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Vol. 4

ROUND ABOUT THE FRENCH STAGE.

A FAMOUS ACTRESS.

(FROM OUR PARIS CORRESPONDENT.)

Adrienne Lecouvreur was born in 1690, at Fismes, between Rheims and Soissons, whence she came quite young to Paris with her father, a poor hatter, who set up shop in the Faubourg-St.-Germain, near the Comédie-Française, then established in the Rue des Fossés-St.-Germain-des-Prés. According to the Abbé D'Allainval, author of *L'Ecole des Bourgeois*, one of the best French comedies produced in the eighteenth century, the little girl showed her dramatic talent "from infancy," her clever recitations having opened the doors of the best houses in Fismes to the budding artist. In Paris her first calling was that of a laundress; but, living close to the Français, her taste for the stage soon developed itself, and in 1705, when scarcely fifteen, Adrienne joined an amateur society, taking part in a performance of *Polyeucte*, given in a grocer's shop in the Rue Féron, which created so much sensation that President Lejay invited the young troupe to appear at his mansion. The highest Parisian society, and even the artists of the Français, flocked to witness the representations, and the juvenile tragédienne obtained great success. One of the spectators—Legrand, the actor-author—was so struck with the girl's talent that he undertook her dramatic education; but, although a clever man, he was a very poor comedian, and it is unlikely that she derived much profit from his tuition. More probable is it that—to use D'Allainval's expression—Adrienne "created herself" and learned the business of her profession when touring in the provinces. For the vogue obtained by the amateur company having excited jealousy at the Français, its performances were interdicted, and Adrienne was offered an engagement at Strasbourg, which she accepted. Her triumphs there and in other cities of Alsace-Lorraine ultimately created noise enough to have the young actress recalled to Paris, and she entered the Comédie-Française in 1717, making her début not, as D'Allainval says, in the rôle of Monime, but in that of Electre, in Crébillon's tragedy. The same evening *Georges Dandin* was performed, and it is likely that Adrienne appeared in this piece as Angélique, a part which always figured in her repertory afterwards. Not only was it then the custom for débutants to give a taste of their quality in tragedy as well as in comedy the same day, but all the good actresses of the period pretended to be able to set spectators laughing after melting them to tears. A portrait preserved in the foyer of the Français, that of Mdlle. Desmares, bears witness to this harmless vanity. She is represented with the tragic dagger and comic mask in her hands, emblems of her dramatic aptitudes. In all probability, therefore, Adrienne, adhering to the tradition, displayed her talent as tragédienne and comédienne on her first appearance.

Adrienne Lecouvreur, then in her twenty-seventh year, was rather below middle height, and by no means a beauty; she had fine, bright eyes, a pretty mouth, an aquiline nose, her head was well set on graceful shoulders, and although very slight in figure she did not appear thin; her bearing was dignified, her movements and gestures particularly elegant. As to her voice, our only authority is Sticotti, the Italian actor, who in his work on "Garrick et les Acteurs anglais," says it was soft and sweet, but weak, adding that she imparted to it "a hollow sound whence she derived the truthful expression which the others lose in imitating her." This hollow sound must have been her natural organ, of which she knew how to make the best use, for no tragedian could attain truthful expression with an artificial voice. We should note, too, that "the others" imitated Adrienne, and people do not imitate what does not succeed. Her diction was not, however, perfect at first; the pronunciation was defective, and although she understood the true sense of the words in her rôles, she spoke them in such a way that they lost some of their value. It was Dumarsais, the celebrated grammarian, who pointed out her shortcomings in this respect to the young actress, and, although she was already all the rage, Adrienne set herself under his guidance to correct them, a remarkable example of artistic conscientiousness and docility which modern actors and actresses would do well to follow. At that period good pronunciation was a matter of great importance on the French stage, the artistes of the Comédie-Française being looked up to as authorities on the subject. Nowadays, even at our first theatre, this tradition is scarcely respected, while on other Parisian stages diction grows more slipslop with every new piece. There can be no doubt that, although Adrienne's débuts were triumphant, the famous actress did not attain the pinnacle of her success until she had studied laboriously and long under Dumarsais's guidance. Truth to nature, simplicity and passion were her leading qualities. In [illegible] talent was questioned, although with apparent injustice, for we have much weighty testimony to her brilliant accomplishments in this branch, and in such esteem was she held by the authors that it was to her Marivaux confided the rôle of the Comtesse in *La Surprise de l'Amour*. True, the piece failed, and there were people who pretended that Adrienne was responsible for its fall, which, they said, she brought about through sheer malice. Sticotti, already mentioned, specifies this imputation very clearly. "Lecouvreur," he says, "is stated to have laughed with the pit at any pieces that did not make a hit, contributing to their downfall instead of sustaining them; she courted the pittites at the expense of the authors. In this way all the pieces in which she played failed, whatever may have been her talent." It is only fair to add that the *Mercure* proclaimed Adrienne excellent in *La Surprise de l'Amour*, and that, contrary to Sticotti's assertion, most of the pieces in which she appeared drew the best houses. The Italian actor was probably a calumniator, and I think we may take it for granted that Adrienne was an excellent comédienne. About her talent in tragedy there can be no doubt whatever, documentary evidence abounding in her favour, books, gazettes, correspondence, traditions. The poets were unanimous in placing her in the first rank of tragic actresses. "She deserves the glory," says *Le Mercure* (1730), "of having introduced simple, noble, and natural declamation, and of having banished the sing-song style." "She expressed passion admirably," says *Le Parnasse Français*, "going straight to the spectator's heart, with art so perfect as to become nature itself."

Adrienne's career at the Français lasted for only thirteen years, and if during that period she obtained every possible success on the stage, her charms triumphed irresistibly in private life. No actress has inspired more violent passions. "Adrienne Lecouvreur," says M. Arsène Houssaye, "passed her existence in loving—from Legrand, the actor, to the Chevalier de Rohan, from the Chevalier de Rohan to the poet Voltaire, from the poet Voltaire to Lord Peterborough, from Lord Peterborough to Marshal de Saxe—without counting the father of her first daughter, or mentioning that of her second, for if we were to search well we should find, it seems, several descendants of the illustrious actress, for instance, Francœur, the mathematician. * * * It was not the stage that enriched Mdlle. Lecouvreur. She did not disdain the golden shower. She could say, like Marion Delorme, 'I take when I have nothing to give;' in other words, when she could only give the mask of love, but, at least, it was a charming mask. 'Come, madame,' Lord Peterborough said to her, 'show me plenty of love and plenty of wit!' and she displayed abundance of both, but her heart did not beat until his lordship had left." Voltaire, who was not in the habit of divulging his amorous secrets, made no concealment of his love for Adrienne. In many of his letters he expresses, not only his great admiration for the tragédienne, but the tenderest feelings towards her, and when her remains were refused Christian burial, his indignation prompted, perhaps, the only emotional verses he ever penned.

Adrienne's rapid triumphs had made for her too many admirers among the public not to create the envy of her comrades. It seems that she paid very little attention to the regulations of the theatre, as the implacable registers of the Comédie abound in notes like the following:—Mdlle. Lecouvreur fined for not beginning in time; twice in *Rhadamiste* for keeping the stage waiting; twice at the rehearsal of *La Foire de Bezons*; for not commencing *Les Horaces* in time; fined six livres for not donning the gown in the ceremony of *Le Malade Imaginaire*. Every time *Le Malade* was played she appears to have been fined the maximum penalty, but her aversion to the doctor's gown has often been shared by young actresses. Régnier says that during the forty years he spent at the Français they almost invariably refused to assume the unbecoming garment. "Only," he adds, "we did not fine the delinquents, but simply read them a lecture, at which they usually laughed." Towards Adrienne, however, the utmost severity was shown, and from her début many of her comrades regarded her with animosity—nay, with hatred. One of them discovered the word *couleuvre* (snake) as the anagram of her name, and pretended that it proved the obliquity of her character! Another came to read to the committee a piece written against her, which was accepted immediately, and would have been played if her friends had not been influential enough to have the scandalous performance interdicted. This enmity had almost disappeared, however, when Adrienne died, after five days' illness, on March 20th, 1730. Her sudden death gave rise to rumours of poisoning, but suspicion never attached to the actors. It fell, as all are aware who have seen Scribe and Legouvé's well-known drama, on the Duchesse de Bouillon, and about this legend I must say a few words.

The [illegible] eur's many lovers was the celebrated Marshal Maurice de Saxe. When, in 1726, the States of Courland elected him their sovereign, he allowed his mistress to sell her jewels and plate in order to supply him with the sinews of war in his struggle against Russia and Poland. She sent him 40,000 livres, or francs, and after a year's gallant resistance to superior forces, he returned to France utterly vanquished, but the hero of the hour. All the frisky matrons of Paris—which was even more licentious then than now—ran after him, and among them the Duchesse de Bouillon, a daughter of Prince Sobieski. He treated her with disdain, and the Duchesse, attributing this defeat to Adrienne, sought a means of poisoning the actress. The nefarious plot was revealed, however, by the person that was to have been its instrument—a priest, who suddenly disappeared in a most mysterious way—and, some time afterwards, the Duchesse appeared in a stage box during a performance of *Phèdre*. Adrienne, on perceiving her, could not restrain her anger. In the third act Phèdre says to Œnone—

> Je sais mes perfidies,
> Œnone, et ne suis point de ces femmes hardies,
> Qui, goûtant dans le crime une tranquille paix,
> Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais.

Instead of addressing these lines to her confidante the tragédienne turned to the Duchesse, and the public, seeing the allusion, applauded vociferously. Soon after this incident the actress was taken suddenly ill, and her death, which occurred almost immediately, was forthwith attributed to Madame de Bouillon. The fact is that the Duchesse had no hand in the catastrophe. An autopsy established beyond doubt that Adrienne succumbed to inflammation of the bowels, a malady to which she was subject, which, moreover, had nearly carried her off five years previously. Voltaire, who never left her room during her illness, and in whose arms she expired, always attested that this was the true explanation of her sudden end. The popular rumour, he said, had no foundation. Consequently the legend of the poisoned rose, propagated far and wide by the play, is to be taken for what it is worth.

On the day of her death Adrienne received a visit from the vicar of St. Sulpice. "I know what brings you," she said, "but you need not be uneasy; I have not forgotten your poor in my will." Then stretching forth her arms towards the bust of Maurice de Saxe, she exclaimed, "Behold my universe, my hope, my gods!" The vicar asked her to make a formal renunciation of her profession, but she would not allow him to continue, and he had to withdraw. She bequeathed 2,000 livres to the church of St. Sulpice; nevertheless, its curé not only refused Christian burial to her remains, but would not allow their interment in that part of the cemetery reserved for unbaptised children. It needed an order from the lieutenant of police to obtain a last resting-place for the brilliant actress on the banks of the Seine, and one only of her friends was authorised to pay her the final tribute of respect. In the middle of the night he had her body transported to the river side, near the spot where the Pont de la Concorde now stands, and, two porters having dug a trench, the coffin was hurriedly thrown into it. Almost at the same moment the honour of interment in Westminster Abbey was accorded to the remains of Ann Oldfield!

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P. M. B.
Aug 2. '94.

AT a private house the other day, I had the pleasure of witnessing a very novel, artistic, and amusing mimetic performance. I don't know how else to designate it; for it was not a recitation, it was more than mere mimicry. and although it was in a sense a monologue, it did not at all resemble the monologues to which the Coquelins and other French actors have accustomed us. The performer was Miss Beatrice Herford, daughter of the Rev. Brooke Herford of Boston, Mass. Without costume or accessories of any sort, this young lady presented to us two American character-types—the haughty shop-girl and the irrepressible book-agent—with a fidelity of observation and a [illegible] work on a high level of realistic art.

LYCEUM—SATURDAY NIGHT.

There is room for the exercise of all the arts of the theatre in the subject of the play that is the latest addition to Mr. Henry Irving's repertory. The mention of the name of King Arthur is suggestive of poetry and romance, of enchanting scenes, of valorous deeds, and noble characters. Author, actor, scenic artist, they may all find in it the aim of their ambition. To us of the *Referee* the story of King Arthur is certainly not less dear than to others. The title of Pendragon is held by us in great affection; we feel quite a personal interest in the appearance of Dagonet on the stage; and if we miss from the cast of Mr. Comyns Carr's play some other Knights of the Round Table whose names are familiar to the readers of this paper, it may be that the author has had to pack so much into his play that there is no room for them. It has been announced with authority that Mr. Comyns Carr has taken his story straight from the old Arthurian romances of Sir Thomas Malory, and it is but natural that Mr. Carr, in attempting to tell the story again in verse, should wish to avoid the charge of turning a great poet's gold into small change. Yet the playgoer who knows his Tennyson by heart, and Malory only by name, will find himself for the most part on well-known ground, and now and then the poet's lines will be brought to mind, not so much by the action of the play, as by the scenery, which realises to perfection some of the most beautiful passages of the "Idylls of the King." It is simply impossible for an Englishman to think of King Arthur apart from Tennyson, from whom the faultless knight received new life; but since Mr. Carr only acknowledges his obligations to the antique, it may be remarked that the stories are in details very much the same in Tennyson and in Malory. Now Mr. Carr gives many a new turn to the legend; he brings the separate tales into one compact narrative; he complicates one story with another, and invents, or finds, dramatic situations for the purpose of his plot. It could not be permitted, of course, to a dramatist to run on in the leisurely way of the old story-teller, even if he added to his art the graces of the poet.

The play is written in blank verse, and if we have nothing to say against Mr. Carr's verse we cannot think of anything else to say in its favour. The gift of imagination is more freely exercised in the arrangement of the scenes. In the prologue, which passes beside the Magic Mere, Arthur receives the great brand Excalibur from the Spirit of the Lake. This is Mr. Irving's scene, and there was a thunder of applause when the curtain fell. When it rose again King Arthur was no longer pressing the blade to his lips, but stood with the sword defiantly aloft. There are many such stirring tableaux in the course of the play. Indeed, it is so contrived that each act ends with a striking picture. "The Holy Grail" is the subject of the first of the four acts of the play, and the scene is laid in the Great Hall at Camelot. The Knights of the Table Round are preparing to start in quest of the Holy Grail, and the moment of their departure is ill timed, for there are rumours of conspiracy against the King, concerning whom it has been prophesied that "He whose hand should strike at Arthur's heart, On May-day must be born." The latter condition has been fulfilled by Mordred, who is already intriguing with his mother, Morgan Le Fay, to accomplish the first. The peerless Lancelot designs to join the quest, and we get a momentary suggestion of "The great and guilty love he bare the Queen," if we may be excused once more for quoting Tennyson, "In battle with the love he bare his lord," but after this Lancelot is turned from his purpose by the Queen, urged to it by Arthur. It is possible that the author intends these scenes as an excuse for the cruel deceit they practise, but in their subsequent conduct there is no sign of regret for their despicable treachery to Arthur. The arrival of Elaine, newly come from Astolat to crave an audience of the Queen, does not help that forlorn maiden in her love for Lancelot; and when Guinevere questions him, she learns of his guilty passion, and the Queen confesses to her love for him. After that, the sage Merlin—who has a provoking way of speaking in short rhymed couplets—when he is asked by the King to decide whether Lancelot shall go or stay, thus makes reply :—

> Fate doth answer Yea or Nay,
> Love shall bid him go or stay;
> Love the best, or love the worst,
> Holiest love, or love accurst.

But King Arthur is for plainer speech, and when the knights file out at the end of the act they go without Lancelot. "The Queen's Maying," which forms the matter of the next act, simply shows how the love of Lancelot and Guinevere progresses, though the reader, of course, need not be under any apprehension that the author has taken from Malory the wicked adventure which, if we are not mistaken, comes under [illegible]

The scene of the third act is a vaulted chamber opening on the river, where the Knights of the Round Table are dis-

cussing the evidence of the conspiracy against the King, of which no sign has yet reached the guileless and confiding Arthur. Here Mordred reveals himself for the villain he is, and defies Lancelot to betray him to the King :—

I dare thy worst!
Yet breathe one word and I will tell a tale
Shall make thee cower like a beaten hound.

Pretty language this to address to the proudest knight of them all! But Mordred has Lancelot, to use a homely phrase, under his thumb, for the traitor, as Mr. Carr poetically puts it, has seen the brave knight and the Queen, "lip to lip, cuddling beneath the may." The scandal is revealed to Arthur when the body of Elaine, who died of love, is brought in on a bier with a letter in her hand addressed to Guinevere, and an exciting scene between Arthur and Lancelot is interrupted by the Queen, who, making a full confession, falls, humiliated, at his feet, and lies there prone till the news is brought of the rising against the King, when he goes off at the head of his knights to fight.

In the last act, the Queen is in prison at Camelot, and in an interview with Dagonet, who tells her of a grave he has seen, she philosophises concerning life in a soaring speech that may be quoted as an example of Mr. Carr at his best. Thus Guinevere :—

I'll tell thee then,
This grave I think was Guinevere's, who died
The hour when she was born; and these two Queens,
Who through the night keep watch beside her tomb,
Are but her shadows fashioned for the masque
Which men call life; poor puppets that must dance
While unseen fingers touch the trembling strings;
But whence the music comes, from Heaven or Hell,
There's none shall say till all life's lamps burn out,
And Death stands forth to claim the harper's fee.

From the prison the scene changes to the Great Hall of Camelot, and Guinevere stands before the throne on which Mordred now sits. She is charged with the death of Arthur, and condemned to the stake unless some champion will do battle for her cause. It is Arthur, not dead yet, who takes up the challenge, and meets his death at Mordred's hands in single combat. This is but one of Mr. Carr's new ideas, for Mordred and Lancelot, too, find their end, Lancelot dying, we are told, as he struck the other down; whilst Guinevere arrives on the scene just in time to recognise the King and to proclaim, "He's gone, the light of all the world lies dead!" Then the stage darkens, and at the back a beautiful vision is seen of the wounded King, in the black barge, attended by the three queens, sailing away to the sweet isle of Avalon.

If we have given the story, scene by scene, as the author has told it, it is because the story is everything with Mr. Carr. In making the amours of Lancelot and Guinevere the main issue of the play, Mr. Carr misses the poetry of the Arthurian legend, but the setting of the play gives a touch of beauty to a story that is, if you choose to look at it closely, one of unredeemed infamy. Pictorially there has been nothing to equal "King Arthur" ever seen on the stage of the Lyceum. The costumes are rich and superb, and the visions are in the very highest degree impressive. The scene of the Queen's Maying is a masterpiece of landscape by Mr. Hawes Craven. The wood, with the may in blossom, seems to stretch far into the distance, and the many roads by which the characters come and go help to sustain a remarkable illusion of indefinite space. The vision of the Passing of Arthur is wonderfully realised, and it brings the piece serenely to a conclusion. The seductive music expressly composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan adds a finishing touch to the delights of a wonderful production. The part of King Arthur cannot be numbered among Mr. Irving's most notable achievements; indeed, it makes no great call upon the powers of the actor, for the great spirit of Arthur finds but slight expression in the action of the piece, and it is beyond even the genius of Mr. Irving to give dignity to the character of the duped husband, who is cheated by everybody and imposed upon all round. There were, however, moments of fire and moments of tenderness in the performance. Miss Ellen Terry gives to the character of Guinevere a sweetness and graciousness that succeed in obtaining the sympathy of the audience for the shameless Queen. The great thing of the play is Mr. Forbes Robertson's Lancelot. Mr. Irving has given Mr. Robertson a splendid chance, and the actor makes splendid use of it. He looks like a picture—by Sir E. Burne-Jones—come to life, and his incomparable voice never stirred an audience more deeply than it did in the delivery of his lines. His performance of Lancelot is the perfection of acting, and it is one of the things that will make the production of "King Arthur" memorable. Another striking success was Miss Lena Ashwell's Elaine. It was sweetness and purity personified, and her performance advances this young actress yet another step. Miss Genevieve Ward played Morgan Le Fay; Mr. Frank Cooper was Mordred, and Mr. Harvey played Dagonet. It is perhaps not this jester's fault that his fooling is as that of the Shakespearean clown. Other parts were well played, and although it was past midnight before the performance was over, the company and the author were called before the curtain, and in a brief speech Mr. Irving graciously acknowledged his obligations to the audience.

"KING ARTHUR" AT THE LYCEUM.

A BRILLIANT FIRST NIGHT.

"King Arthur" was sure of a brave reception at the Lyceum last night. Whatever Mr. Irving does is interesting, and the production of this play had many points of special interest. The subject is fascinating; the author a person of distinction in the theatrical world. Royalty graced the function in the persons of the Duke and Duchess of York. The Lord Chief Justice headed a group of lawyers that included Mr. C. W. Mathews and Sir George Lewis. Mr. Pinero represented the serious, and Mr. Burnand, shall one say, the comic, drama. There were many artists among the audience, notably Mr. Stacey Marks, Mr. Onslow Ford, Mr. Frank Dicksee. Sir Arthur Sullivan looked in to see that the delightful music he has written was all right; and Mr. Oscar Barrett held a watching brief for "Santa Claus." Mr. Irving had spared nothing to secure success. A more expert and interesting company has rarely been recruited for the Lyceum. An artist of no less distinction than Sir Edward Burne-Jones had been secured to design the costumes and advise as to the scenery—the scene on which the curtain fell at last might have been a canvas from the studio of Sir Edward himself. All the arts surrounded Mr. Irving hand in hand. What has Mr. Comyns Carr done? Well, he has hardly done himself justice. He had no doubt a difficult task to perform, and he seems to have been hampered a little by his difficulty. Care has oppressed and has depressed him—had he flung off restraint a more thrilling play might have been the result. As it was, the beginning of "King Arthur" seemed somewhat slow and solemn. When at length a dramatic situation ensued it took one rather by surprise. From the point of Guinevere's frank admission of her passion for Sir Lancelot, the play woke up. And sympathy seemed, alas, to be rather on the side of the Queen and her lover than on the side of the injured king.

"King Arthur" consists of a prologue and four acts, and is written mainly in blank verse. The curtain rises on a lovely picture of the Magic Mere, at dawn. Hither the wise man, Merlin, brings Arthur, whom he has indicated as the true son of Pendragon, and to whom the sword Excalibur belongs.

Whose arm is strong to wield it in the fight
Shall rule a kingdom that shall rule the sea.

This prophetic note of a great England is often repeated during the course of the play. As Merlin speaks, an arm rises from the lake holding aloft a jewelled sword, which gleams with supernatural light. Arthur has long ere this had a warning of his fate—has dreamt of fighting for the foundation of an unborn empire. But, he adds, there was another vision, a vision of loveliness

"like a rose-leaf borne upon the tide of crimson war." Whose face was it that he saw? As the vision of Guinevere passes again before his eyes, Merlin says, solemnly, "Fate answers thee—yet in that gift of beauty lurks thy doom." Again the sword appears, and Arthur demands it.

For, echoing through the night, I, too, can hear
The voice of England like a sobbing child
That longs for day; and gathering in night's sky
I see that throng of England's unborn sons
Whose glory is her glory; prisoned souls
With faces pressed against the bars of time,
Waiting their destined hour. Give me my sword
That I may loose Time's bonds and set them free.

Here the prologue ends. The play begins in the Great Hall at Camelot. Knightly gossip tells of conspiracy against the throne of Arthur, whose confidence in the pacific influence of his lovely queen has suggested a policy of inaction; tells of the impending departure of a hundred knights to seek the Holy Grail; and hints that Guinevere is beginning to find greater delight in the lusty manhood of Sir Lancelot than in the cold perfection of the king. Lancelot, still loyal, would seek refuge from an ever-growing passion in absence from his charmer, and begs permission to join the quest for the Holy Grail. But Lancelot is the avowed lover of Elaine. Can he wish to leave her? says the king, and appeals to Guinevere. Let her persuade Lancelot to stay. There is a tender scene between Lancelot and the queen 'Tis not his love for Elaine that should keep him, the knight confesses—a love that is dead; 'tis a shameful desire for the queen that should send him away! And then the queen, too, tells her love.

That hour when Arthur came, it seemed as though
Christ's hand had beckoned, and I knelt to him,
And in the midst of worship, thought I saw
The winged heart of love. But when you came,
His great ambassador from Camelot,
I saw love's heart indeed, and knew I loved—
But not the King!

