AT THE END OF THE THIRD ACT.

"That old man who plays the drums in the orchestra is her father, you know."

"No, I didn't know. Never noticed him."

"You never see anything this side of the footlights. Anyone might miss him, though, for he stoops into insignificance. Some kind of a romantic story about him; went through college and all that, they say; wrote stories—oh, I dunno; made a love-match, and landed on his drum-sticks. Lucky for her that she didn't inherit his physique. Should have thought his head would have caught your eye—snow-white hair, and a mane of it. Hang it! where d you suppose that advertising agent is? Had an appointment with him an hour ago. Don't mind my temper, Davis. It's a dog's life to manage this theatre. Just think of it—this is the third new play in two months. Ludicrous, you know. Who gets the brunt of the blame, do you suppose? I do! Who is to blame? It isn't the author, scenic artist, stage manager, critics, or I; it's she—Helen Stuart—every time. I tell you she can't act!"

"Great Scott! Why don't you discharge her?"

"Discharge her? I? She's a protégé of Farnam's. He's principal stockholder here, you know. He has a theory that she's the greatest actress that ever lived. I should think that idea would get starved out of his head pretty soon. It hasn't had much to feed it but failure for months."

"In love with her, eh?"

"Oh, I suppose so. Wants to marry her, they say, but she won't have him. He doesn't like the old man, and she won't give him up, or something equally foolish. That doesn't seem likely; but anyhow, she won't marry him. One thing he must acknowledge, she's a one-part actress, if she can act at all. Every play we've put on since she's been here has given her a star's chance, and she's failed every time. Same thing to-night. There's only one part in the piece, to my mind. She's got it, and if she's a 'frost,' we'll have another dead failure on our hands. I am nervous as a woman about the thing, I acknowledge. You know Celia Waite, the girl who plays the comedy part in nearly every piece? She's got more talent in her little finger than Stuart has in her whole make-up. They think because Waite can do a comedy scene with a light touch that she has not any force. They don't know her. If I could have any say, she'd be acting the leading part to-night, and I'd stake all I have on her success. She's the right sort, a thoroughbred, and a regular Bohemian. Stuart gives herself airs of reserve and that sort of thing. To tell the truth, I don't know much about her, for I've never cultivated her acquaintance beyond the merest business relation, but she's not popular with the company, and that speaks for itself."

"What's going on in the theatre?"

"It's the last rehearsal for to-night. They're just running through the lines. You may get some idea of the play. Should like to know how it impresses you. An outsider is often a much keener judge than we oldtimers. I'm too anxious about this venture to have an opinion. You see, I'm really responsible for the production—I mean to say, they took the play on my recommendation. Thereby hangs a tale. I had more manuscripts lying around my office than I could count, not one of them any good. When the last play proved a failure it was necessary to put something in rehearsal at once. It's bad policy, you know, to let the public get into the habit of not coming to your theatre, or of associating the house long with failure. You won't believe me when I tell you that we didn't know of a play, foreign or domestic, that we'd dare venture. Bad plight, eh? Looked as if we'd have to rake out an old comedy or else close the house. One night, about three weeks ago, this play was sent me anonymously. It bore the city's postmark, and that's all the clue we had as to the author. We were in a strait for a play, and, my curiosity being aroused, I read the manuscript that night. I was so much impressed that I urged its immediate production. Novel experience not to have to haggle with the author about royalties. I expected he or she would put in an appearance after we began advertising the play, but not a sign has been made. Odd, isn't it? Then I had another reason for putting it on. I heard indirectly that Farnam said I had purposely produced three palpably bad plays in order to lay the blame of the failures on Stuart. You know we had a pretty lucky house up to her coming. D——d unreasonable argument! Well, I saw that the principal part in this play couldn't suit her better if she had lived it through in real life; and if she can't act it she can't act anything—Farnam will have to acknowledge that. Wait a second and we'll go in front."

He stepped to a speaking-tube and called down to the box-office.—

"I say, Charlie, if Franklin comes in tell him not to go away without seeing me. He'll find me watching the rehearsal. Understand? All right."

