

which can be a substitute for the acted drama. It has been likened to poetry, painting and sculpture combined ; but there is an element of reality about the stage which none but an art-enthusiast can fully appreciate in a statue, a painting, a novel or a poem. Mr. Leslie Stephen, in a late number of the *Cornhill*, after speaking of a French artist who carried realism so far that when he wanted to paint a sea-beach he plastered real sand upon his canvas, continues thus : " And this is precisely what is done in the drama. The dramatic author has to paint his beaches with real sand ; real live men and women move about the stage ; we hear real voices ; what is feigned merely puts an edge on what is ; we do actually see a woman go behind a screen as Lady Teazle, and after certain intervals, we see her very shamefully produced again." Even the art of the novelist, Mr. Stephen goes on to show, is merely painting on a flat board, with a great resulting loss of vividness. It is often said that there is an absence of reality about the stage ; whereas, in the hands of genius, it is eminently realistic. We think we know our nearest relatives, our neighbours or daily companions in business or pleasure ; but how much do we know about them after all ? Are we as well acquainted with their characters as with those of Iago, Macbeth, Overreach, Sir Peter Teazle or any prominent personage of the drama ? Yet we call the former reality and the latter fiction. The fact of the matter is that no effective substitute for the dramatic representation can be found ; it has no *alter ego* which can permanently relieve it from duty. Such being the case, we intend to reserve some space to a consideration of it as it appears amongst us at its best. By so doing we believe we shall serve the interests of art, which properly considered, are aids, not hindrances to the cause of morality. Our preliminary remarks have extended to such length that we are hardly able to deal adequately with the subject on this occasion. After all, however, a few evenings in an opening week do not afford material for a just estimate of a dramatic company, and, therefore, a fuller criticism may be of more value in a future number.

When the Opera House Company, consisting of some of our prominent capitalists, was incorporated by the local legislature, a general feeling of satisfaction was expressed, and this feeling was heightened by the announcement that Mrs. Morrison would undertake the difficult and trying duties of the management. To Mrs. Morrison and other members of her family, the play-going people of Toronto and the other western cities are deeply indebted. It is not too much to say that to them we owe the establishment of the theatre as a source of innocent and elevating amusement, in the midst of difficulties of no ordinary kind. With the old building now num-

bered amongst the things of the past, are connected memories of the energy and enterprise of Mr. John Nickinson and his four daughters—the earnestness of their purpose, and the thoroughly intelligent and honourable view they took of the proper functions of the stage as a means both of instruction and entertainment. Of Mrs. Morrison, known in former days of early triumph as Miss Charlotte Nickinson, there is no reminiscence which her best friends could desire to forget, and the same may be said of those who worked with her. As an actress, she would have made her mark on any stage. Intelligent, refined and well educated, she always threw her whole soul into the work for which she was so well qualified by gifts natural and acquired. There were a native grace and a hatred of inborn coarseness and impropriety which over-awed the rudest tyro who came to tread the same boards with her. In the highest as well as in the lowest parts she undertook, there was always a ladylike dignity in her acting. Between Ophelia and Meg, or Lady Teazle and Nan, in the *Good for Nothing*, there would seem to be a great gulf fixed ; but Mrs. Morrison had so studied all these parts that they were true without being vulgar, faithful to art without over-stepping the modesty of nature. But her merits as an artiste did not form the only reason why she has secured, and for so long a time retained, the respect of the community. She is known as a benefactress and a disinterested worker in much charitable work, as most estimable in private life and, as being what she is, has won the esteem of many who look with no favor upon the dramatic profession. For these reasons her name is a tower of strength to the new Opera House. It is a guarantee of excellence in its performances, of ability in the company, and of what, above all, the public value most, unimpeachable propriety, and unaffected grace in its entertainments. We can imagine, in fact, the memories which crowded upon her mind when she stood face to face with the enthusiastic audience which completely filled the Grand Opera House on the opening night. That she should falter with emotion was a touch not of art, but of nature, which struck a new chord of sympathy in the audience, and added to the embarrassment of its object.

The *School for Scandal* was the opening play. Sheridan's great comedy is within a year or so of completing its centenary upon the English stage. There have been many diverse opinions expressed about it. It certainly forms an agreeable contrast with Congreve's *Love for Love*, or any of the plays fashionable at the time when it was first presented. It has its defects, doubtless—the wit is sometimes of the tinsel order, there is too constant a straining after epigrammatic effect, and an effort to be bril-