

THEATRICAL MACHINERY.

Perhaps no class of persons in the world require the genius of invention more than stage carpenters. Every new play must have its appropriate machinery arranged to work with the utmost precision, so as to produce the most deceptive effect upon the audience. Some of the devices and apparatus used on the stage possess remarkable features of mechanism, requiring originality of the first order; and although these devices are seldom patented, many of them show more real ingenuity than three-fourths of the inventions for which patents are obtained. Yet with all this ingenuity in devising and constructing novel machinery for producing startling scenes upon the stage, but little improvement has been made in the mechanism for working the permanent apparatus of the stage. To-day the drop-scene is rolled up by cords and pulleys operated by hand, at the proper signal, in the same manner that it was rolled up fifty years ago; and who has not often witnessed the distressing accident of two flat scenes positively refusing to come together properly just at a time when it was particularly necessary to shift them quickly? We have recently forwarded to the patent office the application of Mr. H. F. Parsons, a resident of Los Angeles, in this State, for some very useful and ingenious improvements in the permanent mechanism of a theatrical stage. In the first place, Mr. Parsons proposes to paint the scenes on wire cloth instead of canvas, as heretofore. One or two preliminary coats of paint upon the wire cloth, he states, will completely fill the meshes so that a perfectly opaque and uniform surface is provided. Mr. Parsons claims that there will be a saving of 30 per cent. in the amount of paint required to complete the scenes. He proposes to use wire cloth, not only for the flat scenes, but also for the wings and flies, and to use wires instead of ropes for operating them, thus rendering the stage comparatively fire-proof, and effecting a reduction of 70 per cent. in the insurance rates. The scenes thus made will also be more easily handled. Instead of ropes and pulleys for raising and lowering the drop-scene, Mr. Parsons will employ a small water-wheel driven by water conveyed through a pipe connected with the water-main of the city, and the valve will be controlled by the prompter, so that he can, at the proper moment, drop the scene without depending on an assistant. Besides the above improvements, Mr. Parsons has provided a number of others, by which the flat scenes, wings, and flies can be easily worked by one person instead of the large number heretofore required. He claims that a saving of 60 per cent. in the labour of operating stage machinery is obtained by his improvements, besides every part is so adapted as to work smoothly without noise or stoppages.

Mr. Parsons expects to place his improvements on some of the theatrical stages in this city during the coming summer.

"ROMEO AND JULIET" CRITICIZED.

In a book just published called "Shakespeare on the Decline," "Romeo and Juliet" is dished up in this fashion: "In the first place it is a grievous mistake to open with Romeo in love with Rosalind. Why does the poet deprive Romeo of this charm? Even if he had loved before, why should, we know it? In deserting Rosalind for Juliet, Romeo is guilty of treachery towards the former; who, then, will vouch for his fidelity to the latter? The first love of Romeo serves no object. It casts a doubtful light on him, and has not the least significance for the action or the piece. Besides, there is here a psychological impossibility. Romeo loves Juliet at first sight. Such a sudden love is beautiful and poetical, but it is only possible with a free heart. Now, Romeo is not free; he is enchained by another love, which hitherto has been unfortunate, and which should, therefore, have a double hold on his heart. As for Juliet, she is a rhapsodical little maiden, and goes on as no tender, timid, trusting maiden would. She talks of taking Romeo when dead and cutting him into little stars: as though any such fanciful mutilation would mingle with the fond idea of a girl's first love. Girls in love are not prone to speculate on the death and dissection of the beloved object. There is also no reason for Juliet's simulated death; no reason why she should not have fled from Verona with her husband. This play, like the Danish tragedy, suffers from weakness of construction involving inexplicable motives, and is deformed by irrational talk and a punning mania incidental to even the heroic characters and in their case utterly ignoble.