She bids her lover stay; and as the curtain falls the chant of the knights is heard, as they set out on their expedition;

Ere those lips be dumb
That would bid thee stay,
Ere the night be come
Rise and come away.
We who go forth to seek the Holy Grail
Win, ere night come
Light that shall not fail.

A scene of exquisite beauty is entitled "The Queen's Maying." It introduces "Dagonet," after the manner of a Shakespearian fool. It carries the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere a little farther. The death by her own hand of the love-lorn Elaine tells Arthur of the treachery of his friend with his queen. But he will not kill Guinevere.

'Tis life, not death, that is love's sepulchre,
Where each day tells of passionate hearts grown strange,
And perjured vows chime with the answering bell
That was love's funeral.
. . . . . 'Tis not I
Whose life lies broken here, for at thy fall
A shattered kingdom bleeds.

"Hereafter," as the quaint argument records, "followed great evil to the kingdom, for at this hour Caerleon was besieged, and Arthur went forth to make war upon his enemies. And when the King had departed, Mordred gave out that he had been slain by Lancelot, and would have made Guinevere his wife; and when she spurned him he cast her into prison and condemned her to be burnt; and although Arthur came to fight in her cause he could not save her, for Excalibur availed not against the blade of him who had been born on May Day. Yet Guinevere died not then, for Lancelot saved her from the fire, and slew Mordred, who had slain the King. And after he was dead Arthur was borne by the Three Queens of Night to that sweet isle of sleep, which is called Avalon; yet, ere he went, he commanded Bedevere to take Excalibur and cast it into the water, so that when his day was ended England should find her sword again in the sea."

The spirit of the prologue is resumed. "He's gone," cries Guinevere, as Arthur falls, "the light of all the world, he's dead!" And Merlin answers:

Not so, he doth but pass who cannot die,
The King that was, the King that yet shall be
Whose spirit, born along from age to age,
s England's to the end.

Mr. Irving almost begins the play. As the tall, impressive figure of the King, followed by Merlin, appeared upon the scene, a great shout of welcome went up, and the performance was at a standstill for an appreciable space of time till the greeting died away. Mr. Irving seemed at first a little nervous, but his voice was clear and strong. His almost saintly attitude was changed by a thrill of rage when the treachery of Lancelot and Guinevere was made plain; and then wrath subsided towards a death scene of infinite pathos and great dignity. Miss Terry gave a charming and pathetic rendering of Guinevere. One of the remarkable successes of the evening was the performance of Mr. Forbes Robertson as Lancelot. He had a reception of great warmth, that he proceeded to justify by the manliness and skill of his acting. Miss Genevieve Ward as Morgan was terribly tragic—she is a fine actress. Sweet little Miss Ashwell was only on the stage, as it seemed, two minutes, but her Elaine was a delicate and charming impersonation. The Mordred of Mr. Cooper was a careful and effective piece of work; and the Merton of Mr. Sidney Valentine amply justified his inclusion in the Lyceum Company. There could be no doubt of the acceptability of "King Arthur" to the audience, that had Mr. Carr and all the leading members of the company before the curtain over and over again. Mr. Irving made a charming little speech—no long deliberate oration. He just, in two words, expressed his delight that the work of his old friend Comyns Carr should have pleased his old friends in front. He tendered the best thanks of the company for a hearty greeting; and he wished all his guests a happy and a prosperous New Year. So began the seventeenth season at the Lyceum under Mr. Irving's management—auspiciously enough.

"GUY DOMVILLE."

THE NEW PLAY AT THE ST. JAMES'S.

Mr. Henry James has for the second time made an interesting and valuable contribution to the discussion of the novelist in his relation to the drama. To say that in "Guy Domville," which was produced at the St. James's Theatre last night, there is some admirable writing is to say that Mr. James's new play has the least essential factor in a theatrical success. The others, unfortunately, are lacking. Mr. Alexander, in his speech at the end of the performance, frankly admitted the failure of the play; and so we may for once in a way safely record the fact that there were loud expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of the audience. Said Mr. Alexander: "I have received so many tokens of your friendship in the past that the discordant note to-night has pained me deeply. I can only say that we have one and all done our best, and we hope on a future occasion to be more fortu-

cussing the evidence of the conspiracy against the King, of which no sign has yet reached the guileless and confiding Arthur. Here Mordred reveals himself for the villain he is, and defies Lancelot to betray him to the King:—

> I dare thy worst!
> Yet breathe one word and I will tell a tale
> Shall make thee cower like a beaten hound.

Pretty language this to address to the proudest knight of them all! But Mordred has Lancelot, to use a homely phrase, under his thumb, for the traitor, as Mr. Carr poetically puts it, has seen the brave knight and the Queen, "lip to lip, cuddling beneath the may." The scandal is revealed to Arthur when the body of Elaine, who died of love, is brought in on a bier with a letter in her hand addressed to Guinevere, and an exciting scene between Arthur and Lancelot is interrupted by the Queen, who, making a full confession, falls, humiliated, at his feet, and lies there prone till the news is brought of the rising against the King, when he goes off at the head of his knights to fight.

In the last act, the Queen is in prison at Camelot, and in an interview with Dagonet, who tells her of a grave he has seen, she philosophises concerning life in a soaring speech that may be quoted as an example of Mr. Carr at his best. Thus Guinevere:—

> I'll tell thee then,
> This grave I think was Guinevere's, who died
> The hour when she was born; and these two Queens,
> Who through the night keep watch beside her tomb,
> Are but her shadows fashioned for the masque
> Which men call life; poor puppets that must dance
> While unseen fingers touch the trembling strings;
> But whence the music comes, from Heaven or Hell,
> There's none shall say till all life's lamps burn out,
> And Death stands forth to claim the harper's fee.

From the prison the scene changes to the Great Hall of Camelot, and Guinevere stands before the throne on which Mordred now sits. She is charged with the death of Arthur, and condemned to the stake unless some champion will do battle for her cause. It is Arthur, not dead yet, who takes up the challenge, and meets his death at Mordred's hands in single combat. This is but one of Mr. Carr's new ideas, for Mordred and Lancelot, too, find their end, Lancelot dying, we are told, as he struck the other down; whilst Guinevere arrives on the scene just in time to recognise the King and to proclaim, "He's gone, the light of all the world lies dead!" Then the stage darkens, and at the back a beautiful vision is seen of the wounded King, in the black barge, attended by the three queens, sailing away to the sweet isle of Avalon.

If we have given the story, scene by scene, as the author has told it, it is because the story is everything with Mr. Carr. In making the amours of Lancelot and Guinevere the main issue of the play, Mr. Carr misses the poetry of the Arthurian legend, but the setting of the play gives a touch of beauty to a story that is, if you choose to look at it closely, one of unredeemed infamy. Pictorially there has been nothing to equal "King Arthur" ever seen on the stage of the Lyceum. The costumes are rich and superb, and the visions are in the very highest degree impressive. The scene of the Queen's Maying is a masterpiece of landscape by Mr. Hawes Craven. The wood, with the may in blossom, seems to stretch far into the distance, and the many roads by which the characters come and go help to sustain a remarkable illusion of indefinite space. The vision of the Passing of Arthur is wonderfully realised, and it brings the piece serenely to a conclusion. The seductive music expressly composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan adds a finishing touch to the delights of a wonderful production. The part of King Arthur cannot be numbered among Mr. Irving's most notable achievements; indeed, it makes no great call upon the powers of the actor, for the great spirit of Arthur finds but slight expression in the action of the piece, and it is beyond even the genius of Mr. Irving to give dignity to the character of the duped husband, who is cheated by everybody and imposed upon all round. There were, however, moments of fire and moments of tenderness in the performance. Miss Ellen Terry gives to the character of Guinevere a sweetness and graciousness that succeed in obtaining the sympathy of the audience for the shameless Queen. The great thing of the play is Mr. Forbes Robertson's Lancelot. Mr. Irving has given Mr. Robertson a splendid chance, and the actor makes splendid use of it. He looks like a picture—by Sir E. Burne-Jones—come to life, and his incomparable voice never stirred an audience more deeply than it did in the delivery of his lines. His performance of Lancelot is the perfection of acting, and it is one of the things that will make the production of "King Arthur" memorable. Another striking success was Miss Lena Ashwell's Elaine. It was sweetness and purity personified, and her performance advances this young actress yet another step. Miss Geneviève Ward played Morgan Le Fay; Mr. Frank Cooper was Mordred, and Mr. Harvey played Dagonet. It is perhaps not this jester's fault that his fooling is as that of the Shakespearean clown. Other parts were well played, and although it was past midnight before the performance was over, the company and the author were called before the curtain, and in a brief speech Mr. Irving graciously acknowledged his obligations to the audience.

"KING ARTHUR" AT THE LYCEUM.

A BRILLIANT FIRST NIGHT.

"King Arthur" was sure of a brave reception at the Lyceum last night. Whatever Mr. Irving does is interesting, and the production of this play had many points of special interest. The subject is fascinating; the author a person of distinction in the theatrical world. Royalty graced the function in the persons of the Duke and Duchess of York. The Lord Chief Justice headed a group of lawyers that included Mr. C. W. Mathews and Sir George Lewis. Mr. Pinero represented the serious, and Mr. Burnand, shall one say, the comic, drama. There were many artists among the audience, notably Mr. Stacey Marks, Mr. Onslow Ford, Mr. Frank Dicksee. Sir Arthur Sullivan looked in to see that the delightful music he has written was all right; and Mr. Oscar Barrett held a watching brief for "Santa Claus." Mr. Irving had spared nothing to secure success. A more expert and interesting company has rarely been recruited for the Lyceum. An artist of no less distinction than Sir Edward Burne-Jones had been secured to design the costumes and advise as to the scenery—the scene on which the curtain fell at last might have been a canvas from the studio of Sir Edward himself. All the arts surrounded Mr. Irving hand in hand. What has Mr. Comyns Carr done? Well, he has hardly done himself justice. He had no doubt a difficult task to perform, and he seems to have been hampered a little by his difficulty. Care has oppressed and has depressed him—had he flung off restraint a more thrilling play might have been the result. As it was, the beginning of "King Arthur" seemed somewhat slow and solemn. When at length a dramatic situation ensued it took one rather by surprise. From the point of Guinevere's frank admission of her passion for Sir Lancelot, the play woke up. And sympathy seemed, alas, to be rather on the side of the Queen and her lover than on the side of the injured king.

"King Arthur" consists of a prologue and four acts, and is written mainly in blank verse. The curtain rises on a lovely picture of the Magic Mere, at dawn. Hither the wise man, Merlin, brings Arthur, whom he has indicated as the true son of Pendragon, and to whom the sword Excalibur belongs,

> Whose arm is strong to wield it in the fight
> Shall rule a kingdom that shall rule the sea.

This prophetic note of a great England is often repeated during the course of the play. As Merlin speaks, an arm rises from the lake holding aloft a jewelled sword, which gleams with supernatural light. Arthur has long ere this had a warning of his fate—has dreamt of fighting for the foundation of an unborn empire. But, he adds, there was another vision, a vision of loveliness

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For, echoing through the night, I, too, can hear
The voice of England like a sobbing child
That longs for day; and gathering in night's sky
I see that throng of England's unborn sons
Whose glory is her glory; prisoned souls
With faces pressed against the bars of time,
Waiting their destined hour. Give me my sword
That I may loose Time's bonds and set them free.

Here the prologue ends. The play begins in the Great Hall at Camelot. Knightly gossip tells of conspiracy against the throne of Arthur, whose confidence in the pacific influence of his lovely queen has suggested a policy of inaction; tells of the impending departure of a hundred knights to seek the Holy Grail; and hints that Guinevere is beginning to find greater delight in the lusty manhood of Sir Lancelot than in the cold perfection of the king. Lancelot, still loyal, would seek refuge from an ever-growing passion in absence from his charmer, and begs permission to join the quest for the Holy Grail. But Lancelot is the avowed lover of Elaine. Can he wish to leave her? says the king, and appeals to Guinevere. Let her persuade Lancelot to stay. There is a tender scene between Lancelot and the queen 'Tis not his love for Elaine that should keep him, the knight confesses—a love that is dead; 'tis a shameful desire for the queen that should send him away! And then the queen, too, tells her love.

That hour when Arthur came, it seemed as though
Christ's hand had beckoned, and I knelt to him,
And in the midst of worship, thought I saw
The winged heart of love. But when you came,
His great ambassador from Camelot,
I saw love's heart indeed, and knew I loved—
But not the King!

She bids her lover stay; and as the curtain falls the chant of the knights is heard, as they set out on their expedition:

'Ere those lips be dumb
That would bid thee stay,
Ere the night be come
Rise and come away.
We who go forth to seek the Holy Grail
Win, 'ere night come
Light that shall not fail.

A scene of exquisite beauty is entitled "The Queen's Maying." It introduces "Dagonet," after the manner of a Shakesperian fool. It carries the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere a little farther. The death by her own hand of the lovelorn Elaine tells Arthur of the treachery of his friend with his queen. But he will not kill Guinevere.

'Tis life, not death, that is love's sepulchre,
Where each day tells of passionate hearts grown strange,
And perjured vows chime with the answering bell
That was love's funeral . . . . . 'Tis not I
Whose life lies broken here, for at thy fall
A shattered kingdom bleeds.

"Hereafter," as the quaint argument records, "followed great evil to the kingdom, for at this hour Caerleon was besieged, and Arthur went forth to make war upon his enemies. And when the King had departed, Mordred gave out that he had been slain by Lancelot, and would have made Guinevere his wife; and when she spurned him he cast her into prison and condemned her to be burnt; and although Arthur came to fight in her cause he could not save her, for Excalibur availed not against the blade of him who had been born on May Day. Yet Guinevere died not then, for Lancelot saved her from the fire, and slew Mordred, who had slain the King. And after he was dead Arthur was borne by the Three Queens of Night to that sweet isle of sleep, w[illegible]re he went, he commanded Bedevere to take Excalibur and cast it into the water, so that when his day was ended England should find her sword again in the sea."

The spirit of the prologue is resumed. "He's gone," cries Guinevere, as Arthur falls, "the light of all the world, he's dead!" And Merlin answers:

Not so, he doth but pass who cannot die,
The King that was, the King that yet shall be
Whose spirit, born along from age to age,
s England's to the end.

Mr. Irving almost begins the play. As the tall, impressive figure of the King, followed by Merlin, appeared upon the scene, a great shout of welcome went up, and the performance was at a standstill for an appreciable space of time till the greeting died away. Mr. Irving seemed at first a little nervous, but his voice was clear and strong. His almost saintly attitude was changed by a thrill of rage when the treachery of Lancelot and Guinevere was made plain; and then wrath subsided towards a death scene of infinite pathos and great dignity. Miss Terry gave a charming and pathetic rendering of Guinevere. One of the remarkable successes of the evening was the performance of Mr. Forbes Robertson as Lancelot. He had a reception of great warmth, that he proceeded to justify by the manliness and skill of his acting. Miss Genevieve Ward as Morgan was terribly tragic—she is a fine actress. Sweet little Miss Ashwell was only on the stage, as it seemed, two minutes, but her Elaine was a delicate and charming impersonation. The Mordred of Mr. Cooper was a careful and effective piece of work; and the Merton of Mr. Sidney Valentine amply justified his inclusion in the Lyceum Company. There could be no doubt of the acceptability of "King Arthur" to the audience, that had Mr. Carr and all the leading members of the company before the curtain over and over again. Mr. Irving made a charming little speech—no long deliberate oration. He just, in two words, expressed his delight that the work of his old friend Comyns Carr should have pleased his old friends in front. He tendered the best thanks of the company for a hearty greeting; and he wished all his guests a happy and a prosperous New Year. So began the seventeenth season at the Lyceum under Mr. Irving's management—auspiciously enough.

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nate in securing your approval"—or words to that effect. What more is there to be said? Doubtless "Guy Domville" will shortly go the way of all bad plays; and one is bound to regret the fact, for it contains much that is admirable. "Guy Domville" is what they call a costume play—time, 1750. It has quite evidently been a labour of love with Mr. George Alexander to give an air of quaintness and prettiness, as well as accuracy, to the 'mounting" of the comedy. In a fragrant old English garden the story begins. Guy Domville, one of the few survivors of an ancient and illustrious family, faithful to the Roman communion, is about to become a priest. Meantime he is tutor at the Porches, whose young widowed mistress is so evidently in love with him, that if his eyes were not so steadfastly fixed on holiness, he must needs read her secret. On the eve of his departure for France there to begin his priestly life, Guy Domville learns that a succession of deaths has made him the head of his family—a more distinguished person than he was, but not much richer. He is reluctant to assume this new position. But he is persuaded that it is his duty rather to adorn his name in the world than in the Church, and he sets out for London. So far, so good. The first act, though rather precise and tedious, is elegant and charming. But in the next act we are plunged into an incoherent and apparently unnecessary intrigue. The design of Guy Domville's newly-attached relatives is to marry him to a young lady of wealth, a distant connection. She has a lover already, but consents, under pressure, to the marriage with Domville—meantime become a brilliant member of London society, but a purely platonic participant in its pleasures. By the aid of an irritating drunken scene, after the manner of "David Garrick," Domville learns the true feeling of his affianced bride, breaks off the projected marriage, and returns to the country. All things seem to be in train to mate him with his old friend the chatelaine, when suddenly there is a rearrangement of the situation, and Domville sadly disposes himself on the bosom of the Church. The play is irritating and disappointing, and its fate seems assured. Mr. Alexander plays Guy Domville in his very best style. Miss Marion Terry, who had a warm welcome on her return to the St. James's stage, was most charming as Mrs. Peverel, Guy's patroness and would-be sweetheart. Miss Millard played the sad Miss Brazier, so nearly married to the man she did not love. Mr. Waring appeared as an honest country gentleman, and Mr. W. G. Elliott played a wicked town gentleman; but most of the characters are sketchy and insignificant. The most brilliant acting in the world would not make "Guy Domville" a popularly acceptable play.

The Sketch
Aug: 8. '94

Now and then some odd little unrehearsed effect will take place on the stage, of which, happily, the audience are ignorant. One evening, at the closing scene of "Romeo and Juliet," as Romeo, Mr. Forbes-Robertson mounted the high steps leading up to the tomb, to weep by the body of Juliet (Madame Modjeska), when he accidentally pushed them away, and thus left himself in doubt how to descend creditably. Seeing an expression of dismay come over his face, the dead Juliet murmured from under her shroud, "What is it?" "The steps have slipped," whispered Romeo, "and I can't get down." "Never mind," muttered the corpse; "jump!" And jump he did, making a somewhat undignified descent, which, luckily, was not observed in front. Another time, after bidding Juliet an impassioned farewell on leaving her chamber, he rushed as usual to the balcony, threw his leg over the railing to make his exit, and found that by some mistake the stairs had been forgotten, and he dropped fourteen feet.

"KING ARTHUR" AT THE LYCEUM.

The first thing to be said about "King Arthur" is that it is a success, an immense success; but one must make haste to add that it is a success of pageant, not of play. It will be long before the time when, in speaking of other splendid productions to come, one fails to refer to the marvels due to the exquisite taste of Sir Edward Burne-Jones and the skill and liberality of Mr. Henry Irving. Old triumphs of the theatre have been surpassed, not perhaps in magnificence or splendour, but in pure beauty of composition and colour. There is something for every taste. Some will rejoice in the simple if slightly commonplace prettiness of the vision of Guinevere in the first act, and the vision of Arthur in the last, sailing with the three Queens in the barge to the mystic isle of Avalon, to sleep cured of his wounds till, like Barbarossa in the Untersberg, he awakes at the appointed time. For others the finale of the first and second acts will be the gems. Perhaps it is best to speak of them when discussing the tale.

The Play.

It is, of course, deeply to be regretted that admiration for the production cannot extend to the piece. Everyone would be glad to praise the work of a gentleman to whom, like Mr. Comyns Carr, we owe debts of divers kinds. Unfortunately, he has attempted the impossible. Some can write prose and not poetry, some poetry, not prose, and not a few both. Mr. Carr shows himself to be of the first class, yet has not the wisdom like a Balzac to recognise the fact, but has the temerity to try to force himself into the third, with the inevitable result. "Forgiveness," a play which did not seem to us to be valued at its true worth, showed what an excellent prose piece he might write with a good subject to aid him; "King Arthur" proves that between him and poetical drama there is a gulf fixed. However, there are charming passages in "King Arthur"; one may quote :—

For in this wood
Lurks many a pleasant bower o'er-roofed with green,
Where moss and harebells weave a patterned floor
With shifting tracery of added gold,
Shot from the sun's eyes, peeping through the boughs,
Of flowering thorn.

Or this :—

Indeed I have: oft when we kneel and pray,
Before God's image bleeding on the Cross,
We cheat our souls, for our vain hearts still seek
The manhood, not the God: 'twas so with me.
That hour when Arthur came it seemed as though
Christ's hand had beckoned, and I knelt to Him,
And in the mist of worship, thought I saw
The wingèd heart of love.

Others, also, there are, like "Death, too, has gone a-maying, and hath plucked Life's fairest flower—Elaine." Yet even in them there is charm of idea without music of words, and there are many weary lines dissonant in sound, and barren of pleasant thought. This hardly is the worst. Some prettiness may be found in the first stanza of "The May Song" :—

Ere upon its snowy bed
Lies the first-born of the spring,
Ere the crocus lifts its head
Or the swallow finds its wing,
Love is here:
Say ye, then, earth's flowers shall fade?
We shall tell ye nay:
Love, the first of all flowers made,
Lives from May to May.

In the rest of the rhymed verse no beauty can be found. The prophetic strains of Merlin and the Spirits of the Lake may be intentionally simple in form, but there is no reason for making them so bald as—

Love and Hate are born in May;
Love, the bird upon the wing,
Hate, the worm devouring
All Love's flowers of yesterday,
Wait for thee in Guinevere.

In these lines one cannot fail to see some resemblance to Touchstone's mocking rhymes on Rosalind. Moreover, there seems no explanation for the ugliness of

Look not to thy love,
Love that lives an hour;

Heaven's voice above
Calls thee from her bower.
Rise and go forth, with us who seek the Grail,
Winning from above
Love that shall not fail.

It is stated officially that the play is founded on "Le Mort d'Arthur," the delightful compilation of Sir Thomas Malory that Caxton printed in 1485, and not on the lovely "Idylls of the King" that Tennyson fashioned out of the old knight's fascinating work; but the statement is misleading. The characters, though Mr. Carr has failed to give much individuality to them, are after Tennyson's concept, not Malory's. Instead of the King Arthur whose intrigue with Margawse, wife of Lot, King of Orkney (and, though he did not know it, his own half-sister), brought Mordred and ruin into the world—who deliberately tried to massacre all the children born on May Day, in order to defeat a hostile prophecy—who "oftentimes consented in his heat and passion that Guinevere should be burnt and destroyed," Mr. Carr presents the blameless, forgiving hero of Tennyson. Moreover, one finds in his "Guinevere and Lancelot" little of the fierce, worn Guenever and Launcelot de Lake. Nor, putting aside the vast omissions needful for the short traffic of the stage, can it be said that the matter used comes much closer to Malory than to Tennyson.

The Plot.

