

Kit's Column

A Weekly Letter of Comment and Opinion.

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When a man of 25—a student, a writer, and scientist tells us that the world instead of having progressed for the last few thousand years has been standing still, it is apt to make one sit up and think. I have always been led to understand that to be stationary meant retrogression; an Irish way of putting it, I fear, and that not to advance is to go back, but doubtless your more subtle mind will gather my meaning. Not long ago a rather brilliant man of letters said to the writer that he thought the world today was a better place than it had ever been before. "Not better, I imagine," I said, "but more respectable on the outside. We have put a lid on vice, but think of the vast underworld where immorality and murder, and crime of every sort, run riot. Think of the white slave traffic." But my friends did not see it that way. Now comes Russell Wallace, almost a centenarian, with his new year's message of concentrated pessimism.

I do not think that anyone who has stood for a while in the burial chamber of old Babylonians, who has faced the Sphinx and meditated on that baffling and terrible countenance, who has studied the pyramids, can come away with any great ideas as to modern progress. Nowhere in the world does one feel so puny and powerless as in the face of these tremendous objects. They are more impressive than Niagara Falls in the plenitude of its power, than the Yellowstone Park—than the geysers. Perhaps one's youth has something to do with it. Youth is impressionable, and when I looked on the inscrutable face of the Sphinx for the first time, I was a young girl—imaginative, and I fancy, emotional.

Evils of Today

The evils of today on which this old philosopher and pessimist lays most stress are graft in all cases—man preying upon man, adulteration in every commodity, rottenness in every industry; cruelty to the poor, and to the children, and "lies everywhere." He might have added the craze for speed. Of the commercialized traffic in women he does not speak at all, and this, to my mind, is the blackest blot on the world today. "These lies," goes on Mr. Wallace, "in our midst today horrors never known before, and dreaded diseases never known before." This last assertion comes as a surprise. Surely if we have advanced in nothing else, we have in medical and surgical knowledge, in clean living (even to "swatting the fly") in hygienic knowledge, and control of such diseases as diphtheria, and in a large measure consumption. Perhaps our learned and ancient philosopher had had more than a sufficiency of Christmas dinner and plum pudding when he gave that interview to the London reporter, and was thereby suffering from the depression of indigestion. His blue pill had not agreed with him. He certainly was of an indigo tint himself, like the man that said, bitterly, "What's the use of anything? Nothing."

Is Too Much Optimism Injurious?

But again, while no one desires to take the pessimistic view of life, has not optimism, the other extreme, been rather overdone of late? Have you not known some scientific person or other who with breezy, instantly cheerful outlook bored you to death at times? Too much "good cheer" gospel has been preached and written. The old saying, "You can break a good thing of a good thing" (as champagne for instance) carries a ring of truth with it. Sob-brothers as well as solisters have made a business out of the "good cheer" business, and have cozened money out of other people's purses by shouting it. I, too, have been a sinner in this regard, and no doubt, shall sin again. When life was hardest and most bitter with me I used to burst into paragraphs of "good cheer." Alas! such merry and instant optimism does not always fit in a world in which so many have to struggle. I begin to believe that this sort of talk—or too much of it—is unwise. And it does not quite fit our human needs. I have got about my work many days when God's gift to me would have been best rested. To give of yourself all the time—like he who giving all "gives none at all," seems to me, sometimes, a wasteful doctrine. A grin forced by the "good cheer" thought is not a laugh from the heart. It is only a bitter tear dried in the making.

And yet—some women will write a heart-breaking letter, adding pitiously, "Send me a little comfort, Kit. Send me a word of cheer or sympathy—my very soul is sick with trouble." And you send it, because decent human nature rises to a call of that kind.