In the by no means straitened city of Paris forty Parisians, noblemen, artists, and journalists of the best sort—all men of the world in fact—have formed a league for the purpose of hissing without mercy all pieces that may be immoral, all actors who may hazard *double entendres*, and all actresses who may strive to clamour to fame by means of jewellery and good looks instead of by talent.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

WATCHING THE SNOWS is the representation of an event familiar to the inhabitants of the banks of the St. Lawrence, in Lower Canada. This year there were no peculiar circumstances connected with the shove. The ice broke up gradually, the water fell space, and the river was soon clear in front of Montreal. Within twelve hours a score of schooners and small craft from the Boucherville Islands had been towed into port.

We give to-day a reproduction of a steel engraving—THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON—intended to illustrate the excellence of our process for delicate work of the sort. THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON is well known as one of the master-pieces of Raffaele. Printed on plate paper, our copy is hardly distinguishable from the original engraving.

The flora of the sea is represented by a fine group of ANEMONES, including several rare varieties remarkable for the beauties of their tints. Seen through certain conditions of refracted light, naturalists describe them as of marvellous effect.

On page 284 we give an illustration of the business premises of one of the largest firms of wholesale provision dealers and shippers in Canada. The Messrs. Armstrong do an immense business in exportations of butter and cheese and other Canadian produce to the English market, and are gradually but surely extending their connection. The warehouse now occupied by the firm is the old Commissariat stone building, which was erected in 1838-39, under the superintendence of Major Foster, R. E., at a cost of nearly \$3000. The premises are well situated and roomy, measuring 190ft. in length, with a depth of 36ft.; and facing directly on the river.

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TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER LXIII.—Continued.

"Oh, if you please, sir," she said in a gasp, "I'm very sorry, but I made a mistake in allowing you to come in. Missus says Mr. Ledlamb is up in London attending to his business there, and its against his rule for patients' friends to be admitted without an appointment, except its the friend which placed the patient in his care. And if you'll please to write and ask for an appointment Mr. Ledlamb will let you know when you can see Mr. Peeram, providing you has Lady Peeram's lief. Mr. Ledlamb 'olding hisself responsible to Lady Peeram, and no one else."

The girl stumbled slowly through this message, which had evidently been laboriously imprinted upon her mind, for she tried back when she had finished, and went over a good bit of it again, like a musical box.

"I'll ask an appointment by and by," answered Edmund, "But while I am here I'll take a look round your place."

"Oh, if you please, sir, you musn't go out into the garding," said the girl with a frightened look, "It's against the rules."

"Come, Mr. Bain," said Edmund, heedless of this remonstrance. He went out of the window, followed by the steward. "Oh, if you please, you musn't," gasped the girl, in much alarm, and then finding her appeal unheeded she rushed out of the room, stole upstairs crying, "Missus, missus, they've gone out out in the garding, and Mr. Peeram's there with Sammy in the preamberlater."

CHAPTER LXIV.

MR. LEDLAM'S PATIENT.

Mr. Standen's first act on getting out into the open was to take a survey of the house, thinking that Mr. Ledlamb's prisoner might in all probability be looking out of one of the windows. But the windows were all blank. Two of the upper casements were guarded by bars, doubtless with the view of preventing the escape of any desperate patient, who might be inclined to emulate Jack Shepherd's evasion from Newgate.

"Come round the garden," said Mr. Bain; "from that girl's anxiety I'll be bound he's somewhere out here."

They crossed the grass to the stagnant pond where ducks and duckweed flourished, and where the ancient willow wept the desolation of the scene. That willow was the one bit of shelter in all that arid waste of garden, and between the drooping branches Mr. Bain's keen eye had discerned some object that looked like a human figure.

He made for this spot, therefore, followed closely by Edmund. The willow was on the opposite side of the water. They went quickly round the edge of the pool, Mr. Bain always in advance. Yes, there was some one under the tree—a child's shrill voice sounded as they approached, an old man's piping tones answering.

Mr. Bain parted the willow branches and looked into the natural arbour.

An old man was seated in a dilapidated wheel-chair, an infant by his side, in an equally dilapidated perambulator, and both these helpless objects were under the care of a tall, lanky-looking girl of about eleven years of age.

