

make the drama a natural growth in our social life. It is too often a suspiciously regarded graft. But this is not the inherent fault of the stage. The drama has always been what the public taste that supported it has made it. The eye and the ear have been too often aimed at, rather than the head. But with its functions and capabilities properly recognised, there is no need that it should decline either from an intellectual or a moral point of view; or that, as a means of healthful and approved recreation and instruction, it should not be all that the genius and talent enlisted in its service have designed that it should be. No age has been less propitious than ours to the dramatic art, and there has been none that has witnessed such a materializing of life, or that has been more alien to the instincts of gentlemanhood, or more barren of the graces of chivalric feeling and unstained honour. The theatre was no less a commercial speculation in the past than it is to-day, but it flourished better when the ballet was unknown to it, and it had more patrons when its plays were of a healthier sort, and when its boards were less familiar with modern sensationalism. The moralist, of course, will say "close the doors rather than that objectionable plays should be acted, or if the plays we would wish to see upon the stage fail to draw to any extent commensurate with the expense of their representation." This is very easy to say, but the lyceum is a legitimate place of amusement, and theatres will be "run" as such, and from the motives of gain that govern similar enterprises. The question should rather be how to support them in their legitimate successes; how to make them subserve the interests of culture and refinement; and how to utilize them in providing healthful recreation and in promoting high social enjoyment. These are the considerations that should come home to our people; and were they intelligently reflected upon, the result would be beneficial to the community, while theatrical management would be more steadily directed into proper channels. We may safely say, from what we know of the management of the Grand Opera House in our midst, that none would hail more heartily the awakening of a deeper interest in dramatic representations, and be more responsive to the demands of a higher and more critical taste, than would its intelligent and cultivated directress. Mrs. Morrison's efforts in the interest of the local drama are worthy of all praise; and we can quite understand the repeated compliments offered to her in the benefit entertainments such as that of last Thursday—compliments which not only manifest the kindly feeling felt towards her, but that also express sympathy with her professional enterprise and appreciation of her personal services. Such labours as those Mrs. Morrison undertakes are trying indeed under ordinary circumstances; but few know their

burden and irksomeness when the difficulties are intensified in the pursuit of high ideals, and after an attainment marked by that elevation of standard, and scrupulous regard for the proprieties, which characterize the management of the Opera House. If Mrs. Morrison has not always succeeded in presenting such entertainments as would be acceptable to the most fastidious theatre-goer, it has been because one scarcely knows now-a-days where to turn for material for worthy representation. The taste for the Shakespearian drama has sadly suffered eclipse; and the robust representations of a past era have given place to mere farce acting, or to the stupidities of modern sensationalism. The star system, too, has had a prejudicial effect upon the modern stage; and here in Canada this is especially so, where we are subject to the inroads from the other side of the lines of a school of acting which, though it has meritorious exceptions, is of a style alien to British tastes and predilections.

Of course we do not mean to say that all the difficulty in maintaining a high class theatre in our midst comes from without, either in regard to the actors who present themselves, or in the amount of appreciation shown them. There are shortcomings, however much care may be exercised in regard to the formation of stock companies, which materially diminish public satisfaction with their work; though the directorate should not always be held responsible for this while the substantial aid in the procurement of higher talent is withheld by those in whose interests the entertainments are provided.

As a whole, the present troupe under Mrs. Morrison's management may be said to be fairly up to its work; and thanks, no doubt, to the advantage the company possesses in acting under the eye and inspiration of that lady, and with her on the boards in much of its work, the success achieved has been very creditable to the house. Individually, there is not a little to find fault with, which if we indicate may be more of a service to the company than a pleasant duty to the critic.

The most unpleasant feature exhibited by the company's acting is deficiency of education and a lack of refinement in personation. This is the more noticeable in the male cast, with the exception of Mr. De Groat, who more than held his own against the balance of the company, and whose withdrawal from the theatre we much regretted. Mr. Grismer, as a leading man, is wanting in many of the essentials required for the part. His conception of the characters assumed by him is frequently but half realized, if not positively false. His manner and gesture are bad, and he totally fails in the representation of any part requiring ease and high breeding. Mr. Farwell makes a capital villain, and is occasionally good in the old man parts; but in the higher personations