

THE TOURNAMENT.

A knight, well armed, outdressed to the fray
One glorious morn, when June was ripe with roses
Where his antagonist had chosen to stray,
And Cupid oft reposes.

Amid the flowers, for 'twas on a lawn,
Beneath a canopy of trees overhanging,
Swept by the scented zephyr, and a lawn
Grazed timidly, half-dreading.

The intruders, as the warlike pair advanced :—
One, eager for the fray, approaching boldly ;
The other, strange to say, but shyly glanced,
And eyed the foe quite coldly.

But, courage gaining, soon the quiver sought,
As, taking deadly aim, each poised an arrow,
Each mark a human heart, nor gave a thought
To Death's cold chamber narrow.

As simultaneously the shafts were fired
By all too skilled a marksman to misfire—
For, though 'tis strange, another hand gave speed
To shafts they could not hand—

A hidden archer with unerring aim
Had bent the bow whence flew the shafts of death,
Two hearts transfixed, ere discovery came,
His hiding-place revealing.

'Twas Cupid, lying prone beneath a rose—
He-stayed your frays, ye sentimental misses ;
The pair were lovers, and the only blows
They interchanged were kisses.

A FEMALE HAMLET.

In analyzing the mind of Hamlet, it is necessary to accompany him in his different situations, and carefully observe the principles of action that govern him in various circumstances, and this analysis is almost necessary to show how far an actor interprets this most subtle creation of Shakespeare. In Hamlet's first appearance he discovers grief, aversion, and indignation, grief for the death of his father, aversion against his mother, and indignation against his mother, and indignation against the ingratitude and guilt of his mother. The circumstances of the times render it dangerous to discover his sentiments and the real state of his mind, therefore he has to govern them as far as the impetuous ardour of his emotions will allow him. Miss Seaman, an English actress who appeared in this city some days ago, well brought out the indignation labouring for utterance, and the reason striving to retain it, when he inveighs with keenness, but obliquely, against the insincerity of Gertrude's sorrow, and the stinging manner with which he opposes her duty to her actual conduct, in the speech—

Seems Madam! nay it is, I know not seems!
'Tis not alone my inkly cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
That can denote me truly—These indeed seem ;
For they are actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

In the first soliloquy, after his recent interview with the Queen and her unlawful husband, in which he pours out the anguish of his perplexed mind, agitated and overwhelmed with afflictive images that will admit of no soothing, no exhilarating affection, and wishes for riddance from his afflictions by being delivered from a painful existence, Miss Seaman was very effective, and her emotion grew more vehement and her indignation augmented gradually by admiration of the so excellent a king and abhorrence of Claudius. "That was, to this, Hyperion to a Satyr," and, finally, by the stinging reflection on the Queen's inconsistency:

Why she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, &c.

The audience were made to feel how severely Hamlet was affected, when he strives to obliterate the idea in the words—

Let me not think on't—

and again where, in the stimulation and augmentation of his anguish, he utters these lines:

Within a month
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married!

and again, when his agitation is heightened to its extremity in the following exclamation:

Oh, most wicked speed to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

Hamlet, in his retirement, expresses his agony without reserve, but restrains it when in public, and Miss Seaman well brought out that ease and affability which are the result of polished manners, good sense and humanity, by the natural and easy way Hamlet first encounters Horatio and Marcellus. The whole of this scene between the Prince and his friends is masterly and affecting, and yet the dialogue is simple and unaffected. Miss Seaman did her part well, but the beauty of the scene was marred through the youth who played Horatio being guilty of substituting words of his sterile invention for those of the author. Without wishing to be thought unkind and uncharitable, many exquisite scenes throughout the play were utterly spoiled by the contemptible disregard of the text that was manifested by the King and Laertes, Marcellus and Bernardo, Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern. We regret to have the current of our thoughts and the thread of our criticism interrupted by having to use harsh words, but we feel very strongly the manner in which the dialogues were treated, thereby, if not absolutely taking away all our enjoyment, yet considerably distracting us. We dismiss the subject.

Let us not think on't—

and we will come back to "metal more attractive."