The play opens with a prologue, in which Arthur, under the guidance of Merlin, comes to the "Magic Mere" and takes from the Spirit of the Lake the marvellous sword Excalibur, whose blade brings certain victory, whose scabbard renders him almost invulnerable. Contrary to Malory's view, he is not yet crowned King. Arthur sees a vision of Guinevere, daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cameliard, and, fascinated by her beauty, resolves to make her his queen. A note of warning is sounded in Merlin's phrase, "Yet in that gift of beauty lurks thy doom." Years have gone by between the prologue and first act. Arthur has wedded Guinevere and won peace for the land. The Queen and Lancelot are in love with one another, but their love is unconfessed. There is an episode of Elaine la Blanche, who comes from Astolat to beg the Queen to aid her in her love for Lancelot. This leads to an interview between Guinevere and the knight, in which they learn that their guilty passion is mutual. Yet at the sound of the chant of the Holy Grail they determine that their love shall remain unfulfilled, and she bids him go on the quest of the Grail, and he consents. The King, sick at losing so many of his knights in the long perilous quest, implores Lancelot, the bravest of all, to stay behind. The knight stoutly refuses, but in the end refers the decision to the Queen, who, after a painful struggle with her better self, bids him stay. The scene when the Knights of the Table Round, full armed, start for their quest, the King, Queen, Elaine, and ladies of the Court in rich, lovely dresses giving notes of colour, is one of exquisite beauty. Were it not for the loveliness of the scene—the slope of a hill-side studded with white-thorn, with a road winding down the centre—the exquisite effect of the white and green dresses of the Queen's maidens, and the lovely harmony when Guinevere's gown of emerald green, half hidden by veil of golden tissue, rests against Lancelot's robe of deep amethyst and cloak of ashen purple, the second act might be omitted, for it gives no movement to the play. Yet it contains a strong, passionate love scene between the lovers, which is spied upon by the King's wicked half-sister, Morgan le Fay, and Mordred, who seeks the throne. The shameful secret is disclosed in the third act by Morgan and Mordred, yet Lancelot denies it, and if the Queen supported him, the King would have been convinced of her innocence; however, why, it is hard to say, Guinevere confesses her guilt. Arthur raises his sword on Lancelot, yet stays his hand, and bids him go, and himself sets off to quell a rebellion in the north, leaving the Queen in Mordred's charge. Mordred promptly seizes the reins of power, imprisons the Queen, gives out that Arthur has been slain by Lancelot, offers to wed Guinevere, and when she refuses, threatens her with death. He is as bad as his word: she is tried for treason, and condemned to die if no knight will battle for her. Arthur arrives in armour, with his vizor down so that she does not know him, and when she is led off shows his face and challenges Mordred. Morgan mocks him with the painfully unrhythmic lines :—

He Pendragon's son shall slay
That is born with the may.

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nate in securing your approval"—or words to that effect. What more is there to be said? Doubtless "Guy Domville" will shortly go the way of all bad plays; and one is bound to regret the fact, for it contains much that is admirable. "Guy Domville" is what they call a costume play—time, 1750. It has quite evidently been a labour of love with Mr. George Alexander to give an air of quaintness and prettiness, as well as accuracy, to the "mounting" of the comedy. In a fragrant old English garden the story begins. Guy Domville, one of the few survivors of an ancient and illustrious family, faithful to the Roman communion, is about to become a priest. Meantime he is tutor at the Porches, whose young widowed mistress is so evidently in love with him, that if his eyes were not so steadfastly fixed on holiness, he must needs read her secret. On the eve of his departure for France there to begin his priestly life, Guy Domville learns that a succession of deaths has made him the head of his family—a more distinguished person than he was, but not much richer. He is reluctant to assume this new position. But he is persuaded that it is his duty rather to adorn his name in the world than in the Church, and he sets out for London. So far, so good. The first act, though rather precise and tedious, is elegant and charming. But in the next act we are plunged into an incoherent and apparently unnecessary intrigue. The design of Guy Domville's newly-attached relatives is to marry him to a young lady of wealth, a distant connection. She has a lover already, but consents, under pressure, to the marriage with Domville—meantime become a brilliant member of London society, but a purely platonic participant in its pleasures. By the aid of an irritating drunken scene, after the manner of "David Garrick," Domville learns the true feeling of his affianced bride, breaks off the projected marriage, and returns to the country. All things seem to be in train to mate him with his old friend the chatelaine, when suddenly there is a rearrangement of the situation, and Domville sadly disposes himself on the bosom of the Church. The play is irritating and disappointing, and its fate seems assured. Mr. Alexander plays Guy Domville in his very best style. Miss Marion Terry, who had a warm welcome on her return to the St. James's stage, was most charming as Mrs. Peverel, Guy's patroness and would-be sweetheart. Miss Millard played the sad Miss Brazier, so nearly married to the man she did not love. Mr. Waring appeared as an honest country gentleman, and Mr. W. G. Elliott played a wicked town gentleman; but most of the characters are sketchy and insignificant. The most brilliant acting in the world would [illegible] popularly acceptable play.

larly acceptable play.

The Sketch
Aug: 8. '94

Now and then some odd little unrehearsed effect will take place on the stage, of which, happily, the audience are ignorant. One evening, at the closing scene of "Romeo and Juliet," as Romeo, Mr. Forbes-Robertson mounted the high steps leading up to the tomb, to weep by the body of Juliet (Madame Modjeska), when he accidentally pushed them away, and thus left himself in doubt how to descend creditably. Seeing an expression of dismay come over his face, the dead Juliet murmured from under her shroud, "What is it?" "The steps have slipped," whispered Romeo, "and I can't get down." "Never mind," muttered the corpse; "jump!" And jump he did, making a somewhat undignified descent, which, luckily, was not observed in front. Another time, after bidding Juliet an impassioned farewell on leaving her chamber, he rushed as usual to the balcony, threw his leg over the railing to make his exit, and found that the stage manager the stairs had been forgotten, and he dropped fourteen feet.

"KING ARTHUR" AT THE LYCEUM.

The first thing to be said about "King Arthur" is that it is a success, an immense success; but one must make haste to add that it is a success of pageant, not of play. It will be long before the time when, in speaking of other splendid productions to come, one fails to refer to the marvels due to the exquisite taste of Sir Edward Burne-Jones and the skill and liberality of Mr. Henry Irving. Old triumphs of the theatre have been surpassed, not perhaps in magnificence or splendour, but in pure beauty of composition and colour. There is something for every taste. Some will rejoice in the simple if slightly commonplace prettiness of the vision of Guinevere in the first act, and the vision of Arthur in the last, sailing with the three Queens in the barge to the mystic isle of Avalon, to sleep cured of his wounds till, like Barbarossa in the Untersberg, he awakes at the appointed time. For others the finale of the first and second acts will be the gems. Perhaps it is best to speak of them when discussing the tale.

The Play.

It is, of course, deeply to be regretted that admiration for the production cannot extend to the piece. Everyone would be glad to praise the work of a gentleman to whom, like Mr. Comyns Carr, we owe debts of divers kinds. Unfortunately, he has attempted the impossible. Some can write prose and not poetry, some poetry, not prose, and not a few both. Mr. Carr shows himself to be of the first class, yet has not the wisdom like a Balzac to recognise the fact, but has the temerity to try to force himself into the third, with the inevitable result. "Forgiveness," a play which did not seem to us to be valued at its true worth, showed what an excellent prose piece he might write with a good subject to aid him; "King Arthur" proves that between him and poetical drama there is a gulf fixed. However, there are charming passages in "King Arthur"; one may quote:—

For in this wood
Lurks many a pleasant bower o'er-roofed with green,
Where moss and harebells weave a patterned floor
With shifting tracery of added gold,
Shot from the sun's eyes, peeping through the boughs,
Of flowering thorn.

Or this:—

Indeed I have: oft when we kneel and pray,
Before God's image bleeding on the Cross,
We cheat our souls, for our vain hearts still seek
The manhood, not the God: 'twas so with me.
That hour when Arthur came it seemed as though
Christ's hand had beckoned, and I knelt to Him,
And in the mist of worship, thought I saw
The wingèd heart of love.

Others, also, there are, like "Death, too, has gone a-maying, and hath plucked Life's fairest flower—Elaine." Yet even in them there is charm of idea without music of words, and there are many weary lines dissonant in sound, and barren of pleasant thought. This hardly is the worst. Some prettiness may be found in the first stanza of "The May Song":—

Ere upon its snowy bed
Lies the first-born of the spring,
Ere the crocus lifts its head
Or the swallow finds its wing,
Love is here:
Say ye, then, earth's flowers shall fade?
We shall tell ye nay:
Love, the first of all flowers made,
Lives from May to May.

In the rest of the rhymed verse no beauty can be found. The prophetic strains of Merlin and the Spirits of the Lake may be intentionally simple in form, but there is no reason for making them so bald as—

Love and Hate are born in May;
Love, the bird upon the wing,
Hate, the worm devouring
All Love's flowers of yesterday,
Wait for thee in Guinevere.

In these lines one cannot fail to see some resemblance to Touchstone's mocking rhymes on Rosalind. Moreover, there seems no explanation for the ugliness of

Look not to thy love,
Love that lives an hour;
Heaven's voice above
Calls thee from her bower.
Rise and go forth, with us who seek the Grail,
Winning from above
Love that shall not fail.

It is stated officially that the play is founded on "Le Mort d'Arthur," the delightful compilation of Sir Thomas Malory that Caxton printed in 1485, and not on the lovely "Idylls of the King" that Tennyson fashioned out of the old knight's fascinating work; but the statement is misleading. The characters, though Mr. Carr has failed to give much individuality to them, are after Tennyson's concept, not Malory's. Instead of the King Arthur whose intrigue with Margawse, wife of Lot, King of Orkney (and, though he did not know it, his own half-sister), brought Mordred and ruin into the world—who deliberately tried to massacre all the children born on May Day, in order to defeat a hostile prophecy—who "oftentimes consented in his heat and passion that Guinevere should be burnt and destroyed," Mr. Carr presents the blameless, forgiving hero of Tennyson. Moreover, one finds in his "Guinevere and Lancelot" little of the fierce, worn Guenever and Launcelot de Lake. Nor, putting aside the vast omissions needful for the short traffic of the stage, can it be said that the matter used comes much closer to Malory than to Tennyson.

The Plot.

The play opens with a prologue, in which Arthur, under the guidance of Merlin, comes to the "Magic Mere" and takes from the Spirit of the Lake the marvellous sword Excalibur, whose blade brings certain victory, whose scabbard renders him almost invulnerable. Contrary to Malory's view, he is not yet crowned King. Arthur sees a vision of Guinevere, daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cameliard, and, fascinated by her beauty, resolves to make her his queen. A note of warning is sounded in Merlin's phrase, "Yet in that gift of beauty lurks thy doom." Years have gone by between the prologue and first act. Arthur has wedded Guinevere and won peace for the land. The Queen and Lancelot are in love with one another, but their love is unconfessed. There is an episode of Elaine la Blanche, who comes from Astolat to beg the Queen to aid her in her love for Lancelot. This leads to an interview between Guinevere and the knight, in which they learn that their guilty passion is mutual. Yet at the sound of the chant of the Holy Grail they determine that their love shall remain unfulfilled, and she bids him go on the quest of the Grail, and he consents. The King, sick at losing so many of his knights in the long perilous quest, implores Lancelot, the bravest of all, to stay behind. The knight stoutly refuses, but in the end refers the decision to the Queen, who, after a painful struggle with her better self, bids him stay. The scene when the Knights of the Table Round, full armed, start for their quest, the King, Queen, Elaine, and ladies of the Court in rich, lovely dresses giving notes of colour, is one of exquisite beauty. Were it not for the loveliness of the scene—the slope of a hill-side studded with white-thorn, with a road winding down the centre—the exquisite effect of the white and green dresses of the Queen's maidens, and the lovely harmony when Guinevere's gown of emerald green, half hidden by veil of golden tissue, rests against Lancelot's robe of deep amethyst and cloak of ashen purple, the second act might be omitted, for it gives no movement to the play. Yet it contains a strong, passionate love scene between the lovers, which is spied upon by the King's wicked half-sister, Morgan le Fay, and Mordred, who seeks the throne. The shameful secret is disclosed in the third act by Morgan and Mordred, yet Lancelot denies it, and if the Queen supported him, the King would have been convinced of her innocence; however, why, it is hard to say, Guinevere confesses her guilt. Arthur raises his sword on Lancelot, yet stays his hand, and bids him go, and himself sets off to quell a rebellion in the north, leaving the Queen in Mordred's charge. Mordred promptly seizes the reins of power, imprisons the Queen, gives out that Arthur has been slain by Lancelot, offers to wed Guinevere, and when she refuses, threatens her with death. He is as bad as his word: she is tried for treason, and condemned to die if no knight will battle for her. Arthur arrives in armour, with his vizor down so that she does not know him, and when she is led off shows his face and challenges Mordred. Morgan mocks him with the painfully unrhythmic lines:—

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They fight, and since the scabbard of Excalibur has been stolen by Morgan Arthur is wounded. Arthur dies with Guinevere at his side. Strangely enough his last words are "What remains is peace," a curious parallel with Hamlet's "The rest is silence." The King's sword is taken by Sir Bedmere to be cast into the mystic mere whence it came, and as the curtain falls a vision is seen of Arthur in the barge with the three Queens on his way to Avalon.

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OUR CHARACTER SKETCH.

MR. HENRY IRVING.

There are some public men who are not only of the hour but also of the epoch, whose position, whatever our view of their merits, has come to be unassailable, whom we regard as institutions, proof against the fickleness of fortune, and gently mellowed by the climate. Amongst these national monuments Mr. Henry Irving is the more conspicuous because he is an actor, with none of the traditional waywardness, both of character and destiny, which is associated with his calling, and because he is the head of his profession in a country which has not quite rid itself of the idea that the actor is a statutory vagabond. In his capacity as a manager or a player Mr. Irving is subject to criticism, and does not command, any more than an eminent statesman, the undivided allegiance of his fellow-citizen. But in his capacity as an institution he is easily in the first rank of those exalted personages who, like our princes, though, of course, in a minor degree, may be safely counted upon to grace any ceremony, from the laying of a foundation stone to the opening of a chrysanthemum show. In any company, however distinguished,

MR. IRVING IS A NOTABLE FIGURE.

The public likes to gaze on the pensive austerity of his remarkable face; and if he would appear always in his gown as a doctor of Trinity College, Dublin, there would be a universal glow of satisfaction in so harmonious a spectacle. Then the clergy have a strong affinity towards this actor. They seem to feel in some subtle way that he is one of themselves, though a less clerically-minded man, as Mr. Gladstone once said of Monckton Milnes, never breathed. Bishops have been quite wonderfully drawn to Mr. Irving, even to the point of consorting with him in Bond-street. Possibly his success in ecclesiastical parts has something to do with this—more especially his embodiment of the Church militant in Richelieu, Wolsey, and Becket. Every bishop would like to be a Wolsey, and Ritualistic curates have been

MOVED TO SPEECHLESS EXALTATION

by the martyrdom of the saint at Canterbury. In days when the Church plays second fiddle to the State, and the secular arm is omnipotent, it is a joy to the clergy to see the ancient glories of their order represented by Mr. Irving with such a masterly sense of sacerdotal self-will. Yet Nonconformists are not offended. Becket is to them, no doubt, as he was to Henry II., "a pestilent priest," and there is a great comfort to private judgment in Wolsey's disgrace. It has fallen to Mr. Irving's lot, as it has in a much larger sense to Mr. Gladstone's, to conciliate both High Church and Dissent; for many Puritans, who were wont to treat the theatre as anathema, have been converted to the Lyceum. But above these elements of popularity Mr. Irving has, in a remarkable measure, that attribute of personal dignity, that habitual air of command, that semi-mystical reserve, which are indispensable to the permanence of the British institution. Another actor may frolic in the skirts of Charley's Aunt without filling the beholders with irreverence; but our Becket, Shylock, Hamlet and King Arthur

MOVES ON AN EXALTED PLANE

which disposes us at once to seemly regard and deferential expectation. An attack on Mr. Irving is as great an outrage as that of the Danish soldier who proposed to strike the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

We do it wrong, being so majes'ical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

It may be confidently asserted that none of Mr. Irving's predecessors ever enjoyed this unique distinction. The nearest of them in point of time and eminence are Macready and Charles Kean, neither of whom acquired the stability of Mr. Irving's fortunes. Macready had some endowments which have not been surpassed, but he lacked one without which no man can become an institution. He was a great actor, but he had no respect for his art. He thought it, as Fanny Kemble did, a foolish pastime, degrading to a gentleman. He cursed the fate—and his curses gave a robust flavour to many a green-room anecdote—that made him a motley to the view. Mr. Irving, on the other hand, has a deep and abiding belief in the serious responsibilities of the dramatic artist.

HE WORSHIPS HIS ART

with a single-minded devotion which, combined with his extraordinary personality, has done more than all his histrionic achievements, striking as they are, to impress the public mind with the gravity of his calling. He is never weary of claiming for the drama a recognised place amongst the graces of a liberal education. He is quick to resent any slur upon it as a personal injury. He has advocated a municipal theatre, less apparently because he believes in the asthetic genius of town councils than because he craves for some formal recognition of the play as part of the national life. This passion is not shared by municipal reformers, not even by those who have attained the unexampled enlightenment of providing Sunday bands in the London parks; but, although Mr. Irving has not persuaded us, we feel that his energies in this direction are worthy of his character. He lives up to our conception of him as an institution. He rides forth in quest of municipal romance like an Arthurian paladin. To the "Cinderella of the Arts," as he has called the drama, he shows

ALL THE LOYALTY OF A KNIGHT-ERRANT

to the damsel in distress. His gauntlet is hung, so to speak, on the front-door of the Lyceum, and he lies in wait, armed *cap-a-pie*, for any rash roysterer who may be tempted to speak slightingly of the lady. In his dramatic work Mr. Irving shows the same insatiable zeal. The purely commercial aspect of success has probably less attraction for him than for any favourite of fortune that ever lived. Had he a reasonable eye to economy, he might be able at this moment to retire from the stage, and spend the rest of his days amidst all the appurtenances of splendour dear to our national instincts. But it may be doubted whether Mr. Irving is not a poor man, comparatively. Certainly, the unbroken prosperity which has been his for many years, and especially the enormous rewards he has reaped in America, have been counterbalanced by an outlay, due partly to the native largeness of the man, but chiefly to the predominance in his mind of bright over arithmetical values. He has been reproached with the sacrifice of dramatic art to scenic luxury, a gibe which might have some point if it could be shown that he played the penurious Louis IX. in a gorgeous palace, or dressed the village girls in "Olivia" like princesses. But when Wolsey gives a banquet to his master there are economists who think that

"EGO ET REX MEUS"

ought to be attired like hawkers, making a meal off bread and bacon. Mr. Irving's sense of order and harmony is his supreme gift as a manager. As an actor, only those who know him in the theatre can speak fitly of his unremitting toil, of his demonic energy at rehearsal, of the ceaseless elaboration of parts which have

long ceased to be novel, of the artist's unappeasable discontent which is the spur of all true ambition. At the age of 57 Henry Irving still holds securely the position towards which he made the first real strides rather more than three-and-twenty years ago, when his personal force startled the town in "The Bells." His artistic repute rests on a greater variety of accomplishment than that of any actor of his generation. Playgoers accustomed to the strongly-marked individuality of his tragic impersonations must have been astonished by the almost complete effacement of that individuality in Corporal Gregory Brewster. Of this versatility he has given many examples; but perhaps the poles of art are not more widely asunder than Brewster and Becket. In both

THE IMAGINATION OF THE ACTOR

is his most conspicuous quality. The soul of the warrior priest and fanatic, and the poor, flickering life of the old corporal who cries over his broken pipe, are equally vivid. Emotion demanding great physical powers may disclose Mr. Irving's defects; but in the strokes of genius that charm the intellect, in those subtle appeals that stir the fancy to the irony or the pity of life, in all that goes to make up the complex art which surrounds an impersonation with its own proper atmosphere, Mr. Irving has had few equals. We may wish that some of his most brilliant achievements had illuminated the contemporary drama; but who can quarrel with the tradition which he has sustained with such consistent fidelity? It is the alliance of this tradition of the romantic school with the modern spirit of diplomatic sagacity which has made Henry Irving one of our institutions, and which makes us hail his King Arthur as a friend emerging from a temporary sojourn amidst the mysticism of dim antiquity.

MR. IRVING IN "BECKET."

In a prologue and four acts, much read everywhere, long performed in London, and frequently repeated on the stage in America, Lord Tennyson told the story of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and champion of the Church against the arbitrary and profane King Henry the Second. Circumstances, all of a kind prosperous, and welcome even to those who have suffered deprival by them, have till now prevented the representation of this historical tragedy in Liverpool. It was last night produced with striking success at the Court Theatre, and the credit of a most brilliant and popular performance must be shared unequally, in proportions that need not be defined, between the authorship of the late Laureate, the acting of Mr. Irving and his colleagues, most beautiful scenery, and astonishing stage management.

Except to historical students, and to survivors of more ecclesiastical times, the interest of the great contest between Henry and the Church has greatly paled, and Tennyson had not the Shakspeare magnetism; but, lit and animated by Mr. Irving's vivid impersonation of the Archbishop, the turbulent controversy in which it was sought to exempt the ecclesiastical power from State control lives before the audiences of to-day with extraordinary vigour. One of the most life-like scenes in the play is the hall of Northampton Castle, where, dressed in all the splendour of their dignities and orders, those ecclesiastics of the time who took an insular and Erastian view of Becket's bold policy do all that they can by the most intemperate and virulent attacks to carry things in the King's favour. Here Becket, as played by Mr. Irving, comports himself with most impressive moral majesty, although falling for a moment into a mood of vacillation which revives his doubts as to whether he is fitly chosen to conduct the great struggle in which he is engaged. This incident is of double importance. It is a single and final episode of its kind. Never again does Thomas Becket show the white feather. And at the moment it serves a dramatic purpose in giving vicissitude to the scene. When Becket recalls his weak decision by crumpling the document he has signed and declining to seal it, a tornado of royal and clerical denunciation bursts upon him. More than once he retires. He reappears backed by the people, and after rapidly changing fortunes as he alternately overawes and is shouted down by the unruly mob of priests and "King's men," brings the curtain down with this tremendous piece of declamation:—

The voice of the Lord is in the voice of the people!
The voice of the Lord will hush he hounds of hell,
That ever yelp and snarl at Holy Church,
In everlasting silence.

Of course, in the long run the conflict of which Becket is the hero leads him in this tragedy, as in the history, to his martyr's death, but it is the best feature of Tennyson's work that he has entwined with the technical theme of it a love interest which wonderfully refreshes the audience, and which presents Becket in an aspect of humanity which can only be poetically attributed to him, but in which, as often happens, poetry is truer to the probabilities of life than dry historical biography can prove itself to be.

Now, a thread of this delicate and subtle character, fraught with tenderness, tremulous with human feeling, and all the while treated as of the philosophy of the play, is exactly the sort of challenge to which Mr. Irving's fine and sensitive intellect is sure to respond with alacrity, with charm, and with depth. And so it comes that, amid the scenic splendour of the tragedy, and while one's more vulgar faculties are following and enjoying the clash of interests and the clash of swords, and the clash of a mailed invasion of a sacred fane, the more observant and introspective powers are led captive by the profound human interest alike of Becket's character and Becket's speculations. We may say of him three things which it is deeply moving to recognise as Mr. Irving unfolds the action—first, that he passes from lay expediency to pious heroism at the call of God, which dedicates him to be Primate instead of Chancellor; secondly, that with him "Valour and holy life go together," and anything like cowardice is inconceivable to him in holy men; and, thirdly, that "love runs through all the world God made."

This last point is for especial note, and imparts to the play a delicious ingredient, and to Mr. Irving's impersonation a tender and thoughtful attraction, which at the first seeing or even reading of the play many will miss. Observe how strikingly and how perfectly within the character Lord Tennyson introduces this element quite early in the play. In the prologue, when King Henry is desirous to induce his Chancellor, Becket, then only in deacon's orders and wearing a lay dress, to protect Fair Rosamund in her bower during his absence from England, the frivolous monarch jokes his Minister and friend, and plays with the idea that he, being a *bon vivant*, owns the fascinations of the fair.

BECKET: That palate is insane which cannot tell
A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.
HENRY: Well, who loves wine loves woman.
BECKET: So I do.
Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers;
And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,
The trees are all the statelier, and the flowers
Are all the fairer.

OUR CHARACTER SKETCH.

MR. HENRY IRVING.

