateurish sympathies. Amateurs have this great pull against us artists, that they or their friends are always pleading their own cause with the public, and giving their views not only about themselves, but also about us. We, on the other hand, are generally content to let our work speak for itself, and, if we are misrepresented, as very often we are, it is only our own immediate circle whom we torture with our wrongs. Thus it is that a good many vulgar errors about us have taken strong root, one or two of which crop out conspicuously in the paper in question. *Audi alteram partem.* Bear with me while I venture to call attention to one or two of its propositions.

"Amateurs," says the writer, "were never regarded by artists with very friendly feelings." If by this it is

implied that the artist does not regard with friendly feelings the lover of his art, who shows an intelligent sympathy with its higher aims and understanding of how these are to be reached, the statement is no more true than if one should say of Tennyson, that he regards those who appreciate good poetry with no very friendly feelings. But if, on the other hand, it be meant, that the artist regards with no particular respect those who set themselves up to do his work, and call upon the public to admire them, without either the natural aptitude or the earnest study which is essential for the practice of any art worthy of the name, then why should this be imputed to him as a matter of blame? Is rash pretence less culpable in art than in literature, law, or physic? Does Tennyson reverence Tupper? Should we marvel at an ebullition of sarcasm from the meek and forbearing Westbury, if an amateur jurist were to offer to set him right upon a point of law? or wonder if Sir James Clark regarded with no very friendly feelings an amateur hygeist, who interfered with his anxious efforts to persuade the damaged liver of some worthy peer to do its duty? Were an amateur to tell Stanfield or Cooke how to paint a sea—and amateurs sometimes do things quite as outrageous—surely these artists might, without any imputation of jealousy, retort that he did not know what he was talking about.

Why, then, should the actor be less at liberty to think of amateur actors, as Tennyson, Westbury, Clark, Stanfield and Cooke, think of amateur poets, lawyers, doctors, and painters—that so long as they gratify their own tastes by dabbling in verses, in law, physic, or

painting, they may be not merely not blameable, but praiseworthy; but that the moment they choose to court publicity, they must submit to the rules of criticism, and, if they cannot do what they profess to do, be sent to the same limbo with the pseudo poet, jurist, doctor, or painter? In the domain of art, which they choose to invade, there is and should be no respect of persons, no toleration of intruders, any more than in any of the other professions.

If actors look coldly upon amateurs it is because actors know that their art is a most difficult one, even in its subordinate branches, and therefore dislike to see it trifled with, and treated as a thing for which neither special gifts nor special training are required. Your writer is pleased to call this jealousy. Jealousy of what? Where was ever the amateur of whom an actor of any position had cause to be jealous? But the applause, it is suggested, which amateurs receive, is "exasperating" to actors. How little knowledge of actors does this argue! No actor ever willingly witnesses an amateur performance, nor for that matter any judge of acting either, and, not hearing the applause, his withers are not likely to be wrung by it. But grant he does hear it, what of that? In these days he is too much accustomed to hear applause bestowed on brother-actors, and on himself too, when he knows both he and they least deserve it, for any natural bitterness of feeling on this score to be augmented by the plaudits, however loud, bestowed upon amateurs, either by foolish friends or by an uncritical press.

A word about this jealousy which your writer, in

common with so many, attributes to artists. Are artists really more jealous than other people whose interests bring them into rivalry with one another? Are doctors never jealous? Is there no envy and grudging among lawyers? Do clergymen never murmur and look askance at the good fortune or the gifts of some more favoured defender of the faith? Do engineers, cotton-spinners, or ironmasters all rejoice in the prosperity of their rivals? Is Manchester Arcadia? Is a cathedral close exempt from emulation and heart-burnings? Human nature is human nature everywhere. It may be true that as artists are thrown more together, and have less secretiveness than other people, one hears more of their bickerings and jealousies through those busybodies who live on the propagation of gossip about persons who are in any way before the world. People who live only to shake hands with themselves upon their own merits, and to whom popular applause is as the breath of their nostrils, will always be jealous of rivals, be they poets, historians, statesmen, lawyers, philosophers, or actors. But a true artist, to whom the thing to be done or aimed at is always greater than the doer of it, even though that doer be himself, is never jealous of kindred power. On the contrary, he rejoices in it, takes strength from conflict with it.

Small greenroom jealousies are but the jealousies of small people. Of course their number is greater than that of the big people. But why stigmatize a profession for the defects of its feebler followers? There are Dodsons and Foggs among lawyers, and Vincent Crummelses among actors, but these are but types of

a very small class in either profession. An actor is naturally jealous of his position, jealous of encroachment, jealous of incapacity being advanced over his head, not for merit, but for private considerations. But who in any walk of life is not? Any man who has to live by his position must, if he have any self-respect, be jealous to maintain it.

We actors are said not to be over-modest. But surely we are modesty itself as compared with amateurs —and for this good reason, that the public, tolerant as it is, keeps our vanities somewhat in check, to say nothing of the fact, that we have daily to measure ourselves against men of skill in our vocation, and therefore very speedily find our level. Playing is no play to us, but hard, serious earnest, and to those of us who aspire to eminence, it is a ceaseless struggle to reach a still receding ideal. We therefore may be forgiven if we smile at the suggestion of your writer, that the spread of amateur theatricals is likely to be beneficial to dramatic art. Artists may teach amateurs, but amateurs can never teach artists; and it is one of the many signs that the actor's art is at this moment at a low ebb, that amateurs venture to make such frequent displays in public as they do. We do not find they did so when the metropolis was strong in great actors. Then they kept themselves to garrison towns and country houses, where any relief from the prevalent Bœotian dulness was delightful. A man must have formed a very circumscribed notion of the stuff a good actor is made of who thinks that any professional actor of ability is likely to profit by those "back drawing-room" performances,

which are the bugbear of your true play-goer, and have added a new terror to the "At Home."

Nine-tenths of the best amateurs placed upon a stage with professional actors chosen at random will deport themselves with less ease, look less like gentlemen, be altogether more *stagey*. I don't pretend to explain why this is so; probably it is, because they are more conscious, think more of themselves, are less *in* their parts, than the men who treat their work as work and not as pastime. And then think of the kind of pieces which amateurs generally, and wisely, perform,—the lightest comediettas, the flimsiest burlesqnes! Who tries to grapple with a great part, or trying, does not make most woful shipwreck?

It is not upon such models that actors are to be formed. It is not by any number of such performances that a true taste is to be instilled into the public. If the art is low, it is from causes which these cannot reach. In all arts there are periods of ebb and flow. This is the period of ebb in the dramatic art. The great standards are gone; new ones have not yet arisen. There is no want of patronage, but you cannot manufacture fine actors to order. And unluckily the public, though it recognizes good acting when it sees it, is quite as apt to be captivated by bad. The management of theatres is conducted at present upon the lowest tradesman principles. Get money, no matter how, is the rule. No care is shown in the choice, nor discipline in the working, of the companies. The press, moreover, does not do its duty either by actor or audience. It is too tolerant of slovenly or absolutely bad work. It

lends itself too much to the puffing of mediocrity. It is not quick to encourage true and conscientious merit. The public instincts, which are in the main right, instead of being well guided by the press, are just as often misled by it. And so it will be, until critics are educated, before they pretend to teach.

Anybody thinks he is fit to criticise acting. As well might a man, on the strength of the light of nature, set up for a critic of sculpture—nay sooner, for there is no art more complex in its requirements than that of the actor in its higher branches. Good acting, like all good art, is based on deep and true feeling and accurate observation. Without these, excellence is impossible, however great the technical skill or the mastery of "stage traditions." A life of study and practice is not too much for it, and until people both on and off the stage recognize this fact, we need hope for no revival of dramatic art. But when that day comes, actor-amateurs will find themselves, like *dilettanti* in other arts, exactly nowhere!—I remain, Sir, very obediently yours,

AN ACTOR.

March 4, 1865.

THE THEATRES BILL.

[May 17, 1865.]

To the Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette.

IR,—You have shown so much interest in the welfare of the drama, that you may perhaps find a place in your paper for a few remarks on the Theatres Bill of Mr. Locke from one who has some practical knowledge of the stage. In so far as the bill aims at improving the comfort and safety of theatres, all must join in approving it. In these respects most of our theatres are as bad as can be, and by their form or situation scarcely admit of being made better. Nothing short of pulling down and rebuilding them will be of any use. But that, unfortunately, is an operation too costly to be hoped for, unless forced upon their owners by their being burned down—a doom which, in the interests of public health, cannot too soon overtake them. We might then hope for houses in which we could see and hear, without being crammed and caged like travellers in a diligence, with blasts of cold air intermitting with suffocating heat, to distract us during the performance, and the certainty

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impending over us of headache at least, if not of neuralgia, upon the morrow. But till then Mr. Locke's bill will be of little use in mending matters before the curtain.

Will it mend matters behind it? That is the vital question. Whether managers will suffer by it, or not, is a point on which little concern can be felt. Such managers as London has known for many years have no just claim upon our sympathy. They have gone about making money their own way, and that way, as the results prove, has done no good to dramatic literature or histrionic art. If they and their ventures were "in the broad sea sunk," we should not be one jot poorer in what alone can make the theatre a valuable instrument of either instruction or enjoyment. But there is a larger question involved in this bill than the interests either of managers of theatres or of those who hope through its instrumentality to turn their singing saloons into theatres—and that is the operation of the proposed law on histrionic art, and upon the drama itself. Both have sunk low enough already. Will this bill sink them lower?

It is asked, as if that ended the whole question, "Why should we not have free-trade in the drama as well as in other things?" Practically, we have free-trade in the drama. Anybody may turn actor that likes, and if people choose to build theatres, what prevents them? Nothing but the usual commercial consideration, Will they pay, or will they not? In this respect Mr. Locke's bill will leave things where they are at present. Of theatres, pure and simple, we shall in

all likelihood have neither more nor fewer than we should have had without it. The cost of building a theatre in a good situation in London will not be less then than now; and none of the existing theatres yield such magnificent returns as to make new theatres a very tempting speculation. Theatres such as we should wish to see, skilfully constructed, spacious, and well ventilated, would have sprung up before now had there been room for them. But there is not, and for this, among many reasons, that if the theatres had been built, there were no actors to put into them, whom the public would go to see.

Free-trade has nothing to do with art, whether on the stage or elsewhere. Demand will not be followed by supply where art is the commodity wanted. Free-trade will stimulate and develop industry, skill, mechanical resource. It never has developed, and never will develop art. It will never make a Palissy or a Flaxman, though it may multiply imitations of the works of the one, and make the designs of the other familiar at every tea-table. Free-trade heightens general culture undoubtedly, but it breeds no artists. Its only effect as regards art is to make men follow it for gain who ought never to have set foot within the domain of art. This has been its effect already upon the actor's profession, with what miserable results we all know.

According to the supporters of Mr. Locke's bill, free-trade in the drama seems to mean freedom to give theatrical representations in any house or garden fit for the accommodation of the public, with this one restriction, that the pieces presented are to be subject to the

supervision of the Lord Chamberlain. Let us suppose the act in full operation. What ensues? Every singing-saloon proprietor, who thinks that by some kind of acting he can draw more people to his house to drink the liquors, to which he looks for his profits, immediately converts his platform into a stage. Actors must be had, and for these he can only look to the existing theatres. Actors, good actors especially, are not so numerous that they can be draughted from these without disadvantage; but draughted they will be, because the manager of a theatre is sure to be outbidden by the liquor seller. The manager has only his receipts for admission to look to, while these form the smallest item of his rival's revenues. One by one, therefore, his company will be tempted away from him, and then what is to become of his theatre? And what are we to do who wish to go to theatres, but will under no conditions enter a singing saloon? This is the problem which the supporters of the bill will find it hard to solve.

Will fresh actors arise to fill the gaps thus created? They know little of what acting is who think that even a moderately good actor's place can easily be filled. Why is it that the drama, in all that makes the drama attractive, is now at so low a point? Never were actors so well paid as they are now, and have been for several years. And yet what theatre in the kingdom can show a company which can be said to be even respectable? And this simply because good actors cannot be made to order, be trade in the drama as free as legislators can make it; and therefore no manager can afford to bring together into his company the few good actors that are

left, when so many rivals are in the field to raise their price.

Multiply theatres as you will, you cannot multiply good actors. Years of study and practice are indispensable for that. Yet now, when we have already too many theatres in proportion to those who deserve the name of actors, we are going to make the balance still more uneven by increasing our theatres, and increasing them, too, in the very worst way. Is it not the fact that if a fine play were to be offered at this moment to any of our metropolitan theatres, it could not be presented in a way to bring out its excellence? All questions of first-class power apart—for of that we have none in any of the companies—what pitiable work would certainly be made of the secondary parts! The universal outcry is, that no attention is paid to the *ensemble*, that the leading actor or actress may be excellent, but the rest are puppets. Is this state of things likely to be amended, when actors are bribed by high salaries to go to such stages as Mr. Locke's bill is certain to create? The very dearth of ability has for many years operated to raise third and fourth rate actors into the front rank. Increase still farther the demand for actors, scatter still farther those who have at least some experience of their craft, and what hope will be left of our seeing good plays well performed in any of our theatres?

Consider the effect of this state of things upon actors themselves. The stage is at present too much recruited from a class utterly unfit by birth or education for the exercise of any art, much less one which demands a

combination of many fine qualities. Actors of the present day are without high aims. A comfortable income and plenty of applause are all they care for. These they will get henceforth even more easily than they do now, and every vestige of self-respect or ambition to excel is certain to vanish very quickly in the face of an audience which mixes its sympathies with scenic woe with goes of brandy and water, and heightens its relish of comedy or farce by "devilled kidneys" and "small steaks." The profession, already sufficiently lowered, will speedily become one which no educated man, and still more no gentlewoman can possibly pursue. Hitherto it has not yet sunk quite to this level. If it maintains itself above it, after the introduction of entire free-trade in the drama, it must be by some singular combination of circumstances which it is impossible to foresee.

Of course there are many members of the profession whom no temptation of money will attract to a theatre where they must perform in the midst of all that goes on at singing saloons, and is their chief allurement. But these can be but few at the best, and they cannot keep theatres going, even if it were conceivable that these could otherwise be carried on. But this they cannot be. Managers will have to pay more to their actors than they do at present, and they will get them of worse quality. Little attractive now, theatres will become less and less so to the boxes, stalls, and pit, while the frequenters of the galleries will be only too apt to go where they can drink and smoke during the play or between the acts. The end must be, that either theatres shall follow the example of the saloons, or be-

come deserted. It is idle to think that any will remain for the performance of the higher drama. The old actors will have gone elsewhere, and where are new ones to be got? In such a state of things, how can we look for new Garricks or Siddonses, new Keans or Farrens to arise, when there is no arena left on which they can hope or desire to win a worthy fame?

This is no idle fear. The same principle has been at work ever since the act was passed which destroyed the monopoly of the patent theatres. Since then the demand for actors has been far in excess of the supply, and it has become impossible to get a really good company together. Extend the principle still further, and we shall soon search the theatres in vain for even one good actor.

We cry out, and justly, against the wretched style of most of our actors. Shall we mend it by sending them to such audiences as are to be found at saloons? We deplore, and justly, the degraded taste of audiences. Shall we refine them by such actors as the performers in such an atmosphere are likely to become?

One great misconception lies at the root of all that is written in favour of this so-called free-trade in the drama, and it is this—that people regard theatres as mere places of amusement, and acting as the simplest of pastimes. It is, no doubt, a first essential that theatres should amuse, but amusement is of many kinds. It may be wholesome or it may be vicious. That amusement which is to be interwoven with the gross and perilous attractions of liquor and tobacco-smoke is, to say the least, little likely to be wholesome.

One leading merit of theatres is that they supply an amusement which makes the mass independent of such grosser stimulants. Take this virtue from them, and it is not difficult to foresee to what an ignoble level their entertainments must fall.

Again, as to actors; it can never be too often repeated, that the actor's art is one for which even great natural gifts are alone quite insufficient. Voice, figure, features, ought all to be fitted more or less by nature for the vocation. But the art of using these is one which the ablest take long to learn; and when that art is learned, unless there be both brains to guide and heart to impel, the actor will never be other than the veriest of mechanics. How then can we hope ever to see, even under the most favourable conditions, more than a very few good actors? Even when the metropolitan theatres were few, and the distinction of belonging to one of them was deemed by actors an ample reward for years of patient provincial toil, it was difficult to concentrate in any one theatre so many as were necessary to do justice to a fine play. Increase the number of places for theatrical representation, as it is now proposed to do, and what hope will remain of seeing the drama revive? We shall have theatres, of course, for the love of the drama can never die out, but we shall have no theatres worthy of the land of Shakspeare and Sheridan, no theatres to cheer us with harmless mirth, or to lift us into ideal worlds of suffering and heroism, out of the humdrum and personal pursuits of our daily life.

AN OLD STAGER.

DAVID GARRICK.

(From the "Quarterly Review," July, 1868.)

DAVID GARRICK was born at the Angel Inn, Hereford, on the 19th February, 1716. He was French by descent. His paternal grandfather, David Garric, or Garrique, a French Protestant of good family, had escaped to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, reaching London on the 5th of October, 1685. There he was joined in the following December by his wife, who had taken a month to make the passage from Bordeaux in a wretched bark of fourteen tons, "with strong tempests, and at great peril of being lost." Such was the inveteracy of their persecutors, that, in effecting their own escape, these poor people had to leave behind them their only child, a boy called Peter, who was out at nurse at Bastide, near Bordeaux. It was not till May, 1687, that little Peter was restored to them by his nurse, Mary Mougnier, who came over to London with him. By this time a daughter had been born, and other sons and daughters followed; but of a numerous

family three alone survived—Peter, Jane, and David. David settled at Lisbon as a wine merchant, and Peter entered the army in 1706. His regiment was quartered at Lichfield; and some eighteen months after he received his commission he married Arabella, the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Clough, Vicar Choral of the cathedral there. There was no fortune on either side, but much affection. The usual result followed. Ten children were born in rapid succession, of whom seven survived. Of these the third was David, who made his appearance somewhat inopportunely, while his father, then a lieutenant of dragoons, was at Hereford on recruiting service.[1]

Lichfield was the home of the family. There was good blood on both sides of it, and they were admitted into the best society of the place, and held in deserved respect. David was a clever, bright boy; of quick observation; apt at mimicry, and of an engaging temper. Such learning as the grammar-school of the town could give he obtained; and his training here, and at Edial some years afterwards under his townsman Samuel Johnson, produced more of the fruits of a liberal education than commonly results even from schooling of a more elaborate and costly kind. The occasional visits of a strolling troop of players gave the future Roscius his first taste of the fascinations of the drama. To see was to resolve to emulate, and before he was eleven

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[1] The same city claims the doubtful honour of having given birth, sixty-six years before (2nd Feb. 1650), to another histrionic celebrity—Nell Gwyn. One of her grandsons was a Bishop of Hereford.

years old he distinguished himself in the part of Serjeant Kite, in a performance of Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer," organized for the amusement of their friends by his companions and himself.

Meanwhile the cares of a numerous family were growing upon his parents. To meet its expenses, his father exchanged from the dragoons into a marching regiment, and went upon half-pay. Peter, the eldest boy, had gone into the navy; and upon the invitation of the uncle, whose name he bore, young David, then only eleven, was sent to Lisbon, apparently with the expectation that a provision for life would be made for him in his uncle's business. But either his uncle had no such intention, or the boy found the occupation distasteful, for his stay in Portugal did not extend over many months. Short as it was, he succeeded in making himself popular there by his vivacity and talents. After dinner he would be set upon the table to recite to the guests passages from the plays they were familiar with at home. A very pleasant inmate he must have been in the house of his well-to-do bachelor uncle. No doubt he was sent home with something handsome in his pocket; and when a few years afterwards the uncle came back to England to die, he left his nephew £1,000, twice as much as he gave to any others of the family.

Garrick's father, who had for some years been making an ineffectual struggle to keep his head above water upon his half-pay, found he could do so no longer, and in 1731 he joined his regiment, which had been sent out to garrison Gibraltar, leaving behind him his wife, broken in health, to face single-handed the debts and

duns, the worries and anxieties of a large family. In her son David she found the best support; his heart and head were ever at work to soften her trials, and his gay spirit doubtless brightened with many a smile the sad wistfulness of her anxious face. The fare in her home was meagre, and the dresses of its inmates scanty and well worn; still there were loving hearts in it which were drawn closer together by their very privations. But the poor lady's heart was away with the father.

"I must tell my dear life and soul," she writes to him in a letter which reads like a bit of Thackeray or Sterne, "that I am not able to live any longer without him; for I grow very jealous. But in the midst of all this I do not blame my dear. I have very sad dreams for you . . . . but I have the pleasure when I am up, to think, were I with you, how tender . . . . my dear would be to me; nay was, when I was with you last. O! that I had you in my arms. I would tell my dear life how much I am his.—A. G."