Of Miss Seaman's Hamlet we do not, at the outset, wish to be thought exuberant in praise, because we confess that we did not receive half

the pleasure from the Hamlet on the stage as Shakespeare gives us in the closet; not so much from the failing of the actress, but from the difficulty there is for any actor to exhibit what the careful reader and student imagines. It is but natural that they should disappoint us by exhibiting something different from what our imagination had anticipated, and which consequently appears to us at the moment an unfaithful representation of the Poet's idea. Perhaps it would require the competency of all the Hamlets from Garrick to Kemble, from Edmund Kean and Macready to Fichter and Irving to make up a perfect Hamlet, because Shakespeare, probably, breathed more of himself into his Hamlet than into any other of his dramatic persons: a cast of mind at once philosophic and poetic; at once serious and mirthful; at once affectionate and brave; at once acutely observant of others, and profoundly reflective on self; instinct with noble sentiments, solemn convictions, immortal expectations. We fancy we hear more of Shakespeare's inner man, his secret and serious cogitations and impressions in this than in any other instance of his manifold creations. Therefore, while we most willingly confess we derived much pleasure and some profit from Miss Seaman's rendition of the Prince of Denmark, and regret that there were not present hundreds more to have witnessed her performance; yet we cannot give it unqualified praise. A lady having essayed the part, we shall not dwell on her demerits, but rather point to those parts or portions of the play wherein we thought she excelled. And now for her task.

After the conversation between Horatio, Marcellus and Hamlet, wherein the latter learns of his father's spirit in arms being seen on the platform of the Castle of Elsinore, his heart full of agony, prepared for the evidence of the guilt of the king and willing to receive it, he exclaims:

All is not well—
I doubt some foul play, would the night were come!
Till then sit still my soul, &c.

Miss Seaman brought out the "perturbed and perplexed" spirit of Hamlet. Again, when he has followed the ghost to a more remote part of the platform, and utters the words "Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further," Miss Seaman interprets the question as though Hamlet was fearful, and presents her sword at the ghost, or in other words, stands on the defensive, and, we think, rightly so; and her voice betrayed not only fear, but the "windy suspicion of foul'd breath" showed the mental excitement in which he was plunged, not only by the following of the ghost, but by the apprehension of what it was going to divulge, that "foul play" which would account for the suddenness of his father's death and the mysterious circumstances attending it. After the terrifying and appalling words of the ghost,

Confermed fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in his days of nature
Are burnt and purged away,

and the awful horror it must have excited in Hamlet's mind, harrowing his soul; his imagination, left to his own invention, overwhelmed with obscurity, doubtless travelled far into the regions of terror, into the abysses of fiery and unfathomable darkness, his limbs paralysed with horrible imaginings, or "bestial almost to jelly with the act of fear," Miss Seaman, when she utters the words

And your my snows grow unbecomingly old,
But fear me stiffly up.

staggered as though her limbs were paralysed, thus giving additional force to the words.

Her rendering of the words

Swear as before, so help you mercy!
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself, &c.

well brought out the idea of Hamlet wishing to appear incoherent and inconsistent, and his desire to have it believed that his reason is somewhat disarranged; and which inconsistency he puts into practice when he, the more easily, to deceive his uncle-father and aunt-mother, rushes into Ophelia's chamber.

With his doubt all untraced
No hat upon his head, his stockings buff'd
Ungraced, &c.

The scene with Ophelia, which was very creditably played by Miss Ramage, was truthfully rendered, according to our idea of the poet's intent. We believe there was no change in Hamlet's attachment to Ophelia. His affection is permanent. Engaged in a dangerous enterprise, agitated by impetuous emotions, desirous of concealing them, and, for that reason, feigning his "wits diseased," to confirm and publish this report, seemingly so hostile to his reputation, he would act in direct opposition to his former conduct and inconsistently with the genuine sentiments and affections of his soul, which he so feelingly expresses in the churchyard scene,

I had Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

If we may take exception to Miss Seaman's rendering of the "Get thee to a nunnery," &c., we should, by saying that, in our opinion, there is not anything in the dialogue to justify the tragic tone in which it was spoken; we should think it would be more consistent with "the expectancy and rose of the fair state, the glass of fashion," if the words were spoken or delivered in a light, airy, unconcerned and thoughtless manner; the words in themselves are sufficiently rude and harsh without any tragic emphasis. A recent writer in MacMillan's Magazine, January, 1875, in an article, "The New Hamlet and his Critics," says: "We see clearly that Hamlet's idea of the best way to counterfeit insanity is to be flippant, jocular, and at times irrelevant, and yet to allow himself, under shelter of his condition, to utter

sarcasms and tell unpleasant truths," and the writer condemns Mr. Irving because he delivers all such speeches as these between Polonius and Ophelia "with such intensity of manner that they present little or any contrast to the speech of his sadder moments."