There are some public men who are not only of the hour but also of the epoch, whose position, whatever our view of their merits, has come to be unassailable, whom we regard as institutions, proof against the fickleness of fortune, and gently mellowed by the climate. Amongst these national monuments Mr. Henry Irving is the more conspicuous because he is an actor, with none of the traditional waywardness, both of character and destiny, which is associated with his calling, and because he is the head of his profession in a country which has not quite rid itself of the idea that the actor is a statutory vagabond. In his capacity as a manager or a player Mr. Irving is subject to criticism, and does not command, any more than an eminent statesman, the undivided allegiance of his fellow-citizen. But in his capacity as an institution he is easily in the first rank of those exalted personages who, like our princes, though, of course, in a minor degree, may be safely counted upon to grace any ceremony, from the laying of a foundation stone to the opening of a chrysanthemum show. In any company, however distinguished,

MR. IRVING IS A NOTABLE FIGURE.

The public likes to gaze on the pensive austerity of his remarkable face; and if he would appear always in his gown as a doctor of Trinity College, Dublin, there would be a universal glow of satisfaction in so harmonious a spectacle. Then the clergy have a strong affinity towards this actor. They seem to feel in some subtle way that he is one of themselves, though a less clerically-minded man, as Mr. Gladstone once said of Monckton Milnes, never breathed. Bishops have been quite wonderfully drawn to Mr. Irving, even to the point of consorting with him in Bond-street. Possibly his success in ecclesiastical parts has something to do with this—more especially his embodiment of the Church militant in Richelieu, Wolsey, and Becket. Every bishop would like to be a Wolsey, and Ritualistic curates have been

MOVED TO SPEECHLESS EXALTATION

by the martyrdom of the saint at Canterbury. In days when the Church plays second fiddle to the State, and the secular arm is omnipotent, it is a joy to the clergy to see the ancient glories of their order represented by Mr. Irving with such a masterly sense of sacerdotal self-will. Yet Nonconformists are not offended. Becket is to them, no doubt, as he was to Henry II., "a pestilent priest," and there is a great comfort to private judgment in Wolsey's disgrace. It has fallen to Mr. Irving's lot, as it has in a much larger sense to Mr. Gladstone's, to conciliate both High Church and Dissent; for many Puritans, who were wont to treat the theatre as anathema, have been converted to the Lyceum. But above these elements of popularity Mr. Irving has, in a remarkable measure, that attribute of personal dignity, that habitual air of command, that semi-mystical reserve, which are indispensable to the permanence of the British institution. Another actor may frolic in the skirts of Charley's Aunt without filling the beholders with irreverence; but our Becket, Shylock, Hamlet and King Arthur

MOVES ON AN EXALTED PLANE

which disposes us at once to seemly regard and deferential expectation. An attack on Mr. Irving is as great an outrage as that of the Danish soldier who proposed to strike the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

We do it wrong, being so majes'ical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

It may be confidently asserted that none of Mr. Irving's predecessors ever enjoyed this unique distinction. The nearest of them in point of time and eminence are Macready and Charles Kean, neither of whom acquired the stability of Mr. Irving's fortunes. Macready had some endowments which have not been surpassed, but he lacked one without which no man can become an institution. He was a great actor, but he had no respect for his art. He thought it, as Fanny Kemble did, a foolish pastime, degrading to a gentleman. He cursed the fate—and his curses gave a robust flavour to many a green-room anecdote—that made him a motley to the view. Mr. Irving, on the other hand, has a deep and abiding belief in the serious responsibilities of the dramatic artist.

HE WORSHIPS HIS ART

with a single-minded devotion which, combined with his extraordinary personality, has done more than all his histrionic achievements, striking as they are, to impress the public mind with the gravity of his calling. He is never weary of claiming for the drama a recognised place amongst the graces of a liberal education. He is quick to resent any slur upon it as a personal injury. He has advocated a municipal theatre, less apparently because he believes in the asthetic genius of town councils than because he craves for some formal recognition of the play as part of the national life. This passion is not shared by municipal reformers, not even by those who have attained the unexampled enlightenment of providing Sunday bands in the London parks; but, although Mr. Irving has not persuaded us, we feel that his energies in this direction are worthy of his character. He lives up to our conception of him as an institution. He rides forth in quest of municipal romance like an Arthurian paladin. To the "Cinderella of the Arts," as he has called the drama, he shows

ALL THE LOYALTY OF A KNIGHT-ERRANT

to the damsel in distress. His gauntlet is hung, so to speak, on the front-door of the Lyceum, and he lies in wait, armed *cap-à-pie*, for any rash roysterer who may be tempted to speak slightingly of the lady. In his dramatic work Mr. Irving shows the same insatiable zeal. The purely commercial aspect of success has probably less attraction for him than for any favourite of fortune that ever lived. Had he a reasonable eye to economy, he might be able at this moment to retire from the stage, and spend the rest of his days amidst all the appurtenances of splendour dear to our national instincts. But it may be doubted whether Mr. Irving is not a poor man, comparatively. Certainly, the unbroken prosperity which has been his for many years, and especially the enormous rewards he has reaped in America, have been counterbalanced by an outlay, due partly to the native largeness of the man, but chiefly to the predominance in his mind of artistic over arithmetical values. He has been reproached with the sacrifice of dramatic art to scenic luxury, a gibe which might have some point if it could be shown that he played the penurious Louis IX. in a gorgeous palace, or dressed the village girls in "Olivia" like princesses. But when Wolsey gives a banquet to his master there are economists who think that

"EGO ET REX MEUS"

ought to be attired like hawkers, making a meal off bread and bacon. Mr. Irving's sense of order and harmony is his supreme gift as a manager. As an actor, only those who know him intimately can speak fitly of his unremitting toil, of his dœmonic energy at rehearsal, of the ceaseless elaboration of parts which have long ceased to be novel, of the artist's unappeasable discontent which is the spur of all true ambition. At the age of 57 Henry Irving still holds securely the position towards which he made the first real strides rather more than three-and-twenty years ago, when his personal force startled the town in "The Bells." His artistic repute rests on a greater variety of accomplishment than that of any actor of his generation. Playgoers accustomed to the strongly-marked individuality of his tragic impersonations must have been astonished by the almost complete effacement of that individuality in Corporal Gregory Brewster. Of this versatility he has given many examples; but perhaps the poles of art are not more widely asunder than Brewster and Becket. In both

THE IMAGINATION OF THE ACTOR

is his most conspicuous quality. The soul of the warrior priest and fanatic, and the poor, flickering life of the old corporal who cries over his broken pipe, are equally vivid. Emotion demanding great physical powers may disclose Mr. Irving's defects; but in the strokes of genius that charm the intellect, in those subtle appeals that stir the fancy to the irony or the pity of life, in all that goes to make up the complex art which surrounds an impersonation with its own proper atmosphere, Mr. Irving has had few equals. We may wish that some of his most brilliant achievements had illuminated the contemporary drama; but who can quarrel with the tradition which he has sustained with such consistent fidelity? It is the alliance of this tradition of the romantic school with the modern spirit of diplomatic sagacity which has made Henry Irving one of our institutions, and which makes us hail his King Arthur as a friend emerging from a temporary sojourn amidst the mysticism of dim antiquity.

MR. IRVING IN "BECKET."

In a prologue and four acts, much read everywhere, long performed in London, and frequently repeated on the stage in America, Lord Tennyson told the story of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and champion of the Church against the arbitrary and profane King Henry the Second. Circumstances, all of a kind prosperous, and welcome even to those who have suffered deprival by them, have till now prevented the representation of this historical tragedy in Liverpool. It was last night produced with striking success at the Court Theatre, and the credit of a most brilliant and popular performance must be shared unequally, in proportions that need not be defined, between the authorship of the late Laureate, the acting of Mr. Irving and his colleagues, most beautiful scenery, and astonishing stage management.

Except to historical students, and to survivors of more ecclesiastical times, the interest of the great contest between Henry and the Church has greatly paled, and Tennyson had not the Shakspeare magnetism; but, lit and animated by Mr. Irving's vivid impersonation of the Archbishop, the turbulent controversy in which it was sought to exempt the ecclesiastical power from State control lives before the audiences of to-day with extraordinary vigour. One of the most life-like scenes in the play is the hall of Northampton Castle, where, dressed in all the splendour of their dignities and orders, those ecclesiastics of the time who took an insular and Erastian view of Becket's bold policy do all that they can by the most intem-

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The voice of the Lord is in the voice of the people!
The voice of the Lord will hush the hounds of hell,
That ever yelp and snarl at Holy Church,
In everlasting silence.

Of course, in the long run the conflict of which Becket is the hero leads him in this tragedy, as in the history, to his martyr's death, but it is the best feature of Tennyson's work that he has entwined with the technical theme of it a love interest which wonderfully refreshes the audience, and which presents Becket in an aspect of humanity which can only be poetically attributed to him, but in which, as often happens, poetry is truer to the probabilities of life than dry historical biography can prove itself to be.

Now, a thread of this delicate and subtle character, fraught with tenderness, tremulous with human feeling, and all the while treated as of the philosophy of the play, is exactly the sort of challenge to which Mr. Irving's fine and sensitive intellect is sure to respond with alacrity, with charm, and with depth. And so it comes that, amid the scenic splendour of the tragedy, and while one's more vulgar faculties are following and enjoying the clash of interests and the clash of swords, and the clash of a mailed invasion of a sacred fane, the more observant and introspective powers are led captive by the profound human interest alike of Becket's character and Becket's speculations. We may say of him three things which it is deeply moving to recognise as Mr. Irving unfolds the action—first, that he passes from lay expediency to pious heroism at the call of God, which dedicates him to be Primate instead of Chancellor; secondly, that with him "Valour and holy life go together," and anything like cowardice is inconceivable to him in holy men; and, thirdly, that "love runs through all the world God made."

This last point is for especial note, and imparts to the play a delicious ingredient, and to Mr. Irving's impersonation a tender and thoughtful attraction, which at the first seeing or even reading of the play many will miss. Observe how strikingly and how perfectly within the character Lord Tennyson introduces this element quite early in the play. In the prologue, when King Henry is desirous to induce his Chancellor, Becket, then only in deacon's orders and wearing a lay dress, to protect Fair Rosamund in her bower during his absence from England, the frivolous monarch jokes his Minister and friend, and plays with the idea that he, being a *bon vivant*, owns the fascinations of the fair.

BECKET: That palate is insane which cannot tell
A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.
HENRY: Well, who loves wine loves woman.
BECKET: So I do.
Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers;
And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,
The trees are all the statelier, [illegible] the flowers
Are all the fairer.

HENRY : And thy thoughts, thy fancies?
BECKET : Good dogs, my liege, well train'd, and easily call'd
Off from the game.
HENRY : Save for some once or twice,
When they ran down the game and worried it.
BECKET : *No, my liege, no! — not once — in God's name, no!*
HENRY : Nay, then, I take thee at thy word—believe thee
The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.
And so this Rosamund, my true heart-wife,
Not Eleanor—she whom I love indeed
As a woman should be loved—Why dost thou smile So dolorously?
BECKET : My good liege, *if a man*
Wastes himself among women, how should he love
A woman as a woman should be loved?
HENRY : How shouldst thou know that never hast loved one?

All the lines here italicised are delivered by Mr. Irving with a fervour of manly chastity and singleness of love sentiment which gives splendid effect to the poet's beautiful conception. Throughout the dealings of the Archbishop with Rosamund this pure and noble spirit is maintained. In a scene played with a fine constraint as well as with magnificent grip, Becket, appearing with melodramatic appositeness in the bower, rescues Rosamund from the murderous attempts of Queen Eleanor. Here he exhibits that continued faithfulness to the King in his love affair which differences on other matters have not impaired, and which, indeed, is largely founded upon the sympathy of a heart as gentle and chivalous towards a good woman who loves as it is lofty and unyielding in public controversy. But the malignant Queen misrepresents what Becket has done in placing Rosamund in a nunnery for safety, and thus this curiously but honestly and naturally worked love element brings about the crisis of Becket's fate by unjustly incensing the King against him. When in one of the more sombre scenes—but one which makes as fine a picture as any—Becket, perfectly conscious of his approaching doom, is meditating and philosophising on the course of the world's affairs, and on the love that runs through them, and of the courage for God that all good men should have, he is led by a visit of Rosamund to recite an experience of his early life which tells the tale of all his tenderness to good women, and shows us how rash the libertine King was when he concluded that Becket had never loved because he vowed solemnly that he had never been unchaste.

BECKET : There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid
Lived in my mother's house; if Rosamund is
The world's rose, as her name imports her—she
Was the world's lily.
JOHN OF SALIS : Ay, and what of her?
BECKET : She died of leprosy.
JOHN OF SALIS : I know not why
You call these old things back again, my lord.
BECKET : The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

It is clear that Tennyson meant, and that Irving expresses in the beautiful tones of this meditative recital, that this lily-memory had been the romance of Becket's life, and that, like many another good man's romance, whether in possession or withheld, it had coloured all one aspect of his life with gentle hues of faith and constancy and helpfulness. To render perfect the harmony of such a suggestion with the actual love incidents of the tragedy, Fair Rosamund is made as fair of soul as she is fair of beauty. No more charming picture of the gracious self-abandonment of a pure woman to a pure love has ever been achieved than we have in Rosamund Clifford's devotion to the King and to their child, painted on the background of her exquisite home, upon which the imagination of a fine scene painter has been deliciously lavished. Miss Marion Terry is to be congratulated on the truly womanly brightness and ethereality with which she renders the charming part of Fair Rosamund. There is probably no actress on the stage who can more effectually convince an audience that she is playing a good woman, or who can make goodness a more shining trait of beauty.

The last scene is one of noble architecture and mystic lighting, and well-employed colour. Here in Canterbury Cathedral Becket meets his death. Grand to the last, he falls a noble martyr, inviting the death which his fidelity has brought near to him. Mr. Irving's fall as he succumbs wounded by several swords—his half rising to his feet as he breathes the martyr's final prayer—and his rolling over the steps on to the Cathedral floor, are all conceived in that vein of intense and uncompromising reality which does more than anything else can to render the crisis of a tragedy its artistic culmination.

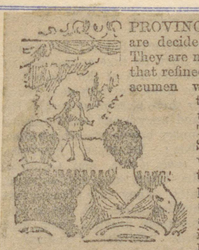
The play is greatly helped by Dr. Stanford's music. Of the acting we can only speak in terms of general and cordial praise. The cast is too numerous for names to be given where all did well, but we must not be quite silent about Miss Annie Hughes's capital Margery—a gay rustic soliloquist—nor about Master Leo Byrne's excellently-played little boy. The tragedy met with such enormous favour that the curtain had to be raised several times after each act.

ROYAL COURT THEATRE.

TERMINATION OF MR. IRVING'S VISIT.

Mr. Henry Irving brought his fortnight's engagement at the Royal Court Theatre to a close on Saturday evening with a performance of "The Merchant of Venice" and "A Story of Waterloo." A house crowded in every part followed both representations with rapt attention, and at the conclusion of Mr. Conan Doyle's little play the curtain had to be raised at least half a dozen times before the applause subsided.

In response to loud calls for a speech, Mr. Irving came forward and said :—It is my privilege tonight, ladies and gentlemen, to express to you in one word or two my heartfelt thanks for the greeting you have given us during the past fortnight—a greeting so cordial and kind that we are very sorry that our engagement at this theatre has come to an end (applause). It is highly gratifying to think that since last we were here we have not been forgotten by you, and I sincerely hope that we shall always deserve that favour of your hands. I have some of the most delightful associations with Liverpool audiences. It is many years since I played in the old Theatre Royal, but I am not going to give you any reminiscences or tell you of the parts I played there so many years ago. Were I to do so, you would indeed say that I ought to play the veteran (laughter and loud cheers). Since those days I have experienced nothing but kindness from the Liverpool public and the sweetest courtesy from Liverpool citizens. During this engagement you have looked with favour upon all we have done, from Tennyson's noble "Becket" to this graphic little sketch of Dr. Conan Doyle's (cheers). If this little play is only the means of obtaining for some of the veterans of the mutiny and Crimea a little acknowledgment in the shape of a small pension—something that will add comfort to their latter days—this little play, I say, will not have been acted in vain (hear, hear, and loud cheers). I must thank the gentlemen of the Liverpool Press for their most generous appreciation, and sometimes most brilliant record, of our work (hear, hear). I must also tender my heartiest thanks for the great assistance and ready help which we have received in our work from the staff of the Royal Court Theatre, headed by that most genial and courteous of friends Mr. Bruce (loud cheers). I have nothing but thanks, and I thank you with all my heart again and again. To one and all I can only express the hope that we may soon meet again (loud and prolonged cheering).



PROVINCIAL audiences are decidedly provincial. They are not possessed of that refined metropolitan acumen which inspired the audience at the St. James's Theatre on Saturday night, when, because they disliked a play that was strange in form and exceptional in tone, they baited the hapless author with derisive calls at the end of the piece, to hoot and jeer him because his effort to please had not met with their critical favour. It were irreverent to their pre-eminent metropolitan culture to suppose that they had failed to observe the cunning literary pains with which the author had bedecked his studiously simple story. It were presumption to imagine that the play's carefully subdued tone, its elaborate avoidance of customary stage trickery, its resolute plainness and quietness, had been mistaken by Britain's most discriminating playgoers for impotence of invention and feebleness of handling.

They must have known, these supreme judges—as we are constantly assured that they are—how laboriously the author had worked, and how hard he had striven to make his play differ from hackneyed and conventional models. Yet they took delight in heaping ridicule and contumely upon his head because his style was not so fortunate as to please their perspicacious taste.

From which we may once more clearly perceive how immeasurably superior is our glorious metropolis to those remote provincial fastnesses where disfavour knows no louder mode of censure than in omitting to patronise the thing it does not like.

* * *

For my part, however, being but lately rescued from the benighted barbarism of the "country," I am conscientiously constrained to confess that literary workmanship is to me a quality so precious, and freshness of conception, however crude, has a savour to me so assuasive, that I would not on my own initiative have ventured to call for Henry James on the night of *Guy Domville's* production to yahoo him for daring to be "new."

Of course, I quite see that since "problem plays" are in the fashion, Henry James, to be fashionable, should have written a problem play, with the usual young men in the centre of the stage to utter *blasé* cynicisms about the other characters. And there ought to have been the customary drawing-room full of smartly dressed people, and the harmless, necessary lady with a past, and the "comic relief" to make discord with all the rest of the play.

It was exceedingly imprudent of him to omit all these well-established accessories; but when I go to see a new play I do so like to see a *new* play that, with my hand upon my critical heart, I am bound to admit I can't altogether blame him.

* * *

Mr. James's St. James's play is simplicity itself. It opens in the garden before a quaint old grey house, where, with her child, and her child's tutor, Guy Domville (Mr. George Alexander), lived at the period of the story (a hundred years ago) a gentle widowed woman named Mrs. Peverel (Miss Marion Terry). The widow is wooed in chivalrous fashion by the tutor's friend, Frank Humber (Mr. Herbert Waring), and is urged to wed this honest gentleman by the tutor himself on the eve of the latter's consecration to the labours of the Church. The widow, restrained by an undefined, semi-unconscious affection for her child's guide, philosopher, and friend, hesitates to accept the other man, but is on the point of making up her mind when—heigh! presto!—a bomb bursts in the midst of this simple peacefulness in the shape of a courtly, high-toned, diplomatic noble, Lord Devenish, who comes to announce that a rich unknown relative of Guy's is dead, that Guy is the head of the ancient Domville family (it is hard to resist recollections at this point of an "old Irish" name of similar sound), and that it is the earnest wish of Guy's rich and last surviving relative, Mrs. Domville, that he should take up the responsibilities of his heritage and perpetuate the stock.

* * *

At first sound of this unexpected news, a new-born hope lends joyful definiteness to Mrs. Peverel's unconscious love. She ruefully declines Frank Humber's proposal, and joins her efforts to those of Lord Devenish to persuade Guy to renounce his pious inclinations, only to find, when she at last succeeds, that Guy's entrance into "life" is to involve exile from her side, and the probability of a wealthy, fashionable marriage.

* * *

The second act shows Guy, as a gentleman of quality, affianced to his rich cousin, Mary Brasier. The engagement has been brought about by his great relative, Mrs. Domville, and by her interested scheming suitor, Lord Devenish. But on the wedding day, by shamming drunkenness, Guy discovers that his cousin loves a poor navy lieutenant, and, sacrificing himself, he assists her to elope with the man of her choice.

* * *

In the third act, he returns to the country to seek consolation by offering himself to Mrs. Peverel, but, finding her disposed now to accept Frank Humber, who, on his appearance, proposes to banish himself for his friend's sake, he outdoes the country gentleman's magnanimity, and though assured that his suit would even yet have the preference, abandons his worldly hopes and leaves the scene to return to his priestly inclinations.

* * *

The chief fault of the play is that the motive of his fashionable connections in dragging Guy to "life" is not made sufficiently real and distinct to count with the audience amongst the vital threads of the action. Secondly, Mrs. Peverel's preference for the dreamy student should, to ensure satisfaction with the ending, have been made more vague and questionable. Moreover, though the dialogue is often fanciful and poetic, and always "literary," it lacks touches of humour and pathos to give it relief and distinction.

* * *

Yet it is a pretty play—not a strong nor even a good play, but a sweet, simple, and refreshingly unargumentative play. And it took nothing from my appreciation of its artistic artlessness to see how vigorously it was applauded by my next neighbour, the skilful and distinguished author of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*

* * *

Guy Domville is beautifully staged and beautifully played. Geo. Alexander, whose lackadaisical evenness has sometimes excited my critical rebuke, never showed more variety or energy than in the title part, and

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BECKET : Good dogs, my liege, well train'd, and easily call'd
Off from the game.
HENRY : Save for some once or twice,
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BECKET : The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

It is clear that Tennyson meant, and that Irving expresses in the beautiful tones of this meditative recital, that this lily-memory had been the romance of Becket's life, and that, like many another good man's romance, whether in possession or withheld, it had coloured all one aspect of his life with gentle hues of faith and constancy and helpfulness. To render perfect the harmony of such a suggestion with the actual love incidents of the tragedy, Fair Rosamund is made as fair of soul as she is fair of beauty. No more charming picture of the gracious self-abandonment of a pure woman to a pure love has ever been achieved than we have in Rosamund Clifford's devotion to the King and to their child, painted on the background of her exquisite home, upon which the imagination of a fine scene painter has been deliciously lavished. Miss Marion Terry is to be congratulated on the truly womanly brightness and ethereality with which she renders the charming part of Rosamund. There is probably no actress on the stage who can more effectually convince an audience that she is playing a good woman, or who can make goodness a more shining trait of beauty.

The last scene is one of noble architecture and mystic lighting, and well-employed colour. Here in Canterbury Cathedral Becket meets his death. Grand to the last, he falls a noble martyr, inviting the death which his fidelity has brought near to him. Mr. Irving's fall as he succumbs wounded by several swords—his half rising to his feet as he breathes the martyr's final prayer—and his rolling over the steps on to the Cathedral floor, are all conceived in that vein of intense and uncompromising reality which does more than anything else can to render the crisis of a tragedy its artistic culmination.

The play is greatly helped by Dr. Stanford's music. Of the acting we can only speak in terms of general and cordial praise. The cast is too numerous for names to be given where all did well, but we must not be quite silent about Miss Annie Hughes's capital Margery—a gay rustic soliloquist—nor about Master Leo Byrne's excellently-played little boy. The tragedy met with such enormous favour that the curtain had to be raised several times after each act.

ROYAL COURT THEATRE.

TERMINATION OF MR. IRVING'S VISIT.

Mr. Henry Irving brought his fortnight's engagement at the Royal Court Theatre to a close on Saturday evening with a performance of "The Merchant of Venice" and "A Story of Waterloo." A house crowded in every part followed both representations with rapt attention, and at the conclusion of Mr. Conan Doyle's little play the curtain had to be raised at least half a dozen times before the applause subsided.