Her husband had then been only two years gone. Three more weary years were to pass before she was to see him again; this was in 1736, and he returned, shattered in health and spirits, to die within little more than a year. One year more, and she, too, the sad faithful mother, whose "dear life" was restored to her arms only to be taken from them by a sterner parting, was herself at rest.

During his father's absence Garrick had not been idle. His busy brain and restless fancy had been laying up stores of observation for future use. He was a general favourite in the Lichfield circle—amusing the old, and heading the sports of the young—winning the hearts of all. Gilbert Walmsley, Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court, a good and wise friend, who had known

and loved him from childhood, took him under his special care. On his suggestion, possibly by his help, David and his brother George were sent as pupils to Johnson's academy at Edial, to complete their studies in Latin and French. Garrick and Johnson had been friends before, and there was indeed but seven years' difference in their ages. But Johnson even then impressed his pupil with a sense of superiority, which never afterwards left him; while Garrick established an equally lasting hold upon the somewhat capricious heart of his ungainly master. From time to time he was taken by friends to London, where, in the theatres that were to be the scenes of his future triumphs, he had opportunities of studying some of the leading performers, whom he was afterwards to eclipse. Even in these early days the dream of coping with these favourites of the town had taken possession of him; but he kept it to himself, well knowing the shock he would have inflicted on the kind hearts at home, had he suggested to them the possibility of such a career for himself.

By the time his father returned from Gibraltar Garrick was nineteen. A profession must be chosen, and the law appears to have been thought the fittest for a youth of so much readiness and address, and with an obviously unusual faculty of speech. Some further preliminary studies were, however, indispensable. He could not afford to go to either university, and in this strait his friend Walmsley bethought him of a "dear old friend" at Rochester, the Rev. Mr. Colson, afterward Lucasian Professor at Cambridge, a man of eminence in science,

as a person most likely to give young Garrick the instruction in "mathematics, philosophy, and humane learning" which was deemed requisite to complete his education. To him, therefore, a letter was despatched, asking him to undertake the charge, from which we get an authentic and agreeable picture of the young fellow's character:

> "He is a very sensible fellow, and a good scholar, nineteen, of sober and good dispositions, and is as ingenious and promising a young man as ever I knew in my life. Few instructions on your side will do, and in the intervals of study he will be an agreeable companion for you. This young gentleman has been much with me, ever since he was a child, and I have taken much pleasure in instructing him, and have a great affection and esteem for him."

Mr. Colson accepted the proposal; but by the time the terms had been arranged, another young native of Lichfield, in whom Walmsley felt no slight interest, had determined to move southward to try his fortunes, and was also to be brought under Mr. Colson's notice. This was Samuel Johnson, whose Edial Academy had by this time been starved out, but for whom London, the last hope of ambitious scholars, was still open. He had written his tragedy of "Irene," and it had found provincial admirers, Walmsley among the number, who thought a tragedy in verse the *open sesame* to fame and fortune. For London, therefore, Johnson and Garrick started together—Johnson, as he used afterwards to say, with two-pence-halfpenny in his pocket, and Garrick with three halfpence in his; a mocking exaggeration not very wide, however, of the truth. Walmsley announced their departure to Mr. Colson on the 2nd March, 1737, in the often quoted words:—

"He (Garrick) and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Johnson,[1] set out this morning for London together; Davy Garrick to be with you early next week; and Mr. Johnson to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed with some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer."

For some reason not now known Garrick did not go to Mr. Colson in a week. On reaching town, he lost no time in getting himself admitted to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn (19th March, 1737), by payment of the admission fee of £3 3*s.* 4*d.*, the only act of membership which he appears ever to have performed. He stayed in London with Johnson for some time, and their finances fell so low that they had to borrow £5 on their joint note from one Wilcox, a bookseller and acquaintance of Garrick's, who afterwards proved one of Johnson's best friends. Most probably Garrick's plans of study under Mr. Colson were disconcerted by the illness of his father, who died within a month after Garrick had started from Lichfield. Nor was it until the death soon afterwards of the Lisbon uncle, and the opening to Garrick of his £1,000 legacy, that he found himself in a condition to incur that expense.

Late in 1737 he went to Rochester, and remained

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[1] In 1769, when Garrick was one of the most notable men in England, the letters of Walmsley to Colson were published by Mrs. Newling, Colson's daughter. She sent the originals at the same time to Garrick's friend, Mr. Sharp, to be forwarded to the great actor. In the very charming letter to Garrick which accompanied them, Mr. Sharp says, "If I had called, as I sometimes do, on Dr. Johnson, and showed him one of them where he is mentioned as *one* Johnson, I should have risked perhaps the sneer of one of his ghastly smiles."—(*Garrick Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 334.)

with Mr. Colson for some months, but with what advantage can be only matter of conjecture. Colson, like the Rev. Josiah Cargill, as described by Meg Dods, was "just dung donnart wi' learning,"—a man too much absorbed in abstruse scientific studies to be the fittest of tutors for a youth of the mercurial temperament and social habits of Garrick. But there was so much of honest ambition and natural goodness of disposition in his pupil, that it may safely be assumed he did not fail to profit by the learning of the man, of whose peculiarities he must have been quite aware before he placed himself under his charge. Whatever his progress in the *literæ humaniores*, Rochester was as good a field as any for such a student of character and manners. He certainly made himself liked in the family; and Colson's daughter, Mrs. Newling, recalling herself to Garrick's notice twenty years afterwards, speaks of the great pleasure with which she reflects "upon the happy minutes his vivacity caused" during his stay with them.

Early in 1738 Garrick returned to Lichfield. By this time his brother Peter had left the navy, and returned home. There were five brothers and sisters to be provided for, so Peter and he clubbed their little fortunes, and set up in business as wine merchants in Lichfield and London. David, by this time tolerably familiar with the ways of town, and not unknown at the coffee-houses where his wines might be in demand, took charge of the London business. Vaults were taken in Durham Yard, between the Strand and the river, where the Adelphi Terrace now stands; and here

Foote, in his usual vein of grotesque exaggeration, used to say, he had known the great actor "with three quarts of vinegar in the cellar, calling himself a wine merchant."

Of Garrick at this period we get a vivid glimpse from Macklin, an established actor, who was then Garrick's inseparable friend, but was afterwards to prove a constant thorn in his side through life, and his most malignant detractor after death. Garrick "was then," as Macklin told his own biographer Cooke, "a very sprightly young man, neatly made, of an expressive countenance, and most agreeable manners." Mr. Cooke adds upon the same authority—

"The stage possessed him wholly; he could talk or think of nothing but the theatre; and as they often dined together in select parties, Garrick rendered himself the idol of the meeting by his mimicry, anecdotes, &c. With other funds of information, he possessed a number of good travelling stories (with which his youthful voyage to Lisbon had apparently supplied him), which he narrated, Sir (added the veteran), in such a vein of pleasautry and rich humour, as I have seldom seen equalled."—*Cooke's Life of Macklin*, p. 96.

There could be only one conclusion to such a state of things. The wine business languished—that it was not wholly ruined, and Garrick with it, shows that with all his love of society he was able to exercise great prudence and self-restraint. "Though on pleasure bent, he had a frugal mind." Early habits of self-denial, and the thought of the young brothers and sisters at Lichfield, were enough to check everything like extravagance, though they could not control the passion which was hourly feeding itself upon the study of plays

and intercourse with players, and bearing him onwards to the inevitable goal. Their society, and that of the wits and critics about town, were the natural element for talents such as his. He could even then turn an epigram or copy of verses, for which his friend Johnson would secure a place in the "Gentleman's Magazine." Paragraphs of dramatic criticism frequently exercised his pen. He had a farce, "Lethe," accepted at Drury Lane, and another, "The Lying Valet," ready for the stage. Actors and managers were among his intimates. He had the *entrée* behind the scenes at the two great houses, Drury Lane and Covent Garden; and his histrionic powers were so well recognized, that one evening, in 1740, when Woodward was too ill to go on as harlequin at the little theatre at Goodman's Fields, Garrick was allowed to take his place for the early scenes, and got through them so well that the substitution was not surmised by the audience.

Nor had his been a mere lounger's delight in the pleasures of the theatre. The axiom that the stage is nought, which does not "hold the mirror up to nature," had taken deep hold upon his mind. But from the actual stage he found that nature, especially in the poetical drama, had all but vanished, and in its place had come a purely conventional and monotonous style of declamation, with a stereotyped system of action no less formal and unreal. There was a noble opening for any one who should have the courage and the gifts to return to nature and to truth, and Garrick felt that it was "in him" to effect the desired revolution. That the public were prepared to welcome a reform had been

demonstrated by the success, in February, 1741, of his friend Macklin at Drury Lane, in the part of Shylock, which the public had up to that time been accustomed to see treated on the stage as a comic part.[1] Reading his Shakspeare by the light of his vigorous intellect, Macklin saw the immense scope the character afforded for the display of varied passion and emotion. Nature had given him the Shylock look, and in his heart he had "the inexorable hate and study of revenge," of which the character is so grand an expression. In the early scenes, he riveted the audience by the hard cutting force of his manner and utterance. The third act came, and here he says:

"'I knew I should have the pull, and reserved myself accordingly. At this period I threw out all my fire; and, as the contrasted passions of joy for the merchant's losses and grief for the elopement of Jessica, open a fine field for an actor's powers, I had the good fortune to please beyond my warmest expectations. The whole house was in an uproar of applause, and I was obliged to pause between the speeches, to give it vent so as to be heard.'

"'No money, no title,' added the veteran, as he recited his triumph, 'could purchase what I felt. And let no man tell me after this what fame will not inspire a man to do, and how far the attainment of it will not remunerate his greatest labours. By G—d, Sir, though I was not worth fifty pounds in the world at this time, yet, let me tell you, I was Charles the Great for that night.'"—*Cooke's Life of Macklin*, p. 93.

Macklin's powers were of an exceptional kind. He wanted variety and flexibility, and those graces of person and manner which are indispensable to a great

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[1] "I cannot but think the character was tragically designed," is the hesitating suggestion of a Shakspearian editor, himself a poet—Nathaniel Rowe.

actor. His success was, therefore, only momentary; and it was left to his young friend and companion to complete the reform, of which his own treatment of Shylock was the first indication.

Nor was that reform far distant. The very next summer was to decide Garrick's career. His broodings were now to take actual shape. But before hazarding an appearance in London he wisely resolved to test his powers in the country; and with this view he went down to Ipswich with the company of Giffard, the Manager of the Goodman's Fields' Theatre, and made his appearance under the name of Lyddal as Aboan in Southern's tragedy of "Oroonoko."[1] This he followed up by several other characters, both tragic and comic, none of them of first importance, but sufficient to give him ease on the stage, and at the same time enable him to ascertain wherein his strength lay. His success was unquestionable, and decided him on appealing to a London audience.

The quality in which Garrick then and throughout his career surpassed all his contemporaries was the power of kindling with the exigencies of the scene. He lost himself in his part. It spoke through him; and the greater the play it demanded of emotion and passion, the more diversified the expression and action for which it gave scope, the more brilliantly did his genius assert itself. His face answered to his feelings, and its workings gave warning of his words before he

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[1] On 21 July, 1741, he played at the same theatre *Captain Duretête* in "*The Inconstant*," and *Caius* on the 28th.

uttered them; his voice, melodious and full of tone, though far from strong, had the penetrating quality hard to define, but which is never wanting either in the great orator or the great actor; and his figure, light, graceful, and well balanced, though under the average size, was equal to every demand which his impulsive nature made upon it. We can see all this in the portraits of him even at this early period. Only in those of a later date do we get some idea of the commanding power of his eyes, which not only held his audience like a spell, but controlled, with a power almost beyond endurance, his fellow performers in the scene. But from the first the power must have been there. He had noted well that all was good in the professors of the art he was destined to revolutionize; and he had learned, even from their very defects, as only men of ability do learn, in what direction true excellence was to be sought for. Long afterwards he used to say that his own chief successes in "Richard the Third" were due to what he had learned through watching Ryan, a very indifferent actor, in the same part. Richard was the character he chose for his first London trial; a choice made with a wise estimate of his own powers, for the display of which it was eminently fitted. At this time the part was in the possession of Quin, whose "manner of heaving up his words, and laboured action," as described by Davies, were the best of foils to the fiery energy and subtle varieties of expression with which Garrick was soon to make the public familiar.

He was announced, by the venial fiction usual on

such occasions, as a "gentleman who had never appeared on any stage." The house was not a great one; still the audience was numerous enough to make the actor feel his triumph, and to spread the report of it widely. They were taken by surprise at first by a style at once so new and so consonant to nature.

"'To the just modulation of the words,' says Davies, 'and concurring expressions of the features, from the genuine workings of nature, they had been strangers, at least for some time. But after Mr. Garrick had gone through a variety of scenes, in which he gave evident proofs of consummate art, and perfect knowledge of character, their doubts were turned into surprise and astonishment, from which they relieved themselves in loud and reiterated applause."

Macklin, of course, was there, and often spoke of the pleasure that night's performance gave him.

"It was amazing how, without any example, but on the contrary, with great prejudices against him, he could throw such spirit and novelty into the part, as to convince every impartial person, on the very first impression, that he was right. In short, Sir, he at once decided the public taste; and though the players formed a cabal against him, with Quin at their head, it was a puff to thunder; the east and west end of the town made head against them; and the little fellow, in this and about half a dozen other characters, secured his own immortality."—*Cooke's Life of Macklin*, p. 99.

The "Daily Post" announced his reception next day, in terms which, however little they would be worthy of belief in any journal of the present day, at that time were enough to arrest attention, as "the most extraordinary and great that was ever known on such an occasion" as a first appearance. Another critic in "The Champion," who obviously was equal to his work, a phenomenon at no time common in newspaper critics of the stage, called attention to his nice propor-

tions, his clear and penetrating voice, sweet and harmonious, without monotony, drawling, or affectation; "neither whining, bellowing, or grumbling,"—tragedians of those days must have been marvellously like our own,—"but perfectly easy in its transitions, natural in its cadence, and beautiful in its elocution."

"He is not less happy in his mien and gait, in which he is neither strutting nor mincing, neither stiff nor slouching. When three or four are on the stage with him *he is attentive to whatever is spoke*, and never drops his character when he has finished a speech, by either looking contemptuously on an inferior performer, unnecessary spitting, or suffering his eyes to wander through the whole circle of spectators. His action is never superfluous, awkward, or too frequently repeated, but graceful, decent, and becoming."

This is invaluable, both as showing what Garrick was, and what the actors of that time—in this also, unhappily, too like the actors of our own—were not. He was "terribly in earnest." He did not play with his work. He had transported himself into the ideal Richard, and his strong conception spoke in every flash of his eyes, every change of his features, every motion of his body. It is characteristic of the fervour with which he threw himself into the part, that before the fourth act was over he had all but run out of voice, and was indebted to the seasonable relief of a Seville orange from a chance loiterer behind the scenes for getting articulately to the end of the play. This failure of the voice often happened to him afterwards, and from the same cause. It is one of the characteristics of a sensitive organization, and did not arise in him from any undue vehemence, but evidently from the intensity which he threw into his delivery.

A power like this was sure of rapid recognition in those days, when theatres formed a sort of fourth estate. Garrick's first appearance was on the 19th of October, 1741. He repeated the character the two following nights, then changed it for "Aboan," his first part of the Ipswich series. The audiences were still moderate, and his salary, a guinea a night, moderate in proportion. But fame had carried the report of the new wonder from the obscure corner of the city, near the Minories, in which his friend Giffard's theatre was situated, to the wits and fashionable people in the West-end. Richard was restored to the bills. "Goodman's Fields," says Davies, "was full of the splendours of St. James's and Grosvenor Square; the coaches of the nobility filled up the space from Temple Bar to Whitechapel." What Garrick valued more than all this concourse of fashionables, men of high character and undoubted taste flocked to hear him; and on the 2nd of November, Pope, ill and failing, who had come out early in the year to see Macklin's "Shylock," and had recognized its excellence, was again tempted from his easy chair at Twickenham by the rumour of a worthy successor having arisen to the Betterton and Booth of his early admiration.

"'I saw,' said Garrick, describing the event long afterwards to the somewhat magniloquent Percival Stockdale, 'our little poetical hero, dressed in black, seated in a side-box near the stage, and viewing me with a serious and earnest attention. His look shot and thrilled like lightning through my frame, and I had some hesitation in proceeding from anxiety and from joy. As Richard gradually blazed forth, the house was in a roar of applause, and the conspiring hand of Pope showered me with laurels.'"—*Stockdale's Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 152.

Pope returned to see him twice; and his verdict, which reached Garrick through Lord Orrery, shows how deeply he was impressed by Garrick's fresh and forcible style, and the genuine inspiration which animated his performance. "That young man never had his equal as an actor, and he will never have a rival." Pope dreaded that success would spoil him; but Garrick's genius was not of the ungenuine kind, which is spoiled by success. He knew only too well how far his best achievements fell short of what his imagination conceived. Others might think his delineations could not be improved. Not so he; for act as long as he might, there was no great part, in Shakspeare especially, which would not constantly present new details to elaborate, or suggest shades of significance or contrast which had previously escaped him.

The praise of old Mrs. Porter, herself the greatest tragedian of her time, who had come up to town to see him from her retirement in the country, must have spoken more eloquently to him than even Pope's broad eulogium, and in it, too, there was the prophecy of the "All hail, hereafter." "He is born an actor, and does more at his first appearance than ever anybody did with twenty years' practice; and, good God, what will he be in time!"[1] The Duke of Argyle and Lord Cobham, great authorities in stage matters, pronounced him superior to Betterton. The very conflicts of

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[1] This speech was conveyed to Garrick in a letter, 26th April, 1742, from his friend the Rev. T. Newton.—*Garrick Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 8.

opinion to which such high commendations gave rise were the best of fame for the young artist. They drew crowds to the theatre; and even before the end of 1741, it was often far too small to accommodate the numbers that flocked for admittance. The humble salary of a guinea a night was clearly no adequate return for such merits. Giffard offered him a share in the management upon equal terms; and within the next few months the foundation of the actor's ultimate great fortune was laid.

Such success could not fail to provoke the jealousy of those performers who had hitherto occupied the foremost ranks. It was a virtual condemnation of all they had trained themselves to think true acting. "If this young fellow is right, then we have all been wrong," said one, as if in that statement were included a final verdict against him. "This," remarked the sententious Quin, "is the wonder of a day; Garrick is a new religion; the people follow him as another Whitefield; but they will soon return to church again."[1] Return, however, they did not. A new era had begun; and Garrick, whose ready pen did not always do him such good service, was able to retort the sarcasm in a smart epigram, of which these two lines have kept their place in literature:

> "When doctrines meet with general approbation,
> It is not heresy but Reformation."

[1] Quin and Garrick became excellent friends. Leaving a coffee-house one night together, only one sedan chair was to be had. "Put Davie in the lantern," said Quin, stepping into it. "Happy to give Mr. Quin light in anything," was Garrick's rejoinder.

When dukes by the dozen, great Parliament men, Mr. Pitt and others, and even Cabinet Ministers, were to be seen in the front boxes applauding, and were known to court the young actor's acquaintance, the adverse whispers of the few, who are always too wise to believe in what all the rest of mankind believe in, were of small account. Gray might pooh-pooh the new genius, and Walpole insinuate that he "saw nothing wonderful in him"—when did he ever recognize anything truly great? —but they felt themselves to be the heretics, and powerless against the overwhelming tide of popularity which had set in. Even Colley Cibber, whose adaptation of "Richard the Third" was Garrick's assay piece, and whose preconceived notions of the character must have received a rude shock from the new soul put into it by the young actor, was reluctantly driven to admit to Mrs. Bracegirdle, "Gadso, Bracey, the little fellow is clever." The praise of so good a critic and so experienced an actor were indeed valuable, and in recounting his successes to his brother Peter, Garrick writes with obvious pride (22nd December, 1741), "Old Cibber has spoken with the greatest commendation of my acting."