In that solitary outpouring of his soul where the Prince severely upbraids himself with his unworthy silence and inaction, by contrasting it with the passionate energy of the players, although his was a real, theirs a fictitious occasion of sorrow:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! &c.

Miss Seaman was very effective, especially in the in the fiery declamation of the following lines:

What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculty of ears and eyes, &c.

And also in the scene between Hamlet, Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern, after the play scene, wherein these creatures of the King, instigated by the Queen, are employed as spies upon Hamlet, who perceives it and treats them with deserved contempt, although in such a manner, however, as to conceal, as much as possible, the real state of his mind. Teased with their impertinence, the transient gaiety of his humour is succeeded by reflections on his condition. His anger and resentment are inflamed, and, indignant that the unworthy engines of a vile usurper

A cupress of the empire and the rule
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,

should be thought capable of ensnaring him, he confounds them by showing them he had discovered their intentions, and overwhelms them with the supercilious dignity of his displeasure.

We imagined Miss Seaman rather heightened her displeasure consequent on the wretched acting of these despicable courtiers, and vented it on that fawning, self-sufficient courtier, grown grey in adulation and paltry cunning, who fretted and exasperated Hamlet to such an extent that we do not wonder at the exclamation—"These tedious old fools!" and that "there was nothing that he would more gladly part with, except his life!"

The perfidy and guilt of Claudius the King are, at the end of the play scene, unquestioned. All the circumstances are stamped indelibly on the imagination of Hamlet. Yet, though vehemently incensed, the gentle and affectionate principles of his nature preserve their influence—the unhappy Gertrude he will not be inhuman.

Soft; now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
Let me be cruel but not unnatural;
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

The closet scene that immediately follows was certainly, as a whole, the best of the play. It agitated the audience. The time, "the very witching hour of night," and the state of Hamlet's mind, when he "could drink hot blood and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on." The situation, that of a son endeavouring to reclaim a parent, is exceedingly interesting. All the sentiments and emotions are animated and expressive of character. In the Queen we discern the confidence of a guilty mind that, by the artifices of self-deceit, has put to silence the upbraidings of the conscience. We also perceive in her the anguish and horror of a mind appalled and confounded by the consciousness of its depravity and its eager solicitude to be rescued, by any means, from the persecuting and painful feeling. Hamlet, full of affection, studies to secure her tranquillity; and, guided by moral principles, he endeavours to establish it on the foundation of virtue. He is animated by every generous and tender sentiment, and, convinced of the superior excellence and dignity of an unblemished conduct, he cannot bear that those who are dear to him should be depraved; and it is evident by Miss Seaman's rendering of the text that she takes this view of his conduct into consideration, and that Hamlet wishes to renew in his mother a sense of honour and merit, without subterfuge or disguise, on her own behaviour, and to restore her to her former fame. The contrast in the lines beginning

Look here upon this picture, and on this,

and ending with

Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
And batten on this moor?

Miss Seaman rendered with a very striking effect. The transition from admiration to abhorrence, which, in a remarkable degree heightens the latter, was admirably shown.

SWEET CIDER.

Somewhere in a late periodical, a traveller who has tasted the wines of France and the coffee of Turkey in their own homes, comes back and sings heartily the praise of cider, declaring it is and ought to be the national American drink, as it is the favourite beverage in Normandy, where it is found on the tables of the great landed proprietors, who cherish their apple orchards as the monks of Cyprus their vineyards. He goes so far as to declare, too, that all genuine Americans, in secret, prefer cider to any other drink, and are only deterred from its use by shame. We heard a keen-sighted social philosopher assert the other day that the rapid physical deterioration of the New Englanders as a race might be dated from the time when they gave up cider and the hearty good-living which it typifies, and took to tea and mental "palpnum" instead. The

Massachusetts farmer in Endicott's time ate his four meals a day, measured six feet two in his stockings, read his Bible, and died, believing it, at four score and ten. Nowadays, he has cut down his apple orchards, starves at home and sells the last gleaming of wheat to educate his son at Cambridge, finds his religious speculations in Emerson, until his lean body, being too tired to work longer, goes down to death to prove the truth of these speculations at the untimely age of fifty-five.

