

entertainment might readily be made to serve for any other, if the necessary changes of pieces and performers were inserted. This state of things is certainly not helpful either to high attainment on the part of performers, or to a proper standard of appreciation on the part of audiences.

Reading is one thing; acting is another. Each has its sphere, though there seems a strong tendency on the part of many to confuse them. The true function of reading is to convey, by means of the modulation of the voice, the real meaning and force of a piece. It follows that it is useless to try and cover up indifferent reading by means of highly dramatic action. There are some public readers among us who conscientiously attempt true reading. They are, perhaps, not the most popular; certainly they are not the most frequently encored. But for their encouragement they may be quite sure that they reach the hearts of those who really appreciate true sentiment, truly voiced. Tearing passion to tatters will almost always command noisy applause, especially from that portion of the audience who are akin to the professional claqueurs of the theatre. This kind of success, however, is fatal to true excellence. We can think of one of our public readers who at the outset promised to attain high excellence—but who, carried away with the passion for acting, is fast losing the power truly to interpret the best kind of composition.

As illustrating these statements go over the selections presented to the public during the present season and ask yourself the question, How many of them were chosen simply because they are vehicles for action,—such action as is calculated to gain transient applause? How many because they are permeated with true emotion and depict the finer play of feeling which can only be truly rendered by one who in the first place fully understands the delicate shades of the author's meaning, and in the second place has trained the voice to convey to others, by its skilful modulations, the interpretation which has been perceived? Were it not invidious we could mention the names of half a dozen of our readers and give their selections, which amply illustrate the criticism we have ventured to make. But we are