Shadrack Bain, not wont to display violent emotions, drew back with a loud cry, and the ruddy tints of his sun-burnt face faded to a sickly white.

"Sir Aubrey Perriam!" he cried, aghast. "What do you mean?" asked Edmund in a hoarse whisper, seizing the agent by the shoulder.

Mr. Bain did not answer him, but crept under the willow, and bent over the old man, taking his hand and looking into his face.

"Sir Aubrey, don't you know me? I'm your old steward, Shadrack Bain, come to fetch you out of this wretched hole—come to take you back to life."

"Yes, to life," answered the old man in senile tones. "They made believe I was dead—they told me to my face that I was not Aubrey but Mordred. They put me in Mordred's rooms, and kept me shut up there, and told me it would be worse for me if I called myself Sir Aubrey Perriam. Who was it that did this?—with a pained look and a wilder tone—"Not my wife, oh, no! not my wife—not my pretty Sylvia. She was beautiful and good. She could never have been so cruel to me."

"Never mind who did it, Sir Aubrey. It is all over now. No one will dare to deny your name when I am by your side. Good God! what a scheme for a woman to invent—for a woman to execute. I see it all now. It was Mordred who died, and that woman made the world believe it was her husband. I wish you joy of your pighted wife, Mr. Standen," added the agent, turning to Edmund, who leaned against the sill, white as death.

The old man clung to Shadrack Bain, like a child who had been restored to the nurse he loves.

"Yes, I know, I know," he muttered, "you are Bain, a good servant, a faithful servant. Take me away from this place—this dull, cold, cheerless place. They don't beat me, they're not very unkind to me, but they're poor, and everything is comfortable. Carter was always good, but she is ill now, and I am left with Sammy and Clara—and Clara calls me Mr. Perriam, and laughs at me when I tell her my right name is Sir Aubrey."

Clara was the tall girl, who stood behind the wheel-chair, knitting a baby's sock.

"That's his fancy," she said sharply; "when he first went out of his mind he took it into his head that he was his elder brother—the one that died. It was his brother's death that turned his brain, father says."

"His brain is no more turned upon some points than yours, my girl," answered Mr. Bain. "His intellect was weakened by a stroke of paralysis, but he's clear enough at times. He has been used very badly, and I mean to take him away from here without loss of time."

"You can't do that," said the girl promptly; "father won't let you."

"I shall not ask your father's leave," replied Shadrack Bain. "You'll stand by me, won't you, Mr. Standen?"

"Yes, I will do what I can to see this poor old man right-ed," answered Edmund, gloomily.

"What is the matter with Mrs. Carter, the nurse?" asked Mr. Bain.

"Inflammation of the lungs. She was took bad a fortnight ago, and father got her round a bit at first, but he says the cough has settled on her chest, and she'll never get over it. She's awful bad. We were afraid last night she'd hardly have lived till this morning."

"If you want to know the particulars of this business you'd better stop and question Mrs. Carter," said Mr. Bain to Edmund. "She has been in it from first to last—she was Lady Perriam's prime confidante and adviser."

"I'll see her," answered Edmund, "unless you want my help in getting Sir Aubrey away."

He had been gazing at the old man's face with earnest scrutiny, to assure himself that this was indeed the elder and not the younger brother—that he was not being made the dupe of some juggling of Mr. Bain's. That scrutiny left no doubt in his mind. This was verily Sir Aubrey Perriam, Sylvia's husband. Strong as had been the resemblance between the brothers there was just sufficient individuality in the face to make Edmund Standen very sure upon this point.

"I only want you to go as far as the carriage with us," said Mr. Bain, "and then you can return and see Mrs. Carter. But don't commit yourself by any promise to condone her share in this conspiracy."

"If she is dying it can matter little whether her crime is condoned."

"If—but it is just possible she may be no nearer death than I am. We can get Sir Aubrey to the gate in this chair. He used to be able to walk a little, but perhaps he's weaker now. It will be easy to lift him into the carriage between us. I shall take him to an hotel in Hatfield, and keep him there till he can be moved comfortably back to Perriam."