The American goes to Europe and repairs without delay to study the tranquillity, the garden-like fullness of an English landscape; or he hires him to Southern France, or Italy, and stands enraptured gazing at the dark, low-lying hills crusted with vines, the gleaming white villas, the cloudless depths of color which are not that which he has been used to call the sky. It is certain that he never saw a picture so fair; yet, after all, it is but a picture. He has no part in it; his guide book is in his hand, his courier at his elbow, his trunks are at the hotel; there are a thousand other landscapes, statues, churches, waiting for him to see. It may be all right for the Spaniard or Frenchman to talk with effusion of olive groves or vine-clad hills; but what are they to Cobbs of Pennsylvania or White of Oregon, except a picture belonging to somebody else? But from Pennsylvania to Oregon there stretch orchards each one of which belongs to some American's childhood. Every one of our readers has such a one in his mind's eye now; the grass brown after the early frost; the white dandelion seed floating drowsily in the yellow sunshine, and the old crooked trees weighted with blood-red Baldwins and golden pippins. These old patriarchs of the farm are the most friendly and human of all trees to him; he and his brothers used to make seats high up in their crooked trunks, his own children have fastened a swing just now to their branches. Between the orchard and the house the elder-press stands, and as he tastes the mellow golden juice, it seems as if he were a boy again, burning with patriotism on Independence Day, hating the British and ready to take oath that no skies are so fair as the purple splendors that rise on a cold Fall evening over the old homestead.

About this time of the year, too, when there is nothing to be done (for not even the butter can be sent into market on account of the deep snows) what a part this homely drink assumes. There are innumerable homes where, on this wintry night, you may find the gray-haired grandsire, father, mother, and children gathered around the fire, with hands seamed by hard work, and faces lined by honest, shrewd thought. Some of the neighbours drop in, having stamped through the snow; the talk runs on politics—on the parson's journey east—the wedding coming off next week. It is not brilliant critical talk, but it is intelligent, kindly, and, above all—clean. Presently one of the boys goes down cellar for the big basket of apples, and there are cakes and a great jug of hot mulled cider. It was such homely, honest homelife as this that gave Lincoln to the country, Clay, Webster, Stonewall Jackson, Greeley, Franklin.

These remarks of the New York *Tribune* can apply to Canada, whose apples are unrivalled and where the cider press used to be an accompaniment to every farm house.

HUMOROUS.

"WHAT can't be cured must be sold fresh" is the watchword of Porkopolis.

THE man who was hummed in by a crowd has been troubled with a stitch in his side ever since.

A FAIR critic recently objected to a work of art, because, by contrast, it spoiled her complexion.

A FUN arising out of the controversy between Monsignor Copel and Canon Liddon is now current in London—viz., "What is Ritualism?" Answer: "Popery with the lid on" (Liddon).

A TRANSATLANTIC editorial notice of a woman's grocery store reads as follows: "Her tomatoes are as red as her own cheeks; her indigo is as blue as her own eyes, and her pepper is as hot as her own tongue."

IN South Carolina, a coloured preacher puts his foot on excessive bribery at elections and crushes it. "Disgrace," he says, "obtain one hundred dollars for a vote is all wrong; ten dollars is as much as it's worth!"

JERROLD and Laman Blanchard were strolling together about London, discussing passionately a plan for joining Byron in Greece. Jerrold, telling the story many years after, said, "But a shower of rain came on, and washed all the Greece out of us."

WHILE at the breakfast-table a little girl made loud and repeated calls for buttered toast. After disposing of a liberal quantity, she was told that too much hot buttered toast would make her ill. Looking wistfully at the dish for a moment, she thought she saw her way out of the difficulty, and exclaimed, "Well, give me amuzzer piece, and send for de doctor."

A GOOD story is told *à propos* of a recent Hamlet, who proposed to play the part of the Dane in a red cloak, which intention was reported to a Shakespearean actor of the old school, who said, "Very well; I do not see anything shocking in that." "But it is right!" asked his interlocutor. "I dare say it is," said the actor; "red was the colour of mourning in the Royal House of Denmark." "But how do you get over this," persisted the other, quoting, "'Tis not alone my inkly cloak, good mother!" "Well," said the old Shakespearean, calmly, "I suppose that there is such a thing as red ink!"

AN IRISHMAN'S LETTER.—Here is an Irish gentleman's letter to his son in college: "My dear son; I write to send you two pair of my old breeches, that you may have a new coat made out of them. Also, some new socks which your mother has just knit by cutting down some of mine. Your mother sends you ten dollars without my knowledge, and for fear you may not use it wisely, I have kept back half, and only send you five. Your mother and I are well, except the young sister has got the measles, which we think will spread among the other girls if Tom had not had it before, and he is the only one left. I hope you will do honor to my teaching; if not, you are on ass, and your mother and myself your affectionate parents."