

## STAGELAND

THE strong man, Sandow, who appeared at the Grand during the early part of this month, is unique among performers of his class for the beauty and refinement of his performance. Nothing could be more noble than his appearance, and one of the daily newspapers, which described him as an Apollo among gladiators, hit off a really good description. The infatuation of womankind for Sandow has been laughed at far and wide, but, really, when you come to look at the matter in a truthful light, there is nothing ridiculous in it. The average strong man is a person whom women do not care to go and see; he is a bull-like, vulgar thing, with no grace in his performances. The beautiful young Prussian, on the contrary, is beautifully formed. The most marvelously powerful of living men,—he has, moreover, the delicate gracefulness of a Greek youth; his splendidly formed head is delicately set upon his shoulders, and his features are perfect; the crop of golden curls which surmounts his head adds further to the Greek effect, and, altogether, he recalls one of the most exquisite descriptions in Walter Pater's beautiful story, "Apollo in Picardy."

To enumerate the feats which Sandow performed were unnecessary. They were wonderful and unparalleled. As I have said, there is nothing ridiculous in the appreciation Sandow has won from the women who have seen him. Men are accustomed to demanding beauty of women. Down in the bottom of his heart every man believes that the woman who does not try to make herself as beautiful as she can is an unfeminine and unsympathetic creature. Certainly the moral significance of beauty is constantly insisted on, and it were strange if women did not sometimes turn the tables, and in this age of ungainly, feeble, and dyspeptic men, show some devotion for strength, and beauty, and grace in the opposite sex. The lesson men should learn from the appearance of Sandow is that beauty and cleanness are always valued by us of the opposite sex.

Sitting in the theater during the performance, I was amused by the comments of two young newspaper men who sat near me. Among the reporters of Toronto I count many friends, and certainly there are many good-hearted, gentlemanly, and witty young fellows among them. After Sandow had performed one of his most remarkable feats, one of the reporters burst out in the dialect which newspaper men sometimes use when not engaged in the task of guiding the public mind: "Hully gee! I wonder if he beats his wife." It was a wonderfully whimsical suggestion, for Sandow has a very beautiful wife, a lovely, refined young English girl, whose portraits I had seen and been captured by. The whimsical idea came back to

me when, by the kindness of the management, I was introduced to Sandow. "Do you beat your wife?" I asked jokingly. The serious, handsome young Prussian looked puzzled for a moment and then he saw I was not in earnest. He replied, quaintly, "No! the man who strikes a woman is a brute," and then added half seriously, "When God has given a man strength like mine, it should be for the protection, and not for the abuse, of womankind." He spoke the words as if he meant them. I did not stay many minutes and when I was leaving I put out my hand, which is a long and rather thin one, to shake hands. "No," said he, shaking his head, "It would be a pleasure, but I am afraid I would crush it. You see my labors have so dulled the nerves of my hand that I cannot regulate the force with which I grasp any-



thing." I laughed and bade him good-by; and subsequently I learned that he is obliged to use wine glasses and cups and plates of metal from this very cause. Unknowingly, he will pinch a china cup in two in raising it to his lips. So, you see, such immense strength is not without its disadvantages.

\* \* \*

Perhaps nothing could better illustrate the conquering power of industry and honesty than the triumph that Mrs. Cora Urquhart Potter is now achieving. After a long and weary struggle against physical limitations, against ridicule and slander, she has come to be recognized as one of the few great actresses of the day. At the time when she first went on the stage, it was looked upon as ridiculous for the society amateur to hazard a professional experience. The trained professionals threw every obstacle in her way possible, and the friends who had

applauded her amateur efforts were the first to flout at serious ambition in a woman. Since Mrs. Potter's advent, however, "times is changed," as the saying goes. A large number of amateurs have walked out of the drawing-room into the green room and have brought with them a large fund of brains and distinction that was sadly needed on our bankrupt stage. If you glance over the list of American actresses doing really good work on the stage, you will find that nearly all of them, instead of having been bred for the theater, have stepped out of the drawing-room of some refined home. Mrs. Potter, however, has gifts of temperament which would have put her at the top, no matter what her origin. There is a rapturous, poetic fire in her in which she is unapproached by any living actress except Dusé. Her powers of expression are at times inadequate and this leads to many bad mannerisms in her work, but for a rôle like that of *Charlotte Corday* she is so perfectly fitted by nature that one feels that she must surpass even Bernhardt of the Golden Voice. In showing us the fury of the girl-assassin, there is a chaste, religious fervor that would be wholly beyond the reach of the feverish and forceful French actress. At least one distinguished New York critic has pronounced her the greatest actress in the world, but while this praise is distinctly exaggerated, she has, nevertheless, great and rare gifts which now the public is beginning to recognize.

\* \* \*

Those who saw Miss Lizzie MacNichol in the rôle of *Flora MacDonald*, in the recent production of "Rob Roy," may perhaps have noticed the brooch she wore with every costume she donned. It was always pinned somewhere about her throat or bosom, and as she wears four or five different dresses during the course of the piece, it is evident that she must regard this brooch—which is by no means strikingly beautiful—as a mascot. Would you like to know the little story that clings to that brooch? Miss MacNichol, as she is known on the stage, is the widow of Franz Vetta, the splendid basso, whom Patti discovered in a minstrel show at San Francisco, and who afterwards became one of the best grand opera singers of the day. Vetta sang *Mephisto* in Emma Juch's splendid presentation of "Faust" here some years ago, and Miss MacNichol was the pretty lad *Siebel*, who sang the immortal flower song so prettily. Well, Vetta died two or three years ago, and the little wife who had loved him so much has preserved ever since this brooch, a present of his to her, as a mascot in her stage performances. It contains the picture of their only child, at school in Washington.

\* \* \*

The young lady whose portrait adorns this page was seen here some weeks ago in "The American Girl." Her claim to distinction is that of having been one of Charles Dana Gibson's models for the magnificent "Gibson Girls," which have so long been a feature of *Life*. Her chin, her form and her brow show conclusively the Gibsonian traits which so many maidens have desired to cultivate.