In response to loud calls for a speech, Mr. Irving came forward and said:—It is my privilege tonight, ladies and gentlemen, to express to you in one word or two my heartfelt thanks for the greeting you have given us during the past fortnight—a greeting so cordial and kind that we are very sorry that our engagement at this theatre has come to an end (applause). It is highly gratifying to think that since last we were here we have not been forgotten by you, and I sincerely hope that we shall always deserve that favour at your hands. I have some of the most delightful associations with Liverpool audiences. It is many years since I played in the old Theatre Royal, but I am not going to give you any reminiscences or tell you of the parts I played there so many years ago. Were I to do so, you would indeed say that I ought to play the veteran (laughter and loud cheers). Since those days I have experienced nothing but kindness from the Liverpool public and the sweetest courtesy from Liverpool citizens. During this engagement you have looked with favour upon all we have done, from Tennyson's noble "Becket" to this graphic little sketch of Dr. Conan Doyle's (cheers). If this little play is only the means of obtaining for some of the veterans of the mutiny and Crimea a little acknowledgment in the shape of a small pension—something that will add comfort to their latter days—this little play, I say, will not have been acted in vain (hear, hear, and loud cheers). I must thank the gentlemen of the Liverpool Press for their most generous appreciation, and sometimes most brilliant record, of our work (hear, hear). I must also tender my heartiest thanks for the great assistance and ready help which we have received in our work from the staff of the Royal Court Theatre, headed by that most genial and courteous of friends Mr. Bruce (loud cheers). I have nothing but thanks, and I thank you with all my heart again and again. To one and all I can only express the hope that we may soon meet again (loud and prolonged cheering).

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PROVINCIAL audiences are decidedly provincial. They are not possessed of that refined metropolitan acumen which inspired the audience at the St. James's Theatre on Saturday night, when, because they disliked a play that was strange in form and exceptional in tone, they baited the hapless author with derisive calls at the end of the piece, to hoot and jeer him because his effort to please had not met with their critical favour. It were irreverent to their pre-eminent metropolitan culture to suppose that they had failed to observe the cunning literary pains with which the author had bedecked his studiously simple story. It were presumption to imagine that the play's carefully subdued tone, its elaborate avoidance of customary stage trickery, its resolute plainness and quietness, had been mistaken by Britain's most discriminating playgoers for impotence of invention and feebleness of handling.

They must have known, these supreme judges—as we are constantly assured that they are—how laboriously the author had worked, and how hard he had striven to make his play differ from hackneyed and conventional models. Yet they took delight in heaping ridicule and contumely upon his head because his style was not so fortunate as to please their perspicacious taste.

From which we may once more clearly perceive how immeasurably superior is our glorious metropolis to those remote provincial fastnesses where disfavour knows no louder mode of censure than in omitting to patronise the thing it does not like.

* * *

For my part, however, being but lately rescued from the benighted barbarism of the "country," I am conscientiously constrained to confess that literary workmanship is to me a quality so precious, and freshness of conception, however crude, has a savour to me so assuasive, that I would not on my own initiative have ventured to call for Henry James on the night of *Guy Domville's* production to yahoo him for daring to be "new."

Of course, I quite see that since "problem plays" are in the fashion, Henry James, to be fashionable, should have written a problem play, with the usual young men in the centre of the stage to utter *blasé* cynicisms about the other characters. And there ought to have been the customary drawing-room full of smartly dressed people, and the harmless, necessary lady with a past, and the "comic relief" to make discord with all the rest of the play.

It was exceedingly imprudent of him to omit all these well-established accessories; but when I go to see a new play I do so like to see a *new* play that, with my hand upon my critical heart, I am bound to admit I can't altogether blame him.

* * *

Mr. James's St. James's play is simplicity itself. It opens in the garden before a quaint old grey house, where, with her child, and her child's tutor, Guy Domville (Mr. George Alexander), lived at the period of the story (a hundred years ago) a gentle widowed woman named Mrs. Peverel (Miss Marion Terry). The widow is wooed in chivalrous fashion by the tutor's friend, Frank Humber (Mr. Herbert Waring), and is urged to wed this honest gentleman by the tutor himself on the eve of the latter's consecration to the labours of the Church. The widow, restrained by an undefined, semi-unconscious affection for her child's guide, philosopher, and friend, hesitates to accept the other man, but is on the point of making up her mind when—heigh! presto!—a bomb bursts in the midst of this simple peacefulness in the shape of a courtly, high-toned, diplomatic noble, Lord Devenish, who comes to announce that a rich unknown relative of Guy's is dead, that Guy is the head of the ancient Domville family (it is hard to resist recollections at this point of an "old Irish" name of similar sound), and that it is the earnest wish of Guy's rich and last surviving relative, Mrs. Domville, that he should take up the responsibilities of his heritage and perpetuate the stock.

* * *

At first sound of this unexpected news, a new-born hope lends joyful definiteness to Mrs. Peverel's unconscious love. She ruefully declines Frank Humber's proposal, and joins her efforts to those of Lord Devenish to persuade Guy to renounce his pious inclinations, only to find, when she at last succeeds, that Guy's entrance into "life" is to involve exile from her side, and the probability of a wealthy, fashionable marriage.

* * *

The second act shows Guy, as a gentleman of quality, affianced to his rich cousin, Mary Brasier. The engagement has been brought about by his great relative, Mrs. Domville, and by her interested scheming suitor, Lord Devenish. But on the wedding day, by shamming drunkenness, Guy discovers that his cousin loves a poor navy lieutenant, and, sacrificing himself, he assists her to elope with the man of her choice.

* * *

In the third act, he returns to the country to seek consolation by offering himself to Mrs. Peverel, but, finding her disposed now to accept Frank Humber, who, on his appearance, proposes to banish himself for his friend's sake, he outdoes the country gentleman's magnanimity, and though assured that his suit would even yet have the preference, abandons his worldly hopes and leaves the scene to return to his priestly inclinations.

* * *

The chief fault of the play is that the motive of his fashionable connections in dragging Guy to "life" is not made sufficiently real and distinct to count with the audience amongst the vital threads of the action. Secondly, Mrs. Peverel's preference for the dreamy student should, to ensure satisfaction with the ending, have been made more vague and questionable. Moreover, though the dialogue is often fanciful and poetic, and always "literary," it lacks touches of humour and pathos to give it relief and distinction.

* * *

Yet it is a pretty play—not a strong nor even a good play, but a sweet, simple, and refreshingly unargumentative play. And it took nothing from my appreciation of its artistic artlessness to see how vigorously it was applauded by my next neighbour, the skilful and distinguished author of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*

* * *

Guy Domville is beautifully staged and beautifully played. Geo. Alexander, whose lackadaisical evenness has sometimes excited my critical rebuke, never showed more variety or energy than in the title part, and

Miss Marion Terry personifies lovableness itself as Mrs. Peverel. Herbert Waring is better suited with modern garb and speech than with the semblances of the last century; but it is wonderful to see how admirably Mr. Elliot, the "smart" young man of *The Masqueraders*, adapts himself to the starch and peruke of the lordly Lord Devenish.

* * *

Miss Ellen Terry.—This distinguished actress has sufficiently recovered from her recent throat affection to join Mr. Henry Irving and the Lyceum company at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, where they will remain during next week. The part selected for her rentrée was Rosamund in "Becket," a play received with enthusiasm wherever it has been taken by Mr. Irving during his provincial tour. The greeting awaiting Miss Terry was of the heartiest, and her poetic impersonation throughout evoked the utmost admiration. The crowded audience also gave an exceedingly warm welcome to Mr. Irving, who had not played in Glasgow for three years. The applause when he was first seen was so prolonged that the action of the play was temporarily suspended, and whenever opportunity afterwards offered, loud and spontaneous applause testified to the effect created by his masterly embodiment of Tennyson's boldly-drawn Archbishop.

My Dear Dick,—Yes. It is quite true. George Alexander does announce that his season will terminate on July the 28th. This may or may not mean that *The Masqueraders* has got a weak spot, and that the hot weather has found it out. Remember, Alexander must have some holiday before he goes on tour, and during the August Bank holiday week most of the St. James's Theatre patrons leave town for the autumn. It seems to me that in July his season naturally terminates itself. Mark you, I was not and I am not one of those who welcomed *The Masqueraders* as a perfect work. I told you the absolute truth according to my convictions. I said that the play was brilliantly received right to the end of the third act, but that, to my thinking, the acting of Alexander threw a sort of spell over his audience, and affected them with a kind of temporary madness. No single episode of the great gambling scene will bear the test of common sense for a minute, but it swept the audience on the first night as if it had been a brand new dramatic revelation. The announcement that the season ends this month may mean that common sense is triumphing after all. But for my own part I think the trying moment will really come when, after the autumn, the piece is revived. Still Alexander has plenty of plays in his locker to go on with, which reminds me that not long since a well-known author wrote a play. He sent it to a manager, who refused it. Another manager produced it, and it was a very great success. The first manager then begged the author to write him another play. The author did so. But the manager promptly returned it with a request that it might be considerably altered, because the "second act was too strong for anything." The author is not the sort of man to mutilate what he considers a proper dramatic scheme to please anybody. Therefore it will not surprise me if the play does not reach its original destination after all, indeed, as Alexander is without question the boldest of our managers, possibly he may make a bid for it. Possibly, also, it may be the very play destined by the fates to succeed *The Masqueraders*.

MR. E. S. WILLARD AT HOME.

It was as difficult to run Mr. Willard to earth as the Butcher, the Baker, the Brewer, the Banker, the Bellman, and Boots found it to get at the Snark. Until *The Professor's Love Story* was produced, not an hour had he to spare. Neither at sunrise—for the famous actor is an early riser, and may be seen at work upon his flowers long before the London gardener is afoot—nor at sunset could he give his mind to anything but the play. But when at last his anxiety was over and the Professor had been taken to our hearts, then I got my call, and on Sunday went up to that quaint gabled house in St. John's Wood, with its diamond-paned latticed windows, to find him among his black oak, his curios, and his books, disposed to talk about anything excepting players and the stage.

"Well, have you heard from Barrie?" was one of my first questions.

"Oh, yes. He's delighted with the way the piece has been received. I had a long letter from him in which he apologised for his shaky hand, for he is still very weak. But to tell you the truth, he needn't have said anything, for it was the only letter I ever had from him that was really legible. Some of his old letters I look at to this day, and wonder what the words can possibly be."

This was my cue for diverting the talk into literary channels, for extracting confessions of favourite authors, learning what professional model suggested Goodwillie the absent-minded, and hearing what previous characters Mr. Willard has played upon similar lines—the inner history, in fact, of this exquisite gem of comedy—but the effort was fruitless, America was his only theme.

"You hear about heat over there, but it's never worse than this. And then they know how to grapple with it. Over there you dress sensibly, in gossamer twills; and every morning every house receives a great block of ice, and you drink things cold, not—in a tone of reproach as he touches the caraffes, the champagne, and the seltzer—'not *lukewarm*.' But we've lots of quaint ideas of America which are all wrong. There's a belief now that they are discourteous. Why, do you know that when a woman passes a man who is seated, he rises as she goes by. When a man is standing beneath a roof with his hat on, say in a corridor, if a woman enters, that hat is whipped off. And this is not in the South, where stately courtesies are half the life, but in the North, where—so we think on this side—nothing but how to make money ever enters their heads. Then one hears how the Advanced Woman comes from the States. Poof! Revolting women and revolting daughters are at a discount there. The children are quite charming with their old-fashioned 'sir' and 'ma'am' to their parents, and the women are just queens of the home. Socially cleverer and more cultured than the men—because they've nothing else to do but broaden their minds and enlarge their views—and the men are content to have it so. 'Oh, if my wife says so that's right' expresses the attitude of the men. There is no war, no strained relations between the sexes such as I hear of on this side. Then the want of sentiment they are accused of is another libel. You want to see Decoration Day to appreciate that on that day, May 30, all who fought in the civil war troop out to do honour to those that fell. They parade in their old uniforms, frayed and tattered and torn, often too small, sometimes too big, all very unmilitary-looking to our ideas, and they march to the great cemeteries and plant a little flag on every soldier's grave, and read out his name, his regiment, and where he fell, and pronounce 'God rest his soul,' and that is all. But you've got to see them from every calling and every grade—from bank presidents to store clerks, all companions for that day—to realise the intense pathos, the sentiment of the scene."

This talk of the North and South War led to a discussion, during which I told him that Hall Caine had pronounced him a "product" of the Cromwellian age, and credited him with a strong leaven of Puritanism, and Mr. Willard then consented to speak for five minutes about himself.

"That's odd, for he's hit the mark. Some ancestors of mine, if they didn't actually go over in the *Mayflower*, were very early settlers, and the Willards are prominent New Englanders to this day. A big dinner-party was got up for me, at which everyone who sat down was a Willard. That day I heard much of the original emigrants, and the history of Solomon Willard, a sturdy old settler, who couldn't get on with his own community, and so shouldered his axe and cut his way to a spot that pleased him, and there pitched his tent, and so founded the city of Concord. The Puritan trait is plainly seen in the family still, and I've just begun to recognise it in myself sometimes."

From New England Mr. Willard whirls me to Chicago and the Great Fair. This is his hobby. He can enthuse for hours upon the glories of the great White City, as it was called, and with gusto he will pass before you the panorama of the Exhibition; superb photographs two feet square, engravings in dozens, coloured pictures by scores, and innumerable studies of dancers, actors, warriors, belles—Samoans, Javanese, Persians, Cretes, and Arabians—and show you how for days he practically lived upon the immense lagoons, and glided in a gondola about the silent reaches in this miracle of man's handiwork, reaches as rural and picturesque and lovely as the enchanting backwaters of the Thames, and yet within a few minutes' paddle of some busy spot in this hundred-and-twenty miles of architectural magnificence, of elaborately built-up towns and villages, of, indeed, the whole world in miniature.

Chicago, of course, suggested Mr. Stead, but Mr. Willard had little to say on this subject. What he had, however, was to the point. "It's a great city, so there's great wickedness. But why enlarge upon it with the catch-cry, 'If Christ came to Chicago,' when there came quite another man in Stead? Besides Chicago can set us an example or two. I wonder if Mr. Stead saw the huge building on the pier stretching out into Lake Michigan, a refuge where the poor women from the slums can bring their babies early in the morning, and leave them in the charge of a great staff of nurses while they go to do their day's work, and the children get good food and sleep in hammocks and play all day in the pure air that blows over the lake." And Mr. Willard gives me story upon story to show that charity and kindliness have taken great hold of that vast city which Mr. Stead describes as out-Babyloning Babylon, and which thirty years ago did not even exist. I ask for a sight of the spoils of Mr. Willard's four years among the generous Egyptians, for I know him to be a treasure hunter—indeed, his walls, covered with artistic trophies, proclaim it—and he unlocks a tiny cabinet. "You see how I value them," he laughs. "I've even turned out some of my precious Swinburnes to make room," and there, above two shelves of rare first editions, this Puritan-actor-bibliophile discloses a collection of gems to hang over, gloat upon, for a month of Sundays. Exquisite Cloisonné enamel vases in pure lapis-lazuli, and camellia, and sedge green, phials carved from amber, and amethyst, and opal—most of them smuggled at great risk out of China. Mr. Willard dwells upon their beauty and handles them with the loving care of a Cyrus Blenkarn or a connoisseur at Christie's. "Opals are my favourite stones," he says, as he produces from his pocket a worn, wash-leather bag. "There, isn't that beautiful?" handing me a lovely dusky stone. "They bring me luck! In *The Middleman*, although, artistically speaking, penniless in that third act, I couldn't part with my opals," and he brings out several more. "What are they to bring you luck in next over here; Hamlet or——?" Mr. Willard assumes an abstracted look, and perhaps I wrong him, but I fancy that he winked. Said he, "I want plays. You have all very kindly said that you want me; but you don't—unless I can give you the plays that you want as well. And they want finding." "Then you won't make any announcement about your programme."

"Oh, some day I mean to try *Hamlet*. That's not abandoned! As for the rest, well"—with another great laugh—"You can let everybody know that the Comedy is the coolest place in London!" and with that I left Mr. Willard to his bronzes, his enamels, his gems, his curios, his books, his garden, his piles of literature, and pictures of his beloved Great Fair.

"JOHN-A-DREAMS" AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

The star of Mr. C. Haddon Chambers is in the ascendant. His new play "John-a-Dreams," written for Mr. Beerbohm Tree, was produced last night at the Haymarket Theatre with all the success that could have been desired by the well-wishers of the manager and of the author of "Captain Swift" and "The Idler" and part author of "The Fatal Card." With some strong situations, a romantic story the interest of which rarely shows signs of flagging, and a theatrical effectiveness of the kind manifesting an affection for oft-tried rather than experimental methods, "John-a-Dreams" has most of the elements appealing to audiences not inclined to consider probability or consistency as the be-all and end-all of modern drama. Mr. Chambers does not seem inclined to change his style. There is nothing of the problem play in "John-a-Dreams." No vexed question of later date, say, than that of the publication of Wilkie Collins's "The New Magdalen" is propounded, and for the means to attain certain ends Mr. Chambers is quite content to employ the stage resources deemed good enough by dramatists of a preceding age for the development of their ideas. It must not be supposed, however, that "John-a-Dreams" is a mere hash of familiar incidents. On the contrary, there is much in the action that is fresh, and though two or three of the characters may be of the puppet order, considerable skill is evinced in maintaining attention in their varying attitudes, aims, and proceedings. Regarded as a whole it is a spirited play, and it receives from the Haymarket company a rendering that is both smooth and telling.

Two friends who at Oxford years back were so devoted to each other that they entered into a compact of abiding fealty fell in love with the same woman. This is the sum and substance of the plot. What Mr. Chambers had to do was to give the woman to the right man after each had been tried in the furnace of doubt and affliction, and had emerged ennobled rather than debased. As already intimated, he has accomplished his task with much tact, and, it must be added, in [illegible] way that leaves the exact manner [illegible] the ending a mystery until a few minutes before the final fall of the curtain. The two men are as different as can be—a peculiarity that, according to Mr. Chambers, explains why they have been fast friends so long. Harold Wynn is a poet and dreamer, the son of a liberal-minded country clergyman; Sir Hubert Garlinge is strong-willed, prompt, and watchful, and is apparently wealthy. With these and others as guests on Lord Barbridge's yacht during a cruise in Kate's Cloud, a fascinating but rather depressed young lady, whose chief recommendation to the majority of her aristocratic associates is that she is a gifted singer, Hubert, afraid that Kate will escape him, offers her his hand with characteristic impetuosity, and at once learns that though she will ever be grateful to him for sundry kindnesses in the past, she can never be his wife. It is soon made evident to the rejected suitor that Kate loves Harold Wynn, but when the latter in turn proposes he also receives an evasive answer. She tells him that she can have no affection for another man, but begs that the subject of wedlock may be dropped. In a capitally-written scene, bringing out the attributes of each, the two friends quarrel and "the Oxford compact" (of which a good deal is heard) is virtually set aside, because it contained no mention of a woman. It is at this point that the first act terminates.

On being taken to the vicarage at Barbridge—the residence of Harold's father—we learn a

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"Oh, yes. He's delighted with the way the piece has been received. I had a long letter from him in which he apologised for his shaky hand, for he is still very weak. But to tell you the truth, he needn't have said anything, for it was the only letter I ever had from him that was really legible. Some of his old letters I look at to this day, and wonder what the words can possibly be."

This was my cue for diverting the talk into literary channels, for extracting confessions of favourite authors, learning what professional model suggested Goodwillie the absent-minded, and hearing what previous characters Mr. Willard has played upon similar lines—the inner history, in fact, of this exquisite gem of comedy—but the effort was fruitless, America was his only theme.

"You hear about heat over there, but it's never worse than this. And then they know how to grapple with it. Over there you dress sensibly, in gossamer twills; and every morning every house receives a great block of ice, and you drink things cold, not—in a tone of reproach as he touches the caraffes, the champagne, and the seltzer—'not *lukewarm*.' But we've lots of quaint ideas of America which are all wrong. There's a belief now that they are discourteous. Why, do you know that when a woman passes a man who is seated, he rises as she goes by. When a man is standing beneath a roof with his hat on, say in a corridor, if a woman enters, that hat is whipped off. And this is not in the South, where stately courtesies are half the life, but in the North, where—so we think on this side—nothing but how to make money ever enters their heads. Then one hears how the Advanced Woman comes from the States. Poof! Revolting women and revolting daughters are at a discount there. The children are quite charming with their old-fashioned 'sir' and 'ma'am' to their parents, and the women are just queens of the home. Socially cleverer and more cultured than the men—because they've nothing else to do but broaden their minds and enlarge their views—and the men are content to have it so. 'Oh, if my wife says so that's right' expresses the attitude of the men. There is no war, no strained relations between the sexes such as I hear of on this side. Then the want of sentiment they are accused of is another libel. You want to see Decoration Day to appreciate that on that day, May 30, all who fought in the civil war troop out to do honour to those that fell. They parade in their old uniforms, frayed and tattered and torn, often too small, sometimes too big, all very unmilitary-looking to our ideas, and they march to the great cemeteries and plant a little flag on every soldier's grave, and read out his name, his regiment, and where he fell, and pronounce 'God rest his soul,' and that is all. But you've got to see them from every calling and every grade—from bank presidents to store clerks, all companions for that day—to realise the intense pathos, the sentiment of the scene."

This talk of the North and South War led to a discussion, during which I told him that Hall Caine had pronounced him a "product" of the Cromwellian age, and credited him with a strong leaven of Puritanism, and Mr. Willard then consented to speak for five minutes about himself.

"That's odd, for he's hit the mark. Some ancestors of mine, if they didn't actually go over in the *Mayflower*, were very early settlers, and the Willards are prominent New Englanders to this day. A big dinner-party was got up for me, at which everyone who sat down was a Willard. That day I heard much of the original emigrants, and the history of Solomon Willard, a sturdy old settler, who couldn't get on with his own community, and so shouldered his axe and cut his way to a spot that pleased him, and there pitched his tent, and so founded the city of Concord. The Puritan trait is plainly seen in the family still, and I've just begun to recognise it in myself sometimes."

From New England Mr. Willard whirls me to Chicago and the Great Fair. This is his hobby. He can enthuse for hours upon the glories of the great White City, as it was called, and with gusto he will pass before you the panorama of the Exhibition; superb photographs two feet square, engravings in dozens, coloured pictures by scores, and innumerable studies of dancers, actors, warriors, belles—Samoans, Javanese, Persians, Cretes, and Arabians—and show you how for days he practically lived upon the immense lagoons, and glided in a gondola about the silent reaches in this miracle of man's handiwork, reaches as rural and picturesque and lovely as the enchanting backwaters of the Thames, and yet within a few minutes' paddle of some busy spot in this hundred-and-twenty miles of architectural magnificence, of elaborately built-up towns and villages, of, indeed, the whole world in miniature.

Chicago, of course, suggested Mr. Stead, but Mr. Willard had little to say on this subject. What he had, however, was to the point. "It's a great city, so there's great wickedness. But why enlarge upon it with the catch-cry, 'If Christ came to Chicago,' when there came quite another man in Stead? Besides Chicago can set us an example or two. I wonder if Mr. Stead saw the huge building on the pier stretching out into Lake Michigan, a refuge where the poor women from the slums can bring their babies early in the morning, and leave them in the charge of a great staff of nurses while they go to do their day's work, and the children get good food and sleep in hammocks and play all day in the pure air that blows over the lake." And Mr. Willard gives me story upon story to show that charity and kindliness have taken great hold of that vast city which Mr. Stead describes as out-Babyloning Babylon, and which thirty years ago did not even exist. I ask for a sight of the spoils of Mr. Willard's four years among the generous Egyptians, for I know him to be a treasure hunter—indeed, his walls, covered with artistic trophies, proclaim it—and he unlocks a tiny cabinet. "You see how I value them," he laughs. "I've even turned out some of my precious Swinburnes to make room," and there, above two shelves of rare first editions, this Puritan-actor-bibliophile discloses a collection of gems to hang over, gloat upon, for a month of Sundays. Exquisite Cloisonné enamel vases in pure lapis-lazuli, and camellia, and sedge green, phials carved from amber, and amethyst, and opal—most of them smuggled at great risk out of China. Mr. Willard dwells upon their beauty and handles them with the loving care of a Cyrus Blenkarn or a connoisseur at Christie's. "Opals are my favourite stones," he says, as he produces from his pocket a worn, wash-leather bag. "There, isn't that beautiful?" handing me a lovely dusky stone. "They bring me luck! In *The Middleman*, although, artistically speaking, penniless in that third act, I couldn't part with my opals," and he brings out several more. "What are they to bring you luck in next over here; Hamlet or——?" Mr. Willard assumes an abstracted look, and perhaps I wrong him, but I fancy that he winked. Said he, "I want plays. You have all very kindly said that you want me; but you don't—unless I can give you the plays that you want as well. And they want finding." "Then you won't make any announcement about your programme."

