

The Drama.

PROPOS of the thousandth performance of "La Dame aux Camelias," which is soon to be given in Paris, the Figaro has been looking up the early history of the famous play. "La Dame aux Camelias" had to wait some years for its first public hearing. The author first of all offered it to his father, the elder Dumas, who was then director of the Theatre Historique, but a few days after he received it his management came to an end. Another manager read and returned it; and D'Ennery, who at a later period took the Theatre Historique, declined the play as unsuitable for an opening performance. The Gymnase refused it because they were playing "Manon Lescaut" at the time and did not care to produce after it a piece so similar. Then the manager of the Vaudeville accepted the play, but he failed before it was ready for performance, and his successor sent it back to the author with the message that it would not answer his purpose. Dumas now took it to Dejazet, who told him that she did not feel equal to playing so sentimental a character as the heroine. M. Worms, however, the actor who afterwards played the part of the doctor, had heard the play read, and was so sure it would succeed that he persuaded M. Bouffe, who had joined the management of the Vaudeville, to accept it. The much-tried author was at last hopeful; but this time the censor interposed his veto, and another year passed before, thanks to the influence of M. de Morny, "La Dame aux Camelias" was at last performed, on the 2nd of February, 1852, and since then "Camille" has been played in every known civilized tongue.

Olga Nethersole has the pleasant consciousness that she has won the approval of the great Bernhardt, who has predicted for the young Englishwoman recognition and undying fame with all the pleasant accompaniments of fortune, friends, and happiness. Maybe Bernhardt is right about it, but the friends of Miss Nethersole should look into the matter of her physical strength. Miss Nethersole is simply using up her strength and vitality, and making no provision for the time when her overtaxed nature will refuse to respond to her demands. In her great emotional plays this young woman does not only act the parts wherein she is supposed to laugh and cry or to lose consciousness, but she lives them. Once, when going back to see her after a particularly fine production of "Camille," a critic was startled to see her lying unconscious in her dressing-room with a maid chafing her hands and temples. It was explained that this was not an unusual state of affairs, that frequently Miss Nethersole fainted at the close of some trying scene and was unable to respond to an encore.

Several very curious theatrical performances were recently given within the sacred precincts of the Vatican. They were not arranged for the amusement of the Pope, who is by no means the only occupant of this vast complex of buildings, but for the entertainment of his company of Swiss Guards. These poor hirelings in red and yellow coats have but little to do and sometimes suffer from ennui, because the Vatican is not at war with one or the other nation. For their benefit a few performances were recently given in a hall in the Belvedere Garden in the Vatican, where a small stage had been erected. The members of the Society of Saint Peter arranged what was announced on the programme as an "Academy of Music and Prose." There were several recitations, harp and violin music, a tenor and a male soprano were heard to great advantage, and the climax was reached when a comic trio of brigands appeared. The orchestra, which filled part of the evening, consisted of two ladies and a piano. The Swiss Guards had a good time, and the few outsiders, members of the Catholic aristocracy of Rome, were also very well pleased with the unusual entertainment.

"Iachimo is quite in Sir Henry Irving's line," says the London World, "and he makes a striking, memorable figure of him. Shakespeare probably conceived a younger, lighter, more irresponsible villain—a stinging gadfly rather than a rattlesnake. Sir Henry Irving's Iachimo is a subtle, tenebrous, deadly creature. But his acting is extremely artistic, both in what he does and what he refrains from doing. He seemed to me, in fact, to refrain almost too sternly from the cheap byplay of the commonplace villain. There were times, for instance, in the scene with Imogen, when his show of moral earnestness almost took him in for the moment. It is

a nice question whether it be not an over-refinement, a supersubtlety, to let the audience forget that he is playing a part within a part."

Justin Huntly McCarthy, who has written much for the English stage, but who is known principally to theatre-goers on this side of the water for his adaptation of "A Night Off," played with so much success by the Daly forces, is now busily engaged in dramatizing Anthony Hope's "A Man of Mark." Mr. McCarthy certainly has a task ahead of him, for to many minds "A Man of Mark" is lacking totally in the qualifications necessary to make it a dramatic success—that is, if the text of the book is followed. Yet, who can tell? "Trilby," as a book, was purely episodic, yet, as a play, it was a magnificent example of dramatic strength. So, after all, it may not be the play's the thing, but the man who writes it.

The player's art is transitory. He creates nothing, and leaves nothing behind him. He struts his little hour on the stage, weaving ephemeral scenes out of cobwebs, and outlining his notions of humanity on the baseless fabric of fancy. He comes like a shadow and like a shadow he goes. Within the span of his career he may bring into life a thousand characters, full of sound and fury, yet they signify nothing, for none of them can exist without him, and when he dies they are buried in his grave. Without the talents of the men who write about and the artists who paint him the actor's memory would not outlast a year.

Two theatrical events last week, cables a London correspondent, were of international interest. One was the first production of Edward Rose's dramatization of Stanley Weyman's romance, "Under the Red Robe," which must be recorded as a success of the highest order. The other was John Hare's farewell performance at the Lyceum, preliminary to his departure for America. It was one of those spontaneous outbursts of popular affection such as perhaps no other living English actor would be able to call forth from the English public.

Rev. Dr. Parkhurst says he has no prepossession against the theatre, but from information he has gleaned from theatre-goers, newspaper criticism, bill-boards, and "one of our most distinguished English actors" he has the distinct impression that "if the American theatre were suddenly to omit all its vicious accompaniments, and to come out frankly upon the ground of unequivocal purity, the theatre-going world would withdraw in impatient disgust and the whole business go into the hands of a receiver inside of a month."

Mr. Pinero recently returned from his holidays in Italy, and gave the finishing touches to Mr. John Hare's rehearsals of "The Hobby Horse," which will be played in America in the course of Mr. Hare's next tour. This, we believe, is the first appearance of this admirable comedy out of London. It was produced in the autumn of 1886, and, although it ran a hundred and nine nights, it was voted a comparative failure at the time. But it is a brilliant piece of work, full of humour and rich in character. Mr. Hare's tour on this side of the water commences at Montreal early next month.

The fact that a large number of first-class stars and sterling companies play one night stands this season is an evidence of the fact that they pay. Small towns yield a larger revenue in one night than many large cities, especially when the proper plays and the proper stars are announced.

Blanche Walsh will act with Henry Miller the leading roles in "Heartsease." This is the title under which "La Dame aux Camelias" was first acted in England.

Mary Hampton, whose work here two seasons ago in "Sowing the Wind," was so greatly appreciated, is to be Sothern's leading lady.

One of Amelie Rives' tales, "Virginia of Virginia," is to be dramatized. Minnie Maddern Fiske will take the leading character.

Thirty-two companies will start out after the elections across the line. Thirty companies were idle in New York last week.

Modjeska contemplates an "all star" Shakespearean comedy company.