The two men entered the auditorium and took seats in the shadow of the balcony. Three or four scrub-women were sweeping and cleaning away the soil of the night before, and in response to the vigor of their efforts, a cloud of dust had gathered in the open space in front of the stage. A bit of uncertain daylight had found its way through a grimy window, and between the wings, where it united effort conscientiously with a single bunch-light that stood in the centre of the stage. Its rays fell about the head of the orchestra leader like a halo, as he sat with waiting baton, intently listening for the music-cues. Just back of the orchestra sat the stage manager, watching with concentrated attention, now and then calling over the footlights criticisms and directions, or ordering the stage-hands to make less noise. The actors, pale and overworked, went through their lines in a perveless way. The atmosphere was charged with anxiety. The feeling traveled through the dust, and reached the manager and his friend in the rear of the auditorium.

"I can't stand it in here," said the former. "I'd like to go off as far as possible and put the thing out of my mind. You can't tell anything about the play, those scene-shifters raise such a confounded row."

"Do you know," said his companion, meditatively, "I like her. She's subtle, slender and intense. She has a distinct personality that compels the gaze and holds it absorbed."

"Nonsense! I can't see it your way, old fellow. However, to-night will tell the story. Acts nervous, doesn't she? Stupid as she realizes that failure this time signs her death-warrant theatrically."

"So that's her father drumming, is it? Patriarchal looking old chap, ain't he? I've been watching him for some time. Did you ever notice that he never looks at her, but how he listens? He listens as if his ears had eyes."

"All right for to-night! Thanks, ladies and gentlemen," called out the stage manager, in relieved tones.

A buzz of unrestrained chatter ensued. The manager and his friend made their way to the lobby.

"I'll look for you to-night," said the former. "Be sure and come. I'll need you to lend a good, loud applause when ever you see the ghost of a chance."

"Oh, yes; I'll be on hand."

The two men bade each other good morning and separated.

Meantime, back in the theatre, the stage was nearly deserted. Leaning with manifest weariness against the proscenium was Helen Stuart, watching her father beating the time of a gay waltz, waiting for a chance to speak to him. Presently the leader paused to give the violins directions, and she leaned over the footlights and asked, in a low voice,—

"Shall I wait for you, father? Will you be much longer, do you think?

"Just the overture, dearest. It's now. It won't be long; but don't wait. You're too tired."

However, she did wait, relaxed and resting a little. She dreamily looked out into the dim auditorium at the array of unresponsive, empty seats. How impotent she felt before them. She pictured them filled with the typical first-night audience, with the coldly critical, the light-hearted amusement seekers, the sympathetic few. Could she brave them again—could she create a belief in herself—could she conquer them? The full enormity of her task fell upon her, and for a moment her very soul cowered before it, then the self-confidence born of innate power surged over her and sparred the color back to her pallid cheeks. She must succeed! She would succeed!

The orchestra rehearsal was over, and her father was preparing to join her. He looked up at her standing against the deep, dark background of the cleared stage, and his heart contracted with fear for her. She looked so fragile and helpless. How could that slender body contain the power to act the hard part entrusted to her. Then he saw the fervent light in her eyes, her momentary uplifted look, and reproached himself.

With a mute prayer he went through a passage back of the boxes to the stage and joined her.

She took his arm in a loving clasp, and they passed through the stage door to the street.

"Do you know what I've been hoping ever since I've been in this company, father? I haven't told you, but did you guess?"

"No, dearest. Tell me."

"I thought that if I could only make a marked success, so that everyone believed in me, so that my foothold would be secure and our future clear, I thought how lovely it would be for you to put away those awful drumsticks forever. Yes, father, let me tell you. It seems as if you were beating out your life. If you could only rest, as you ought, and have your evenings alone with your books, as you love to have them! Every new play has filled me with hope that every failure has crushed; and I've watched your darling white hair just over the footlights night after night, and my heart was bursting with self-reproach that I could not be greater. I try so hard, but I don't understand myself any longer. I haven't been successful. I'm beginning to lose confidence in myself. Oh, it is dreadful—I must not think of it!

"Try to think only of the part you act to-night, child."

"Yes, that is what I must do. I love this play, father. Some way, I feel as if it had been written for me. It suits me wonderfully. The author is unknown—did I tell you? But I feel as if he had been thinking of me. I've felt it so strongly that ever since we commenced rehearsing I've watched my mail, thinking I might receive some communication about it. Isn't that strange?"