"Oh, some day I mean to try *Hamlet*. That's not abandoned! As for the rest, well"—with another great laugh—"You can see everybody know that the Comedy is the coolest place in London!" and with that I left Mr. Willard to his bronzes, his enamels, his gems, his curios, his books, his garden, his piles of literature, and pictures of his beloved Great Fair.

"JOHN-A-DREAMS" AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

The star of Mr. C. Haddon Chambers is in the ascendant. His new play "John-a-Dreams," written for Mr. Beerbohm Tree, was produced last night at the Haymarket Theatre with all the success that could have been desired by the well-wishers of the manager and of the author of "Captain Swift" and "The Idler" and part author of "The Fatal Card." With some strong situations, a romantic story the interest of which rarely shows signs of flagging, and a theatrical effectiveness of the kind manifesting an affection for oft-tried rather than experimental methods, "John-a-Dreams" has most of the elements appealing to audiences not inclined to consider probability or consistency as the be-all and end-all of modern drama. Mr. Chambers does not seem inclined to change his style. There is nothing of the problem play in "John-a-Dreams." No vexed question of later date, say, than that of the publication of Wilkie Collins's "The New Magdalen" is propounded, and for the means to attain certain ends Mr. Chambers is quite content to employ the stage resources deemed good enough by dramatists of a preceding age for the development of their ideas. It must not be supposed, however, that "John-a-Dreams" is a mere hash of familiar incidents. On the contrary, there is much in the action that is fresh, and though two or three of the characters may be of the puppet order, considerable skill is evinced in maintaining attention in their varying attitudes, aims, and proceedings. Regarded as a whole it is a spirited play, and it receives from the Haymarket company a rendering that is both smooth and telling.

Two friends who at Oxford years back were so devoted to each other that they entered into a compact of abiding fealty fell in love with the same woman. This is the sum and substance of the plot. What Mr. Chambers had to do was to give the woman to the right man after each had been tried in the furnace of doubt and affliction, and had emerged ennobled rather than debased. As already intimated, he has accomplished his task with much tact, and, it must be added, in a way that leaves the exact manner of the ending a mystery until a few minutes before the final fall of the curtain. The two men are as different as can be—a peculiarity that, according to Mr. Chambers, explains why they have been fast friends so long. Harold Wynn is a poet and dreamer, the son of a liberal-minded country clergyman; Sir Hubert Garlinge is strong-willed, prompt, and watchful, and is apparently wealthy. With these and others as guests on Lord Barbridge's yacht during a cruise is Kate Cloud, a fascinating but rather depressed young lady, whose chief recommendation to the majority of her aristocratic associates is that she is a gifted singer. Hubert, afraid that Kate will escape him, offers her his hand with characteristic impetuosity, and at once learns that though she will ever be grateful to him for sundry kindnesses in the past, she can never be his wife. It is soon made evident to the rejected suitor that Kate loves Harold Wynn, but when the latter in turn proposes he also receives an evasive answer. She tells him that she can have no affection for another man, but begs that the subject of wedlock may be dropped. In a capitally-written scene, bringing out the attributes of each, the two friends quarrel and "the Oxford compact" (of which a good deal is heard) is virtually set aside, because it contained no mention of a woman. It is at this point that the first act terminates.

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great deal more of the hero and heroine. The former has for years past sought poetic inspiration from opium: Kate, who finds herself in rather an awkward position, after due reflection arrives at the conclusion that it is best to confide the secret of her past to the vicar—this secret being that she is not only herself a fallen woman, but the daughter of a fallen woman. The inducement to make this confession is increased by Kate recognising the Rev. Stephen Wynn as the minister for a time of the church in London which she and her rescuer from a career of sin customarily attended. Harold's father is at first dismayed by such intelligence, but he soon perceives that his son's affection for Kate is so much a part of his life that remonstrance is virtually hopeless. It is a question of Harold marrying Kate or dying of an overdose of opium. Kate is not content that her secret shall be kept from Harold. She had intended to quit the neighbourhood, but comes back in the evening to tell Harold why she cannot be his wife. Kate then makes a rather singular proposal. Lost Harold should, on losing friends and social position, repent the sacrifice he is ready to make, she declares her resolve never to marry him, but she is quite willing that they shall live together as man and wife. This is overheard by Hubert, whose passion for Kate is, if possible, more intense than ever. When Kate leaves the room to give Harold time for consideration, his former friend not only pours opium into the glass that is to be a pledge of the revival of "the Oxford compact," but by a pretext induces him to write the words, "I release you," with the signature "Harold." When Harold sinks back on the sofa Hubert puts the emptied opium phial into the senseless man's hand, and on Kate entering to learn her lover's decision, gives her the paper, by which she is led to believe that Harold will not accompany her abroad. This succession of incidents is cleverly contrived, and closes the third act.

The concluding section of the play is very short. Hubert follows Kate on board the yacht lent her by the kindly Lord and Lady Barbridge, and again makes a vain appeal. Then Harold and his father appear, and Hubert, thoroughly ashamed of himself, goes back to shore alone, whilst the yacht bears the lovers away to sea.

As the poet, Harold Wynn, who is nicknamed "John-a-Dreams," so long under the influence of opium, Mr. Tree acts with all his accustomed fervour and regard for proportion. He admirably indicates the perplexity and hesitation caused by Harold's fatal craving, and throughout makes it clear that the young man would be quite as much master of himself as is the determined Sir Hubert but for the opium. The crafty and unprincipled friend is played by Mr. Charles Cartwright with a subdued power that prepares the spectator for any enormity Hubert may commit in his anger and jealousy. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was heartily welcomed to the Haymarket stage, represented the unhappy Kate with womanly feeling as well as dramatic force. At first she appeared somewhat cold, but midway in the play rose to the more stirring incidents and was thoroughly equal to the illustration of the indignation caused by Hubert's conduct after he believes his rival's chances of winning the girl they both love (though in different fashion) are extinguished. Mr. Nutcombe Gould sustained the genial clergyman with ease and distinction. The action is lightened by the apparent indifference towards each other of a married couple who only require the courage to arrive at a mutual understanding to become happy with their lot. These characters are sustained in the true spirit of comedy by Mr. Edmund Maurice and Miss Janette Steer, whilst Mr. Herbert Ross makes comic capital out of the part of an inane idler who dangles after the lady until he is summarily dismissed by the practical-minded husband. In smaller characters Miss Le Thiere and Mr. Charles Allan add to the efficiency of the interpretation of the new play. The scenes of the yacht and of the vicarage are both picturesque and realistic.

The calls for the principals, the manager, and the author were unanimous. When asked to say a few words, Mr. Tree, after thanking the audience for their kind reception of "John-a-Dreams," said he believed the play would run until the end of his season—a prophecy that evoked cheers. But he meant to give a few matinées of his American répertoire, and among the revivals would be "Hamlet" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

Talking of the Playgoers' Club, the annual dinner on Sunday was a brilliant and conspicuous success. I absolutely agree with every word that was said by the president in his address, and I must say that I look forward as he does to the time when the revenues of the club will be sufficiently large to justify the committee in securing premises where the club will not be at the mercy of the licensing laws. George Alexander had a splendid reception, which must have assured him of the popularity with which he is regarded, and he made a most excellent little speech, though he was obviously a trifle nervous. The two best speeches of the evening were certainly those made by Comyns Carr, who, amongst other clever things, described the gentlemen who translate Ibsen's plays as importers of dry goods from Scandinavia, and Edward Rose, who suddenly scintillated in a manner which took even his warmest admirers by surprise. Two or three young idiots got a little noisy at one part of the evening I am sorry to say, but they were sat upon by the promptness which immediately extinguished their ardour, and they were happily heard of no more. A rapturous reception was accorded to Arthur Roberts, more especially after his pantomimic exhibition. It was a distinct proof of the real interest which the Playgoers' take in true dramatic art. Ben. Davies sang delightfully, so did Harrison Brockbank, R. Greene, and a number of other admirable artists. The Hungarian band played at intervals, and most of us had headaches the following morning.

The Sketch
Aug: 8. 1894

Henry Irving.

Probably the Japs and John Chinamen will make up their strife, more or less on compulsion, before other Powers strike in, and the temperature of the patriot of the Uncle—as perfidious British schoolboys would probably translate him—will fall to its normal boiling-point in presence of ordinary British arrogance. Otherwise, I tremble to think what may be the consequences of Mr. Irving's personating Napoleon the intellectually great but physically small. Perhaps the Prophet of the Lyceum was merely joking, but if not—well, one never knows how the French will take it. They may think it a fresh insult to the immortal memory of the Corsican, or they may think it a late but sufficient revenge for Waterloo. But for the admirers of Mr. Irving this announcement was one of dread. In "King Arthur" he will, doubtless, make an appropriate Lancelot. That bold, though not strictly moral, knight was, as we know, marred, though goodly; and he was (especially after one of his fits of intermittent insanity) lean and long—in fact, a decidedly Lanky lot, as *Punch* will probably remark. But Napoleon—well, if the great Henry carries out his purpose, we may see such lines as these in some ribald periodical—

There was a great actor named I——g,
Whose legs were fantastic and curving;
His mind was set solely on
Playing Napoleon—
And the critics said, "Poor, but deserving!"

King Arthur in The Era.

Jan: 19.
1895.

THE LYCEUM.

On Saturday, Jan. 12th, for the First Time, a Play, in a Prologue and Four Acts, by J. Comyns Carr, entitled

"KING ARTHUR."

King Arthur	Mr Irving
Sir Lancelot	Mr Forbes Robertson
Sir Mordred	Mr Frank Cooper
Sir Kay	Mr Tyars
Sir Gawaine	Mr Clarence Hague
Sir Bedevere	Mr Fuller Mellish
Sir Agravaine	Mr Lacy
Sir Percivale	Mr Buckley
Sir Lavaine	Mr Julius Knight
Sir Dagonet	Mr Harvey
Merlin	Mr Sydney Valentine
Messenger	Mr Belmore
Gaoler	Mr Tabb
Morgan Le Fay	Miss Genevieve Ward
Elaine	Miss Lena Ashwell
Clarissant	Miss Annie Hughes
Spirit of the Lake	Miss Maud Milton
Guinevere	Miss Ellen Terry

The clever and cultured manager of the Comedy Theatre set himself a task of real difficulty when he chose for dramatic treatment that part of the Arthurian legend which relates to the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere. The obstacles lie below, and not upon, the surface. A betrayed and deluded husband, whatever his amiable and respectable qualities may be, is very apt to cut a pitiful figure in fiction. Tennyson's Arthur, despite all his pluck and patriotism, is a dreary prig, as all who remember that self-righteous oration over the procumbent Guinevere must, at the bottom of their hearts, have felt. For, so long as the relative values of the sexes are what they are, there will always be a tendency to lay on the man the onus of preventing domestic treachery. "Don't you think," says the erring wife to the idiotic husband in Augier's *Gabrielle*, "that *you* have *your* share in the fault you reproach me with in such a high tone? You always treated me more as a master than as a lover; you were not jealous when you should have been jealous;

Vous partiez le matin pour vos graves travaux,
Vous rentriez le soir plein de soucis nouveaux."

There is always attaching to the deluded spouse something of the blame which falls on the man who has bought a horse which he cannot control; "bitten off," as the Americans say, "more than he can swallow." The cares of a kingdom may be certainly pleaded in extenuation of marital failure; and consequently we notice that most great men have married tame, ordinary, or old women—neutral-tinted creatures, who have served them with blind devotion. Napoleon is an exception; and his jealousy of Josephine upset him terribly on several occasions.

King Arthur's overthrow is a case in point. The greatness of the man lay in his perception of the necessity of a strong central government for Britain, and in his organisation of the same. But, in Mr Carr's play, at the very time that he accepts this as his life-work, he, attracted by a pretty woman in a vision, "falls," as we say, "in love." He thus takes upon him two burdens, together too heavy for mortal shoulders. As Schopenhauer would say, he tries to serve his country in freeing it of disorder, and benefit the *genus* or race by the offspring of himself and Guinevere. He realises, consequently, almost exactly the husband described by the self-excusing lady in Augier's drama.

To make such a man what is called "sympathetic" is extremely difficult. It can only be done by insisting on his patriotism, his force of character, and his physical courage. And here we think Mr Carr has done better than Tennyson. At any rate, Mr Carr's King Arthur does not, as the little Nigger complained, "Preachee and floggee too." There is less of the Chadband in him, and more of the man. He does not keep the partner of his mistake waiting while he "shows her, even for her sake"—as if she didn't know—"the sin that she has sinned." There is a fine virility about that scene of Mr Carr's when the King, after losing wife and friend, and finding himself beset on all sides and betrayed by his trusted, waves Excalibur on high, and cries:—

My sword is drawn, I want no scabbard now!

This is the chief, marked merit of the play: and Mr Carr has made the best of an awkward and difficult business. As it is, there are passages which to us are extremely painful, such as the scene in which Arthur learns his wife's infidelity from Mordred and Morgan Le Fay. The situation is cruel, pitiful. The spectacle of the King played upon, pipe-like, by these two tricksters and traitors is heartrending. The truth is, at the Lyceum on Saturday the hearts of the audience, during the earlier portions of the performance, were with Lancelot and Guinevere, though their morality was with Arthur. They seemed to have accepted Chamfort's theory—rather dangerous in its abuse—that "when a man and a woman have a violent passion for one another the two lovers are for one another by divine right, in spite of human laws and conventions."

So much for the ethical hardships of Mr Carr's task. The way he has worked out his ideas is excellent. We have seldom seen a play in which so much culture, so much tact, and so much knowledge of stage effect were combined. It is not necessary to describe each detail of the scenario. Everyone knows the narrative. But the way in which the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is "broken," as it were, to the audience is excellent. The conscientious struggles of the Queen against her passion, the declaration forced from the knight against his will, the passionate, but not sensual, scene which follows; the retention of Lancelot, the Queen's judgment trembling in the balance, and the last rivet driven in by the innocent entreaty of Elaine; the intimation in the love passage in the White Thorn Wood that the guilty love has been consummated, the hint of coming trouble in the thunderstorm—all these, illustrated with verse which is seldom careless in its workmanship, and is frequently expressive, intelligent, and elevated, gives us keen and unmitigated enjoyment. What follows is, for the most part, effectively theatrical. The remorse of Lancelot at the death of Elaine for love of him, the impulse of Arthur to slay Lancelot and his revulsion of feeling and refusal to be his own executioner, the supposed death of Arthur and his return to his court only to be overcome by the traitor Mordred, the King's death, and the Queen's repentance, are represented with the necessary energy and skill. Mr Carr is a shrewd calculator, and it was not without good reason that he excluded Lancelot from this last act, in which we only hear him spoken of as having slain somebody "off." By placing King Arthur at bay, he is enabled to vindicate his right to respect and admiration, a little lost, perhaps, in the penultimate division of the piece.

Mr Henry Irving in his impersonation of the King performed an act of rare artistic sacrifice. If Arthur and Lancelot are equally brave, and equally handsome, and equally attractive, there is a danger of Guinevere's passion lacking excuse—in fact, she becomes simply a depraved female. Mr Irving saw this pitfall, and generously avoided it. We say generously, because every ounce taken from one side of the balance is so much on the other. The older Arthur is made, the more formal, abstracted, and cold he appears, the less sympathy is with him, and the more with Lancelot. But Mr Irving considered not his own part, but the interests of the play as a whole; and he bravely made Arthur elderly, staid, and icily noble—in short, the most aggravating husband possible for a woman of Guinevere's age and temperament. Mr Irving, in this respect, rivalled "the ideal knight" in unselfishness and public spirit. There was the very predestination of mishap in the scene in which, intoxicated by the vision, this grim, considerate warrior craved the possession of the lovely female depicted in the magic lake. There was the exact hint required as to "the relations of the parties" in the stately courtesy and superior friendship of the worn and half-weary ruler for his blooming and exuberant bride. It was Charlemagne with a mixture of Menelaus. It is not really until the third and fourth acts that Arthur gets his chance. It was in these that Mr Irving "came out strong." The way in which his Arthur rallied his force, the grandeur and nobility of his attitude under calamity, restored the balance of regard to the king. The play may be divided into two halves; one in which Lancelot and Guinevere have it all their own way, and another in which they are, more or less, "out of it." There was a splendid vigour in the grip which Mr Irving took of his opportunities when they came; and his death scene was—as his death scenes always are—carefully thought out and deeply pathetic and impressive. Mr Forbes Robertson made an ideal Sir Lancelot, the admirable mixture of force and refinement in his temperament being exactly suited to the depiction of sensitive chivalry. The scenes between Lancelot and Guinevere were most daintily dealt with. One step more, and we should have been on the ground of the sensual; but Mr Robertson always halted in time, and poetised passion instead of realising its grosser details. Mr Frank Cooper was sharp and forcible as Sir Mordred, and had a very important share in the success of the piece. Mr Sydney Valentine's Merlin was the very embodiment of shrivelled, withered prophesy, and he delivered his rhymed lines with eloquent solemnity. Miss Lena Ashwell made a pure, sweet, and ingenuous Elaine, and Miss Annie Hughes was bright and arch as Clarissant. Miss Maud Milton displayed good elocutionary ability in the small part of the Spirit of the Lake. Miss Ellen Terry's Guinevere tempts us to superlatives. It was the most exquisite compound of purity, passion, impulse, and womanliness which we have ever seen on the stage. The dénouement, so far as it affects Guinevere, is inadequate; but perhaps it is just as well in the interests of the public morality that the too-attractive and too-bewitching Queen should recede into the background before the evening is over. But even amidst the prosaic timbers of dramatic carpentry Miss Terry is never common. Even in the prison scene she maintained her distinction, and

great deal more of the hero and heroine. The former has for years past sought poetic inspiration from opium: Kate, who finds herself in rather an awkward position, after due reflection arrives at the conclusion that it is best to confide the secret of her past to the vicar—this secret being that she is not only herself a fallen woman, but the daughter of a fallen woman. The inducement to make this confession is increased by Kate recognising the Rev. Stephen Wynn as the minister for a time of the church in London which she and her rescuer from a career of sin customarily attended. Harold's father is at first dismayed by such intelligence, but he soon perceives that his son's affection for Kate is so much a part of his life that remonstrance is virtually hopeless. It is a question of Harold marrying Kate or dying of an overdose of opium. Kate is not content that her secret shall be kept from Harold. She had intended to quit the neighbourhood, but comes back in the evening to tell Harold why she cannot be his wife. Kate then makes a rather singular proposal. Lest Harold should, on losing friends and social position, repent the sacrifice he is ready to make, she declares her resolve never to marry him, but she is quite willing that they shall live together as man and wife. This is overheard by Hubert, whose passion for Kate is, if possible, more intense than ever. When Kate leaves the room to give Harold time for consideration, his former friend not only pours opium into the glass that is to be a pledge of the revival of "the Oxford compact," but by a pretext induces him to write the words, "I release you," with the signature "Harold." When Harold sinks back on the sofa Hubert puts the emptied opium phial into the senseless man's hand, and on Kate entering to learn her lover's decision, gives her the paper, by which she is led to believe that Harold will not accompany her abroad. This succession of incidents is cleverly contrived, and closes the third act.

The concluding section of the play is very short. Hubert follows Kate on board the yacht lent her by the kindly Lord and Lady Barbridge, and again makes a vain appeal. Then Harold and his father appear, and Hubert, thoroughly ashamed of himself, goes back to shore alone, whilst the yacht bears the lovers away to sea.

As the poet, Harold Wynn, who is nicknamed "John-a-Dreams," so long under the influence of opium, Mr. Tree acts with all his accustomed fervour and regard for proportion. He admirably indicates the perplexity and hesitation caused by Harold's fatal craving, and throughout makes it clear that the young man would be quite as much master of himself as is the determined Sir Hubert but for the opium. The crafty and unprincipled friend is played by Mr. Charles Cartwright with a subdued power that prepares the spectator for any enormity Hubert may commit in his anger and jealousy. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was heartily welcomed to the Haymarket stage, represented the unhappy Kate with womanly feeling as well as dramatic force. At first she appeared somewhat cold, but midway in the play rose to the more stirring incidents and was thoroughly equal to the illustration of the indignation caused by Hubert's conduct after he believes his rival's chances of winning the girl they both love (though in different fashion) are extinguished. Mr. Nutcombe Gould sustained the genial clergyman with ease and distinction. The action is lightened by the apparent indifference towards each other of a married couple who only require the courage to arrive at a mutual understanding to become happy with their lot. These characters are sustained in the true spirit of comedy by Mr. Edmund Maurice and Miss Janette Steer, whilst Mr. Herbert Ross makes comic capital out of the part of an inane idler who dangles after the lady until he is summarily dismissed by the practical-minded husband. In smaller characters Miss Le Thiere and Mr. Charles Allan add to the efficiency of the interpretation of the new play. The scenes of the yacht and of the vicarage are both picturesque and realistic.

The calls for the principals, the manager, and the author were unanimous. When asked to say a few words, Mr. Tree, after thanking the audience for their kind reception of "John-a-Dreams," said he believed the play would run until the end of his season—a prophecy that evoked cheers. But he meant to give a few matinées of his American success, "Hamlet" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

Talking of the Playgoers' Club, the annual dinner on Sunday was a brilliant and conspicuous success. I absolutely agree with every word that was said by the president in his address, and I must say that I look forward as he does to the time when the revenues of the club will be sufficiently large to justify the committee in securing premises where the club will not be at the mercy of the licensing laws. George Alexander had a splendid reception, which must have assured him of the popularity with which he is regarded, and he made a most excellent little speech, though he was obviously a trifle nervous. The two best speeches of the evening were certainly those made by Comyns Carr, who, amongst other clever things, described the gentlemen who translate Ibsen's plays as importers of dry goods from Scandinavia, and Edward Rose, who suddenly scintillated in a manner which took even his warmest admirers by surprise. Two or three young idiots got a little noisy at one part of the evening I am sorry to say, but they were sat upon by the promptness which immediately extinguished their ardour, and they were happily heard of no more. A rapturous reception was accorded to Arthur Roberts, more especially after his pantomimic exhibition. It was a distinct proof of the real interest which the Playgoers' take in true dramatic art. Ben. Davies sang delightfully, so did Harrison Brockbank, R. Greene, and a number of other admirable artists. The Hungarian band played [illegible] and most of us had headaches the following morning.

The Sketch
Aug: 8. 1894

Henry Irving..

Probably the Japs and John Chinamen will make up their strife, more or less on compulsion, before other Powers strike in, and the temperature of the patriot of the Uncle—as perfidious British schoolboys would probably translate him—will fall to its normal boiling-point in presence of ordinary British arrogance. Otherwise, I tremble to think what may be the consequences of Mr. Irving's personating Napoleon the intellectually great but physically small. Perhaps the Prophet of the Lyceum was merely joking, but if not—well, one never knows how the French will take it. They may think it a fresh insult to the immortal memory of the Corsican, or they may think it a late but sufficient revenge for Waterloo. But for the admirers of Mr. Irving this announcement was one of dread. In "King Arthur" he will, doubtless, make an appropriate Lancelot. That bold, though not strictly moral, knight was, as we know, marred, though goodly; and he was (especially after one of his fits of intermittent insanity) lean and long—in fact, a decidedly Lanky lot, as *Punch* will probably remark. But Napoleon—well, if the great Henry carries out his purpose, we may see such lines as these in some ribald periodical—

There was a great actor named I——g,
Whose legs were fantastic and curving;
His mind was set solely on
Playing Napoleon—
And the critics said, "Poor, but deserving!"

King Arthur in The Era.

Jan: 19. 1895.

THE LYCEUM.

On Saturday, Jan. 12th, for the First Time,
a Play, in a Prologue and Four Acts, by J. Comyns Carr,
entitled
"KING ARTHUR."