While people were still in admiration at the tragic force of his Richard, he surprised them by the display of comic powers, scarcely less remarkable, in Clodio in the "Fop's Fortune," Fondlewife in Congreve's "Old Bachelor," and other characters; thus early demonstrating his own doctrine that "there must be comedy in the perfect actor of tragedy," of which he was afterwards to furnish so brilliant an example. His lively farce of "The Lying Valet" (produced in December,

1741), established his reputation as a writer, at the same time that it gave him in Sharp a field for the airy vivacity, the ever-bubbling gaiety of tone, the talent of making witty things doubly witty by the way of saying them, for which he was afterwards so famous. Some of his friends (his townsman Newton, the future Bishop, then tutor to Lord Carpenter's son, among the number) thought his appearance in such parts a mistake. "You, who are equal to the greatest parts, strangely demean yourself in acting anything that is low or little," he wrote, 18th January, 1742. "There are abundance of people who hit off low humour and succeed in the coxcomb and the buffoon very well; but there is scarce one in an age who is capable of acting the hero in tragedy and the fine gentleman in comedy. Though you perform these parts never so well, yet there is not half the merit in excelling in them as in others." Sound enough advice in the main and to actors of limited scope, and most politic as a warning, by which Garrick profited, not to let himself down by playing merely farce parts. But there is no good reason why an actor of the requisite genius should not play Touchstone as well as Othello, Sir Toby Belch as well as Coriolanus, with no more loss of caste than Shakspeare for having written them. But then there must be the requisite genius to justify the attempt. This Garrick had, as was soon afterwards proved, when he passed from King Lear to Abel Drugger, in "The Alchemist," from Hamlet to Bayes in "The Rehearsal," and left his severest critics in doubt in which he was most to be admired.

Indeed it was just this wide range of power, this

Shaksperian multiformity of conception, which was the secret of Garrick's greatness, and, *after his death*, made even the cynical Walpole confess that he was "the greatest actor that ever lived, both in comedy and tragedy." Newton himself was struck by this a few months later. He had just seen Garrick's Lear, and after giving him the opinion of certain friends that he far exceeded Booth in that character, and even equalled Betterton, he goes on to say :—

"The thing that strikes me above all others is that variety in your acting, and your being so totally a different man in Lear from what you are in Richard. There is a sameness in every other actor. Cibber is something of a coxcomb in everything; and Wolsey, Syphax, and Iago, all smell strong of the essence of Lord Foppington. Booth was a philosopher in Cato, and was a philosopher in everything else! His passion in Hotspur I hear was much of the same nature, whereas yours was an old man's passion, and an old man's voice and action; and, in the four parts wherein I have seen you, Richard, Chamont, Bayes, and Lear, I never saw four actors more different from one another, than you are from yourself."—*Garrick Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 7.

His Lear, like his Richard, seems from the first to have been superb. Cooke, indeed, in his "Memoir of Macklin," says the first and second performances of the part disappointed that severe critic. It did not sufficiently indicate the infirmities of the man "fourscore and upwards"—the curse did not break down, as it should have done, in the impotence of senile rage—there was a lack of dignity in the prison scene, and so forth. Garrick took notes of Macklin's criticisms on all these points, withdrew the play for six weeks, and restudied the character in the interval. Of the result of his next appearance Macklin always spoke with rapture. The curse in

particular exceeded all he could have imagined; it seemed to electrify the audience with horror. The words "kill—kill—kill," echoed all the revenge of a frantic king, "whilst his pathos on discovering his daughter Cordelia drew tears of commiseration from the whole house. In short, sir, the little dog made it a *chef-d'œuvre*, and a *chef-d'œuvre* it continued to the end of his life."

While the town was ringing with his triumphs, and his brain was still on fire with the fulfilment of his cherished dreams, Garrick did not forget his sober partner in business nor the other good folks at Lichfield, to whose genteel notions his becoming a stage player, he knew, would be a terrible shock. The Ipswich performances had escaped their notice; and brother Peter, when in town soon afterwards, found him out of health and spirits. It was the miserable interim "between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first motion" of it. Garrick, though he had quite made up his mind to go on the stage, was afraid to break the news to his family. But he did so the day after his *débût* at Goodman's Fields, while the plaudits of his audience were yet sounding in his ears, in a letter to his brother and partner, deprecating his censure with an unassuming earnestness which speaks volumes for the modesty of the artist, and the simple and loving nature of the man:—

"'My mind,' he writes, '(as you must know) has been always inclined to the stage, nay, so strongly so that all my illness and lowness of spirits was owing to my want of resolution to tell you my thoughts when here. Finding at last both my inclination and interest required some new way of life, I have chose the most agreeable

to myself, and though I know you will be much displeased at me, yet I hope when you shall find that I may have the genius of an actor, without the vices, you will think the less severely of me, and not be ashamed to own me for a brother. . . . . Last night I play'd Richard the Third to the surprise of everybody, and as I shall make very near £300 per annum by it, and as it is really what I doat upon, I am resolved to pursue it."

The wine business at Durham Yard, he explained, had not prospered—£400 of Garrick's small capital had been lost—and he saw no prospect of retrieving it. He was prepared to make every reasonable arrangement with his brother about their partnership, and in his new career better fortune awaited him, of which his family should share the fruits. But the news spread dismay in the old home at Lichfield; their respectability was compromised by one of their blood becoming "a harlotry player," and getting mixed up with the loose morals and shifty ways of the theatrical fraternity.

Before Peter's reply reached him, Garrick must have known that his fame was secure. But the tone of his rejoinder is still modest, though firm. Writing again on the 27th, he assures his brother that even his friends, "who were at first surprised at my intent, by seeing me on the stage, are now well convinced it was impossible to keep me off." As to company, "the best in town" were desirous of his, and he had received more civilities since he came on the stage than he ever did in all his life before. Leonidas Glover has been to see him every night and goes about saying he had not seen acting for ten years before.

"In short, were I to tell you what they say about me, 'twould be too vain, though I am now writing to a brother. . . . . I am sorry

my sisters are under such uneasiness, and, as I really love both them and you, will ever make it my study to appear your affectionate brother, D. Garrick."

A less modest or more selfish man would have thrown off with some impatience the weak scruples of his family about loss of caste. How could he be doing wrong in following the irresistible bent of a genius for what he knew to be one of the most difficult as well as noblest of the arts, however it might have been discredited by the folly or vice of some of its followers, or disparaged as an "idle trade" in the opinion of the unreflecting? But Garrick's heart and no less excellent temper determined him to pursue a conciliatory course. He reminded his brother, therefore, "how handsomely and how reputably some have lived, as Booth, Mills, Wilks, Cibber, &c., admitted into and admired by the best companies." He told him (10th November, 1741), that "Mr. Pitt, who is reckoned the greatest orator in the House of Commons, said I was the best actor the English stage had produced, and he sent a gentleman to let me know he and the other gentleman would be glad to see me. The Prince has heard so great a character of me, that we are in daily expectation of his coming to see me."

This sort of thing was calculated to impress the rather dull brain of Peter and the timid souls of the sisters, which would have been impervious to any appeal on the score of the intrinsic nobility of the actor's art. Garrick could feel within himself, and might have told them, that he had his vocation as clearly as ever poet or painter had his, and that it no more rested with himself

what "he should do or what refuse," than with a Milton to write, or with a Raphael to design. But to have written to the good people at Lichfield of these things would have been to talk to stone walls. He therefore keeps steadily before their eyes the numbers of great folks who are pressing for his acquaintance—"the great Mr. Murray, counsellor," Pope, Mr. Littleton, the Prince's favourite, with all of whom he has supped, and who have all treated him "with the highest civility and complaisance." He has dined with Lords Halifax, Sandwich, and Chesterfield. "In short, I believe nobody (as an actor) was ever more caressed, and my character as a private man makes 'em more desirous of my company."[1]

When they found their brother making his way in the highest quarters, and becoming well to do at the same time, the views of his family underwent a change. It was not, however, till the 2nd of December, 1741, that Garrick threw off the mask and performed under his own name. By this time even they must have begun to doubt whether honour was not more likely to accrue to them than discredit from the step which he had taken. But it must have been no small pain to him to have the vulgar estimate of his profession thrown so remorselessly in his teeth by his own kindred; and that even in the first excitement of his success he had misgivings as to what would be his social position, and had expressed them to his friend Newton, may be

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[1] For the details of this part of Garrick's correspondence, see book iii. cap. ii. of "Goldsmith's Life" by Mr. Forster.

inferred from a letter of that wise and liberal-minded man:—

"You need make no apology," he writes to Garrick, December 7, 1741, "for your profession, at least to me. I always thought that you were born an actor, if ever any man was so; and it will be your own indiscretion (and I hope and believe you will hardly be guilty of such indiscretion), if coming upon the stage hurts your reputation, and does not make your fortune. As great talents are required for acting well, as for almost anything; and an excellent actor, if at the same time he is an honest worthy man, is a fit companion for anybody. You know Roscius was familiar with Cicero, and the greatest men of his time; and Betterton used frequently to visit Bishops Sprat and Atterbury, and other divines, as well as the best of the nobility and gentry, not as a mimic and buffoon, to make diversion for the company, but as an agreeable friend and companion."

This was encouragement of a very commonplace kind to a man who respected his art and himself. But still it was encouragement, and encouragement not to be despised. For it was not alone the many-headed vulgar who thought themselves entitled to look with a kind of scorn upon a player, but the so-called men of letters, with Johnson at their head, who above all others should have been superior to such prejudice, lost no opportunity of letting Garrick feel that they regarded the actor as of an inferior order to themselves. It was only men of the highest gifts, like Burke, Warburton, Camden, or Reynolds, or of the highest social position, like the Dukes of Devonshire or Portland, or the Spencers, who never wounded his self-respect by airs of superiority or condescension.

Garrick paid the actor's accustomed penalty for success by being overworked. Between his first appearance in October, 1741, and the following May, when the

Goodman's Fields Theatre closed, he played no less than one hundred and thirty-eight times, and for the most part in characters of the greatest weight and importance in both tragedy and comedy. Among the former were Richard, Lear, Pierre; among the latter, Lord Foppington, in Cibber's "Careless Husband," Fondlewife, and Bayes. The range of character and passion which these parts covered was immense. To have played them at all, new as he was to the stage, was no common feat of industry, but only genius of the most remarkable kind could have carried him through them, not only without injury but with positive increase to the high reputation his first performances had created.

In Bayes he was nearly as popular as in Richard and Lear; and he made the part subservient to his purpose of exposing the false and unnatural style into which actors had fallen, by making Bayes speak his turgid heroics in imitation of some of the leading performers. But when he found how the men whose faults he burlesqued—good, worthy men in their way—were made wretched by seeing themselves and what they did in all seriousness held up to derision, his naturally kind heart and good taste made him drop these imitations. Garrick's true vocation was to teach his brethren a purer style by his own example, not to dishearten them by ridicule. Mimicry, besides, as he well knew, is the lowest form of the actor's art, and no mere mimic can be a great actor, for sincerity, not simulation, is at the root of all greatness on the stage.

The success of Garrick at Goodman's Fields emptied the patent houses at Covent Garden and Drury Lane,

and the patentees had recourse to the law to compel Giffard to close his theatre. Garrick was secured for the next season at Drury Lane. But as that house did not open till September, and the people of Dublin were impatient to see him, he started off for that city early in June, and remained there playing a round of his leading parts till the middle of August. An epidemic which raged during the greater part of this time, caused by distress among the poor and by the great heat, got the name of the Garrick Fever. But the epidemic which he really caused was not among the poor, but among the wits and fine ladies of that then fashionable and lively city, who were not likely to be behind his English admirers in enthusiasm. He was berhymed and fêted on all hands, and from them he got the title of Roscius, which to this hour is coupled with his name. During this engagement he added Hamlet to his list of characters. Like his Richard and his Lear it was treated in a manner quite his own, and like them it was from the first a success, but was, of course, much elaborated and modified in future years.

At Drury Lane Garrick found himself associated with his old friend Macklin, who was deputy manager, and with that "dallying and dangerous beauty" Peg Woffington, under whose spell he appears to have fallen as early as 1740. As an actress Woffington was admirable for the life, the nature, and the grace which she threw into all she did, set off by a fine person and a face which, as her portraits show, though habitually pensive in its expression, was capable of kindling into passion, or beaming with the sudden and fitful lights of feeling and

fancy. She had been literally picked out of the streets of Dublin as a child crying "halfpenny salads,"[1] and trained by a rope-dancer, Madame Violante, as one of a Lilliputian company, in which she figured in such parts as Captain Macheath. Like Rachel and many other celebrated women, she contrived, it is hard to say how, to educate herself, so that she could hold her own in conversation in any society; and such was her natural grace, that she excelled in characters like Millamant and Lady Townley, in which the well-bred air of good society was essential. Frank, kindly and impulsive, she had also wit at will, to give piquancy to the expressions of a very independent turn of mind. She never scrupled to avow that she preferred the company of men to that of women, who "talked," she said, "of nothing but silks and scandal." The men returned the compliment by being very fond of her company. "Forgive her one female error," says Murphy, "and it might fairly be said of her that she was adorned with every virtue,"—a truly modest plea, when it is considered that Peg was not more chaste, and certainly not less mercenary, than Horace's Barine, to whom indeed she was likened in some pointed but very heartless verses by one of her many lovers, Sir Hanbury Williams. "By Jove," she exclaimed, as she ran into

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[1] "I have met with more than one in Dublin who assured me that they remember to have seen the lovely Peggy with a little dish on her head, and without shoes to cover her delicate feet, crying through College Green, Dame Street, and other parts of that end of the town, 'All this fine young salad for a halfpenny—all for a halfpenny—all for a halfpenny, here!'"—*Memoirs of Charles Lee Lewis*, vol. ii. p. 16.

the green-room one night from the stage, when she had left the house cheering her exit as Sir Harry Wildair, "they are in such delight, I believe one half of them fancy I am a man." "Madam," rejoined Quin, "the other half, then, has the best reason for knowing to the contrary."

But when Garrick first fell under her fascination, these frailties had not been developed. She was then in the bloom of her beauty,—and how charming that was we can see from Hogarth's exquisite portrait (in the Marquis of Lansdowne's Collection),—and though suitors of wealth and rank surrounded her, genius and youth had probably more charms for her than gold and fine living. Garrick was deeply smitten by her, and he seems for a time to have thought her worthy of an honourable love. For one season he kept house together with her and Macklin, and they were visited by his friends, Johnson and Dr. Hoadley among the number. It was thought he would marry her; but Peg's aberrations —her "one female error"—grew too serious. She was in truth an incurable coquette. It was the old story of Lesbia and Catullus. Garrick's heart was touched, hers was not. It cost him a good many struggles to break his chains, but he broke them at last, and left her finally in 1745 to the rakes and fools who were outbidding each other for her favours.

He was worthy of a better mate, and he was to find one before very long; for in March of the following year (1746) the lady came to England who was to replace his feverish passion for the wayward Woffington, by a devotion which grew stronger and deeper with every

year of his life. This was the fair Eva Maria Veigel, which latter name she had changed for its French equivalent, Violette. She was then twenty-one, a dancer, and had come from Vienna with recommendations from the Empress Theresa, who was said to have found her too beautiful to be allowed to remain within reach of the Emperor Francis. Jupiter Carlyle, returning from his studies at Leyden, found himself in the same packet with her, crossing from Helvoet to Harwich. She was disguised in male attire, and this although travelling under the protection of a person who called himself her father, and two other foreigners. Carlyle took the seeming youth for "a Hanoverian baron coming to Britain to pay his court at St. James's." But the lady becoming alarmed by a storm during the passage, her voice, no less than her fears, at once betrayed her to Carlyle. This led to an avowal of her profession, and of the object of her journey, and the young handsome Scotchman took care not to leave London without seeing his fair fellow-traveller on the Opera stage, where he found her dancing to be "exquisite." [1]

Such was the general verdict. The dancing of those days was not a thing in which every womanly feeling, every refined grace, was violated. It aspired to delight

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[1] "Autobiography of Carlyle," pp. 183 and 127. Twelve years afterwards Dr. Carlyle dined with the lady and her husband at their villa at Hampton Court. "She did not seem at all to recognize me," he says, "which was no wonder at the end of twelve years, having thrown away my bag-wig and sword, and appearing in my own grisly hairs, and in parson's clothes."

by the poetry of motion, not to amaze by complexities of distortion, or startling marvels of muscular force. Beautiful, modest, accomplished, the Violette not only charmed on the stage, but soon found her way into fashionable society. So early as June, 1746, Horace Walpole writes to his friend Montague:—"The fame of the Violette increases daily. The sister Countesses of Burlington and Talbot exert all their stores of sullen partiality and competition for her." The Countess of Burlington took her to live with her, and was in the habit of attending her to the theatre, and waiting at the side-wings to throw a shawl over her as she left the stage.

These attentions, due solely to the charm of the young lady, and the enthusiasm of her patroness, were quite enough to set in motion the tongues of the Mrs. Candours and Sir Benjamin Backbites of society. The Violette, they began to whisper, was a daughter of Lord Burlington, by a Florentine of rank; and when, upon her marriage with Garrick in 1749, she received a handsome marriage portion from the Countess, this was considered conclusive evidence of the scandal. It was not, however, from the Earl, but from the Countess that the dowry came. It consisted of a sum of £5,000, secured on one of her ladyship's Lincolnshire estates; Garrick on his part settling £10,000 on his bride, with £70 a year of pin-money.[1] It is quite possible that the

[1] The evidence of this is before us in a copy of the Marriage Articles, to which the Countess is a party. They are dated 20th June, 1747, two days before the marriage, and disprove all that is said on the subject both by Mr. Boaden and by Garrick's last biogragrapher, Mr. Fitzgerald.

security for £5,000, granted by the Countess, was simply an equivalent for some such sum previously handed over to her by the young lady. But the parties kept their own counsel in their arrangements, and so left the busy-bodies at fault. "The chapter of this history is a little obscure and uncertain as to the protecting Countess, and whether she gives her a fortune or not," Horace Walpole wrote out to a friend in Florence a few days after the marriage, and speculation has since gone on mystifying what was in itself a very simple affair.

The Countess, it is said, looked higher for her young friend than the great player, as a Countess with so celebrated a beauty in hand was likely to do; and it was not without difficulty that Garrick won what proved to be the great prize of his life. He had on one occasion to disguise himself as a woman, in order to convey a letter to his mistress. But the fact of her receiving it bespeaks the foregone conclusion that he had won her heart; and, that fact once ascertained, the Countess was probably too wise to oppose further resistance. How attractive in person the young dancer was her portraits survive to tell us. What her lover thought of her appears from some verses which he wrote in the first happiness of what we cannot call his honeymoon, for their whole married life was one honeymoon—

> "'Tis not, my friend, her speaking face,
> Her shape, her youth, her winning grace,
> Have reached my heart; the fair one's mind,
> Quick as her eyes, yet soft and kind—
> A gaiety with innocence,
> A soft address, with manly sense;

> Ravishing manners, void of art,
> A cheerful, firm, yet feeling heart,
> Beauty that charms all public gaze,
> And humble, amid pomp and praise."

That this charming picture owed little or nothing to the exaggeration of the lover is confirmed by the uniform testimony of all who knew her. Wilkes, no mean judge, called her "the first," and Churchill "the most agreeable woman in England." "Her temper," says Stockdale, "was amiable and festive; her understanding discriminating and vigorous; her humour and her wit were easy and brilliant." Sterne, writing to Garrick from Paris in 1752 under the immediate influence of the beauties who thronged the Tuileries Gardens, said she "could annihilate them all in a single turn." "To David Hume," as Madame Riccoboni tells us, "*elle rappelait au souvenir ces illustres dames romaines dont on se forme une idée si majestueuse.*" Beaumarchais speaks of her "*sourires fins et pleins d'expression.*" To her husband Gibbon writes, "May I beg to be remembered to Mrs. Garrick? By this time she has probably discovered the philosopher's stone. She has long possessed a more valuable secret—that of gaining the hearts of all who have the happiness of knowing her." Horace Walpole drops his cynicism in speaking of her, "I like her," he says, "exceedingly; her behaviour is all sense, and all sweetness too."

Of this "best of women and wives," as Garrick called her, he proved himself worthy by a loverlike wakefulness of affection which no familiarity ever dulled. During the twenty-eight years of their married life they

were never one day apart. His friends were hers; where he went she went, and by the grace of her presence made his doubly welcome. The *beaux-esprits* of Paris were only restrained from throwing themselves at her feet by the unusual spectacle of a lover husband, "*l'heureux mari*," as Madame Riccoboni calls him, "*dont les regards lui disent sans cesse*, I love you!" Even Foote, brutal in his contempt of constancy and the home virtues, was touched by the beautiful oneness of their lives. In February, 1766, when he was recovering from his terrible accident, and, face to face with pain and sorrow, could listen to the dictates of his better nature, he wrote to Garrick: "It has been my misfortune not to know Mrs. Garrick; but from what I have seen, and all I have heard, you will have more to regret, when either she or you die, than any man in the kingdom." Seven years later, and when he had enjoyed the privilege of knowing her better, the same reckless wit, who spared no friend however kind, respected no nature however noble, and from whom, as the event proved, a thousand wrongs were unable to alienate Garrick's forgiving nature, wrote of the lady to her husband in these terms:—"She has the merit of making me constant and uniform in perhaps the only part of my life—my esteem and veneration for her."