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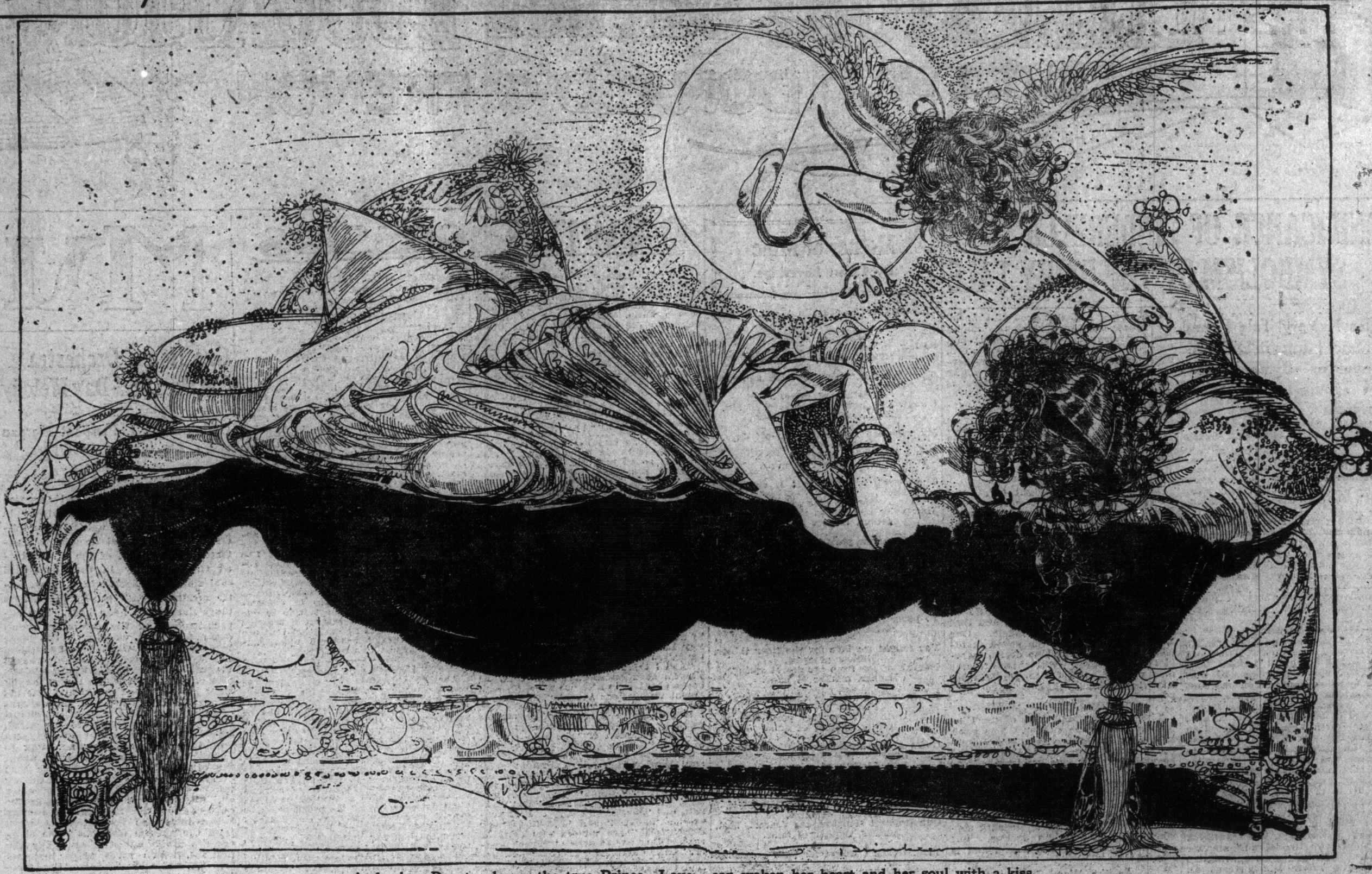
TORONTO.

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Old Fairy Tales Made New

The Sleeping Beauty and the Prince

By Nell Brinkley



And when Beauty sleeps, the true Prince—Love—can waken her heart and her soul with a kiss.

and very many women have "souls that are sick with trouble," and hearts that are withered with sorrow.

A Curious Letter

The following tumbled out of the post box a day or so ago:

Toronto, Jan. 6, 1913.

My Dear Kit—

Your columns being apparently widely read, I ask you respectfully for space in which to write about what might be termed an "indiscreet" or "delicate" subject. It is this: When a man, subject to that terrible disease, periodic drinking, wants to straighten up, he can walk into an hospital, state his case, and get treatment. Not so a woman. And there are women victim to this same disease as I know to my cost. The woman—always a secret drinker—when the fit is subsiding, goes to a woman's refuge, a sanitarium or other public institution. For very shame she cannot go there, who would not be branded with a stigma to her doctor, and to the public. She must go to a Dr. Drink Cure Institution. She would die at home sooner. Nor could she manage for herself any of the so-called "Home treatments." In fact, she is helpless, and must often find her only way out in suicide. The following true story you will not print, please—I send it in justification of my plea and for your eyes, only. Yours, etc., NEMO.

P.S.—My card with name and address is enclosed.

Canada's Own

In his delightful essay on "Canadian Womanhood and Beauty" in the January number of the Canadian Magazine, Dr. Logan pays generous tribute to the list of many Canadian women of intellectual brilliance. And I am glad to note the names of some of my kindred friends, as Mrs. Virginia Sheard, Miss Marjory MacMurchy, and Miss Jean Graham. Women of genius, all of them. Such tributes are well-deserved and encouraging. The Canadian Women's Press Club embraces a number of women and girls who are doing very fine, sterling and laborious work on our daily papers—too often, poorly paid work also. I should like here to offer a little tribute to "Cornelia," whose daily budget of work is amazing and amazingly well done. I call her "Cornelia" to the ladies on other papers whose names I do not know, but whose work forms part of the daily reading. All thru Canada we have notable women journalists whose names and work are too rarely mentioned. Canadian women in paths of intellectual and artistic achievement, and are helping in no small way to develop their beautiful motherland.