King Arthur	Mr Irving
Sir Lancelot	Mr Forbes Robertson
Sir Mordred	Mr Frank Cooper
Sir Kay	Mr Tyars
Sir Gawaine	Mr Clarence Hague
Sir Bedevere	Mr Fuller Mellish
Sir Agravaine	Mr Lacy
Sir Percivale	Mr Buckley
Sir Lavaine	Mr Julius Knight
Sir Dagonet	Mr Harvey
Merlin	Mr Sydney Valentine
Messenger	Mr Belmore
Gaoler	Mr Tabb
Morgan Le Fay	Miss Genevieve Ward
Elaine	Miss Lena Ashwell
Clarissant	Miss Annie Hughes
Spirit of the Lake	Miss Maud Milton
Guinevere	Miss Ellen Terry

The clever and cultured manager of the Comedy Theatre set himself a task of real difficulty when he chose for dramatic treatment that part of the Arthurian legend which relates to the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere. The obstacles lie below, and not upon, the surface. A betrayed and deluded husband, whatever his amiable and respectable qualities may be, is very apt to cut a pitiful figure in fiction. Tennyson's Arthur, despite all his pluck and patriotism, is a dreary prig, as all who remember that self-righteous oration over the procumbent Guinevere must, at the bottom of their hearts, have felt. For, so long as the relative values of the sexes are what they are, there will always be a tendency to lay on the man the onus of preventing domestic treachery. "Don't you think," says the erring wife to the idiotic husband in Augier's *Gabrielle*, "that *you* have *your* share in the fault you reproach me with in such a high tone? You always treated me more as a master than as a lover; you were not jealous when you should have been jealous;

Vous partiez le matin pour vos graves travaux,
Vous rentriez le soir plein de soucis nouveaux."

There is always attaching to the deluded spouse something of the blame which falls on the man who has bought a horse which he cannot control; "bitten off," as the Americans say, "more than he can swallow." The cares of a kingdom may be certainly pleaded in extenuation of marital failure; and consequently we notice that most great men have married tame, ordinary, or old women—neutral-tinted creatures, who have served them with blind devotion. Napoleon is an exception; and his jealousy of Josephine upset him terribly on several occasions.

King Arthur's overthrow is a case in point. The greatness of the man lay in his perception of the necessity of a strong central government for Britain, and in his organisation of the same. But, in Mr Carr's play, at the very time that he accepts this as his life-work, he, attracted by a pretty woman in a vision, "falls," as we say, "in love." He thus takes upon him two burdens, together too heavy for mortal shoulders. As Schopenhauer would say, he tries to serve his country in freeing it of disorder, and benefit the *genus* or race by the offspring of himself and Guinevere. He realises, consequently, almost exactly the husband described by the self-excusing lady in Augier's drama.

To make such a man what is called "sympathetic" is extremely difficult. It can only be done by insisting on his patriotism, his force of character, and his physical courage. And here we think Mr Carr has done better than Tennyson. At any rate, Mr Carr's King Arthur does not, as the little Nigger complained, "Preachee and floggee too." There is less of the Chadband in him, and more of the man. He does not keep the partner of his mistake waiting while he "shows her, even for her sake"—as if she didn't know—"the sin that she has sinned." There is a fine virility about that scene of Mr Carr's when the King, after losing wife and friend, and finding himself beset on all sides and betrayed by his trusted, waves Excalibur on high, and cries:—

My sword is drawn, I want no scabbard now!

This is the chief, marked merit of the play: and Mr Carr has made the best of an awkward and difficult business. As it is, there are passages which to us are extremely painful, such as the scene in which Arthur learns his wife's infidelity from Mordred and Morgan Le Fay. The situation is cruel, pitiful. The spectacle of the King played upon, pipe-like, by these two tricksters and traitors is heartrending. The truth is, at the Lyceum on Saturday the hearts of the audience, during the earlier portions of the performance, were with Lancelot and Guinevere, though their morality was with Arthur. They seemed to have accepted Chamfort's theory—rather dangerous in its abuse—that "when a man and a woman have a violent passion for one another the lovers are for one another by divine right, in spite of human laws and conventions."

So much for the ethical hardships of Mr Carr's task. The way he has worked out his ideas is excellent. We have seldom seen a play in which so much culture, so much tact, and so much knowledge of stage effect were combined. It is not necessary to describe each detail of the scenario. Everyone knows the narrative. But the way in which the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is "broken," as it were, to the audience is excellent. The conscientious struggles of the Queen against her passion, the declaration forced from the knight against his will, the passionate, but not sensual, scene which follows; the retention of Lancelot, the Queen's judgment trembling in the balance, and the last rivet driven in by the innocent entreaty of Elaine; the intimation in the love passage in the White Thorn Wood that the guilty love has been consummated, the hint of coming trouble in the thunderstorm—all these, illustrated with verse which is seldom careless in its workmanship, and is frequently expressive, intelligent, and elevated, gives us keen and unmitigated enjoyment. What follows is, for the most part, effectively theatrical. The remorse of Lancelot at the death of Elaine for love of him, the impulse of Arthur to slay Lancelot and his revulsion of feeling and refusal to be his own executioner, the supposed death of Arthur and his return to his court only to be overcome by the traitor Mordred, the King's death, and the Queen's repentance, are represented with the necessary energy and skill. Mr Carr is a shrewd calculator, and it was not without good reason that he excluded Lancelot from this last act, in which we only hear him spoken of as having slain somebody "off." By placing King Arthur at bay, he is enabled to vindicate his right to respect and admiration, a little lost, perhaps, in the penultimate division of the piece.

Mr Henry Irving in his impersonation of the King performed an act of rare artistic sacrifice. If Arthur and Lancelot are equally brave, and equally handsome, and equally attractive, there is a danger of Guinevere's passion lacking excuse—in fact, she becomes simply a depraved female. Mr Irving saw this pitfall, and generously avoided it. We say generously, because every ounce taken from one side of the balance is so much on the other. The older Arthur is made, the more formal, abstracted, and cold he appears, the less sympathy is with him, and the more with Lancelot. But Mr Irving considered not his own part, but the interests of the play as a whole; and he bravely made Arthur elderly, staid, and icily noble—in short, the most aggravating husband possible for a woman of Guinevere's age and temperament. Mr Irving, in this respect, rivalled "the ideal knight" in unselfishness and public spirit. There was the very predestination of mishap in the scene in which, intoxicated by the vision, this grim, considerate warrior craved the possession of the lovely female depicted in the magic lake. There was the exact hint required as to "the relations of the parties" in the stately courtesy and superior friendship of the worn and half-weary ruler for his blooming and exuberant bride. It was Charlemagne with a mixture of Menelaus. It is not really until the third and fourth acts that Arthur gets his chance. It was in these that Mr Irving "came out strong." The way in which his Arthur rallied his force, the grandeur and nobility of his attitude under calamity, restored the balance of regard to the king. The play may be divided into two halves; one in which Lancelot and Guinevere have it all their own way, and another in which they are, more or less, "out of it." There was a splendid vigour in the grip which Mr Irving took of his opportunities when they came; and his death scene was—as his death scenes always are—carefully thought out and deeply pathetic and impressive. Mr Forbes Robertson made an ideal Sir Lancelot, the admirable mixture of force and refinement in his temperament being exactly suited to the depiction of sensitive chivalry. The scenes between Lancelot and Guinevere were most daintily dealt with. One step more, and we should have been on the ground of the sensual; but Mr Robertson always halted in time, and poetised passion instead of realising its grosser details. Mr Frank Cooper was sharp and forcible as Sir Mordred, and had a very important share in the success of the piece. Mr Sydney Valentine's Merlin was the very embodiment of shrivelled, withered prophesy, and he delivered his rhymed lines with eloquent solemnity. Miss Lena Ashwell made a pure, sweet, and ingenuous Elaine, and Miss Annie Hughes was bright and arch as Clarissant. Miss Maud Milton displayed good elocutionary ability in the small part of the Spirit of the Lake. Miss Ellen Terry's Guinevere tempts us to superlatives. It was the most exquisite compound of purity, passion, impulse, and womanliness which we have ever seen on the stage. The dénouement, so far as it affects Guinevere, is inadequate; but perhaps it is just as well in the interests of the public morality that the too-attractive and too-bewitching Queen should recede into the background before the evening is over. But even amidst the mosaic timbers of dramatic carpentry Miss Terry is never common. Even in the prison scene she maintained her distinction, and

the music of her tones, the artistic grace of her poses, the charm, in a word, of her whole creation were beyond and above description. The Knights of the Round Table were carefully and conscientiously embodied by Mr Tyars, Mr Clarence Hague, Mr Fuller Mellish, Mr Lacy, Mr Buckley, Mr Julius Knight, and Mr Harvey, who all did excellent and useful work.

In a production of this kind, the mounting is very important; it supplies the "atmosphere" of mystery, magic, and romance. No praise can be too warm of the manner in which Messrs Harker and Hawes Craven have done their work. Very unearthly and awesome indeed is the "magic mere," a still, silent pool, from which rises the Spirit, and the arm "clad in white samite, mystic, wonderful," holding Excalibur in its jewelled scabbard. The details were arranged with complete success in this scene, where incompleteness would have meant disillusion and displeasure. Mr Harker's Great Hall at Camelot reminded us very agreeably of Gustave Doré's illustrations to "Elaine," the reproductions of early English furniture being quite correct. Mr Hawes Craven's White Thorn Wood in the second act brought the scent of the "may" blossoms across the footlights indeed; and a more poetical background for an idyllic love scene could hardly be imagined. The armour was admirably copied from ancient originals; though, of course, as everybody knows, there was really no armour at all in the fifth century. The costumes, made by Nathan and Co., Mrs Nettleship, and Auguste et Cie., under the able direction of Mrs Comyns Carr and Mr Karl, were very beautful, some of Miss Terry's dresses being "joys for ever" in form and colour.

Mr H. J. Loveday's excellent stage-management had doubtless a great deal to do with the smoothness of the performance, which went without a hitch. At its conclusion at a somewhat advanced hour the principals were rapturously summoned, and Mr Irving, in reply to the inevitable demand for a few words of acknowledgment, said:—"Ladies and gentlemen, it would be very affected of me if I did not offer you a word of heartfelt thanks for the bountiful, splendid welcome you have awarded to *King Arthur* to-night. It is a great delight to me to be back once more amongst you, and to know that you have received with such favour the play of my old friend Mr Comyns Carr. I am deeply indebted to him, to Sir Arthur Sullivan, and to the others who have done so much, and I heartily thank them and you. I have only to ask you to let me respectfully, cordially, and, if I may so, affectionately wish you all a Happy New Year."

The Era: Jan: 19. 1895.

P. M. B. Aug: 2. '94.

STROLLING out of the theatre in the entr'acte, I observed a crowd round the window of a stationer's shop in College Green. They were attracted by an immense display of photographs, several hundred in all, ranged in two battalions or columns, the one headed "THEIR CENTURY'S GREATNESS," the other "THEIR CENTURY'S BASENESS." The latter column consisted of what I imagine to be a curious and valuable collection of portraits of notorious malefactors; but these I had no time to study. The Immortals were more easily scanned, each having his name and his title to renown inscribed on his mount. "The Greatest Actor" was, of course, Mr. Irving, "The Greatest Actress," Miss Ellen Terry; but Mr. Toole figured as "The Greatest Comedian," Mr. Edward Terry as "The Greatest Burlesque Actor," and Mrs. Langtry headed a novel category as "The Greatest Actress-Beauty." Sir Augustus Harris took his rightful place among the illustrious men of his century as "The Greatest Theatrical Manager"; but I own I was surprised to see Mr. Edmund Yates included in the Valhalla under the style and title of "The Greatest Theatrical Critic"—an eminence which Mr. Yates, I am sure, neither claimed nor coveted. Mr. Oscar Wilde—the juvenile and hyacinthine Oscar of fifteen years ago—figured as "The Greatest Æsthete." George Eliot took rank as "The Greatest Authoress"; but, by an ingenious distinction, room was found for Miss Braddon as well under the designation of "The Greatest Lady Novelist." I looked in vain for "The Greatest Dramatist"—none was held worthy. It is true that Mr. W. S. Gilbert occupied a prominent place; but what, think you, was his claim to distinction? You will scarcely guess: he took rank as "The Greatest Punster"! This is a trifle hard on poor Mr. Gilbert, who never—well, hardly ever—perpetrated a pun. I now bethink me that I caught a glimpse of the features of Mr. G. R. Sims among the Immortals, but forgot to note what particular branch of laurel adorned his brow. Shall I go back to Bristol and see? No; he was in all probability "The Greatest Dramatist."

DINNER TO MR. BEERBOHM TREE.

On Tuesday Mr Beerbohm Tree was entertained at a complimentary dinner at the Savoy Hotel prior to his departure for the United States. Lord RUSSELL of KILLOWEN, the Lord Chief Justice, presided over a distinguished company, which included Lord Hothfield, Lord Wantage, the Earl of Londesborough, Viscount Dungarvan, Lord William Nevill, Sir Francis Jeune, the Marquis of Granby, M.P., Sir Edward Clarke, M.P., Sir Algernon Borthwick, M.P., Sir George Lewis, Sir Arthur Blomfield, A.R.A., Sir William Rose, the Portuguese Minister, Mr E. H. Carson, Q.C., Mr George Candy, Q.C., M.P., Mr E. W. Beckett, M.P., Sir Eyre Massey Shaw, K.C.B., Mr Stuart Wortley, M.P., Sir F. Milner, M.P., Sir F. Abel, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Dr. Hugh Playfair, Mr Alfred Gilbert, Mr Justin M'Carthy, M.P., Sir J. D. Linton, Sir Joseph Barnby, Sir Reginald Hanson, M.P., Mr Frank Harris, the Hon. Eric Barrington, the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, Professor Herkomer, Mr Edward Ledger, Mr Frank Dicksee, R.A., Mr Luke Fildes, R.A., Mr James Knowles, Mr Linley Sambourne, Mr W. L. Courtney, Mr Haddon Chambers, Mr Sydney Grundy, Mr Comyns Carr, Mr Marcus Stone, R.A., Sir Douglas Straight, Mr W. H. Pollock, Count Gleichen, Sir Richard Quain, Mr Julius Beerbohm, Mr Campbell Praed, Dr. Semon, Mr Carl Meyer, Mr Edward Rose, Mr Max Beerbohm, Mr T. H. Bolton, M.P., Dr. Robson Roose, Mr A. W. Pinero, Mr Theodore Watts, Mr Charles Cartwright, Rev. Dr. Robbins, Mr Luther Munday, Mr Ballard Smith, Mr Cecil Clay, Mr Charles Drummond, Mr Augustus Spalding, Mr H. S. Trower, Mr Henry Heinemann, Mr Marshall Hall, Mr Samuel Heilbut, Mr W. K. D'Arcy, Mr Frederick Beer, Mr C. D. Rose, Colonel L. V. Loyd, M.P., Mr George Cawston, Mr Ernest Cassell, Mr W. Schuster, Mr Edmund Craigie, Mr A. H. Synge, Mr Harry Higgins, Mr Radul Foa, Mr S. B. Bancroft, Mr George Alexander, Mr Edgar Bruce, and the Lord Mayor.

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing the toast of the evening, said that Mr Tree might well be proud of the gathering assembled to do him honour. There were present representatives of literature, of art, of the Houses of Legislature, of the bar, and of commerce, and also distinguished men of leisure, of that class once described as the class that sow not neither do they spin. He had had given to him a list of a number of distinguished men in many walks of life who had expressed their goodwill and their earnest wishes for the success of the enterprise upon which Mr Tree was about to enter. The first amongst them was from the Prince of Wales, who with that considerate kindness that distinguished him telegraphed in these words:—"Please express to Mr Tree from me my hope that he will have a prosperous voyage, a safe return, and a most successful tour in America." In addition, the present Ambassador of the United States (Mr Bayard), Mr Henry Irving, and others wrote in a similar sense. The Chairman, in conclusion, said their guest was a man of culture, who had been able to play in French to the Gaul and in German to the Teuton, and there were comparatively few men of whom anything corresponding could be said. He (Lord Russell) sometimes thought the world did not quite acknowledge the debt it owed to the theatre and to those who trod its boards.

Mr BEERBOHM TREE, who was received with cheers and musical honours, in the course of his reply said:—I should indeed be lacking in imagination did I not feel some trepidation in responding to the eloquent speech which has just been delivered. Words seem blurred, and language halting. Not only did I feel a natural pride in listening to the periods of the distinguished orator who has just proposed my health, but a feeling of diffidence besets me lest I should be led away by his eloquence into an undue sense of my own importance. I once knew a man who was so great an egotist that he felt unworthy to tie his own shoe-strings. Well, my lords and gentlemen, I must tell you that I feel something in the predicament of my friend at this moment. Nothing is so calculated to induce modesty as the tribute of the great; just as nothing is so conducive to self-assurance as the detraction of the little. And among the many gratifying evidences of goodwill to-night, I have been especially touched by the gracious message of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who is so staunch a friend of the theatre, who has done so much to encourage its exponents, and who is never tired of showing his kindness. It would be strange, indeed, if among these numerous tokens one did not think better of oneself. But it is never well to take oneself too seriously. In a calling which is, perhaps, more than any other in touch with humanity and its humours, one is continually reminded of this truth. A corrective was recently administered to me by an Irish carman. In the course of the past year we had occasion to undertake a somewhat meteoric flight from Balmoral to Dublin. We were announced to appear in that city on the Monday night, but circumstances only permitted us to arrive in time to fulfil our engagement on Tuesday night. I observed, with a modesty not untinged with a commercial conceit, that a little crowd had gathered to cheer us on the landing stage (they were not "supers"). To the sympathetic carman who drove us to the theatre I remarked that our advent appeared to cause considerable excitement in the town. "Ah, sure," said he, "it's nothing compared with the smallpox scare." It is true that the time of our absence is short, and I take it that the reason of this gathering is not so much one of condolence at our departure as a desire to send us on our way rejoicing. What indeed, could be a more brilliant introduction to our great cousins in blood across the Atlantic, who are as yet strangers, than the expression of goodwill from those who know us? It was in order to meet you here to-night that we have postponed our departure. Man is ever selfish, and I confess I am not sorry, for more than one reason, that Fate, in the shape of Lord Russell, intervened, for I am told that the rest of the company started in a gale on Saturday last. Even Admirals, so we are informed on the authority of Mr W. S. Gilbert, occasionally "quail in the fury of a gale." For myself, I confess I am a poor sailor, and even an indifferent Admiral. I never knew why sea-sickness was invented—perhaps it was to supply the comic papers with copy. We were recently crossing from Holyhead to Dublin. I was lying in my cabin; we were nearing shore. The stewardess, with that cheerfulness which is the sufferer's greatest bitterness, entered the cabin. "Are you feeling a little better, Mr Tree?" she enquired with aggravating sympathy. "Yes, thanks; a little," I faintly replied. "Then will you kindly write me out an order for three for to-night. I'll hold the basin the while." But I am diverging. To-morrow morning, at an early hour, we are to set forth on our journey, and I have to say farewell to-night. I cannot but flatter myself that the distinguished and representative gathering which I see before me here to-night could not have come together unless in addition to a personal feeling of kindness and friendship there was also an underlying recognition of one who had, in serving the public, striven for that art for which he professes to do the best within his reach, even if he has sometimes failed to attain the ideal at which he aimed. I see before me some faces which I have known from boyhood, others which, known at first in distant reverence, have grown into the faces of friends; others, until to-night only friends by courtesy. I thank you one and all, my friends, my hosts, my hosts' friends, for gathering here to-night. I thank you on behalf of my wife, to whom such graceful allusion has been made, and who will share in my happiness. And to you, my lord, the kindly organiser of this feast, I tender my heartiest thanks for having presided on this occasion, and may you live many a long year to temper mercy with justice, and frugality with hospitality.

Other toasts were the health of "The Queen," proposed by Lord Russell; that of "The Army and Navy," proposed by the Marquis of Granby, and responded to by Lord Wantage; that of "Literature," proposed by Mr Justin M'Carthy, and responded to by Mr Comyns Carr; that of "Painting," proposed by Sir Edward Clarke, and responded to by Sir J. D. Linton; and that of "The Drama," proposed by Sir Algernon Borthwick, and responded to by Mr A. W. Pinero. The Chairman's health was proposed by Lord Hothfield.

MR. BEERBOHM TREE'S DEPARTURE.

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the music of her tones, the artistic grace of her poses, the charm, in a word, of her whole creation were beyond and above description. The Knights of the Round Table were carefully and conscientiously embodied by Mr Tyars, Mr Clarence Hague, Mr Fuller Mellish, Mr Lacy, Mr Buckley, Mr Julius Knight, and Mr Harvey, who all did excellent and useful work.

In a production of this kind, the mounting is very important; it supplies the "atmosphere" of mystery, magic, and romance. No praise can be too warm of the manner in which Messrs Harker and Hawes Craven have done their work. Very unearthly and awesome indeed is the "magic mere," a still, silent pool, from which rises the Spirit, and the arm "clad in white samite, mystic, wonderful," holding Excalibur in its jewelled scabbard. The details were arranged with complete success in this scene, where incompleteness would have meant disillusion and displeasure. Mr Harker's Great Hall at Camelot reminded us very agreeably of Gustave Doré's illustrations to "Elaine," the reproductions of early English furniture being quite correct. Mr Hawes Craven's White Thorn Wood in the second act brought the scent of the "may" blossoms across the footlights indeed; and a more poetical background for an idyllic love scene could hardly be imagined. The armour was admirably copied from ancient originals; though, of course, as everybody knows, there was really no armour at all in the fifth century. The costumes, made by Nathan and Co., Mrs Nettleship, and Auguste et Cie., under the able direction of Mrs Comyns Carr and Mr Karl, were very beautful, some of Miss Terry's dresses being "joys for ever" in form and colour.

Mr H. J. Loveday's excellent stage-management had doubtless a great deal to do with the smoothness of the performance, which went without a hitch. At its conclusion at a somewhat advanced hour the principals were rapturously summoned, and Mr Irving, in reply to the inevitable demand for a few words of acknowledgment, said:—"Ladies and gentlemen, it would be very affected of me if I did not offer you a word of heartfelt thanks for the bountiful, splendid welcome you have awarded to *King Arthur* to-night. It is a great delight to me to be back once more amongst you, and to know that you have received with such favour the play of my old friend Mr Comyns Carr. I am deeply indebted to him, to Sir Arthur Sullivan, and to the others who have done so much, and I heartily thank them and you. I have only to ask you to let me respectfully, cordially, and, if I may so, affectionately wish you all a Happy New Year."

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P. M. B.
Aug: 2. '94.

STROLLING out of the theatre in the entr'acte, I observed a crowd round the window of a stationer's shop in College Green. They were attracted by an immense display of photographs, several hundred in all, ranged in two battalions or columns, the one headed "THEIR CENTURY'S GREATNESS," the other "THEIR CENTURY'S BASENESS." The latter column consisted of what I imagine to be a curious and valuable collection of portraits of notorious malefactors; but these I had no time to study. The Immortals were more easily scanned, each having his name and his title to renown inscribed on his mount. "The Greatest Actor" was, of course, Mr. Irving, "The Greatest Actress," Miss Ellen Terry; but Mr. Toole figured as "The Greatest Comedian," Mr. Edward Terry as "The Greatest Burlesque Actor," and Mrs. Langtry headed a novel category as "The Greatest Actress-Beauty." Sir Augustus Harris took his rightful place among the illustrious men of his century as "The Greatest Theatrical Manager"; but I own I was surprised to see Mr. Edmund Yates included in the Valhalla under the style and title of "The Greatest Theatrical Critic"—an eminence which Mr. Yates, I am sure, neither claimed nor coveted. Mr. Oscar Wilde—the juvenile and hyacinthine Oscar of fifteen years ago—figured as "The Greatest Æsthete." George Eliot took rank as "The Greatest Authoress"; but, by an ingenious distinction, room was found for Miss Braddon as well under the designation of "The Greatest Lady Novelist." I looked in vain for "The Greatest Dramatist"—none was held worthy. It is true that Mr. W. S. Gilbert occupied a prominent place; but what, think you, was his claim to distinction? You will scarcely guess: he took rank as "The Greatest Punster"! This is a trifle hard on poor Mr. Gilbert, who never—well, hardly ever—perpetrated a pun. I now bethink me that I caught a glimpse of the features of Mr. G. R. Sims among the Immortals, but forgot to note what particular branch of laurel adorned his brow. Shall I go back to Bristol and see? No; he was in all probability "The Greatest Dramatist."