Singularly enough the finest portrait of this charming woman is associated with Foote. It was painted by Hogarth for Garrick, and is now in Her Majesty's possession. It presents Garrick in the act of composition, his eyes rapt in thought, and his wife stealing behind him and about to snatch the pen from his up-

raised hand. He is in the act of writing, so says the catalogue of his sale, his prologue to Foote's farce of "Taste." This supplies the date, "Taste" having appeared in 1752, just two years after their marriage. The picture is the very poetry of portraiture. The character as well as the lineaments of both are there; and it needs no stretch of fancy to imagine Garrick on the point of illustrating the virtuoso's passion for the antique by the line—

"His Venus must be old, and want a nose,"

when his reverie is broken by the saucy challenge of as pretty a mouth and sweet a pair of eyes as ever made a husband's heart happy.

What Garrick owed to the happy circumstances of his marriage can scarcely be stated too highly. In his home he found all the solace which grace, refinement, fine intelligence, and entire sympathy could give. As artist, these were invaluable to him; as manager, a man of his sensibilities must have broken down without them. In 1747, two years before his marriage, he had, along with Mr. Lacy, become patentee of Drury Lane theatre, to which his performance had been confined, with the exception of a second visit to Dublin in 1745-6, and a short engagement at Covent Garden in 1746-7. So well had he husbanded his means since his *début* at the end of 1741, that he was able, with some help from friends, to find £8,000 of the £12,000 which were required for the enterprise. Lacy took charge of the business details, while all that related to the performances devolved upon Garrick. He got together the very

best company that could be had, for, to use his own words, he "thought it the interest of the best actors to be together," knowing well that, apart from the great gain in general effect, this combination brings out all that is best in the actors themselves.

On the stage, as elsewhere, power kindles by contact with power; and to the great actor it is especially important to secure himself, as far as he can, against being dragged down by the imbecility of those who share the stage with him. Sham genius naturally goes upon the principle of "*ma femme et cinq poupées;*" real inspiration, on the contrary, delights in measuring its strength against kindred power. This was Garrick's feeling. At starting, therefore, he drew around him Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Woffington, among the women,—Barry, Macklin, Delane, Havard, Sparks, Shuter, among the men. Later on he secured Quin and Woodward, and when he could he drew into his company whatever ability was in the market. He determined to bring back the public taste, if possible, from pantomime and farce to performances of a more intellectual stamp. Johnson wrote his fine "Prologue," to announce the principles on which the theatre was to be conducted, and threw upon the public, and with justice, the responsibility, should these miscarry, by the well-known lines,—

> "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> For those, who live to please, must please to live."

The public, as usual, fell back after a time upon its love for "inexplicable dumb show and noise," and Garrick

had no choice but to indulge its taste. But in these early days the array of varied ability which his company presented, backed by his own genius, filled, as it well might, the theatre nightly.[1]

Garrick purchased his success, however, by an amount of personal labour, for which only his own passionate enthusiasm for his art could have repaid him. To keep such forces in order was no common task; to reconcile their jealousies, to conciliate their vanity, to get their best work out of them, demanded rare temper, rare firmness, and extraordinary tact. Even with all these, which Garrick certainly possessed, his best efforts frequently provoked the spleen and shallow irritability of those about him. Nor was it only the airs of his tragic queens that upset his plans and put his chivalry to sore trial. Woffington and Clive—one the fine lady of Comedy, the other the liveliest of Abigails—kept him in continual hot water. But his *bonhommie* was not to be shaken; and when Clive had written him a more scolding letter than usual, he took it as a symptom of better health, and his salutation to her when they next met would be,—"I am very glad, madam, you are come to your usual spirits." Even the fiery Kitty could not resist such invincible good humour.

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[1] We have before us an extract from the books of the theatre, from which it appears that the nett profits of the two first years of Garrick's management were £16,000. The nightly receipts, which varied from £100 to £150 when he did not play, invariably exceeded £200 when he did. Besides his share of the profits Garrick received £500 a year for acting, £500 for managing, and £200 for extras.

Of course malicious stories in abundance were propagated against him, many of them due, beyond all question, to his very virtues as a manager. He worked from too high a point of view to be understood by many of the people who surrounded him. Excellence was his aim, and he allowed no one to trifle with the work he assigned them. Strict and elaborate rehearsals, under his own direction, were insisted on, much to the annoyance of some of the older actors, who had grown habitually careless as to the words of their parts. His own presiding mind arranged the business of the scene, and ensured *ensemble* and completeness. He took infinite pains to put his own ideas into the heads of performers who had no ideas of their own, so that his actors often made great hits, which were mainly due to the soul he had contrived to infuse into them at rehearsal.

"Wonderful Sir," Kitty Clive wrote to him (23rd January, 1774), "you have for these thirty years been contradicting the old proverb that you cannot make bricks without straw, by doing what is infinitely more difficult, making actors and actresses without genius."

Again, on 23rd January, 1776, when the stage was about to lose him, she writes from Clieveden (Clive's Den, as her friend Walpole calls it) with her usual delightful heartiness:—

"I have seen you with your magical hammer in your hand endeavouring to beat your ideas into the heads of creatures who had none of their own. I have seen you, with lamb-like patience, endeavouring to make them comprehend you; and when that could not be done, I have seen your lamb turned into a lion. By this, your great labour and pains, the public were entertained; *they* thought they all acted

very fine—they did not see you pull the wires. There are people now on the stage to whom you gave their consequence; they think themselves very great: now let them go on in their new parts, without their leading-strings, and they will soon convince the world what their genius is. I have always said this to everybody, even when your horses and mine were in their highest prancing. While I was under your control, I did not say half the fine things I thought of you, because it looked like flattery; and you know your Pivy [1] was always proud; besides, I thought you did not like me then; but *now* I am sure you do, which makes me send you this letter."—*Garrick Correspondence*, ii. 128.

It was only human nature, and not actors' nature especially, that Garrick should be pulled to pieces by the very members of his company to whom he had been most serviceable. Obsequiously servile to his face, behind his back they persecuted him with the shafts of slander. "I have not always," as he wrote in 1764, "met with gratitude in a playhouse." These were the people that whispered about that he was not the great actor the world supposed, but that he maintained his pre-eminence by stifling the gifts of other people, and letting nobody have a chance of popularity but himself. This was singularly untrue. All other considerations apart, Garrick was too good a man of business not to make the very best use he could of the abilities of his company. An opposite course meant empty houses, and a failing exchequer, besides double work to himself as an actor. As he wrote to Mrs. Pritchard's husband (July 11, 1747), in answer to

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[1] A friendly nickname, which appears to have been given to her by Garrick.

some querulous suspicions that she was to be sacrificed to Mrs. Cibber :—

> "It is my interest (putting friendship out of the case) that your wife should maintain her character upon the stage; if she does not, shall not the managers be great losers? . . . . I have a great stake, and must secure my property and my friends to the best of my judgment."

But Garrick was also governed by higher motives. He had a true artist's delight in excellence, and a kind-hearted man's sympathy with well merited success. His whole relations to his actors prove this. Nor has a word of blame on this score been left on record against him by any of his really great compeers, such as Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Woffington, Quin, Barry, Sheridan, King, Smith, or Weston. The charge rests upon the insinuations of the smaller fry of players, egotists like Mrs. Bellamy or Tate Wilkinson, who charged him with the meanness which was congenial to their own instincts.

Horace Walpole, delighting as usual in detraction, echoed their complaints of Garrick's "envy and jealousy;" and Mrs. Siddons very unwisely encouraged the charge, by insinuating that her comparative failure during her first engagement in London, in 1775-6, was due to this cause. After she had become the rage of the town in 1782, three years after Garrick's death, her answer, when questioned as to her relations with him, according to Walpole, was to the effect, that "he did nothing but put her out; that he told her she moved her right hand, when it should have been her left. In short, I found I must not shade the tip of his nose."

This was an ingenious way of accounting for that being so indifferent in 1776, which the town was raving about in 1782. But what are the facts? In that first engagement Mrs. Siddons, recently a mother, was weak and much out of health; most certainly she gave no evidence of the remarkable powers which she afterwards developed. Yet she was so especially favoured by the manager, that she got the name of Garrick's Venus. At that time he had in his theatre two first-class actresses, Mrs. Yates and Miss Younge, both extremely popular; yet he put Mrs. Siddons into several of their parts, and selected her to act with him repeatedly in his farewell performances,—a distinction of infinite value to so young an actress. Garrick obviously liked and took pains with her, and his suggestions could not have been otherwise than beneficial to a performer, whose Lady Anne, in "Richard III.," was pronounced by the London Magazine of the day to be "lamentable." And no doubt she did profit by them, although she had not the generosity to own it. Well might Garrick say, "I have not always met with gratitude in a playhouse."

But, in truth, Garrick never had any real cause to be either envious or jealous of any one. The success of his rivals, Quin, Barry, Sheridan, Mossop, never dimmed the splendour of his own for one hour. His only dangerous rival as to popularity at any time was Powell, and this popularity, as the event proved, was chiefly due to the fact that Garrick was out of England for the time. "A substitute shines brightly as a king until a king be by." Worn out with the fatigues of his profession,

Garrick had gone abroad in September, 1763, to make the grand tour. The previous summer he had come across Powell, then a merchant's clerk in the city, and had taken great pains to instruct him. Such was his promise, that Garrick engaged him to play the juvenile tragedy parts in his absence. Powell had a good voice and figure, and considerable power of tragic expression, and he became a great favourite, filling Drury Lane, and enabling Lacy to write abroad to his brother manager, that they were doing so well he need be in no hurry to return. Garrick would have been more than mortal had such tidings been altogether welcome. No one likes to think he is not missed in the circle where he has been the "observed of all observers;" least of all an actor, ever too conscious of the fickleness of popular favour, and naturally loth to resign his hold upon the public. But we find no trace of either jealousy or chagrin on Garrick's part. On the contrary, he was annoyed at Powell for endangering his reputation by playing mere fustian:—

"I am very angry with Powell," he writes to Colman, "for playing that detestable part of *Alexander;* every genius must despise such fustian. *If a man can act it well, I mean, to please the people, he has something in him that a good actor should not have. He might have served Pritchard and himself too,* in some good natural character. I hate your roarers. Damn the part. I fear it will hurt him."

To Powell himself he wrote from Paris (12th December, 1764) in terms, the generous warmth of which it is impossible to mistake, that the news of his great success had given him "a very sensible pleasure." The ingratitude which Powell had expressed for "what little

service" he had done him by his instructions last summer "has attached me to you as a man who shall always have my best wishes for his welfare, and my best endeavours to promote it." He warns him against playing too many parts, and the dangers of haste:—

> "Give to study, and an accurate consideration of your characters, those hours which young men too generally give to their friends and flatterers . . . . When the public has marked you for a favourite (and their favour must be purchased with sweat and labour), *you may choose what company you please, and none but the best can be of service to you.*"

The admirable words with which he concludes this letter cannot be too often quoted:—

> "The famous *Baron* of France used to say that an actor '*should be nursed in the lap of queens*,' by which he means that the best accomplishments were necessary to form a great actor. *Study hard, my friend, for seven years, and you may play the rest of your life.* . . . . Never let your Shakspeare be out of your hands; keep him about you as a charm; the more you read him, the more you will like him, and the better you will act him. . . . . Guard against splitting the ears of the groundlings—do not sacrifice your taste and feelings to the applause of the multitude; *a true genius will convert an audience to his manner, rather than be converted by them to what is false and unnatural.*"—*Garrick Correspondence*, i. 177.

Powell was not "a true genius." There is weakness in every line of his comely face, as we see it in the fine mezzotint by Dixon after Laurenson, and he did not profit by these golden precepts. He had sensibility, which ran over into the extreme of lachrymose weakness on the one hand, and of furious rant on the other. Intellectual culture, which alone might have cured this defect, he made no effort to obtain, and growing too well satisfied with himself to serve in the ranks, he

deserted to Covent Garden, to Garrick's great vexation, and died soon afterwards at Bath (3rd July, 1769), of a raging fever, at the age of thirty-two.

Much as Garrick was worried by his actors, the fraternity of authors caused him even greater disgust. Every scribbler who had put together something he chose to call a play, thought himself entitled to regard the refusal of his rubbish as a personal wrong, dictated by the meanest motives. Garrick's weak dread of the power of this class of persons to injure him by attacks in the press constantly led him to act in defiance of his sounder judgment. Men like Murphy avowedly traded on this weakness. "That gentleman," says Tate Wilkinson, with his wonted elegance, "could tease his soul and gall his gizzard, whenever he judged himself wronged," his means being, in Murphy's own words, a "fierce campaign" in the papers.

Garrick was moreover too sensitive himself not to be tender to the sensitiveness of an author. Often, therefore, when his answer should have been a simple refusal, he would give a qualified denial, which was used to justify further importunity, or a complaint of injustice when the decided negative came, as it often did come at last. The insolence of tone assumed by these writers towards Garrick is indeed incredible. It constantly implied the question, what right had a mere player to sit in judgment upon their literary skill? The gifted creature who had compiled five acts of dreary morality or fiery fustian was not to be amenable to the puppet to whom he offered the honour of mouthing it. If a refusal came, although accompanied

as it generally was by a letter of criticism, admirable for literary acumen and rich with the experience of years of practical study of the stage, it was set down to jealousy, or private dislike, or some other contemptible motive. Horace Walpole was only echoing the complaints of this class of persons when, in writing to his friend Montague about his own impossible play of "The Mysterious Mother," he said (15th April, 1768):—

"Nor am I disposed to expose myself to the impertinences of that jackanapes Garrick,[1] *who lets nothing appear but his own wretched stuff, or that of creatures still duller, who suffer him to alter their pieces as he pleases.*"

By passages such as these much wrong has been done to Garrick's reputation for fairness. His assailants and detractors, it must be remembered, have always had the command of the press, and much of their abuse, by sheer dint of repetition, has stuck to his name. Garrick's real mistake was in putting on the stage and wasting his own and his actors' powers upon too many bad pieces. Did he refuse any that have lived? Not one, except "The Good-natured Man" of Goldsmith. He offered to play "She Stoops to Conquer;" and, although these pieces are now classical, let it not be forgotten, so contrary were they to the prevailing taste, that on their first production they narrowly escaped being damned. "'She Stoops to

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[1] Yet did Walpole in 1775 present the great player with a beautifully chased gold repeater, which was lately in the possession of Mr. Toovey, of 177, Piccadilly, inscribed "*Horace Walpole to his esteemed friend David Garrick*, 1775."

Conquer,' a comedy!" says Walpole; "no, it is the lowest of farces!"

One instance will suffice to show how unfairly Garrick was treated in matters of this sort. He refused Home's "Tragedy of Douglas" "as totally unfit for the stage." Home's Edinburgh friends were indignant, and went into absurd raptures about the piece, when it was soon afterwards produced on their local boards. Even Sir Walter Scott, writing seventy years afterwards, cannot deal with the subject without insinuating that Garrick refused the piece because there was no part in it in which he could appear with advantage![1] And Jupiter Carlyle, alluding to Garrick's subsequent kindness to Home, chooses to find the explanation of it in the fact that "he had observed what a hold Home had got of Lord Bute, and, by his means, of the Prince of Wales." But Carlyle suppresses what he must have known, that Home altered his play materially to cure the defects Garrick had pointed out, and that all Lord Bute's influence, if he had any, was brought to bear on Garrick before he rejected the play. It was through Lord Bute the play was sent to him, and the following portions of a letter from Garrick to his Lordship, now published for the first time from the original in our possession, establish conclusively that, whether right or wrong in his decision, Garrick came to it solely on the literary merits of the piece:—

"My Lord, "July ye 10th, 1756.

"It is with the greatest uneasiness that I trouble your Lordship

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[1] Misc. Works, vol. xix. p. 309.

with my sentiment of Mr. Hume's tragedy. The little knowledge I had of him gave me the warmest inclination to serve him, which I should have done most sincerely had the means been put into my hands; but upon my word and credit it is not in my power to introduce *Douglas* upon the stage with the least advantage to the author and the managers.

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"I am obliged, my lord, to be free in the delivery of my opinion upon this subject, as I think both Mr. Hume's and my reputation concern'd in it: I should have had the highest pleasure in forwarding any performance which yr. Lordship should please to recommend; but nobody knows so well as you do that all the endeavours of a patron and the skill of a manager will avail nothing, if the dramatic requisites and tragic force are wanting.

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"The story is radically defective and most improbable in those circumstances which produce the dramatic action—for instance, *Lady Barnet*[1] continuing seven years together in the melancholy, miserable state just as if it happen'd the week before, without discovering the real cause; and on a sudden opening the whole affair to *Anna* without any stronger reason than what might have happen'd at any other time since the day of her misfortunes. This, I think, which is the foundation of the whole, weak and unaccountable. The two first acts pass in tedious narratives, without anything of moment being plann'd or done. The introducing Douglas is the chief circumstance; and yet, as it is manag'd, it has no effect. It is romantic for want of those probable strokes of art which the first poets make use of to reconcile strange events to the minds of an audience. *Lady Barnet's* speaking to *Glenalvon* immediately in behalf of *Randolph*, forgetting her own indelible sorrows, and *Glenalvon's* suspicions and jealousy upon it (without saying anything of *his* violent love for the lady, who cannot be of a love-inspiring age), are premature and unnatural. But these and many other defects, which I will not trouble yr. Lordp. with, might be palliated and alter'd perhaps; but the unaffecting conduct of the whole, and which will always be the case when the story is rather told than represented; when the characters do not talk or behave suitably to the passions imputed to them, and

[1] Afterwards changed by Home to *Lady Randolph.*

the situation in which they are placed; when the events are such as cannot naturally be suppos'd to rise; and the language is too often below the most familiar dialogue; these are the insurmountable objections which, in my opinion, will ever make *Douglas* unfit for the stage. In short, there is no one character or passion which is strongly interesting and supported through the five acts. *Glenalvon* is a villain without plan or force. He raises our expectations in a soliloquy at first, but sinks ever after. *Lord Barnet* is unaccountably worked upon by *Glenalvon,* and the youth is unaccountably attacked by *Lord Barnet,* and loses his life for a suppos'd injury which he has done to him, whose life he had just before preserv'd. And what is this injury? Why, love for a lady who is old enough to be his mother, whom he has scarcely seen, and with whom it was impossible to *indulge* any passion, there not being time, from his entrance to his death, ev'n to *conceive* one.

"I have consider'd the performance by myself; and I have read it to a friend or two with all the energy and spirit I was master of, but without the wished for effect. The scenes are long, without action. The characters want strength and pathos, and the catastrophe is brought about without the necessary and interesting preparations for so great an event.

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"I have undertaken this office of critic and manager with great reluctance. . . . . If I am so happy to agree with Lord Bute in opinion, it would be a less grievance to Mr. Hume to find my sentiments of his play not contradicted by so-well known a judge of theatrical compositions.

"I am, my Lord, yr. Lordship's most humble and most obedt. servant,

"D. GARRICK."

The verdict of these days, at least, will be with Garrick; for although the play had a great success in Scotland, partly from local feeling and more from the fact that the author was driven by the bigots out of the Church for having written it; and although the genius of Mrs. Siddons kept it for many years upon the stage, it has long since disappeared, beyond the powers of

any actress to recal. In London it never had a great success, and even when first produced at Covent Garden, with its northern fame fresh upon it, and supported by Barry and Mrs. Woffington, Tate Wilkinson tells us "the play pleased, but no more."

In general Garrick's tact in divining what would or would not go down with the public was unerring. Dr. Brown, the author of "Barbarossa" and "Athelstan," two successful plays, told Stockdale that, before they were acted:

"Mr. Garrick distinguished to him all the passages that would meet with peculiar and warm approbation; to the respective passages he even assigned their different degrees of applause. The success exactly corresponded with the predictions."

No wonder, therefore, if authors eagerly availed themselves of this invaluable faculty, which Garrick was always ready to place at their disposal. These were, however, in the complacent Walpole's estimation, "creatures still duller than himself, who suffer him to alter their pieces as he pleases," and the whole tribe of "the unactable" were ready to catch up and repeat the strain.

Had Garrick's alterations been confined to the works of the Browns, the Francklins, the Hills, and the like, it would have been better for his fame. But he took to altering Shakspeare with what we, who are better able to estimate the workmanship of the great dramatist, can only regard as sacrilegious audacity. We must not, however, forget that if he mutilated he also restored; and, in making the alterations he did, he probably secured a warmer verdict for the whole piece,

in the then state of the public taste, than if he had played Shakspeare pure and simple. "The Winter's Tale," for example, was cut down by him into three acts. But the play had wholly vanished from the stage. To have played it as Shakspeare wrote it, Garrick knew very well would never do. But it was worth an effort to get people's attention recalled to its most important parts—to bring Hermione, that purest, and holiest, and most wronged of Shakspeare's women, in living form before their eyes, and to elevate their taste by that most exquisite of pastorals in which the loves of Florizel and Perdita are set. That he acted on this principle is clear from the concluding lines of his prologue to the altered piece:—

> "The five long acts from which our three are taken,
> Stretch'd out to sixteen years, lay by forsaken.
> Lest, then, this precious liquor run to waste,
> 'Tis now confined and bottled to your taste.
> 'Tis my chief wish, my joy, my only plan,
> To lose no drop of that immortal man!"

