

modern stage—much less often indeed than it deserves to be. It is many years since it was last played in Toronto; on which occasion Mrs. Morrison, then Charlotte Nickinson, personated the heroine. The last notable production in London was something like a quarter of a century ago, at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of the late Charles Kean. The cast on that occasion was a remarkable one. Mrs. Charles Kean appeared as *Viola*; Mr. Bartley, the greatest Falstaff of his day, as *Sir Toby Belch*; Mr. Meadows, an actor then unequalled in his particular line, as *Malvolio* (and a wonderful piece of acting it was); Harley, prince of Shakspearean Jesters, as the *Clown*; Mr. Cathcart, the gentleman who played here last year with Barry Sullivan, and who at the time we speak of was in his prime, and a very good actor, as *Sebastian*; the inimitable Keeley, as *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*; and his equally inimitable wife, as *Maria*. With such a cast the play could not be otherwise than a success; it had a long run and brought plenty of money into the treasury. A noteworthy point in the stage-setting was the garden scene, which was an exact reproduction, even to the positions of the different characters, of Mr. Leslie's well-known picture.

The *Viola* of Miss Neilson is somewhat difficult to characterize. It pleased us less than any other part we have seen this lady in. Her conception throughout was a radically false one. *Viola*, on her first entrance, has just escaped a shipwreck, in which she supposes her only brother, *Sebastian*, to have been drowned; in the following scene, disguised as a page, she falls in love with the *Duke*, who himself is in love with *Olivia*. Under these circumstances, *Viola* would naturally deem her love a hopeless one; and this feeling, coupled with her grief for her brother's loss, would make her prevailing mood, especially when alone, one of melancholy and depression. In Miss Neilson's hands, however, the general idea one gets of her is that of a pert, self-satisfied boy. It is true that at times, as in her discourse with the *Duke*, in which occurs the passage respecting patience "smiling at grief," earnestness and feeling are manifested, but they seem to be merely assumed for the nonce as a surface veneer covering real levity, rather than hidden depths revealed through an assumed disguise, in a moment of confidence.

The other characters in which Miss Neilson appeared, were *Juliet*, *Rosalind*, and *Pauline*, in the "Lady of Lyons." Her *Juliet*, we regret to say, manifested some signs of deterioration. The actress's physical resources are apparently not so great as they were; her voice is not so strong, or, at least, in level passages, does not seem to have so much of that carrying quality which on former occasions made her lightest tones audible in every part of the house.

Other defects which have crept into the performance since it was seen here two years ago, are a tendency to over-elaboration and a straining after novelty. This was especially noticeable in the balcony scene, where the actress's changes of attitude and position were so frequent as almost to make the spectator himself feel restless and uncomfortable. Miss Neilson has played *Juliet*, we believe, considerably over a thousand times; and where a part is performed so frequently by an artist who makes it a subject of constant study, and who is continually adding a touch here and another there, the inevitable result is to overload it with detail. This result is especially to be dreaded in a part like *Juliet*, which contains so much in itself as to need but little elaboration. Moreover, some of the novelties added in the present instance, were the reverse of improvements: the throwing down of flowers on her lover at the close of the balcony scene savoured of clap-trap; the cutting short of the antechamber scene in the third act, so as to make it end with the parting of the lovers, rendered the subsequent portion, with father, mother, and nurse, far less effective; and the interpolation of the tableau of *Juliet's* tomb, between the fourth and fifth acts, was a poor piece of sensationalism. Only to think of it; "Romeo and Juliet" a vehicle for spectacle! But the worst of the novelties—the excision of the great scene in the third act, where the nurse brings Juliet the news of Tybalt's death at the hands of Romeo—remains to be animadverted upon. This scene is the crisis of the play, and the turning-point in the development of Juliet's character. Hitherto her existence has been the careless and happy one of a child; now the hard and terrible realities of life begin to press in upon her with a force which for the time is overwhelming. The result is to change the light-hearted and loving girl into a self-reliant, courageous, and devoted woman. Moreover, apart from its connection with what goes before and what comes after, the scene is, in dramatic power and in the scope which it affords for acting, the grandest in the play, next after the potion scene, and on Miss Neilson's last visit was acted by her with a power in every way worthy of it. To omit such a scene as this is simply an outrage on all dramatic propriety; it would be hardly less excusable to omit the play scene from "Hamlet." It is painful to be obliged to write such things of so great an actress as Miss Neilson, the more so because the blemishes which we have felt it our duty to point out, serve to mar a performance which, notwithstanding, is still, in all probability, the greatest piece of acting to be witnessed on the English-speaking stage of to-day.

It is a relief to have done with fault-finding, and we can turn with unalloyed pleasure to the other Shakspearean character portrayed by Miss Neilson. Her *Rosalind* is indeed the