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DINNER TO MR. BEERBOHM TREE.

On Tuesday Mr Beerbohm Tree was entertained at a complimentary dinner at the Savoy Hotel prior to his departure for the United States. Lord RUSSELL of KILLOWEN, the Lord Chief Justice, presided over a distinguished company, which included Lord Hothfield, Lord Wantage, the Earl of Londesborough, Viscount Dungarvan, Lord William Nevill, Sir Francis Jeune, the Marquis of Granby, M.P., Sir Edward Clarke, M.P., Sir Algernon Borthwick, M.P., Sir George Lewis, Sir Arthur Blomfield, A.R.A., Sir William Rose, the Portuguese Minister, Mr E. H. Carson, Q.C., Mr George Candy, Q.C., M.P., Mr E. W. Beckett, M.P., Sir Eyre Massey Shaw, K.C.B., Mr Stuart Wortley, M.P., Sir F. Milner, M.P., Sir F. Abel, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Dr. Hugh Playfair, Mr Alfred Gilbert, Mr Justin M'Carthy, M.P., Sir J. D. Linton, Sir Joseph Barnby, Sir Reginald Hanson, M.P., Mr Frank Harris, the Hon. Eric Barrington, the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, Professor Herkomer, Mr Edward Ledger, Mr Frank Dicksee, R.A., Mr Luke Fildes, R.A., Mr James Knowles, Mr Linley Sambourne, Mr W. L. Courtney, Mr Haddon Chambers, Mr Sydney Grundy, Mr Comyns Carr, Mr Marcus Stone, R.A., Sir Douglas Straight, Mr W. H. Pollock, Count Gleichen, Sir Richard Quain, Mr Julius Beerbohm, Mr Campbell Praed, Dr. Semon, Mr Carl Meyer, Mr Edward Rose, Mr Max Beerbohm, Mr T. H. Bolton, M.P., Dr. Robson Roose, Mr A. W. Pinero, Mr Theodore Watts, Mr Charles Cartwright, Rev. Dr. Robbins, Mr Luther Munday, Mr Ballard Smith, Mr Cecil Clay, Mr Charles Drummond, Mr Augustus Spalding, Mr H. S. Trower, Mr Henry Heinemann, Mr Marshall Hall, Mr Samuel Heilbut, Mr W. K. D'Arcy, Mr Frederick Beer, Mr C. D. Rose, Colonel L. V. Loyd, M.P., Mr George Cawston, Mr Ernest Cassell, Mr W. Schuster, Mr Edmund Craigie, Mr A. H. Synge, Mr Harry Higgins, Mr Radul Foa, Mr S. B. Bancroft, Mr George Alexander, Mr Edgar Bruce, and the Lord Mayor.

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing the toast of the evening, said that Mr Tree might well be proud of the gathering assembled to do him honour. There were present representatives of literature, of art, of the Houses of Legislature, of the bar, and of commerce, and also distinguished men of leisure, of that class once described as the class that sow not neither do they spin. He had had given to him a list of a number of distinguished men in many walks of life who had expressed their goodwill and their earnest wishes for the success of the enterprise upon which Mr Tree was about to enter. The first amongst them was from the Prince of Wales, who with that considerate kindness that distinguished him telegraphed in these words:—"Please express to Mr Tree from me my hope that he will have a prosperous voyage, a safe return, and a most successful tour in America." In addition, the present Ambassador of the United States (Mr Bayard), Mr Henry Irving, and others wrote in a similar sense. The Chairman, in conclusion, said their guest was a man of culture, who had been able to play in French to the Gaul and in German to the Teuton, and there were comparatively few men of whom anything corresponding could be said. He (Lord Russell) sometimes thought the world did not quite acknowledge the debt it owed to the theatre and to those who trod its boards.

Mr BEERBOHM TREE, who was received with cheers and musical honours, in the course of his reply said:—I should indeed be lacking in imagination did I not feel some trepidation in responding to the eloquent speech which has just been delivered. Words seem blurred, and language halting. Not only did I feel a natural pride in listening to the periods of the distinguished orator who has just proposed my health, but a feeling of diffidence besets me lest I should be led away by his eloquence into an undue sense of my own importance. I once knew a man who was so great an egotist that he felt unworthy to tie his own shoestrings. Well, my lords and gentlemen, I must tell you that I feel something in the predicament of my friend at this moment. Nothing is so calculated to induce modesty as the tribute of the great; just as nothing is so conducive to self-assurance as the detraction of the little. And among the many gratifying evidences of goodwill to-night, I have been especially touched by the gracious message of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who is so staunch a friend of the theatre, who has done so much to encourage its exponents, and who is never tired of showing his kindness. It would be strange, indeed, if among these numerous tokens one did not think better of oneself. But it is never well to take oneself too seriously. In a calling which is, perhaps, more than any other in touch with humanity and its humours, one is continually reminded of this truth. A corrective was recently administered to me by an Irish carman. In the course of the past year we had occasion to undertake a somewhat meteoric flight from Balmoral to Dublin. We were announced to appear in that city on the Monday night, but circumstances only permitted us to arrive in time to fulfil our engagement on Tuesday night. I observed, with a modesty not untinged with a commercial conceit, that a little crowd had gathered to cheer us on the landing stage (they were not "supers"). To the sympathetic carman who drove us to the theatre I remarked that our advent appeared to cause considerable excitement in the town. "Ah, sure," said he, "it's nothing compared with the smallpox scare." It is true that the time of our absence is short, and I take it that the reason of this gathering is not so much one of condolence at our departure as a desire to send us on our way rejoicing. What indeed, could be a more brilliant introduction to our great cousins in blood across the Atlantic, who are as yet strangers, than the expression of goodwill from those who know us? It was in order to meet you here to-night that we have postponed our departure. Man is ever selfish, and I confess I am not sorry, for more than one reason, that Fate, in the shape of Lord Russell, intervened, for I am told that the rest of the company started in a gale on Saturday last. Even Admirals, so we are informed on the authority of Mr W. S. Gilbert, occasionally "quail in the fury of a gale." For myself, I confess I am a poor sailor, and even an indifferent Admiral. I never knew why sea-sickness was invented—perhaps it was to supply the comic papers with copy. We were recently crossing from Holyhead to Dublin. I was lying in my cabin; we were nearing shore. The stewardess, with that cheerfulness which is the sufferer's greatest bitterness, entered the cabin. "Are you feeling a little better, Mr Tree?" she enquired with aggravating sympathy. "Yes, thanks; a little," I faintly replied. "Then will you kindly write me out an order for three for to-night. I'll hold the basin the while." But I am diverging. To-morrow morning, at an early hour, we are to set forth on our journey, and I have to say farewell to-night. I cannot but flatter myself that the distinguished and representative gathering which I see before me here to-night could not have come together unless in addition to a personal feeling of kindness and friendship there was also an underlying recognition of one who had, in serving the public, striven for that art for which he professes to do the best within his reach, even if he has sometimes failed to attain the ideal at which he aimed. I see before me some faces which I have known from boyhood, others which, known at first in distant reverence, have grown into the faces of friends; others, until to-night only friends by courtesy. I thank you one and all, my friends, my hosts, my hosts' friends, for gathering here to-night. I thank you on behalf of my wife, to whom such graceful allusion has been made, and who will share in my happiness. And to you, my lord, the kindly organiser of this feast, I tender my heartiest thanks for having presided on this occasion, and may you live many a long year to temper mercy with justice, and frugality with hospitality.

Other toasts were the health of "The Queen," proposed by Lord Russell; that of "The Army and Navy," proposed by the Marquis of Granby, and responded to by Lord Wantage; that of "Literature," proposed by Mr Justin M'Carthy, and responded to by Mr Comyns Carr; that of "Painting," proposed by Sir Edward Clarke, and responded to by Sir J. D. Linton; and that of "The Drama," proposed by Sir Algernon Borthwick, and responded to by Mr A. W. Pinero. The Chairman's health was proposed by Lord Hothfield.

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veteran WILLS and the juvenile—the ever juvenile—CHAMBERS, to HENLEY and STEVENSON, to IBSEN and MAETERLINCK, to adaptations from French and German and experiments in English, to modern society plays and romantic dramas of no particular period at all. He has tried many things; and it may truly be said of him that he has touched nothing without adorning it. And, besides introducing to us many excellent plays and clever authors, he has improvised—if we may use the phrase in this connection without discourtesy—a charming actress in Mrs BEERBOHM TREE, who has developed peculiar ability and an individuality and style which are quite out of the common.

We have briefly enumerated Mr TREE's claims to consideration and popularity, because the public memory is short, and people need to be reminded of their obligations. *The Era* is read wherever the drama exists, and it may not be amiss that we should define in the minds of the lessees, managers, and critics across the Atlantic what manner of man it is that is coming amongst them. Mr TREE is still, as the ages of the active and eminent are measured, a young man. He has done much, and from him we expect much. We part with him with regret, and we shall receive him back with a mixture of joy and anxiety—joy to have him with us once again, and anxiety lest in his absence from our land he may injure some of the finer qualities of his genius. Let us hope that he will bring back to us unimpaired the same keen discrimination, the same insight, and the same strong individuality which he has preserved intact amidst the opposite influences of London criticism, popular adoration, quasi-failure, and "tremendous" success. Our loss is America's gain; and we feel quite certain that the triumphs which Mr TREE has won at the Haymarket will be repeated in the United States. We are sure, too, that all our readers will join us is wishing the enterprising and ambitious actor-manager and his charming wife all success in their venture in the new land that now is almost old.

MR. HENRY IRVING.

BECKET.

WITHOUT doubt the visit of Mr. HENRY IRVING and his Lyceum company is the apex of the dramatic pyramid which is built up for us year after year by those who provide our theatrical pleasures.

When the opera and pantomime seasons are over, a period of stagnation sets in, and a dead level of mediocrity holds its own, with perhaps a few special bursts of better things, till the close of the summer brings with it a whole host of autumn attractions. The highest and best of these is the engagement of our great tragedian, and when it is past and gone we begin to think of Christmas amusements.

Mr. IRVING commenced his fortnight's visit with five performances of Lord TENNYSON's *Becket*, which, being new to Liverpool playgoers, has created a good deal of literary and dramatic

Liverpool Porcupine October 13. 1894.

excitement. A large audience assembled on Monday night to witness the first representation and to welcome the great actor and his splendid company.

Becket found immediate and immense favour. To many people no doubt it does not present so many elements of enjoyment as other plays in Mr. IRVING's *repertôire*. It has an astonishly small amount of action, scarcely any but the merest thread of story, but withal a charm of its own that is undeniable from any literary or dramatic point of view. It is true that it has no rapid succession of poetic flights of fancy, such as abound in the plays of the Elizabethan period, nor is it so rich in the materials of passion and imagination. But it is simpler and purer, and appeals by a subtle force to the heart of the spectator. A great deal of this is due to the ease and grace and beauty of Lord TENNYSON's poem, but much more, I think, to Mr. IRVING, both as represented in his own acting, and shadowed in his company and surroundings generally. As a poem, *Becket* has many genuine passages, such as the scene in the bower between the *King* and *Rosamund*, and afterwards between *Rosamund* and the *Queen*. The secret meeting of the lovers is an excellent instance of the union of scenic effect with delicate loveliness of fancy, and their tenderness for their little son *Geoffrey* is very beautiful, and strikes a deeply pathetic note. Another charmingly poetic passage is the scene in Northampton Castle between *Becket* and his enemies. The exquisite grouping of all the characters in this scene, and the noble strength of the Archbishop defying them, appear to me far more calculated to delight and refine a vast concourse of spectators than the more exciting incidents, the florid language, and the intensity of passion to which we are accustomed in the old dramatists.

In the very simplicity of the plot of *Becket* lies a great part of its merit. The incidents, such as they are, possess the most intimate connection and dependence upon each other, every event contributing something to the progress of the story and the working out of the final catastrophe. Lord TENNYSON has apparently discarded any attempt to tell his tale in a dramatic form, preferring to reach the hearts of the people by the simplicity of his appeals, and therefore depending upon human sympathies, which have never altered since the days of St. THOMAS A BECKET for the general success of his play. There is no attempt to fascinate the imagination by undue splendours of imagery, nor to swamp it by tremendous outbursts of pathos and fine diction. His characters speak epigrammatically and to the point, and the full force of what is in their hearts and minds is thereby presented to their hearers stripped of any verbal or fanciful excrescences. And this surely is true poetry, for poetry is, or should be, the outcome of human experiences concentrated into concise expressions and utterances of human nature. If in some places the language in *Becket* sounds bald and skimpy at first hearing, it needs no more than the single reflection that humanity, when in trouble, suffers in silence, and the recollection that all the characters in the piece *are* suffering in greater or lesser degree, to show how faithfully Lord TENNYSON has endowed his play with the inner instincts and sensations of the *personæ* he is dealing with.

And just as ably as Lord TENNYSON has put the words in their mouths do the actors deliver them. Mr. IRVING himself as *Becket* was in every scene perfection. In the beginning we find him the friend and confidant of the King—not a priest as yet, and scarcely relishing the idea of becoming one, when the King suggests he might be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. If anything could exceed the nervous agitation beneath an outward calm with which he concluded this act, it was the manner of his appearance before his enemies in the Castle, when the calmness was external and the agitation within. Both were exceedingly finely represented by Mr. IRVING. His convinced air, his looks of stubborn resolve to carry out his purpose, his stately bearing, presented a picture of the "turbulent priest" which has only been dimly pictured before by the mental eye. And as the play progresses we watch this priestly majesty with an awe attuned to the fate we know is to be his. We see him in the first days of his Bishopric contesting eagerly for the rights he believes to be best for the Church and the country, we see his noble presence baffling with the Archbishop of York, other ecclesiastical potentates and "King's Men" of all sorts; we see him stay the arm of *Queen Eleanor* in the bower when she is about to slay poor *Rosamund*, and we see him bear her away to a nunnery. Later still we meet him in the ordinary habit of the black canons of the Augustinian rule, oppressed with cares and the superstitious presciences of his own death, which weigh heavily upon him. Last of all, in a grand passage of poetry and acting, the author and actor combine to show us the martyr *Becket* refusing to save himself by flight and meeting his death in Canterbury Cathedral with the calm dignity in which he has lived. The final death scene and the leaden roll of the body down the steps was most impressively realistic, and as the curtain fell, the audience, released from its thraldom, burst into vociferous applause at the genius and power that held them spellbound.

As is always the case, Mr. IRVING was most excellently supported. *Henry II.* found in Mr. FRANK COOPER a most able exponent, who rose to a high pitch of dramatic power in the scene where he speaks the historical line, "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" As *Queen Eleanor* Miss GENEVIEVE WARD illustrated to perfection the throes of jealousy, anger, suspicion, and revenge, and Miss MARION TERRY was so sweet and charming as *Rosamund* that the regrets universally felt at the absence during this visit of her sister, Miss ELLEN TERRY, were considerably lightened. Miss ANNIE HUGHES as the country girl *Margery*, and Master LEO BYRNE as little *Geoffrey*, have met with very general expressions of admiration to which I must add my own. Both played their parts to absolute perfection, and the same word, generally speaking, may stand to describe the *tout ensemble* of the entire production from a literary, dramatic, and scenic point of view.

The Era. Jan: 19. 1895.

DEATH OF MR. ROYCE CARLETON.

It is with much regret we record the death of Mr Colin Campbell, professionally known as Mr Royce Carleton. Several weeks ago Mr Carleton was seized with illness, and went to Brighton, where he became worse, and died there on Monday evening. He leaves a widow and one son to mourn his loss. The deceased actor, who was born in Edinburgh, in 1858, made his début on the stage in 1875, and the Globe Theatre was the scene of his first appearance in London, he undertaking the part of Will Robin, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, first played there on April 29th, 1882. In the autumn of the same year he acted at the Crystal Palace in *Sweethearts and Wives* and *The Honeymoon*. At the Olympic, on March 10th, 1884, he embodied the Comte de Presles, in a revival of *The Two Orphans*, and on May 10th he appeared in *Haunted Lives*. At the Crystal Palace, on July 1st, he was the Orlando Middlewick, in *A Lesson in Love*, and on July 10th was seen in *The Rivals*. At the Olympic on Feb. 9th, 1885, he represented Rolph, in a revival of *The White Pilgrim*, and at the old Holborn on Jan. 11th, 1886, he enacted Dr. Fubbs, in *Not Alone*. At the Vaudeville, on April 12th, he made a decided hit as Blifil, in *Sophia*, and on July 16th he undertook Silky, in *The Road to Ruin*. At the Strand, Dec. 1st, he portrayed Colonel Faulkner, in *Gladys*, and at the Vaudeville, on March 10th, 1887, his William, in *The Brothers*, was a notable performance. At the same theatre, on April 9th, he played Sire de Chasseloup, in *A Dark Night's Bridal*. On July 12th he was entrusted with Philip, in *Devil Caresfoot*, and on Nov. 3d with Daniel Robins, in *Heart of Hearts*. At Terry's, Dec. 15th, he appeared in *The Wave of War*, and at the Vaudeville, on Jan. 19th, 1888, in *Fascination*. At the Prince of Wales's, Feb. 23d, he impersonated Mr Hairsham, in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and at the Haymarket, on March 31st, increased his reputation by his portrayal of the Duc de Choiseul, in *The Pompadour*. At the Olympic, on April 14th, he represented Gerald Bowyer, in *Barren Land*, and at the Crystal Palace, on Sept. 13th, Page, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. At the Criterion, on Oct. 17th, he acted Lancaster Browne, in *Blackmail*, and at the Jodrell, on Nov. 24th, undertook Jack Peach, in *The Alderman*. At the Adelphi, on Dec. 22d, he portrayed Dick Redmayne, in *The Silver Falls*. At the Haymarket, in February, 1889, he appeared as Ford, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. At the Comedy, May 16th, he was seen in *The Inheritance*, and at the same theatre, June 29th, he played the Count Barrotti, in *The Tyrress*. At the Strand, on Nov. 28th, he was Reginald Smith, in *The Jackal*, and at the Shaftesbury, on May 21st, 1890, he achieved a notable triumph by his impersonation of Mr Dethic, in *Judah*. In October of that year he went with Mr E. S. Willard to the United States, appearing in *Judah*, *The Middleman*, *Hamlet*, *John Needham's Double*, &c. He next appeared in London at the Comedy, on June 16th, 1894, as Joseph Chandler, in *The Middleman*, and on June 25th enacted with much success Henders, in *The Professor's Love Story*. Mrs Carleton formerly played under the name of Miss Nelly Lyons, and is a sister of Mrs Charles Cartwright.

The Era: Jan: 19 1895.

NOT only has the stage lost a skilled actor in Mr Royce Carleton, but theatrical society has to regret an always amusing companion, a teller of stories of extraordinary verve and humour. Of late years Mr Carleton had acted chiefly in the United States, whither he had accompanied Mr Willard on three successive tours; and his constant theme was American living, American customs, and American manners—all of which he denounced, in a purely humorous spirit and with astonishing wealth of exaggeration, though in more serious moments he was fond of dwelling on the generous and warm-hearted hospitality he had met with across the Atlantic.

The Era. Jan: 19 1895.

AMONGST those present at the first night of *King Arthur* at the Lyceum Theatre on Saturday were Mr and Mrs Arthur Lewis, Mrs Morris (Miss Florence Terry), Mr and Mrs Fred Terry, Miss Marion Terry, Mr Gordon Craig, Miss Ailsa Craig, Mr Bancroft, Mr John Hare, Mr Henry Irving, jun., Mrs Patrick Campbell, Mr F. C. Burnand, Mrs Charles Mathews, Mr and Mrs Pinero, and Mr Hall Caine. After the fall of the curtain Mr Irving entertained a large party at supper on the stage, Mr and Mrs George Alexander, Mr and Mrs George Grossmith, Mr Weedon Grossmith, and Mr Cyril Maude being amongst the large and fashionable assembly which accepted Mr Irving's hospitality.

veteran WILLS and the juvenile—the ever juvenile—CHAMBERS, to HENLEY and STEVENSON, to IBSEN and MAETERLINCK, to adaptations from French and German and experiments in English, to modern society plays and romantic dramas of no particular period at all. He has tried many things; and it may truly be said of him that he has touched nothing without adorning it. And, besides introducing to us many excellent plays and clever authors, he has improvised—if we may use the phrase in this connection without discourtesy—a charming actress in Mrs BEERBOHM TREE, who has developed peculiar ability and an individuality and style which are quite out of the common.

We have briefly enumerated Mr TREE's claims to consideration and popularity, because the public memory is short, and people need to be reminded of their obligations. *The Era* is read wherever the drama exists, and it may not be amiss that we should define in the minds of the lessees, managers, and critics across the Atlantic what manner of man it is that is coming amongst them. Mr TREE is still, as the ages of the active and eminent are measured, a young man. He has done much, and from him we expect much. We part with him with regret, and we shall receive him back with a mixture of joy and anxiety—joy to have him with us once again, and anxiety lest in his absence from our land he may injure some of the finer qualities of his genius. Let us hope that he will bring back to us unimpaired the same keen discrimination, the same insight, and the same strong individuality which he has preserved intact amidst the opposite influences of London criticism, popular adoration, quasi-failure, and "tremendous" success. Our loss is America's gain; and we feel quite certain that the triumphs which Mr TREE has won at the Haymarket will be repeated in the United States. We are sure, too, that all our readers will join us is wishing the enterprising and ambitious actor-manager and his charming wife all success in their venture in the new land that now is almost old.

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Liverpool Porcupine
October 13.
1894.

MR. HENRY IRVING.

BECKET.

WITHOUT doubt the visit of Mr. HENRY IRVING and his Lyceum company is the apex of the dramatic pyramid which is built up for us year after year by those who provide our theatrical pleasures.

When the opera and pantomime seasons are over, a period of stagnation sets in, and a dead level of mediocrity holds its own, with perhaps a few special bursts of better things, till the close of the summer brings with it a whole host of autumn attractions. The highest and best of these is the engagement of our great tragedian, and when it is past and gone we begin to think of Christmas amusements.

Mr. IRVING commenced his fortnight's visit with five performances of Lord TENNYSON'S *Becket*, which, being new to Liverpool playgoers, has created a good deal of literary and dramatic excitement. A large audience assembled on Monday night to witness the first representation and to welcome the great actor and his splendid company.

Becket found immediate and immense favour. To many people no doubt it does not present so many elements of enjoyment as other plays in Mr. IRVING'S *repertôire*. It has an astonishly small amount of action, scarcely any but the merest thread of story, but withal a charm of its own that is undeniable from any literary or dramatic point of view. It is true that it has no rapid succession of poetic flights of fancy, such as abound in the plays of the Elizabethan period, nor is it so rich in the materials of passion and imagination. But it is simpler and purer, and appeals by a subtle force to the heart of the spectator. A great deal of this is due to the ease and grace and beauty of Lord TENNYSON'S poem, but much more, I think, to Mr. IRVING, both as represented in his own acting, and shadowed in his company and surroundings generally. As a poem, *Becket* has many genuine passages, such as the scene in the bower between the *King* and *Rosamund*, and afterwards between *Rosamund* and the *Queen*. The secret meeting of the lovers is an excellent instance of the union of scenic effect with delicate loveliness of fancy, and their tenderness for their little son *Geoffrey* is very beautiful, and strikes a deeply pathetic note. Another charmingly poetic passage is the scene in Northampton Castle between *Becket* and his enemies. The exquisite grouping of all the characters in this scene, and the noble strength of the Archbishop defying them, appear to me far more calculated to delight and refine a vast concourse of spectators than the more exciting incidents, the florid language, and the intensity of passion to which we are accustomed in the old dramatists.

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