No man in Garrick's position would now venture to write additions to Shakspeare. But are our own managers and actors less culpable, when they elbow him out of his own pieces by overdone scenic splendour, and by readings of his characters false to the spirit in which they were conceived? There may be worse things on the stage, where Shakspeare is concerned, than a garbled text. To Garrick, at all events, it is mainly due that the genuine text was restored to the stage. He knew his Shakspeare, not from acting editions, like Quin, Barry, Pritchard, and others, but from the original folios and quartos. With true literary enthusiasm he

made a fine collection of first editions of all the great early dramatists, which now forms one of the treasures of the British Museum. Thomas Warton and George Steevens used it largely, and it was Johnson's own fault that it was not equally available to him for his "Shakspeare."

Garrick's sympathies with literature and literary men were very great. He formed a fine library, and not only formed but used it.[1] He was well versed in the literature of Europe, especially of Italy and France. He wrote well himself. His prologues and *vers de société* are even now pleasant reading. He would turn off one of his prologues or epilogues in two hours. As a rule, an epigram—such as his famous one on Goldsmith—took him five minutes. There was no man of literary eminence in England with whom he was not on a friendly footing. "It has been the business, and ever will be, of my life," he wrote to Goldsmith (25th July, 1757), "to live on the best terms with men of genius." When such men wanted money, his purse was always at their command and in the handsomest way.

Sterne, Churchill, Johnson, Goldsmith, Murphy, Foote, had many proofs of this helpful sympathy, not to speak of men of lesser note. And yet the two last were constantly denouncing his avarice and meanness. Happily, Murphy's own letters survive to convict him of injustice. To quote one of many: "I am convinced,"

[1] The motto on his book-plate from the *Menagiana* will be appreciated by all who love their books. "La première chose qu'on doit faire quand on a emprunté un livre, c'est de le lire afin de pouvoir le rendre plutôt."

he wrote to Garrick (20th September, 1770), "that you look upon the loan of two or three hundred pounds to a friend as a small favour: and I am further persuaded that I am welcome to be in your debt as long as I please. Having said this, I said it from conviction," &c. This letter was *apropos* of a sum of £200, which Garrick had lent him *without acknowledgment of any kind.* And yet this was the man who, from Garrick's death down to his own, went about saying, "Off the stage, sir, he was a little sneaking rascal; but *on* the stage, oh, my great God!" It is pitiful to think a good man's name should be at the mercy of such a creature.[1]

Foote's sarcasms on Garrick's parsimony are preserved by the anecdote-mongers. "Stingy hound!" if we are to believe Tate Wilkinson, was Foote's favourite epithet for him. But Foote was constantly appealing to Garrick for money in considerable sums, and people do not go to "mean" men for these. What is more, there is no instance of their having ever been refused; although

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[1] Equally characteristic is the following letter from Murphy to Garrick (6 March, 1777):—"I began in friendship with you, and I am happy to feel that I end my career in the same sentiments. Jealousies have intervened, but I hope they are vanished from both our minds. From mine they certainly are, and it is with the greatest cordiality I thank you for your extreme politeness upon the last occasion that I shall present myself to the theatrical world. Believe me to be, dear Sir, your admirer, friend, and most obliged humble servant, ARTHUR MURPHY." Garrick wrote the prologue to "*The Apprentice*," one of Murphy's earliest pieces, and the epilogue to "*Know Your Own Mind*," his last, and one of his best. No man had more reasons for subscribing himself Garrick's "*most obliged* servant."

no man had better reason to turn his back upon another. "You must know—to my credit be it spoken—*that Foote hates me,*" he writes to Mrs. Montague under the provocation of a charge of meanness made at the table of a common friend. Yet, when Foote most needed help, all his manifold offences were forgotten, and Garrick stood by him with the most loyal devotion. "There was not a step," says Mr. Forster, "in the preparation of his defence" against the infamous charge trumped up against him by the Duchess of Kingston, "which was not solicitously watched by Garrick." And to Garrick himself Foote wrote about this time:—

> "My dear kind friend, ten thousand thanks for your note! . . . May nothing but halcyon days and nights crown the rest of your life! is the sincere prayer of S. FOOTE."

The iteration of this charge of meanness as to money, in the face of the clearest evidence to the contrary, has influenced even Mr. Forster into lending his countenance to it. In a note to his Essay on Churchill he prints extracts from two letters by Garrick to his brother George, written from Paris immediately after hearing of the poet's death, telling him to put in a claim for money lent to Churchill. "Mr. Wilkes," he writes, "tells me *there is money enough for all his debts, and money besides for his wife, Miss Carr whom he lived with,*" &c. "You'll do what is proper; but put in your claim." "I think," he says, in a subsequent letter, "and am almost sure that Churchill gave me his bond. *I asked him for nothing; he was in distress, and I assisted him.*" It is not easy to see why Mr. Forster should say, as he does, that he "must sorrowfully confess" these letters

"bear out Foote's favourite jokes about his (Garrick's) remarkably strong box, and his very keen regard for its contents." What would he have had Garrick do? Say nothing about his debt at all? Why so, when there was money enough, according to the statement of Churchill's bosom friend Wilkes, to pay everybody, and also to provide for those who were dependent upon Churchill? Perhaps, however, he should have waited for a few weeks in seemly grief for Churchill's death. But why? Garrick had no special cause to mourn for Churchill as a man. He had proved his admiration for his genius by very substantial loans of money on more occasions than one; and it is surely the merest sentimentalism to charge to an undue love of money the fact of his telling his man of business to look after a debt. In matters of business why are poets, or the executors of poets, to be dealt with differently from other people?

Johnson, by some of his hasty sayings, lent countenance to this imputation of parsimony. But at other times he did Garrick justice on this point, and that in very emphatic terms. "Sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views." Again, "He began the world with a great hunger for money; the son of a half-pay officer, bred in a family whose study was to make fourpence do as much as others made fourpence halfpenny do. But when he had got money he was very liberal." Here we get the truth. The well-judged economy of the man, who has his own fortune to make and is resolved to achieve independence, will make him avoid idle expenses in a way

which is odious to the very men who are apt to draw upon his purse when he has filled it by a life of prudent self-denial. "To Foote and such scoundrels," as Reynolds wrote, "who circulated these reports, and to such profligate spendthrifts, prudence is meanness and economy is avarice."

Johnson was not always so just to Garrick in other things. He liked the man, and would suffer no one else to speak ill of him; but he never quite forgave him his success. He was himself still struggling for bare subsistence, long after Garrick had not only become rich and a favourite in the first society in London, but was enjoying an European fame. Johnson was not above being sore at this, and the soreness showed itself in many an explosion of sententious petulance.[1] When, for example, Garrick ventured to suggest some alteration upon the "Irene," which would have given a little more of that life and movement to the scene in which it is so much needed, "Sir," said Johnson, "the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his head and kicking his heels." It was not to be borne that an actor should know better

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[1] "Johnson, with all his genius, had no taste for Garrick's acting; and, with all his virtues, was envious of his riches. This led him very unjustly to say very severe things, which Garrick not unfrequently retorted. . . . . I perfectly recollect the candid answer Garrick once made to my inquiry, why Johnson was so often harsh and unkind in his speeches both to and of him. 'Why, Nine,' he replied, 'it is very natural; is it not to be expected he should be angry, that I, who have so much less merit than he, should have had so much greater success?'"—*Hannah More to her Sister.* "Memoirs," i. 338.

than an author how people were to be interested or moved. "A fellow, sir, who claps a hump on his back and a lump on his leg, and cries, 'I am Richard the Third!'"

Johnson had the lowest idea of the actor's art. He was too shortsighted to see the varying shades of expression on the face, or even to judge of the beauty or fitness of scenic action. He regarded it, therefore, as a mere compound of mimicry and declamation. "I never could conceive," writes Walpole, in his accustomed strain of sublime puppyism, "the marvellous merit of repeating the words of others in one's own language with propriety, however well delivered." Johnson held the same opinion, and was not therefore likely to feel, what is nevertheless true, that higher faculties were required for playing "Lear" or "Richard" as Garrick played them, than for writing plays like "Irene."

"A great actor," as Madame de Stael said of Talma, "becomes the *second author* of his parts by his accents and his physiognomy." For this a kindred gift of imagination is obviously necessary. It is not enough that he shall be master of the arts of expression in voice, feature, and action. He must also be penetrated by the living fire of a vigorous conception. The words to be spoken are *the least part* of his performance. He must have lived into the being of the person he has to portray—have realised the very nature of the man, modified as it would be by the circumstances of his life. Only then is he in a condition to give that completeness to the dramatist's work which words alone cannot convey,—that crowning grace of breathing life which makes the

creatures of the poet's imagination stand out before the common spectator with all the vivid force in which they primarily presented themselves to the poet's mind. A great actor's impersonation is therefore a living poem, harmonious from first to last, rounded and well defined as a piece of sculpture, as finely balanced as a noble strain of music, and it leaves upon the mind the same exquisite impression of completeness. Its details will all be fine. Silence will be more eloquent than speech,—what is *acted* more impressive than what is said—"Each start be nature and each pause be thought."

It was this power of becoming the man he had to play, this rare faculty of imaginative sympathy, which was the secret of Garrick's greatness. It was this which made Madame Necker, no inapt judge,[1] say, in speaking of Shakspeare to her friends in Paris, after she had seen Garrick act—"*Vous n'avez aperçu que son cadavre, mais je l'ai vu, moi, quand son âme animait son corps.*" It was the same quality in Préville which made Garrick say of him, "his genius never appears to more advantage *than when the author leaves him to shift for himself;* it is thus Préville supplies the poet's deficiencies, *and will throw a truth and brilliancy into his character which the author never imagined.*" It was this power which enabled Garrick to move the hearts of thousands in parts which, but for his genius, must have sent an audience to sleep, and which explains Gold-

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[1] Diderot, in his admirable *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, speaks of her as "une femme qui possède tout ce que la pureté d'une âme angélique ajoute à la finesse du goût."

smith's meaning when he says that there were poets who "owed their best fame to his skill,"—a line, the truth and fitness of which those who have seen fine acting will at once recognise. But the actor who can do this does not owe his triumph to study and the accomplishment of art alone. These are, no doubt, indispensable; but he has his inspirations like the poet,—splendid moments, when he becomes the unconscious organ of a power greater than himself. On this subject Garrick himself has spoken:—

"Madame Clairon is so conscious and certain of what she can do, that she never, I believe, had the feelings of the instant come upon her unexpectedly! *but I pronounce that the greatest strokes of genius have been unknown to the actor himself, till circumstances, the warmth of the scene has sprung the mine, as it were, as much to his own surprise as that of his audience.* Thus I make a great difference between a great genius and a good actor. The first will always realise the feelings of his character, and be transported beyond himself; while the other, with great powers and good sense, will give great pleasure to an audience, but never

'pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet,
Ut magus.'" *Garrick Correspondence*, i. 359.

At the root of the genius of great actors, no less than of great poets, lies intense sensibility. Things which other men take coldly will send thrills of exquisite pain or pleasure along their nerves, and the strain on their emotions leaves traces of exhaustion little less than would be caused by real troubles. But this is the very condition of their excellence. "If it was not for the stage," wrote Mrs. Cibber, that great mistress of pathos, to Garrick, a few months before her death, "I could wish, with Lady Townshend, that my nerves were made

of cart-ropes." So, when we read of what Garrick was upon the stage,—of the colour that visibly came and went upon his cheek with the shifting passions of the scene—of the features that in every line became the reflex of the inward emotion—of the voice, whose very character would change to fit the part he was playing,—we may be sure that such qualities implied great physical exhaustion, and great inroads upon health. Accordingly, throughout his life, and even very early in his career, he was so often made ill by his work as to occasion serious anxiety to his friends.

"Hark you, my friend," Warburton writes to him (25th January, 1757), "do not your frequent indispositions say (whatever your doctors may think) *lusisti satis?* . . . . I heartily wish you the re-establishment of your health, but you do not act by it with a conscience. When you enter into those passions which most tear and shatter the human frame, you forget you have a body; your soul comes out, and it is always dagger out of sheath with you."—*Garrick Correspondence*, i. 78.

But it was just Garrick's "conscience" which prevented him from taking his work easy. Whatever wear and tear of body it cost him, "he gave the people of his best" always. Once upon the stage, he resigned himself to the sway of his inspiration, and his whole faculties were at its disposal. To Garrick acting was enjoyment, but no pastime. He told Stockdale that he was never free from trepidation and anxiety before coming on the stage. He had all the modesty and patience of genius, and took as much pains in preparation the last year of his performances as the first. He saw no one on the days he performed, spending them in meditation on the play of the evening; and during the performance

he kept himself aloof from the other actors, still intent on the meditation of his part, and so that the feeling of it might not be disturbed.

Knowing what we now know of the man, and his high estimate of his art, it is impossible to revert without disgust to an incident recorded by Murphy in his "Memoir of Johnson." One night, when Garrick was playing "King Lear," Johnson and Murphy kept up an animated conversation at the sidewing during one of his most important scenes. When Garrick came off the stage he said, "You two talk so loud you destroy all my feelings." "Prithee," replied Johnson, "do not talk of feelings. Punch has no feelings." Of the many recorded outrages of which the great literary bear was guilty none is more inexcusable than this.

"The animated graces of the player," Colley Cibber has well said, "can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that present them, or at best can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators." There are many descriptions, and good ones, of Garrick's acting; but the most vivid pen can sketch but faintly even the outlines of an actor's work, and all the finest touches of his art necessarily perish with the moment. Of Garrick, however, we get some glimpses of a very life-like kind, from the letters of Lichtenberg, the celebrated Hogarthian critic, to his friend Boie.[1] Lichtenberg saw Garrick in the autumn of 1775, when he was about to leave the stage, in Abel Drugger, in Archer in the

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[1] Lichtenberg's "Vermischte Schriften." Göttingen, 1844, vol. iii.

"Beaux Stratagem," in Sir John Brute in the "Provoked Wife," in Hamlet, in Lusignan in Aaron Hill's version of "Zaire," and in Don Leon in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife." He brought to the task of chronicler powers of observation and a critical faculty scarcely second to Lessing's. Every word of what he says has value, but we must be content with translating only a few passages.

"What is it," he writes, "which gives to this man his great superiority? The causes, my friend, are numerous, and very, very much is due to his peculiarly happy organization. . . . . In his entire figure, movements, and bearing, Mr. Garrick has a something which I have seen twice in a modified degree among the few Frenchmen I have known, but which I have never met with among the many Englishmen who have come under my notice. In saying this I mean Frenchmen of middle age, and in good society, of course. If, for example, he turns towards any one with an inclination of the person, it is not the head, not the shoulders, not the feet and arms alone, that are employed, but each combines harmoniously to produce a result that is most agreeable and apt to the situation. When he steps upon the stage, though not moved by fear, hope, jealousy, or other emotion, at once you see him and him alone. He walks and bears himself among the other performers like a man among marionettes. From what I have said, no one will form any idea of Mr. Garrick's deportment, unless he has at some time had his attention arrested by the demeanour of such a well-bred Frenchman as I have indicated, in which case this hint would be the best description. . . . . His stature inclines rather to the under than the middle size, and his figure is thickset. His limbs are charmingly proportioned, and the whole man is put together in the neatest way. The most practised eye cannot detect a flaw about him, either in details, or in ensomble, or in movement. In the latter one is charmed to observe a rich reserve of power, which, as you are aware, when well indicated, is more agreeable than a profuse expenditure of it. There is nothing flurried, or flaccid, or languid about him, and where other actors in the motion of their arms and legs allow themselves a space

of six or more inches on either side of what is graceful, he hits the right thing to a hair, with admirable firmness and certainty. His manner of walking, of shrugging his shoulders, of tucking in his arms, of putting on his hat, at one time pressing it over his eyes, at another pushing it sideways off his forehead, all done with an airy motion of the limbs, as though he were all right hand, is consequently refreshing to witness. One feels one's self vigorous and elastic as one sees the vigour and precision of his movements, and how perfectly at ease he seems to be in every muscle of his body. If I mistake not, his compact figure contributes not a little to this effect. His symmetrically formed limbs taper downward from a robust thigh, closing in the neatest foot you can imagine; and in like manner his muscular arm tapers off into a small hand. What effect this must produce you can easily imagine. . . . . In the scene in 'The Alchemist,' where he has to box, he skips and bounds from one of these well-knit limbs to the other with an agility so amazing, one might say, he moved on air. In the dance, too, in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' he distinguishes himself from all the rest by the elasticity of his movements. When I saw him in this, the audience were so delighted, that they had the bad taste to *encore* their Roscius in it. In his face every one can descry without much physiognomical discernment the bright graceful mind upon the radiant forehead, and the keen observer and man of wit in the quick, sparkling, and frequently roguish eye. There is a significance and vivacity in his very looks which are catching. When he looks grave, so do we, when he wrinkles his brows, we do so too; in his quiet chuckle, and in the friendly air, with which in his asides he seems to make confidants of his audience, there is something so engaging that we rush forward with our whole souls to meet him."

A description like this, aided by the many admirable portraits which exist, enables us to see the very man, not merely as he appeared on the stage, but also as he moved in the brilliant social circle, which he quickened by the vivacity, the drollery, the gallant tenderness to women, and the kindly wit, which made him, in Goldsmith's happy phrase, "the abridgment of all that is pleasant in man." When Lichtenberg saw

Garrick he was fifty-nine. But with such a man, as Kitty Clive had said of herself and him some years before, "What signifies fifty-nine? The public had rather see *the* Garrick and *the* Clive at a hundred and four than any of the moderns." His was a spirit of the kind that keeps at bay the signs of age. "Gout, stone, and sore throat," as he wrote about this period; "yet I am in spirits." To the two first of these he had long been a martyr, and sometimes suffered horribly from the exertion of acting. When he had to play Richard, he told Cradock, "I dread the fight and the fall; I am afterwards in agonies." But the audience saw nothing of this, nor in the heat of the performance was he conscious of it himself.

It is obvious that Lichtenberg at least saw no trace in him of failing power, or of the bodily weakness which had for some time been warning him to retire. He had meditated this for several years; but at last, in 1775, his resolution was taken. His illnesses were growing more frequent and more severe. People were beginning to discuss his age in the papers, and, with execrable taste, a public appeal was made to him by Governor Penn to decide a bet which had been made that he was sixty. "As you have so kindly pulled off my mask," he replied, "it is time for me to make my exit." He had accumulated a large fortune. The actors and actresses with whom his greatest triumphs were associated were either dead or in retirement. Their successors, inferior in all ways, were little to his taste. The worries of management, the ceaseless wrangling with actors and authors which it involved, fretted him

more than ever. He had lived enough for fame, and yearned for freedom and rest. At the end of 1775 he disposed of his interest in Drury Lane to Sheridan, Linley, and Ford. "Now," he wrote, "I shall shake off my chains, and no culprit in a jail-delivery will be happier."

When his resolution to leave the stage was known to be finally taken, there was a rush from all parts, not of England only, but of Europe, to see his last performances. Such were the crowds, that foreigners who had come to England for the purpose were unable to gain admission. While all sorts of grand people were going on their knees to him for a box, with characteristic kindness, he did not forget his humbler friends. An instance of this is before us in the following delightful letter, hitherto unpublished, from Mrs. Clive:—

"Twickenham, June ye 10, 1776.

"A thousand and a thousand and *ten* thousand thanks to my dear Mr. Garrick for his goodness and attention to his Pivy—for the care he took in making her friends happy! Happy! *That* word is not high enough; felicity I think will do much better to express *their* joy when they were to see the Garrick—whom they had never seen before. And yet I must tell you, your dear busy head had like to have ruined your good designs, for you dated your note Monday four o'clock, and to-morrow, you said, was to be the play. And pray, who do you think set it to rights? Why, your blunder-headed Jemy. I did not receive your letter till Wednesday morning; so they was to set out for the play on Thursday; but Jemy pouring over your epistle found out the mistake, and away he flew to Mr. Shirley's with your letter, and the newspaper from the coffee-house, to let the ladies see the play was that day. This was between one and two, and Shirley ordered the horses to the coach that moment, and bid the Misses fly up and dress, for they must go without dinner. Dinner! Lord, they did not want dinner—and away they

went to take up their party, which was Governor Tryon, Lady and daughter. Everything happened right. They got their places without the least trouble or difficulty, and liked everythiug they saw except the *Garrick.* They didn't see much in him. You may reverse it if you please, and assure yourself they liked nothing else. They think themselves under such obligations to me for my goodness to them, that we are all invited to dine there to-day, when I shall give you for my toast.