"But you musn't take him away!" shrieked Miss Ledlamb. "I'll run and tell mother."

She sped off on this somewhat futile errand, leaving the baby squalling in the perambulator, appalled by the sudden solitude. When she came back, followed by Mrs. Ledlamb, a timid-looking matron, who had been all this time trying to make herself presentable to the eye of strangers, Sir Aubrey and Mr. Bain had just driven off in the fly, and Edmund Standen was quietly approaching the house.

"He's gone, Mar," screamed Clara; "they've took him clean away!"

Mrs. Ledlamb began to cry.

"Your father will say it's my fault," she screamed, piteously, "but what could I do? I wasn't fit to be seen when they came, and was just getting myself a little bit tidy when you ran in to say they were going. And there's all our income gone at one swoop, for he was your Par's only patient, and goodness knows when he'll get another. I'm sure I tremble when I think what he'll say to me."

"It wasn't your fault, Mar. You couldn't have stopped them if you'd been dressed ever so. They'd have taken him away by main force. There's one of the gentlemen; you'd better ask him what they mean by it."

Mr. Standen, being timorously interrogated upon this point, would give no definite answer.

"There has been a great wrong done," he said, gravely. "I cannot tell what knowledge your husband may have had of that wrong, but I know that the first step towards setting it right was to get that poor old man out of this house."

"I'm sure he's been treated kindly," whimpered Mrs. Ledlamb, "and if he says he isn't, he's a deceiving old thing. He's had every indulgence—sago puddings that I've made for him with my own hands, and mutton broth, and all kinds of delicacies. I'm sure he's been treated like the family, and we've all of us borne with his worrying nonsense, when he said he was not himself but his brother. Clara has had the patience of an angel with him."

Mr. Standen asked to see the nurse, Mrs. Carter, and after some difficulty, by means of a good deal of persuasion and the gift of a five-pound note to Mrs. Ledlamb, as consolation under the sudden loss of income, he obtained permission to go up to the attic where the sick woman was lying.

"She's very bad," said Mrs. Ledlamb. "I sat up with her half last night, thinking she was going, but it's a harassing, deceiving complaint, and I darsay she'll go on lingering ever so long, a burden to herself and others."

Mrs. Carter, otherwise Mrs. Carford, lay on her narrow bed facing the casement through which the western sun streamed with soft, yellow light. She was the very shadow—the pale ghost—of that Mrs. Carter who had been seen at Perriam a month ago. The bright brown eyes looked larger than of old—larger than they had seemed even in her days of semi-starvation, when she came a suppliant to Hedingham schoolhouse.

Yet even now, with that deadly brightness, they were like Sylvia's eyes. Edmund perceived the resemblance at once. He sat quietly down by the bedside, and took her hand. She looked at him at first with a dull indifference, thinking he was some strange doctor who had been brought to see her. Then a gleam of recognition flashed into her eyes. She remembered a face she had seen in a photograph Sylvia had shown her—the face of her daughter's first lover.

"Is—Sylvia—is Lady Perriam here?"

"No, but if there is anything on your mind—anything you wish to tell before you are called away—you need not fear to tell me. Whatever wrong you have done is now past atonement upon earth. Try to secure God's pity by a late repentance. Do not carry the secret of your sin to the grave."

"The wrong I did was not done for my own sake, but for another. If I tell the truth it is she who will suffer."

"If you are speaking of Lady Perriam, be assured that nothing you can tell me can affect her injuriously. In the first place her secret is already known, and in the second place I should be the last to use any knowledge to her disadvantage."

"What, is it known already?" cried Mrs. Carter, agitated.

"I knew that it must come to light sooner or later, that such a sinful thing could not long be hidden; but so soon! That it should all be discovered so soon! How did it happen—who came here?"

"Do not trouble yourself about details. You are too weak to bear much emotion. Sir Aubrey has been found, and he is in safe hands. Let that content you."

"And she—Lady Perriam?"

"Are you so deeply interested in her welfare?"