The Woman And The Beauty Doctor

"I may be only a beauty doctor," said the frayed lady with the accent on the "only," "but I could give pointers to most of the city doctors, all the same, about reducing the weight."

She was preparing to treat a 200-pound patient when the present models are far from favoring. Now as I know the stout lady rather well, and she asked me to accompany her, and not the process, why it was with much interest (to tell the truth one has of late been putting on an extra pound or so. Let's be frank at all hazards)—that one watched the proceedings. First the lady was vigorously massaged all over. Then she was wrapped

in a blanket face down on a rug, and rolled over and over. Then she was obliged to roll herself over—no light job. All the time the little frayed lady talked.

"I usually advise my patients to buy some bathroom scales and use them right. It is a great encouragement to a reducing woman. She can see flesh falling off her. The whole thing is diet, baths and exercise."

"Not on your life, my dear! Look at the Empress of Germany! Heart ruined thru reducing powder. Look at—she'll never get over her indigestion. I don't know how many coats you have to your stomach, or overcoats either, but I know she has used up every one of them. Those advertising fellows ought to be in prison."

"But what about your beauty medicines? You advertise so liberally this bloom of perpetual youth, and that stilly old dry cream?"

"Save your pencil," she said. "My good reporter, lady, you're sure all wise to us. There ain't any youth for keeps. It's all lies." She is not a Canadian publisher, from "Story" this side of sixty who won't buy any cream magic as is advertised. We're all doing the young. May-be it's the men as well. May-be if the women get the vote they won't care so much about wrinkles, pleaters or skin peelers, but just now me and me friends is flourishing thank you.

"Wimmen is such fools."

Advertised Nonsense

I don't think I will try to reduce. I shouldn't like to be rolled upon a rug hither and thither. Nor do I want to "diet and exercise." But "rest." Ah, that's different. And I do rest. I have to. Believe me, or not—a warning note to women about certain advertised commodities should be sounded. Russell Wallace's advice as to adulteration everywhere should not be overlooked. There are too many patent foods, cure-alls, face-creams, digestive tablets—on the market. Women, above all others, "fall" for them. The poorest working women—with the immense families of the trusting and decent poor—buy every sort of advertised oil or liniment warranted to cure every ill. Such people are real "Christian Scientists." They believe—and they pay. Why, man, we must sometimes exercise our common sense. We cannot live in the fanciful world of dreams. One might wish we could. But that is impossible. Do you ever, friend, if you have passed the fire, the delightful strength of youth and grow unwontedly tired for nothing—do you ever long for just rest? Not to talk, or write, or do anything but look at the snow or the sun, or listen with closed eyes to the hum of sleep on the window. That means being ill and that I am supposed by a careless patient (who buys your outfit for a penny) never to be tired. However, on this is neither here nor there. Mere vapors.

The Gaby

Some one did or did not interview Gaby Deslys. That little king-eater has no use for the unfortunate reporter who pounds the pavement in front of her hotel for hours and hours. I remember when I was assigned to "interview" Julia Arthur when that lady was starring in "A Woman of Quality." Some years have slipped by since. Quite a few, in fact. I remember the long wait and wanderings and the paucity of the interview when at last I got it. But those ladies of the footlights! Oh, those dear, peculiar, particular ladies! And the more peculiar they are the more we run after them.

It is almost a dismaying fact that we run to see the stage beauty caring but little about the suave politeness which generally recommends his profession.

"It's four days since I've eaten, lady," he said, pathetically. A familiar odor floated thru the hall.

"Four days!" we said, in alarm. "But does that familiar odor last four days?"

He blinked. "I will give him God's grace for that. Then—pleadingly—"It's the onions you smell, lady. I

The Beggar

He came in the back door brusquely caring but little about the suave politeness which generally recommends his profession.

"It's four days since I've eaten, lady," he said, pathetically. A familiar odor floated thru the hall.

"Four days!" we said, in alarm. "But does that familiar odor last four days?"

He blinked. "I will give him God's grace for that. Then—pleadingly—"It's the onions you smell, lady. I

picked one out of your garbage can, Ma'am. 'Help me I did.' He shifted from one old boot to the other.

"You are English?"

"Yes—London."

"And why are you begging?"

"It's the country, Ma'am. Nobuddy wants the Hengishman. 'Tis 'ated here."