"I hope my dear Mrs. Garrick is well. I will not say anything about you, for they say you are in such spirits that you intend playing till next September. Adieu, my dear Sir, be assured I am ever yours, "PIVY CLIVE."

Before this letter had reached Garrick's hands—it is endorsed by him as received 12th of June—he had bidden adieu to the stage. On the 10th, the very day his old comrade was proposing him as her "toast," he had gone through that trying ordeal, which, had she been aware of it, would have made her voice choke with emotion. The piece selected was "The Wonder;"[1] and it was announced, with Garrick's usual good taste, simply as a performance for "the benefit of the Theatrical Fund." No gigantic posters, no newspaper puffs clamorously invoked the public interest. The town knew only too well what it was going to lose, and every corner of the theatre was crammed. In his zeal for the charity of which he was the founder, and to which this "mean" man contributed over £5,000, Garrick had written an occasional Prologue, to bespeak the goodwill of his audience in its favour. It has all his wonted vivacity and point, and one line—

[1] Seven years before (24 April, 1769,) Mrs. Clive had bidden adieu to the stage in the same play—Garrick was the *Don Felix* and Mrs. Clive *Flora.*

"A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind"—

has passed into a household phrase. This he spoke as only he could speak such things. He had entire command of his spirits, and he even thought that he never played Don Felix to more advantage. So, at least, he wrote to Madame Necker eight days afterwards; but when it came to taking the last farewell, he adds,—

"I not only lost the use of my voice, but of my limbs, too; it was indeed, as I said, *a most awful moment.* You would not have thought an English audience void of feeling, if you had then seen and heard them. After I had left the stage, and was dead to them, they would not suffer the *petite pièce* to go on; nor would the actors perform, they were so affected; in short, the public was very generous, and I am most grateful."—*Garrick Correspondence*, ii. 161.

To do consciously for the last time what has been the work and the delight of a life would agitate the stoutest heart; but to do it in the face of those whose sympathy has been your best reward, one would suppose almost too much for endurance. That Garrick felt this is plain. His parting words were full of feeling and solemnity:—

"It has been customary," he said, "for persons in my situation to address you in a farewell epilogue. I had the same intention, and turned my thoughts that way; but I found myself then as incapable of writing such an epilogue, as I should be now of speaking it.

"The jingle of rhyme and the language of fiction would but ill suit my present feelings.

"This is to me a very awful moment; it is no less than parting for ever with those from whom I have received the greatest kindness, and upon the spot where that kindness and your favour was enjoyed. (*Here his voice failed him; and he paused, till relieved by tears.*)

"Whatever may be the changes of my future life, the deepest

impression of your kindness will always remain here—here, in my heart, fixed and unutterable.

"I will very readily agree to my successors having more skill and ability for their station, than I have had; but I defy them all to take more uninterrupted pains for your favour, or to be more truly sensible of it, than is your grateful humble servant."

On this "he retired slowly up—up the stage; his eyes fixed upon them with a lingering longing. Then stopped. The shouts of applause from that brilliant amphitheatre were broken by sobs and tears. To his ears were borne from many quarters, 'Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!' The wonderful eyes, still brilliant, were turned wistfully again and again to that sea of sympathetic faces, and at last, with an effort, he tore himself from their view."[1]

And so without fuss or flourish—true genius and gentleman as he was—passed from the stage the greatest actor of modern times. In the short period that was left to him he was as happy as "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," and his own keen relish for social enjoyment could make him. He was courted and caressed by the best, the ablest, the highest in the land. At court he had always been a favourite, and there was a talk of knighting him; this distinction, however, he declined.

"I should never have supposed it to have been of your own seeking," writes Mrs. Pye (15th April, 1777), "for it has ever been remarked to your honour, that you never employed your ample fortune to excite envy and make fools stare, but in the rational and sober enjoyment of life. However, I will not allow you the whole merit of this neither; most men's follies are owing to their wives;

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[1] Fitzgerald's "Life of Garrick," ii. 397.

and you have a wife whose judgment is as near infallible as ever fell to the lot of a mortal."

Another of the countless testimonies to Mrs. Garrick's worth.

One of Johnson's many stupid sayings about Garrick was, "Garrick, sir, has many friends, but no friend." The man who was blest with such a wife wanted no other friend. As the charming Countess Spencer wrote to him (19th December, 1776), "You, I am sure, can neither hear, see, nor understand without her." With such a counsellor and companion by his side, Damon seeks no Pythias. Of friends, in the more restricted sense, no man had more. He seems never to have lost one who was worth the keeping. Pitt and Lyttleton, of whose praise he was so proud in 1741, were strongly attached to him to the end of their days. Lord Chatham, from his retirement at Mount Edgecumbe, in some scholarly lines, invited him to visit

> "A statesman without pow'r and without gall,
> Hating no courtiers, happier than them all;"

and Lord Lyttleton (12th October, 1771) wrote to him:—

"I think I love you more than one of my age ought to do, for at a certain time of life the heart should lose something of its sensibility; but you have called back all mine, and I feel for you as I did for the dearest of my friends in the first warmth of my youth."

So it was with Bishops Newton and Warburton, with Lord Camden, with Burke—to whom he was always "dear David" or "dearest Garrick"—with Hogarth, with Reynolds, and with hosts of others. And indeed a nature so kindly, so sympathetic, so little exacting,

might well endear him to his friends. His very foibles, of which so much has been made, his over-eagerness to please, his little arts of *finesse* to secure the admiration which would have been his without effort, that acting off the stage of him who was "natural, simple, and affecting" upon it, were those of a loveable man. They speak of over-quick sensibility; and, balanced as they were by the finer qualities of generosity, constancy, tact, active goodness, by his wit and unfailing cheerfulness, they must even have helped to make up the charm of his character to those who knew him best.

"Ah," says Cumberland (Memoirs, i. 333), "I could wish the world to believe that they take but a very short and partial estimate of that departed character, who only appreciate him as the best actor in the world. He was more and better than that excellence alone could make him by a thousand estimable qualities; and, much as I enjoyed his company, I have been more gratified by the emanations of his heart than by the sallies of his fancy and imagination."

And then, as Johnson said, "he was the first man in the world for sprightly conversation." "I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table." "His conversation is gay and grotesque. It is a dish of all sorts, and all good things:" a view which Burke incidentally confirms in a letter sending Garrick the present of a turtle, as "a dish fit for one who represents all the solidity of flesh, the volatility of fowl, and the oddness of fish." He shone as a talker, even in Paris, beside D'Holbach, Diderot, Grimm, Marmontel, Helvétius, Beaumarchais, and the rest of that brilliant

circle. Twelve years after Garrick's last visit there Gibbon heard people constantly exclaiming in the best society, with characteristic bnt pardonable vanity, "*Ce M. Garrick était fait pour vivre parmi nous;*" and they claimed a share in his renown by reason of the French blood in his veins.

Garrick did not enjoy his retirement long. While on his wonted Christmas visit to the Spencers at Althorp, in 1778, he was attacked by his old ailment. He hurried back to his honse in the Adelphi, and, after some days of great pain and prostration, died upon the 20th of January following. His death was a national event. His body lay in state for two days; and so great was the crowd, that a military guard was necessary to keep order. His funeral was upon an imposing scale. The line of carriages extended from Charing Cross to Westminster Abbey, and the concourse of people of all ranks along the line of the procession was greater, say the papers of the day, "than ever was remembered on any occasion." Among the pallbearers were Lord Camden, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Spencer, Viscount Palmerston, and Sir W. W. Wynne; and the members of the Literary Club attended in a body, eager to pay the last honours, not less to the friend than to the great actor, who, in Warburton's phrase, had "lent dignity to his art."

There were many sad hearts and many tearful eyes around the grave where "the cheerfulest man in England" was to be laid to his rest. One who had done him much wrong by many an ungracions speech we will believe did penance in that solemn hour. "I saw

old Samuel Johnson," says Cumberland, "standing beside his grave, at the foot of Shakspeare's monument, and bathed in tears." Johnson wrote of his death afterwards as an event that had eclipsed the gaiety of nations. He even offered to write his old pupil's life, if Mrs. Garrick would ask him. But, remembering the many savage slights he had shown to him that was gone, she was not likely to make such a request. It might have been wiser, however, to have done so, than to leave his good name at the mercy of such little-honest chroniclers as Murphy and Davies, whose misrepresentations she despised too much to think them even worthy of her notice.[1]

In October, 1822, at the extreme age of ninety-eight, Mrs. Garrick was found dead in her chair, having lived in full possession of her faculties to the last. For thirty years she would not suffer the room to be opened in which her husband had died. Years wrought no chill in her devotion to his memory. "He never was a husband to me," she said, in her old age, to a friend; "during the thirty years of our marriage he was always my lover!"

She was buried, in her wedding sheets, at the base of Shakspeare's statue, in the same grave which forty-three years before had closed over her "dear Davie."

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[1] "We stopped," says Boswell, speaking of Johnson and himself, "a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, and I said to him with some emotion that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who once lived in the buildings behind us, Topham Beauclerk and Garrick." "Ay, Sir," said he tenderly, "and two such friends as cannot be supplied."

THE DRAMA IN ENGLAND.[1]

(From the Quarterly Review, January, 1872.)

HE Lives of the Kembles by Boaden and Campbell are undoubtedly poor specimens of biography. This may, as the author of these volumes says, be a very good reason why a fresh work on the subject should be written; but, for the same reason, it especially behoves the writer who avails himself of the plea to prove his right to do so by the excellence of his own work. Boaden and Campbell had at least the advantage—a great one in the writers of all biographies, and a paramount one where actors are concerned—of having not merely known both John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons intimately in private life, but studied their performances, and also the performances of a race of high-class actors during a long series of years. Their books, therefore, although overloaded and tedious, are full of authentic informa-

[1] *The Kembles: an Account of the Kemble Family; including the lives of Mrs. Siddons and her brother, John Philip Kemble.* By Percy Fitzgerald, M. A., F. S. A., Author of "The Life of Garrick.' 2 vols. London, 1871.

tion. They have the interest and value of contemporary records, and a tolerably vivid picture can be formed from them of the professional qualities, good and bad, of these great artists, as well as of their personal history and character. Neither are their books destitute of passages distinguished by the graces of good writing, by graphic force, and picturesqueness of style, which it will be wise in no one to overlook who may hereafter have occasion to deal with the same subject. Mr. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, never saw any of the Kemble family, nay, to all appearance never even saw any really great English actor of the higher drama. A man in this position could only hope, therefore, to interest by a broad grasp of his subject, and an unusually vivid power of presenting it. Having no experience of his own to offer, he was bound to justify the intrusion on the public of a fresh book upon the Kembles by literary skill in presenting a compact and brilliant monograph of all the essential facts and characteristic features, which could be gathered from Boaden or Campbell, and the many other sources of information which they either neglected or had not at command. In place of this, Mr. Fitzgerald's work is destitute of every literary merit. It is a jumble of clumsy patchwork, to which paste and scissors have contributed more than deliberate study and workmanlike skill. Whatever new matter has been added is either absolutely worthless, or, as in the case of some hitherto unpublished letters from Mrs. Siddons to Lord and Lady Harcourt, of the most insignificant kind. The book swarms with blunders. Indeed, so habitually

careless is Mr. Fitzgerald, that he is inaccurate even in correcting in the preface the blunders of his text.[1] So little conscious is he, too, of the vitreous character of his own residence, that he throws stones vigorously at others where he is himself most vulnerable. Thus the style of Campbell and Boaden is condemned in his preface with overcharged severity, and this by a writer who, even in his Dedication, sees no absurdity in inscribing to Mr. Sothern this "*history* of the two great *lights* of the English stage, both as a *token* of personal regard, and as a cordial *admirer* of Mr. Sothern's many talents." A gentleman who describes his own "history" of "lights," as at once "a token" of regard, and an "admirer" of talent, scarcely surprises us by an ignorance of the commonplaces of Shakspeare, but in a champion of the poetical drama like Mr. Fitzgerald such ignorance takes one a little aback. And yet he deliberately quotes the phrase, "sound the very bass-string of humility" as an expression of Campbell's, illustrative of the inflation and grotesqueness of his diction! While doing so, moreover, he commits the double blunder of charging upon Campbell the use of these words as his own, which Campbell *avowedly* cites as a quotation *used by Boaden*, and of ignoring the

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[1] Mr. Fitzgerald has only two blunders to correct. It would be easy to swell his errata by scores. One of the two which he admits is the use of the name of Mr. Tom Taylor instead of that of Mr. John Taylor, from whose "Records of my Life," published in 1823, he has borrowed most extensively without acknowledgment; and the other, the omission of an important date, which he says should be 1776, when in fact it was 1775.

fact, that the words drop from Prince Hal in probably the best known of all the scenes in which that "mad wag" figures. (1 Henry IV., Act ii. s. 4.) The same vices of style, and the same untrustworthiness of statement and quotation pervade the whole work, and it will certainly never supplant the volumes of Boaden and Campbell, which it aims at superseding. Instead, however, of pursuing the immediate subject of these volumes, which we reserve for some more worthy occasion, we shall take the opportunity, which they suggest, of presenting some considerations as to the actor's art, and its present state and prospects in England, that may not be without interest or out of place at the present moment.

In the histrionic, as in other arts, there are epochs crowded with great names, and epochs distinguished by few or none; periods of ebb, when genius and skill seem dormant or dead, and periods of flow, when they carry their triumphs to the highest point, and infect the public with their own enthusiasm. It would be strange indeed were it otherwise. We do not marvel that there is no perpetual succession of Van Eycks, Leonardos, Titians, Raffaelles, or Michael Angelos, or that the age of Marlowe, Shakspeare, Chapman, Massinger, Jonson, Ford, and all the noble brotherhood of dramatic writers remains without rival in our literary history. Why, then, should we expect that genius of the highest order in an art which, perhaps more than any other, demands an unusual combination of qualities of body as well as of mind, should show itself otherwise than at

rare intervals? Genius in any art can never be otherwise than rare; and how rare it has been in the actor's art is at once apparent from the comparatively few, whose renown has survived themselves. Polos and Æagros on the Grecian stage, Æsopus and Roscius on the Roman, are almost the only names that have escaped oblivion; and brief indeed is the catalogue of those who have achieved pre-eminence on the modern European stage.

Yet in none of the arts is the influence of individual genius upon the public taste, and also upon the followers of the art itself, at once so necessary and so intimate, as in that of the actor. Literature, sculpture, painting, music, all leave their records. None of these can be without models to emulate, or standards to appeal to, so long as any of their great masterpieces, which have outlived the shock of time, continue to survive. By these it is possible to learn wherein excellence consists, and he who has mastered, however imperfectly, the secret of the charm by which they are pervaded, is in a position to appraise the worth of every fresh effort in the same field. If an age, therefore, were barren in these arts, the love for them might still be kept alive and the public taste be preserved at a high level. But it is not so with the stage. Without the actual presence of genius upon it, the art must languish and the public taste decline. Nor is the reason far to seek. The actor's noblest successes perish with the hour that sees them, with the eyes and hearts on which their spell has been impressed. However vivid the chronicle of his triumphs,—although a pen, dipped in the very

hues of life, should be found to do for each, what Cibber has done for Betterton, Montfort, and Bracegirdle, the impression conveyed can only be vague and phantasmal at the best. Neither pen nor pencil can ever set Betterton or Garrick, Siddons or Kean before us, "in form and moving, express and admirable"—with all that magic of presence, voice, and gesture, of dignity, tenderness, vivacity, and passion, which kindled a soul within the most torpid, or charmed the imagination of the most accomplished of their contemporaries. "To conceive the pleasures," as Cibber has truly said, "arising from such harmony, you must have been present at it—'tis not to be told you." Nor is this all; for not only can we form no satisfactory picture of what these great artists were, but unless we have actually seen great actors, we can form no adequate conception of what their art is capable. Were it otherwise, we should not so often find the highest praise bestowed even by people of culture and intelligence upon acting, which in a better condition of the stage would be barely tolerated. As a "sprawling Verrio" seems to an untutored eye more admirable than a Francia steeped in the beauty of profound but tempered feeling, and in colours of luminous purity, so the showy effects of a style radically false and artificial often meet, for a time at least, with greater success upon the stage than the quiet truth of real gifts and self-respecting artistic power. This must always be expected, for it requires training and exact observation to discriminate between the true and false in all art, and in none more than in that in which the complex

elements of character and emotion are so largely concerned. And how much more must it prevail if there be no living models of excellence by which the judgment of the public may be steadily disciplined?

Nor does the loss to public taste end here; for without "the living comment and interpretation" of fine acting, dramatic literature in its highest forms must be in a great degree a sealed book to us. We may, indeed, think that we see all the significance of a great conception. We may imagine, as so many people obviously do, that actual impersonation will never make us better acquainted with Imogen, Rosalind, Portia, Othello, Macbeth, or Coriolanus, than our own unaided study has done. There can be no greater mistake. Plays are written, not to be read, but to be seen and heard. No reader, be his imagination ever so active, can therefore thoroughly understand a finely conceived character, or a great play, until he has seen them on the stage. The dramatic poet himself may be independent of what it is the office of the stage to perform in giving completeness to his conception, but no one else can be. He knows that words can never paint the passions of the soul, whether in sunshine or in storm, can never suggest the infinitely subtle phases of emotion, like an accent, a gesture, or a look. By the very nature of his genius he feels intuitively where silence is most eloquent, where the passion-charged utterance of the simplest phrase can do more than torrents of imagery; and, as he writes, he fills up the pauses and breaks of emotion with the appropriate look, and tones, and action of his ideal forms. Therefore does he leave

much for the actor to do; knowing well that if he did not, however his dialogues might sparkle, or his periods glow, his work would not be one to move an audience.

Of all dramatists this is true, but it is pre-eminently true of Shakspeare. And herein lies the secret of the unquestionable fact that his plays are, more than all others, the crucial test of an actor's power. None suffer more by bad acting, and none gain more by good. A clever declaimer, or practised player, may produce an impersonation not disagreeable; but kindred genius can alone seize and turn to account the opportunities furnished by the poet to the performer for filling in the tints and shadows which are essential to complete the picture. Such, to all appearance, was the genius of Betterton. What Steele has said of his Othello ("Tatler," No. 167) happily illustrates at once the genius of the actor and the dramatist in the particulars just indicated.

"The wonderful agony which he appeared in when he examined the circumstance of the handkerchief in Othello; the mixture of love that intruded upon his mind, upon the innocent answers Desdemona makes, betrayed in his gesture such a variety and vicissitude of passions, as would admonish a man to be afraid of his own heart, and perfectly convince him that it is to stab it, to admit that worst of daggers—jealousy. *Whoever reads in his closet this admirable scene will find that he cannot, except he has as warm an imagination as Shakspeare himself, find any but dry, incoherent, and broken sentences; but a reader that has seen Betterton act observes, there could not be a word added; that longer speeches had been unnatural, nay, impossible, in Othello's circumstances.*"

Here we see the actor's gift acting as the complement of the poet's genius. A kindred intuition of human

passion and its modes of expression is at the root of the excellence of each. "What knowledge of the human heart does Talma display!" says Madame de Stael, speaking of the life thrown by that great actor into his parts. "He becomes their second anthor by his accents and his physiognomy." It is only when a great drama is dealt with by an actor or actress of whom this can be truly said, that the full meaning of the poet is revealed. And indeed the poet himself will probably be the foremost to admit, that even he had scarcely known the full significance of his work—it being, as all the best work is, spontaneous and unconscious—until it has been presented to him in action. "What is this?" said Murphy, the first time he saw Mrs. Siddons in *Euphrasia*, in his own play of "The Grecian Daughter"—"What is this? I never wrote that scene. It has been added." So hard was it for him to believe that it was only the exquisite life thrown into it by the great actress, which had wrought the delusion. Nor is this an exceptional case merely. "Est-ce bien moi qui ai fait cela?" Voltaire had exclaimed, not many years before, in surprise at the undreamt-of power developed in one of his own scenes by the deep sensibility and splendid declamation of Madame Clairon. The "Vous pleurez, Zaïre!" of Le Kain was no less a revelation to him of a pathos which the words, as they dropped from his pen, had not suggested to himself. And it is no exaggeration to suppose that Shakspeare might have felt in the same way, had he heard the "Prithee, undo this button!" of Garrick in "Lear," or the "Fool, fool, fool!" of the elder Kean's *Othello*. His best critics at least have

been most ready to acknowledge the light cast upon his pages by the actor's genius. Thus, for example, George Steevens writes to Garrick (27th December, 1765): [1]—

"I am contented with the spirit of the author you first taught me to admire; and when I found you could do so much for him, I was naturally curions to know the materials he had supplied you with; and often when I have taken the pen in my hand to try to illustrate a passage, I have thrown it down again with discontent, when I remembered how able you were to *clear that difficulty with a single look, or particular modulation of voice, which a long and laboured paraphrase was insufficient to explain so well.*" [2]

Nor is what we have said true in the case of single phrases, single scenes, or single characters merely. It is perhaps even more true with reference to the comprehension of a great play as a whole. Without the aid of actual representation this is possible only to a vigorous imagination, and a mind trained to continuous and sustained exertion, and even to these only after repeated perusal and elaborate study. But three hours

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[1] "Garrick Correspondence," vol. i. p. 217.