"Yes, very strange. Your star is in the ascendant, dearest. You will succeed, you will succeed! I believe it. I believe it."

His words fell upon her ear like a prayer. Her hand crept tenderly along his arm until it nestled in his palm and his bent fingers closed responsively over it, and so, linked lovingly together they walked on homeward in silence.

At seven o'clock the electric lights over the entrance to the theatre burst into a brilliant showing of the name of the new play. At half-past seven the manager, as he passed under the glowing letters, glanced up, mentally wondering how long they would shine there. He stopped a moment at the box-office window.

"How's the house, Charlie, pretty fair?"

"Yes; nearly sold out."

"That's good. Hope it will keep up the rest of the season. Our 'standing room only' signs haven't been on duty for some time."

Presently the first carriage approached; another carriage, another and another, until the number was lost track of, and the lobby was crowded with a gay, entering throng.

The manager listened impatiently for the first strains from the orchestra. It seemed to him that he had never known so long a half-hour. People continued to stream by him. Farnam entered with a party, and gave him a curt greeting. At five minutes after eight he went into the auditorium and stood about restlessly back of the seats, watching the audience. He saw that it was unusually brilliant. Everett the left his seat and joined him.

"I see you don't mention the author in the new manuscript."

"Can't, my boy," the manager replied, laconically. "Don't know it."

"Oh; well, if it succeeds I guess you will hear from him," the critic commented, and sauntered off.

At last the musicians ceased tuning their instruments and took their places in the shadow of the footlights and the leader lifted his baton.

Behind the curtain what a different scene! Each actor was dressed and ready for his cue long before the orchestra was called. They moved about, this one endeavoring to become accustomed to a new make-up, that one pacing up and down a narrow space beside the wings, concentrated on her lines and muttering them over, now and then mechanically suggesting a gesture, while two others were running hastily through a scene they were to play together. Others, less concerned, were talking excitedly and thoughtlessly. Scene-shifters, property man, and stage manager were hurrying to and fro, crowding every preparation possible into the last precious moments.

Helen Stuart had not left her dressing room. She was ready and waiting for the act to be called. At the last moment her father had knocked at her door and gently opened it. He exclaimed, when he saw her,—

"You are beautiful as to-night! Don't think of me, think of nothing but the part you are acting. Let nothing distract you. They shall know how great you are!"

She could not reply, but looked at him, her pupils dilated with nervous intensity. He took her in his arms and held her tightly for a moment, as if he would give her all his little strength, then, too deeply moved for further words, he left her. In a moment the orchestra commenced and the drum-beats smote her consciousness with strength-giving force.

The act was called, the curtain was up, the first word was spoken, and the audience was hushed to listen.

Half an hour had passed when the curtain fell on the first act, and an absorbed audience shook itself. Its interest had been aroused. The critics nodded approvingly and exchanged comments and surmises in the lobby.

The second act was on, and they hastened back to their seats. The interest crept up in intensity, and the curtain fell on an enthusiastic burst of applause.

The manager was surrounded by congratulating acquaintances. He felt the glow of coming success, but expostulated, reminding them that there was still another act. Even Farnam approached him with beaming face, and exclaimed,—

"You were right this time in your play. It was made for Miss Stuart—made for her."

Davis came up to him.

"Didn't I tell you. The Stuart is turning out just as I knew she would. They will call her a genius to-morrow. Has the author been heard from?"

"No, not a word. I don't think he can be here. He never could sit silent through all that applause."

When the curtain rose on the third act a thrill of expectancy swept over the house. Helen Stuart was "discovered" at the rise, and the audience watched her as if under a spell. The ovation was quiet, rapid, intense. Scene after scene unravelled a story of such power and developed to such a remarkable climax that the audience listened with concentrated interest, and, at the fall of the curtain, rose electrified by the greatness of the actress and the play. There was no mistaking the meaning of that applause. The curtain rose and fell on the line of actors bowing their acknowledgments, rose and fell again. The house rang with the cry,—

"Stuart! Stuart! Stuart!"

Presently the curtain was pulled aside, and the manager appeared, flushed and smiling, and led a very white, little woman half way across the stage. They retired, only to have the calls continued. The manager started out again, but she remonstrated,—

"It is the author they want, not us. Don't you hear?

