

cannot draw a pen through a phrase that proves, upon examination, to have been badly chosen, and we cannot paint out a blemish upon our canvas, retouching the spot at our leisure. When the portraiture once takes form, it is instantly judged for what it is worth, not what it may become by revision. The dramatic artist is thus placed at a disadvantage as compared with the workers in other lines of art.

It is a great part of our mission to seek out the utmost dramatic possibilities of compositions that have been framed for the stage and bring them to the light. We can hardly expect to accomplish this task with success until we have, by long study and experience, trained our natural qualities to a knowledge of what dramatic effects really are, and a power to bring them out.

Let me choose, for an example, the "Winter's Tale." When I was preparing for its presentation in London many close readers of Shakespeare were considerably more than doubtful of the result. Professor Max Müller said to me one day: "I do not see what can be made of this work. Viewed from the dramatic standpoint I re- gard it as not only the least valuable of Shakespeare's plays, but as being almost wholly worthless."

"You must go and see it," I replied.

"I shall do so," he continued, "and if you can convince me that the 'Winter's Tale' is worth the labor and expense you are bestowing upon it, I shall admit that I was completely in error."

He did see the production, and he very heartily admitted that he had been completely deceived as to its value for dramatic purposes. Thus, I hold, that the dramatic artist, by the sustained and tireless exercise of his or her art, may prove of great assistance to the student, who, without knowledge of the stage, must frequently lose sight of the best qualities of dramatic poetry.

The "Winter's Tale," contrary to the expectation of all readers, has proved to be, not only interesting in a literary sense, but highly dramatic in its action, and much more than usually rich in episode. It was in this last quality that the play was most generally thought to be utterly deficient, and the insight of stage experience, training and study was required to make it apparent.

The discovery of all the purely dramatic effects in any given work is not possible to the student who is not familiar with the art of acting in its best sense. Indeed, the author himself is frequently ignorant of the complete possibilities of his play. It is only the dramatic artist who can fully enlighten him, and by this enlightenment assist him to the creation of still greater effects.

An instance illustrating the power of the dramatic artist to suggest and bring out the meanings of the author where they have not been apparent to the reader or student, was made known in the Monnet-Sully production of "Hamlet" at the Theatre Francaise. It was the most wonderful production of Shakespeare ever known, not merely from the standpoint of splendor and

outlay, but as viewed from the point of realistic suggestiveness. All Paris went to see it, and a great many people made the journey from London for the express purpose of witnessing the revival. I confess to having followed it, with eager interest, no less than eight times.

Reference to a single event in the representation will confer an idea of the remarkable skill shown in conveying the illusion intended by the author. In the first place, the curtain went up on a scene in which there was an atmospheric effect so skillfully devised as to suggest most vividly the blue-cold of a winter night in Denmark. For some moments there was silence on the stage, which was deserted. Then there was heard in the distance the clanking sound of a man in armor. The sound approached nearer and nearer, and then a guard appeared upon the scene, beating his hands and blowing his warm breath upon his fingers, in an apparent endeavour to restore his circulation. He crossed the stage without a word and disappeared. He could be heard receding in the distance, and finally came in sight again at the back of the stage.

All this was done before a word was spoken, and it was intended to show just what kind of a night it was. In this the action was extremely successful. It brought out, pictorially, the poet's briefly-described conditions surrounding the opening of his play. There might be recalled a number of similar effects which were brought out in this same representation, but this single incident will serve to show the value of the dramatic artist's insight as a help to making clear the author's design, no matter how lightly it may have been touched by the writer.

The knowledge that makes possible this detection of meanings, sometimes written between the lines, comes through the training of the dramatic instinct that is the substructure upon which the actor builds his art. But, in the building, there is untold endeavour, and often bitter disappointment. There is nothing about the progress of a dramatic artist that is at all in the line of carelessness and ease. Every step carries one into more difficult paths, and an accidental triumph is robbed of half its pleasure.

These, at first sight trivial elaborations, to which I have alluded, go to show that the merest trifles in dramatic art are worth the labor involved in their acquirement. And it is only through long and earnest effort, careful training, lofty thought and determined purpose, that the player of to-day has been raised from the shadow of the past, and finds himself no longer a vagabond, but a recognized artist, to whom the world is open.

The possibilities of the art are boundless to those who approach it with the proper motives, spurred by a fitting instinct. Such votaries may be of high or low degree. That matters nothing. But the person who steps upon the stage, from palace or hovel, in pursuit of notoriety or unearned gain, has no right to be admitted to the dramatic profession.

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