[2] What Cibber says of Mrs. Montfort has been no less true of many of her successors. "Nothing, though ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be flat in her hands. She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and *often made an author vain of his work, that in itself had but little merit.*" In these cases the actor is more than the second author. He is the only real one. Mrs. Jordan, who had often in this way to create "a soul under the ribs of death," once remarked, "Many a character one has to perform is in itself insipid, it all depends upon what you can put into it." This recalls Madame Schwetzine's remark on life, "What you find in life depends on what you bring into it." So a "Merchant of Venice" grows out of a dull Italian tale, and Garrick's "Abel Drugger" convulses an audience with laughter, the possibility of which could never be surmised from reading Jonson's text.

in a theatre, before a company of "well-graced actors," will raise the most unlettered of spectators, and the most unpractised of thinkers, if only he be possessed of ordinary intelligence and sensibility, quite up to the level of the most laborious critic; nay, more, will teach the critic what, if left to himself, he would never have discovered. The pages of a book can never affect the mind so powerfully as a direct appeal by voice and motion to "the very faculties of eyes and ears." Whatever is so presented with the truth of nature supplies, as Coleridge has said, "a species of actual experience." Brain and heart are both moved, and, being so, the spectator is in the mood to meet the poet more than half way. His imagination is aroused, so that the appropriate thought or emotion will be there before the poet's words are spoken; and thus the truth of character and of feeling, and the fitness or beauty of the language, will come home to him as they never can do in the calm and often languid silence of the study. Borne along upon a tide of living sympathy, he follows the development of the plot without an effort, and carries away with him a deep impression of the whole bearing and compass of the poet's design, as of some actual event in which he has himself borne a part.

To infuse this life into the poet's creations by quickening the hearts and imaginations of the multitude is the great actor's vocation. A poet himself in breadth of sympathy, in range and accuracy of observation,[1] and

[1] "My ever dear friend Garrick," says Burke ("Letters on a Regicide Peace") "was the first of actors, because he was the most acute observer of nature I ever saw."

in intensity of feeling, he converts his audience into poets for the time, waking them out of their habitual lethargy, and kindling those sympathies, aspirations, and passions which slumber, often unsurmised by ourselves, beneath the crust of our daily life. Humanity in all its forms is "the haunt and main region" of his working. His business is to find living embodiment and expression for

> "All thoughts, all feelings, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame;"

and to do this in forms stamped with the truth of nature, but modulated at the same time by the subtle graces of art. He must delight, not here and there only by some fine burst of passion, by the power or pathos of some particular speech, by the exquisite finish of some separate scene. If these things fall naturally into his conception, good and well; but he will not go out of his way to catch unintelligent applause by what are technically called "points." These are the cheap triumphs of inferior artists—the "purple patches" of a vicious style. Whatever disturbs the truth and consistency of character or the harmony and proportion of the scenic picture is inexorably rejected by the actor of genius. His aim is not to win applause, dear as that may be to him, but to teach, refine, instruct, and to let men see, if he may, what his own imagination has bodied forth as the ideal of the human being whom he is called upon to represent. Thus the great German actor Schröder could not bear to have it said that he played well at such or such a moment, or spoke well such or such a speech. "Have I played the

part well?" he would say. "Have I been the very person I represented?" And what was Garrick's view? Writing to a French correspondent, he says, "l'art d'un grand acteur est de se faire oublier jusqu'à son nom, quand il paraît sur la scène." And of all the tributes to the excellence of Mrs. Siddons, the highest is that paid to her by a brother actor, Charles Young:—

> "Whatever she touched she ennobled. She never sought by unworthy means to entrap her audience. She disdained to apply to any of the petty resources of trickish minds in order to startle and surprise her hearers. There was no habitual abruptness, no harshness about her. You never caught her slumbering through some scenes in order to produce by contrast an exaggerated effect in others. She neglected nothing. From the first moment to the last she was, according to theatric parlance, '*in the character*.'"

Where this is the measure of excellence to be reached, great actors, it is obvious, must of necessity be few.

"The painter," says Sir J. Reynolds, "first makes himself master of the subject he is to represent, by reading or otherwise, then works his imagination up to a kind of enthusiasm, till he in a degree perceives the whole event, as it were, before his eyes, when, as quick as lightning, he gives his rough sketch on paper or canvas. By this means his work has the air of genius stamped upon it." The actor goes to work in the same way; but his pictures are produced under much severer conditions. Painter, sculptor, or poet may wait for their moments of inspiration. If their sketch fails, they may alter, efface, recast it at will. Not so the actor. His "inevitable hour" comes with the prompter's bell. The stage waits and, ill or well, in the vein or not in the vein, he must begin his work, and this,

too, before inquisitive and critical eyes. His picture must be made to grow before them, touch by touch, finished in its detail, clear in its outline, broad in its general effect. There is no retrieving a false tone or inapt gesture, no recovering an opportunity for expression once missed. Of all these he must be thoroughly master, and yet the very well-spring of his excellence is a sensitive and passionate nature, not easily held in check, and apt to impel him beyond the limits of that reserve which is essential for all artistic work.[1] Tact and taste must go hand in hand with passion. Neither is it from within only that disturbances may come. The finest actor is at the mercy of the blunders or the stupid or vulgar incompetence of those with whom he may find himself on the scene. But not only must he not suffer himself to be put out by these, but he must manage to make his audience forget them also. And how is this to be done, unless, on the one hand, being "of imagination all compact," he can keep his own ideal unfailingly before him, and "be the thing that he foresaw," and unless, on the other hand, the repose of conscious strength have become habitual with him, and the art of gradation intuitive, so that he is able to adapt himself to all contingencies by modifying or varying the details of his impersonation without injury to its general effect?

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[1] "Acting," said Talma, "is a complete paradox; we must possess the power of strong feeling, or we could never command and carry with us the sympathy of a mixed audience in a crowded theatre; but we must, at the same time, control our sensations on the stage, for their indulgence would enfeeble execution."

If, then, there be truth in Milton's aphorism, that "he who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem," it can be no less true that the actor who is to reach the summit of his art must feed his thoughts with "fancies chaste and noble," and live in an atmosphere of culture and refinement. "If I am only a vulgar and ordinary woman," says Clairon, "during twenty of the four-and-twenty hours of the day, whatever effort I may make, I shall be only an ordinary or vulgar woman in Agrippina or Semiramis during the remaining four." How imperative, then, is it that the Portia or Imogen, the Juliet or Desdemona of the stage should bear within herself the reflex of the qualities which diffuse an ideal charm around these pre-eminently attractive among Shakspeare's women! Intrinsic worth and nobleness, a reverent culture to higher than selfish ends of the "gifts that God gives," can alone flower on the stage, as elsewhere, into the perfections of the consummate artist. Given such a combination, with the requisite graces of person, and the result is what Cicero describes Roscius to have been, a man to be looked up to with the highest regard, and as an actor matchless.[1]

The degrees of this excellence must, of necessity, be manifold; but something of it, we may be sure, has always existed in every actor or actress of eminence. They, like the poet, must have been "of imagination all compact." The details of their every-day life may

[1] "Quum artifex ejusmodi sit, ut solus dignus videatur esse qui in scenâ spectetur; tum vir ejusmodi est, ut solus dignus videatur qui eo non accedat. . . . Propter excellentem artem et venustatem videbatur omnino mori non debuisse."—*Oratio pro Quintio*, c. 25.

have been prosaic and commonplace enough, or even equivocal—may not as much be said of innumerable great poets, painters, and musicians?—but when they stepped upon the stage their meaner self slipped from them, and the better something, "the deep poetic voice" within them, which must otherwise have died unheard within their breasts, found a vent in the embodiment of characters in which wit, grace, refinement, vivacity, tenderness, humour, passion, dignity, or pathos were called into play. Of this view of actors and their vocation very little is heard in books, but much of the vanities, the vices, and the Bohemian habits, for which the contemptuous treatment of the art and its followers by the Church and by society during several centuries is, in a great measure, responsible. Scarron and Le Sage have made every one familiar with the seamy side of the actor's life of a former day. The terrible vigour of Churchill, of Hogarth, and of Crabbe have stamped in indelible colours the sordid incidents of the Stroller's life in days not far removed from our own. And even while modern opinion on this subject has become juster and more kindly, literary men have generally been more ready to seize on the grotesque or vulgar aspects of the actor's vocation than to portray the inner life and purpose of those by whom the stage has been conscientiously adopted as an art. For this no ordinary power of artistic sympathy would be required; while it is comparatively easy to dash in the amusing but coarse outlines of a Fotheringay or a Snivellici, a Crummles or a Folair. We recognize the truth of these sketches, just as we acknowledge the truth of Scott's Dick Tinto,

or his Claude Halcro, as excellent examples of the ragged followers who hang on to the skirts of every gentle craft. But the same people who would never dream of accepting these as types of the painter or musician, will yet take their notions of what actors are from the caricatures of Thackeray and Dickens, without pausing to consider that Miss Bunion is not more unlike Mrs. Browning, or Poseidon Hicks more unlike the Laureate, than the players of "Pendennis" and "Nicholas Nickleby" must be unlike an Iffland or a Seydelmann, a Talma or a Macready, a Ristori or a Helen Faucit. Artists who, like these, have worked under a deep sense of the responsibility entailed upon them by their gifts, who have "moved through the vulgar and prosaic accompaniments of their behind-the-scenes existence," as Mrs. Jameson eloquently said of Adelaide Kemble, "without allowing it to trench on the poetry of their conceptions, and thrown themselves upon the sympathy of an excited and admiring public, without being the slave of its caprices," have yet to find their adequate representatives in English works of fiction.

It is, as we have said, one of the difficulties of the great actor, that he is much at the mercy of his fellow-players. If these be stupid or vulgar, though they cannot drag him down to their level, still they can thwart and embarrass him at every turn, and make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to work out his intentions with complete effect. Actors of spurious celebrity may like to surround themselves with foils, in whose ignorance their "skill may stick fiery off indeed." "*Ma femme et cinq poupées*" has indeed been avowed to be the ideal

of a company, and the principle is a favourite one both with bad actors and hand-to-mouth managers. But the genuine artist is never happier than when he is surrounded by ability. He rejoices in emulation with kindred genius; for, although as Bacon has said, "he that seeketh to be eminent amongst able men hath a great task," nothing draws forth true power like collision with power equal or even greater. It was no more than natural for an ill-regulated genius like Edmund Kean, hungry only of applause and of money, to refuse to play side by side with Charles Young, feeling himself overshadowed by that accomplished actor's majestic deportment and sonorous utterance, and, perhaps, more than all, by his thorough finish. But a true artist, with whom his art was paramount and self but a subordinate consideration, would rather have courted the opportunity to vie with him in honourable rivalry, as he would certainly have come out of the struggle with redoubled honour. Mind would have kindled with mind, and flashed out fresh beauties in the play of reciprocal emotion, while the audience would have been swept along in a current of twofold force. It was so, we know, when, in the same play, Mrs. Siddons, her brothers John and Charles Kemble, and Charles Young were seen together.

One fine actor upon the stage amid a crowd of imbeciles is like an admirably painted figure in a group of daubs. Nay, his case is even worse. We may fix our eyes on the single figure, and shut them to the daubs. But we cannot do this in the theatre. For what is the divinest Juliet, if the Romeo under her balcony be a

boor? or what the most chivalrous Othello, if Desdemona be a dowdy? The greater the contrast, the more painfully is our attention called at every turning to their defects—the more surely is our imagination dragged down from the elevation which it would otherwise have kept. But if it be hard for us, the spectators, to believe in the illusion of the scene, when Romeo and Desdemona belie what is said of them by every look and movement and intonation, how much harder must it be, although people never think of this, for the Juliet or Othello of the hour, with such counterparts before them, to infuse the glow of imaginative passion into their impersonations? In truth, we can never see an actor or actress at their best, unless we see them well acted up to, and the whole characters of the play worked out in just harmony and due proportion. Imagine for the moment Mrs. Siddons, with her grand manner, her noble voice and presence, by the side of any Macbeth of our present stage; or the distinction, the force, the exquisite finish of the elder Farren beside the slipshod feebleness of the new school! The broad emphatic style of these great artists will seem as much too highly pitched as that of the others will be unquestionably too low; and instead of a well balanced picture, we shall get one that is out of drawing, and harsh and dissonant in colour.

A general without soldiers, or soldiers without a general, are not, indeed, more helpless than a great actor unsupported by efficient subordinates, or the rank and file of actors without first-class ability at their head. Accordingly, we find that great actors have, as a rulo, been the nucleus of a cluster of able performers. Thus,

Burbage's company, in Shakspeare's day, was a strong one. Betterton, again, was only the foremost in a company, which included, among others of note, his own wife, Mr. and Mrs. Montfort, Kynaston, Sandford, Mrs. Barry, and the charming Anne Bracegirdle ; all of them, according to Cibber, " original masters in their different style, and not mere auricular imitators of one another, which commonly is the highest merit of the middle rank." It may well be doubted whether such a combination of talent has ever since been brought together in an English theatre. Nevertheless, Booth, Garrick, Henderson, the Kembles, Kean, Macready, were all fortunate in having around them a body of thoroughly trained actors, proud of their art, well versed in its traditions, and more or less accustomed to work together.

This was a state of things which very soon became impossible when the principles of free-trade were applied to the drama, and the privileges of the patent theatres were withdrawn. Abolish these, said the reformers, with that irrepressible logic which the facts of human nature so constantly belie, and you will raise the public taste; for then, instead of the sulphurous melodramas on which their audiences are now fed, the minor theatres will devote themselves to plays of a higher class. Abolish them, said the most distinguished veterans of the drama, and you will, before long, make the acting of tragedy and comedy impossible.[1] The actors were

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[1] See " Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Dramatic Literature," presided over by Lord Lytton, then Mr. Edward Lytton-Bulwer, ordered to be printed 2nd August, 1832,

right, for of what avail was it to multiply theatres, and give them the right to perform the higher drama, unless you could also provide actors to keep pace with their demands? These are a commodity not to be turned out in any quantity to order. No amount of demand will produce a corresponding supply. Natural gifts and years of training must go to their production—and the only real training school is a theatre of good actors working together with a pride in their art, and under a system of intelligent discipline. But the change of system made the existence of such schools impossible; for how could such actors of ability and experience as then existed be kept together, when they were being continually bribed away by offers of increased salary and higher rank to the host of competitive theatres which soon afterwards sprang into existence? Companies became of necessity broken up, actors, who by time and practice might have been tutored into excellence, were ruined by being lifted into positions far beyond their powers, every player became a law to himself, the traditions of the art were lost, the discipline

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where Charles Kemble, the elder Matthews, Bartley, and others, will be found in their evidence before the Committee to have predicted, with what events have since shown to be absolute accuracy, the decline of the character of dramatic representations certain to ensue from carrying out the abolition of the patent privileges which was then proposed. Such a step, says Mathews (p. 166), "will in the course of a very short time *brutalize the regular drama.*" "It is not increase of theatres," says Charles Kemble (p. 55), "that will give you an increase of fine actors. The qualifications of a fine actor are a gift that God gives, and they are not to be multiplied as theatres may be."

which distinguished the old theatres was broken down, and the performance of a comedy of character, or of a poetical play, as these used to be presented, became, as the elders of the craft had foretold, simply impossible.

It was natural that in this state of things scenic splendour should, as it did, take the place of careful acting, for the former can always be bought in the market to any extent. Shakspearian revivals, in which poet as well as actor were subordinated to the antiquary, and the *costumier* helped still further to debauch the public taste, and to drive to despair such actors as retained a lingering pride in their vocation; for they knew well that these revivals were aimed at the eyes and not at the souls of the audience, and that superior acting was neither desired by the manager, nor looked for by the public. But what could such devotees to their vocation do? There was no standard to which they could rally, no theatre in which taste, discipline, and a feeling for excellence reigned, and to a place in which they might aspire as the honourable reward of a laborious career. As a necessary consequence, there ceased, after a time, to be even a public to whom they could appeal; for people of culture would no longer attend the theatre, which, to them, had been a place of intellectual enjoyment, when it was given over either to mere spectacle, to imbecility raised by every device of puffing into an ephemeral distinction, or to buffoonery and the attractions of female forms, undraped with an eye to meretricious effect beyond the power even of a Lord Chamberlain to control. Thus it is, that the dramatic profession has become a body without leaders,

without coherence, without purpose, living from hand to mouth, drifting from stage to stage, at the mercy of scrambling adventurers in management, declining day by day in tone and status, and vitiating and being vitiated by the coarse tastes of a vast public, intent only on being excited or amused for the moment upon any terms. Thus it is, too, that while Art in all other departments has flourished, and culture spread, we alone of the European nations are without that most important agent of civilization,—a theatre, in which the glories of our older drama, or any new drama worthy of the name, can be adequately presented. The stages of the metropolitan theatres—and the same is true of the provinces—are, with only the rarest exceptions, given over to melodramas, in which the leading feature is some feat of apparently break-neck gymnastics; burlesques, in which poetry is dragged in the mire; and dramas of so-called real life, which are unconscious burlesques of a more amusing kind, but amusing only by their absurd defiance of every probability.

Dramatic art among us has, in this way, fallen for the time to the lowest ebb. But is it therefore true, what is so often said, that we have no good actors, or that the public taste for the higher drama is dead? Assuredly not. Actors of the highest class we may not have. These are no more to be invoked at will than are "spirits from the vasty deep." But we have many of such ability as, under favourable conditions of discipline and co-operation, might grace a first-class theatre. And why are we to assume that there is no

public for a refined drama? Is the love of the other arts less now than it has ever been? Has poetry a smaller or less sensitive public now than ever? Is the critical appreciation of genius less acute—the delight in its manifestations less intense or less widely diffused? Who will answer these questions in the affirmative? If this be so, why should we not believe that a good drama well acted would meet with an eager recognition like everything else that is good in art? Look at the plays pretending to poetical merit, which delighted our ancestors within the last century. Would these endure the ordeal of a theatre filled with well-educated men and women of the present day? Or would they not at once be doomed to the oblivion into which they have justly fallen, false as they were to nature in their characters and plots, and feeble and flaccid in their diction? But put before the same people a truly fine piece of dramatic workmanship, true to life and character, with a well-developed plot, with the weight of Sir Henry Taylor's thought in its verse, and the subtly dramatic suggestiveness of Browning in the framework of its dialogue; then let all this be brought out by intelligent acting, and it would be certain to meet with a response as sensitive as ever greeted a fine play at any period of our history.

But the actors are wanting that could attract such an audience; and until we get the actors, we shall not get the plays. For what writer capable of constructing a high-class play, more especially of a poetical cast, would entrust its fate to any of our metropolitan theatres? And if this be, as we know it to be, the

feeling of men from whom such dramas might be hoped, can we wonder that the theatres are deserted by the very class to whom good plays well acted would be of all others the most acceptable—the men and women of high culture, for whom the intellectual recreation, which is nowhere to be found in such perfection as in a well-ordered theatre, would be of priceless value? That class was never so numerous as in the present day; and if such a theatre should arise, it would be against all experience of human nature to doubt that a public would be found to fill it, and to fill it more fully and more steadily than any similar theatre ever was filled before. There is now a public for good art as well as for bad; a smaller public, but still a large one. Unhappily, bad art is in the ascendent in our theatres, and the best class of audiences has, as might have been expected, receded from them. Those who alone go there get what they want in that "inexplicable dumb show and noise" which always attracts the multitude; and the careful acting, which "holds the mirror up to nature," is for the moment at a discount. The croakers have therefore the best of it for the time; but those who know anything of the history of the stage will not therefore lose "the grave cheerfulness of a circumspect hope" that better things may be in store for us.

In the drama, as in politics, we are in one of those epochs of transition which are characteristic of a people that has made a vast and rapid development in numbers and in wealth, and among whom the old habits and relations of society are in the course of being broken up. But in point of taste and relish for what is good

and refined, we are no whit behind those who have gone before us. Only good sense and good taste are, as they always must be, in a minority, and in one that is of course obscured by the surging and noisy majority, never bigger or louder than now, of the half-educated and the fools. Fine acting and fine plays were no strangers to the Roman stage in the days of Augustus, yet Horace had the same tale to tell of the popular taste:—

> "Migravit ab aure voluptas
> Nunc omnis ad incertos oculos, et gaudia vana."