He either did not hear or paid no heed, but led her out again before the footlights. Once more he could not misunderstand the cry.—

"Author! Author! Where is the author?"

He paused, still holding Helen by the hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret that it is impossible. We do not know who the author is."

Loud murmurs of incredulity and surprise followed his words, mingled with continued calls for the author.

The white head of the old drummer in the orchestra was lifted for an instant, then he arose to his feet.

"Ladies and gentlemen——"

"—ssh!"

The whispered command was followed by a silence all the more intense for the clamor that had preceded. The manager and Helen were bowing their way off the stage, and paused, startled, just above the old man.

Again he spoke,—

"Ladies and gentlemen I thank you, I thank you! The play is mine."

He turned and looked up at Helen. She stepped forward, her arms reached toward him, but triumph and happiness could not be realized in that moment. Her nerves, strained to their utmost tension, gave way. The slender figure drooped and fell fainting against the proscenium, while the audience spent voice and strength in applause.—Harriet Ford, in The Criterion.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL AND ITS RECENT SUCCESSES.

Says the Literary Digest.—The most marked feature in American fiction of the past year has been the predominance of the historical novel. Of the six most popular novels in the month of January, 1900, four—"Richard Carvel," "Janice Meredith," "When Knighthood Was in Flower," and "Via Crucis"—have historical scenes for their background. The latest success—and, considering the question of time, the greatest success of all—is Miss Johnson's "To Have and to Hold," a novel dealing with early colonial days in Virginia. The latter book is already, at the end of little over a month, in its hundred and thirty-fifth thousand, while at least three of the first mentioned books are still in the high tide of their popularity. These facts are startling literary phenomena, and, as a recent critic has remarked, "if they do not give what Adam Smith calls a 'fillip to the trade,' it will be because authors lack the commercial sense." We are now unlikely to be flooded by a downpour of historical novels during the next twelvemonth, and to have all the scenes of history, from Noah, the primeval sailor of history, to Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and possibly Kruger, served up to us with every variety of literary spicing. Those contemplating historico-fictional authorhood need not, according to the literary critic of the New York Commercial Advertiser, feel backward by reason of a distrust of their personal equipment. "Any man," he says, "with a literary temperament and a capacity for compilation, stands a very good chance of success in this field." And he further encourages the incipient author in the following strain.—

"The critics are bland and the public cordial, and there will be plenty of people to say that the fifth historical novel is better than any of the preceding four, and the sixth is more wonderful yet. And while hard work is necessary, it is a kind of work that can be systemized and makes comparatively slight drain on the creative force. It is a good, straightforward, definite job, with materials ready to your hand. A part of it consists in rearranging certain well-tried properties, and some parts could almost be let out on sub-contract. Almost any one will soon be able to handle the George Washington scenes, and duels will become a mere matter of clerical routine.

"The public thus far has shown no disposition to discriminate between what a man invents and what he reproduces. This is what makes it easy. You do not have to create an atmosphere. It is already made for you. Historical associations will help you out when art fails. Rig a man up in small clothes and silk stockings, give him a sword and peruke and four or five old expletives, and a hot temper and a bravo heart, and the thing is half done. Put in a few 'ans' and 'twixes' and 'tises' and 'says I's' and the conversation will fit any past century you like. In the older historical novel they reproduce the spirit of ancient Rome or Jerusalem by making all the characters say thee and thou and talk generally like the Book of Common Prayer, but at present one or two archaisms suffice, and there need be no consistency in their use. Richard Carvel's conversation often spans three centuries in a single sentence. But none of these things are noticed if enough happens. That is the one relentless law of the present historical novel. The hero must be kept busy from beginning to end, with never an instant's pause in heroism. There is no interest in him apart from what happens to him. The art that can so build a character that he holds you whether he is doing anything worth mentioning or not is not needed here. For the business of clinging to the masts of sinking ships, hurling back insults in other people's teeth, standing unmoved amid fearful carnage, and waiting for a proud, capricious beauty to recognize his worth, there is scarcely any need of a character at all. He is not a man but a literary storm centre, and requires only four or five large, plain virtues and a good physique."

There is nothing against the historical novel in itself, the writer thinks. These books do a useful work, and at least leave the reader no worse off for reading them. They are monuments of diligence; and, since on the whole they have more facts than fallacies, they serve to impress some lessons of history upon their readers' minds.