"But the whisky—along with the onions?"

He turned and shuffled out. Poor Rat! I clumped after him.

"Here's the price—" I said—"of a sandwich."

No letters of any account, therefore no Post Box this week. Besides, I am not too well.

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Stories for the Little Folk

Selected by Kit

The Fox and the Crab.

A Chinese fable. Retold from "Chinese Fables and Folk Stories," by Mary H. Davis and Chow Leung.

A proud fox once met a crab, and he said, "Crawling thing, did you ever run?"

"O, yes," said the crab. "I have run from the mud to the grass and then back to the river again."

"Why! that is no distance to run!" said the fox, snuffing the air. "Look at all your feet. If I had as many feet as you have I could run at least six times as fast as you do. You are a stupid, slow creature. I never heard of anyone with so many feet running so slowly."

The crab looked meekly at the fox and said:

"Would you like to run a race with such a stupid creature? Of course you ought to run faster than I, for you are so much larger. And then you have such a fine, bushy tail; you hold it up so high, it helps you to run faster, too."

The fox looked proud and satisfied with himself, and said:

"Yes, I will run with you. Still the race will be so easy for me. I shall not need to try. You know you are such a stupid creature, at best. And no one can get ahead of me. Why, even men say as 'sly as a fox.' So do what you will, stupid one."

"If you will let me tie down that beautiful tail of yours I am sure that I can win the race," said the crab.

The fox agreed to this.

"When I put the weight on, I will call out 'ready' and we will start," said the crab.

The fox stood still and the crab went behind him and grasped his tail with its pincers.

"Ready," the crab called. And the fox started upon his race, running as fast as he could. When he was too exhausted to go further, he turned to have a look at the crab, whom he thought to be far behind. No crab was in sight.

The crab then let go his hold upon the fox's tail, and called out cheerfully: "Where are you, brother fox? I thought you could run faster than I!"

The proud fox turned, and there

to the extra spurt put upon her end by the exigencies of the moment, she has never sung better this season. Her upper tones seemed to have regained much of their former brilliancy and power and her wonderful use of the mezzo voice, tired over many a difficult moment. All the intensity which she infuses into her acting made the part literally vibrant with emotional impulse. A remarkable performance and one that should go down in the annals of the Montreal Opera Company as a memorable achievement.

Ferrabini's Zaza. Of the same artist's Zaza the same critic says: "The story of the deserted mistress, the cruel life of the sweetly sympathetic offspring of a 'marriage de convenance' and of the final spurning of a domestic union by the woman of hyper-artistic temperament need not be dwelt upon at length. Suffice it to say that Mme. Ferrabini revealed such powers of intense and emotional acting that she literally compelled repeated applause. At the same time one may take issue with her conception of the part. The first act with all its accessories of scenic environment does not quite suggest the successful sobriety. There is a pithos in her voice, which should be lacking in the heartless belle of the Champs Elysees Cafe concert. To those who have seen Mme. Rejane or Mrs. Leslie Carter in the part, the absence of the necessary artificiality is singularly noticeable. Mme. Ferrabini plays the role as tho she were a great, big-hearted, whole-souled woman and not as an adventuress. Seeing that the music is practically only an accompaniment of the story, one looks rather to the dramatic presentation for the real heart of the opera."

Mme. Ferrabini's Double Triumph

Montreal Opera Company Star as Aida and Zaza.

Madame Esther Ferrabini, the famous Italian prima donna, of the Montreal Opera Company, who has been singing very little this season, owing to her devotion to the baby girl that the stork was good enough to present her with last September, last week came back to her own when she sang two roles in which she has never before been heard in Canada, and in such a way as to win the admiration of all who heard her.

One of these was Aida, which she took on a few hours' notice, and the other was Zaza, a work which the company dedicated to her.

Of the Aida performance the distinguished critic of The Montreal Star says: "One of the most remarkable performances of Aida ever given on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre."

Of the Zaza performance, the critic says: "One of the most remarkable performances of Zaza ever given on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre."

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who may be said to have "made" his name in this country. Mr. Morris has engineered three other tours of Lauder in the United States, sometimes as an independent vaudeville manager with a circuit of theatres, and again as an equally independent manager with a circuit of theatres.

Robert Grau speaks of Mr. Morris as one of the few in a generation who show extraordinary tact in theatrical management, and names as the others P. T. Barnum, J. H. Haverly, and the late Sam E. Shubert.

Mr. Morris has been in the habit of starting the theatrical world by the size of the salaries he pays. When he first brought Lauder to this country at \$3,000 a week, failure was predicted for him, but Mr. Morris understood the drawing powers of the star, and at the end of the season he had a good profit to show for his expenditure.

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