A troop of infant phenomena, "an eyrie of young eyases," in Shakspeare's days bore away the bell from such practised players as Burbage, Taylor, Lowin, and their fellows, just as in 1804 a pretty spouting school-boy, in the person of Master Betty, drew larger houses, and created a wilder enthusiasm, than the genius and artistic skill of John Kemble and his distinguished sister ever did. On the English stage from D'Ave-nant's time till now, pantomime, ballet, and spectacle have always filled the manager's exchequer better and longer than the best actors, and they always will draw larger audiences than a company of even ideal excel-lence. They did so when our stage was at its best. They do so now, when they have it nearly all to them-selves. Brains, with the multitude, have no chance against legs, nor the subtle gradations of a fine imper-sonation against the gorgeous splendours of processions and transformation scenes.

But if the multitude whom such things please be greater now than at any former time, so also is the

number greater of those who possess literary culture and the love of what is best in art. Keeping this fact in view, it is well to remember, that there have been times before now when the prospects of the stage looked quite as unpromising. To demonstrate this fully would carry us too far; bnt one illnstration may be given. In the second quarter of the last century, just before the period of our stage's greatest glory, a shrewd observer, whose conclusions are thoroughly borne out by facts, had only such things to say of it as the following. Thus, of the plays [1]—

"All our tragedies are filled with the flagrant crimes of Grecian, Roman, or Turkish tyrants, and our comedies very decently deck'd out with our own bold-face follies and nasty vices."

The tragedians, moreover, he tells us, trusted to tiresome narration rather than to the force of action, or as Johnson expressed it a few years later, "Declamation roar'd whilst passion slept;" and Mrs. Behn, who "fairly puts all characters to bed," was, it could easily be shown, very far from being the only one of the comic writers, who made free use of such strong expedients for mirth.

The managers, of course, come in for a liberal dressing of sarcasm:—

"They don't consider a play as to its merits, the reputation it would bring to their art, or the pleasure or instruction it would give the town. . . . They are less solicitons about this true use of the stage to the world, and the dignity of their profession, than they are

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[1] See "The Taste of the Town, or a Guide to all Publick Diversions," London, 1731, a scarce and amusing volume, invaluable for the light it throws upon the taste and manners of the time.

about filling their pockets in order to enable them to rake, and drink, and gamble, as if they had as much right to those vices as the first men of quality in the kingdom."

Our forefathers were clearly rather worse off in this respect than ourselves; and if the scenic shows of those days were what we should call poor and mean, it was from no lack of will to give them prominence:—

"When the stage is crowded, the greatness of the show casts a mist, as it were, over the eyes of the spectators, and makes the thinnest plot appear full of business. Keep the stage filled thus, you'll instil life and spirit into the dullest play; the passions will never flag, nor the action cool. I have known a tragedy succeed by the irresistible force of a squadron of Turkish turbans and scimetars, and another owe the whole of its merit to the graceful procession of a Mufti and a tribe of priests. A poet who fights cunning will judiciously throw into every act a triumph, a wedding, a funeral, a christening, a feast, or some such spectacle, which must be managed by a multitude. Thus, by a well-disposed succession of crowds in every scene he lies, as it were, safe under cover from all criticism."

The complaint of our author against the actors is, that having too great a variety of characters to play, they cannot play them well. "In acting to perfection, as well as in writing," he says, "a genius is required, and it is impossible for one person truly to form himself in so many different parts." And we can scarcely wonder at his conclusion when the state of the metropolitan companies was such, that the Alexander or Drawcansir of to-night was the Romeo, or Sir Fopling Flutter, or Justice Shallow of to-morrow; or when Lady Macbeth laid down her dagger and crown, to become the next night "the pert jilting chambermaid" of one of Farquhar's comedies. No such complaint can be alleged against our actors in these days. If they fail

it is not from the too great variety, but from the absolute want of variety, in the parts for which they are cast. When a play runs, as plays are now made to do, for two or three hundred nights on end, the monotony of his work must either drive an actor of any sensibility mad, or sink him into irretrievable mannerism. The latter, whether happily or not may be doubted, is apparently the more common result.

The work we have cited was published in 1731, and only ten years later appeared David Garrick, to give practical disproof of the doctrine, that "the genius for acting to perfection" is limited in its scope;—his very earliest performances having made it clear that a truly great actor of tragedy may, and probably will, be a great actor of comedy, even as Shakspeare had demonstrated the theory of Socrates to be true, that "the genius of comedy is the same as that of tragedy, and that the writer of tragedy ought to be a writer of comedy also."[1] But he did what was of infinitely more importance; for by personal example, and by his skill and energy as manager of Drury Lane Theatre, he raised the dramatic art, and the ambition and status of its professors, to a level previously unknown. He had himself, immense as was his popularity from the first, suffered from the shifty and precarious life, which was inevitable where the metropolitan theatres were in

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[1] It will be remembered how the last thing remembered by Aristodemus, the narrator of the "Symposium," was Socrates insisting on this proposition to Aristophanes and Agathon, the rest of the party having been for some time, thanks to Agathon's wine, beyond the reach of argument.

the hands of men who cared nothing for art, and had no principle or purpose in management, but that of making money on any terms. For this state of things there was no cure but the practical one of a theatre conducted on a definite plan, and in which the best actors could be sure of a permanent home. "It is for the interests of the best actors to be together," wrote Garrick to Mrs. Pritchard's husband in 1747, when he entered upon his lesseeship of Drury Lane; neither was it from any fault of his, if they were not kept together down to the close of his lesseeship in 1776. He omitted no opportunity of securing for his theatre whatever, either in plays or actors, could best enable him to keep up the relish in the public for a vigorous intellectual drama. The better the play, the more certain was it of being worthily presented; for with such performers as Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Clive, Miss Pope, Miss Younge, Mrs. Abington, Barry, Mossop, Sheridan, Woodward, King, Smith, Shuter, and Weston, not to mention a host of others of inferior ability, character, passion, pathos, poetry, humour or wit, were more likely to gain than suffer in the rendering. What a scope was here for emulation of the best kind behind the curtain! What a school for taste to the audiences before it! Held together as these admirable artists were, moreover, by a man like Garrick, no less conspicuous for practical sense and a fine critical faculty than for genius as an actor, all that was best in them was brought out as it could never otherwise have been. In his own person he set before them the example of unwearied study in preparation, and scrupulous care

in performance; and the same discipline which he imposed upon himself he enforced upon his company, by careful rehearsals and unwearied efforts to infuse into them the suggestions of his own intelligence and experience. Even performers of great name owed more of their success than their vanity admitted to what was done for them in this way by Garrick. As plain-speaking Kitty Clive wrote to him in 1776:—

> "I have seen you with your magical hammer in your hand endeavouring to beat your ideas into the heads of creatures who had none of their own. . . . There are people now on the stage to whom you gave their consequence; they think themselves very great; now let them go on in their new parts, and they will soon convince the world what their genius is."

However this might be, the public at least were the gainers. The system struck root. Care in study, care in performance, acute and active intelligence brought to bear on the whole business of the scene, the contrast of varied styles of excellence, the constant endeavour to bring out by the best considered experiments in what is technically known as "stage business" all the strength of good dramatic situations, begot a standard of excellence upon the stage of Garrick's theatre, which re-acted upon the public taste, and diffused its influence even to remote provincial stages. Nor was his personal character and intimate relations with the best society without a salutary influence upon the status of actors generally. Junius with his accustomed brutality might denounce him as a "vagabond." But public opinion no longer recognized the force of the epithet. The personal friend of Chatham, Camden, and the Archbishop

of Canterbury might still by statute be a vagabond, but he was not therefore the less a gentleman. He had beaten down by the excellence of his private life, no less than by his genius, the narrow prejudice which had dealt with actors as people beyond the pale of good society; and what he began was made secure by many followers of the art, in whom were found moral worth, well regulated lives, and "all good grace to grace a gentleman." In none were these more conspicuous than in the Kemble family, who so soon after Garrick's departure renewed, under a different phase, the splendours of the actor's art; and continued, in the person of John Kemble, during his management first of Drury Lane and afterwards of Covent Garden, the system of discipline and the standard of prevailing excellence which Garrick had established.

Admirable as John Kemble was in his enthusiasm for his art, he committed, or more probably was forced by the undue size of Covent Garden Theatre into, the mistake of initiating those gorgeous scenic displays, which were immediately copied in a spirit of rivalry at Drury Lane, and which have done so much to degrade the stage as the home of art. So long as scenery and carefully dressed supernumeraries merely illustrate and relieve the action of the scene, it is fit and proper that they should be of the best kind; but when these are carried to the point of "shouldering aside the dramatic interest"—to use Sir W. Scott's happy phrase—the effect is disastrous. Disastrous in all ways,—disastrous to actors, disastrous to public taste, and, as ample experience has proved, disastrous to theatres themselves.

Disastrous to actors, because they feel that they are little better than puppets in the spectacle,—disastrous to the taste of the public, because their eyes and senses, not their brains and hearts, are appealed to; and disastrous to theatres, because the outlay involved can never be compensated. Sooner or later comes the inevitable failure, for "the many-headed beast," though gratified by ever increasing splendour of scenery, and ever multiplying masses of richly attired processionists, gets sated in the end, and turns in disgust from the weary show. We seem to be nearing this stage at the present moment. Even those who formerly applauded what were mistakenly called Shakspearian revivals, have begun to think that it would be better if the carpenter and scene-painter were put into the background, and theatres were forced to rely for attraction upon the development of character and passion; while the much more numerous class, who look to the theatre for intellectual stimulus and refreshment, for wit, character, incident, and poetry, are crying aloud for the establishment of some theatre in the metropolis, where their desire may be gratified, and the languid hours that succeed to a day of hard work may be brightened by the combination of good literature with good acting.

The cry is a natural one—but how to meet it is a problem of no ordinary difficulty. What excellence existed in our theatres in bygone days was, as we have indicated, the slow growth of many years, and of circumstances abnormally happy in the fact of the great presiding minds at the head of the two great metropolitan theatres. It was more easy to dislocate and

ultimately destroy the system under which that excellence flourished, than it can ever be to restore an equivalent for it. The schools for dramatic art are extinct, the traditions of the stage lost, and as these traditions were the results of the observation and experience of the ablest actors through many generations, this is a loss not lightly to be estimated, where the great dramas of our older literature are concerned.[1] Actors, moreover, are united by no common bond. There is no centre to which they can rally, no leader whom they would be content to follow and obey. A theatre is a venture too costly to be risked, upon the mere chance of finding a public sufficiently patient to bear with the shortcomings of such actors as might in the first instance be available for a higher class of drama, for the sake of the good intention shown in the plan on which it was conducted, and until the actors could be got into such excellent working order as might satisfy an educated and fastidious taste. Whoever enters, therefore, upon an enterprise of this sort, must be both content and able to wait. He must be of a spirit, moreover, not easily daunted, for his discouragements from within, as well as from without, will be neither few nor slight. Actors, even in the days of discipline and subordination,

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[1] It is well known, for example, that Betterton used to acknowledge his obligations to Taylor of the Blackfriars Company, and to the elder Lowin; the former of whom was instructed in the character of Hamlet, and the latter in that of Henry VIII. by Shakspeare himself. What Betterton thus learned was transmitted through an unbroken chain to Garrick and Barry, and helped to form their excellence and that of their successors.

were never easy to manage. Like other artists they are apt to be, by temperament, irritable, jealous, and capricious; and, as Sir W. Scott has well said in a letter to his friend Terry ("Lockhart's Life," vol. vii. p. 371), "Jealousy among them is signally active, because their very persons are brought into direct comparison, and from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot they are pitted by the public in express rivalry against each other." So racked and tormented was Garrick by their jealousies and caprice, supplemented as they were, and always will be, by the unreason and caprice of audiences, that he said, "the plagues of management for one year are sufficient to expiate a whole life of sin." These difficulties are not likely to be lighter now, when the internal discipline of theatres has all but disappeared; when, moreover, there is absolutely no standard of excellence to appeal to, and every third and fourth-rate declaimer, or buffoon, is struggling for a front place, and sees no reason why he should not have it. Position and prominence on the stage, as elsewhere, means money value, and in these days when even art among artists becomes subordinate to lust of gain, the theatre is not likely to be exempt from the prevailing vice.

And yet, if we are not to continue calmly under the shame of being without a theatre commensurate with the culture of the age, some effort must be made to overcome these and the other practical difficulties which crowd upon the mind of whosoever is conversant with the condition of the theatrical world. What the other countries of Europe have done surely we can accomplish

in England also. It is true, no doubt, that the superior tone and finish which prevail in the best theatres of France and Germany, are due in a great measure to the fact that being, by reason of the State subventions, less dependent on the caprices of the public taste, they can afford to appeal to a higher culture than theatres which, like ours, must come to a stand-still unless they can attract the general public. Government assistance for any theatre in this country is hopeless; neither is it to be desired, for it would be an injustice to the other theatres from which it was withheld. Some equivalent for it must, however, be found; and for this we may fairly look to that public spirit and private wealth by which so many admirable results are achieved among us. In a country so rich as ours the sum required would be a mere trifle, and it could undoubtedly be found without difficulty. But it is not desirable it should be found, unless the organization of such a theatre as we point at were in other respects complete. The money would most probably be wanted, not in hard cash, but in the shape of a guarantee similar in principle to that under which our two great Exhibitions were constructed. And, on the supposition already put, this guarantee would in all likelihood no more require to be drawn upon in the one case than in the others.

The more perplexing problem, however, is the internal organization; and first as to the actors. Scattered about among the theatres in the metropolis and provinces there are actors and actresses of experience and artistic feeling, who, for the chance of finding a home in a high-

class metropolitan theatre—where they were sure of being treated with the courtesy and consideration due to the members of a liberal profession—would, no doubt, be content to make present sacrifices both in income and in nominal position. If these were brought together for the purpose of playing pure drama, where they could be assured of a permanent position as the result of proved ability and conscientious industry, and subjected to a distinct code of rules as to precedence, and to a stringent discipline as to rehearsals and performance, similar to those which prevail in the *Comédie Française*, the foundation would, at all events, be laid for that system of co-operation on which, much more than actual genius in the actors themselves, the charm rests of the performances at that theatre. We should get rid, under this state of things, of the ignorance, the slovenliness, the vulgarity, the want of harmony and proportion, with which our stage is too familiar. Each would do his best, not only for himself, but for the general effect. Care and thought would be felt throughout, and a general level of excellence be achieved, which would sustain the illusion and gratify the taste. In time, doubtless, higher merits would be developed. Genius would arise, and be of necessity attracted to a theatre of this stamp. Acting would be dealt with as an art by its professors, an art for the study of which, as Barton Booth said, the longest life is too short: and in the end audiences would also learn to appreciate this truth, and bring the force of intelligent criticism to bear upon the performers. The theatre would then become to the spectators, as it ought to be,

not merely the pastime of an idle hour, but a place of study, a whetstone of the imagination and the sympathies, a revealer of the secret springs of character and emotion, and of the subtler beauties of our finest poetry. They would learn at the same time to appreciate the niceties and the difficulties of histrionic art, and by their knowledge be enabled to stimulate merit, and rebuke defect or carelessness, instead of encouraging, as audiences too often do at present, whatever is most false in conception, and meretricious in style. Good actors will not exist without intelligent audiences; and if things are bad upon the stage it is quite as often the audience as the actors who are to blame.

But assuming, as may fairly be done, that a theatre and actors such as we have indicated may both be found, still they will be found to no purpose, unless at the same time some presiding spirit can be found to take the command of both, and to exercise it with forethought and firmness. Herein, as it seems to us, lies the crucial difficulty; for it is obvious that, for the manager of such an establishment, a combination is required of such qualities as must at all times be hard to find. An actor he must not be, nor allied to actors, for he must be neither liable to the temptations of personal vanity, nor open to the suspicion of partiality. With a Garrick, a Kemble, or a Macready in the field this requisite might be dispensed with, but even in their case the fact that they were actors was a positive drawback to them as managers. With any actor of less pre-eminent power, the condition should be absolute. But, though not an actor he must be a good

judge of acting, for on him the selection and discipline of the troops with which he has to conduct his campaign must rest. A man of broad and catholic literary taste he must also be,—not wedded to one form of the drama, but open to recognize the real merits of all which deal with actual life and character, as well as with the higher spiritual life and reality of poetical conception. He must be able to cater for all tastes, so that only they are pure and healthy. Artistic feeling for beauty, symmetry, and proportion should be instinctive with him, to enable him to decide on just that amount of scenic illustration, and fulness of *mise en scène*, which should set off, but not encroach upon, the actor's work. He should also be conspicuous for *savoir-faire*, and force of character, for he has to govern men and women, sensitive in temperament, and jealous of their position, who will never surrender their own whims and vanities except to a determined will, wise-timed tact, and acknowledged purity of intention. Practical business habits will be no less essential to establish the completeness of organization, and to control the ever-recurring proclivity to waste, always predominant enough in every sphere, but never more so than in a theatre.

For these and other minor qualities, on which it is unnecessary to dilate, it would be idle to seek among any theatrical managers of the present day. Of them it may be said, as a race, that their only aim is to fill their theatre at the smallest cost, without regard to the quality of the attraction. They will follow any vicious public taste, but have no ambition to correct or elevate

it. As to any settled policy—either as to the actors they enlist, or the class of pieces they produce, this, except in the rarest instances, is never dreamed of. Where a different system has prevailed, and good pieces, carefully acted and placed upon the stage, have been the rule, as in the case of the *Prince of Wales's Theatre*, the best results have followed. Actors, audience, and manager have all gained, and this to an extent which justifies the warmest hopes for any theatre, where the same rule shall be applied upon a wider scale, and with a higher aim. There, the effort has been proportioned to the available means. The plays are good of their kind, the actors equal to the arena they have to work in, and the tasks committed to their care; and the harmonious and agreeable effect which results delights a not too exacting audience, and fills the manager's exchequer. Apply the same methods on a higher scale, and there can be no question that similar results will ensue. Act Shakspeare, for example, in such a way that the audience shall, as Shakspeare expected them to do, "work their thoughts" to eke out the inevitable imperfections of all scenic representation:—do not make the poet's work a mere vehicle for the scene-painter's and costumier's art, and drown all imaginative sympathy in the confusion and noise of elaborate scenery and awkward supernumeraries—let intellect and imagination have full play, and keep mere physical stimulus in the back-ground, and even Shakspeare will not "spell ruin," which managers, who have no idea of Shakspeare or of any other writer above the level of a Boucicault or a Halliday, are so

fond of telling the world that he does. Presented as they present him, how should he spell anything but ruin? Without one actor or actress who knows the value of a blank verse line, not to speak of their inability to form the feeblest conception of a Prospero, or a Miranda, a Constance, or a King John—what but failure must ensue on an attempt to embody in the grossest material forms, and with the clumsiest emphasis, the subtle spirit of the finest poetry?

Such a manager as we aim at will follow no such impracticable course. He will proportion his ends to his means, and never commit the absurdity of producing the plays of Shakspeare or of any other first-class dramatist, until he is sure of artists equal to the task, or at least in thorough sympathy with it. Below this line a whole world of excellent dramas exists, or may be created, for which the necessary gifts in actor or actress either exist, or may very readily be cultivated. Higher work will come in time; if the conditions for its development can only be established and permanently maintained. The dramatic instinct will not die out of men, as long as the race survives. The dignity of the actor's art was never more sure of a recognition from the public, than it is at this moment. Make it in its practical exercise—and this is now merely a question of the internal arrangement of theatres, and of theatrical management—a vocation which men and women of education and pure habits can pursue without forfeiture of self-respect, and the ranks of the profession will speedily be recruited by persons of ability and character, who would in time

drive into their fitting obscurity the incapacity and unseemly impudence which disgrace so many of our stages. But there is, we are assured, only one way of doing this, and it is by giving our artists a fit arena for the exercise of their art in a theatre where the artistic spirit reigns, and where intelligence and high principle are at the head of affairs. Let such a theatre be once firmly established, and there need be no fear that England will yet be as famous for her acted, as she is for her written drama.

But everything, as we have said, will and must depend on the governing mind which shall undertake the office of controlling and directing such a theatre as we have indicated. To find it must be difficult; impossible, we cannot believe. The first step towards supplying a want is to recognize it. Let this be fairly seen and understood, and we feel confident that those, who are now agitating to remove from us the reproach of a degraded stage, will find some one who may combine, if not all, at least most of the essential qualities for the task. But there must be no division of responsibility, no limitation of his power, no interference by committees of consultation or of any other kind. These can lead only to jobbing, to confusion, to vacillation and ultimate failure. The principle of a limited monarchy is as inapplicable to the administration of a theatre as that of a republic. It is like a great family, or a great army, where the central authority must be absolute, and the only safeguard is the decisive action of an intelligent despot. Without such a head the

complicated machine will inevitably fall out of gear. But invest the leader with full powers, and he will be unfit indeed for his place if he cannot select wisely his own staff for either counsel or action.

THE END.

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