According to the "Australasian Catholic Directory," the total Catholic population of the colony of New Zealand is over 92,000 and the number of priests 146. There are 248 churches and 141 schools attended by about 11,600 pupils.

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THE WEARING OF THE GREEN.

Oh! Paddy dear and did you hear
The wail of Ireland's sons
As falling on the Afric veldt
They die beside their guns.

They gave up all at England's call
As oft they've done before
But the hearts in Irish homes to-night
Beat high with hope once more.

For the changes wrought in public minds
Are plainly to be seen
In the flag that floats this day of days
And the wearing of the green.

For to-day the Irish flag floats free
From staff and tower and mast
And England's soldiers wear the green
As never in the past.

Once more the shamrock may be seen
In honor of our boys
Who for the Queen on Afric's green
Renounced all earthly joys.

So let every Irish heart rejoice
To-day, beneath the green
For Ireland's flag is honored where,—
They sing 'God Save the Queen.'

Agnes Ida Bellew,
Montreal.

DEATH OF FATHER YOUNG, PAULIST.

Rev. Alfred Young, of the Paulists, one of the best known priests in the country, died at St. Paul's Convent on April 4th after a long illness. With Rev. Isaac Hecker, Rev. Francis A. Baker and Rev. Clarence A. Walworth, he founded the Paulist Fathers' Church, in West Fifty-ninth street, in 1861, and he had been closely allied with its fortunes ever since.

Father Young was born in Bristol, England, January 21st, 1831. When seven years old he was brought to this country by his parents. He was graduated from Princeton University in 1848 and entered the medical department of the University of New York. From there he was graduated in 1852. He then began the practice of his profession. But a year later he became a convert to Catholicity and entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris, and commencing his profession to enter the priesthood. He was ordained a priest August 24, 1856, and became the vice president of Seton Hall College, holding that office for a year.

He was rector of the church at Princeton, N. J., and later in charge of one in Trenton. In 1861 he resigned and helped to found the Paulist Fathers' Church. He was a missionary of zeal and eloquence and the composer of many devotional hymns of great beauty. He was enthusiastic in renewing the custom of congregational singing, as well as in restoring the ancient Gregorian chant to the liturgical service of the Church.

His name was prominently identified with the reformation of church music in the United States, especially in the abolition of the concert style of singing and the use of modern musical Masses and Vespers. His greatest work was "Catholic and Protestant Countries Compared," which has had an enormous circulation and has run through many editions. Many of his sermons may be found in the six volumes of "Sermons by the Paulists." Among his principal publications were "The Complete Sodality Hymn Book," "Catholic Hymns and Canticles," "The Office of Vespers," "The Catholic Hymnal," "Carols for a Merry Christmas and a Joyous Easter," and "An Order of Divine Praise and Prayer." He was the author also of a series of poems.

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Wm. ROSS, Manager.

A NEW SPECIES.

They are, says Saturday Evening Post, telling a rather good story told of Mr. Bradley-Martin and his encounter with a London cabby. The cabby is easily the quickest-witted and glibbest tongued occupier of the Queen's highways in this capital; he is clever at sarcasm, and when he begins to use bad language the very Landseer lions in Trafalgar Square turn tail and quake. Talk about the British soldier being "Duke's son, cook's son"—her Thomas Atkins is nothing like so universally related as the British cabby. When a certain sort of man, the horsey dare-devil who loves London and lights, "goes broke," he takes to cab driving as naturally as a duck to water, and the streets swarm with cabbies who have received university educations and who have been in their day well to do and of good social positions.

The Londoner knows that he cannot score off cabby under any circumstances, and so leaves him to fight his never-ending battles with brother cabbies, bus drivers and policemen. The other morning Mr. Bradley-Martin was crossing Pall Mall, near the Carlton Club, and a cab coming down the street at a good pace came within an ace of spiking the wealthy American with one of its shafts. The cabby pulled up in time to save the situation. Mr. Bradley-Martin leaped to the pavement and turning in anger to the cabby, shouted angrily. "Who the duce are you trying to run down?" Cabby gazed in contempt and sorrow upon the flushed pedestrian and replied. "Blest if I know, Gov'nor. You're a new species to me."