

A DIRGE.

COLD, grey and drizzly drifts the dreary day ;
Drifts to the gloom-girt shores within the West,
And cowering sinks before night's spectral sway
To troubled rest.

The lowering heaven lends no guiding light,
Wild, black-winged shades her flickering beams debar.
Save in the East, there gleameth, coldly bright,
A lonely star,

Which sheds its tearful beams above thy grave
Where sear and shivering droop the wind-swept flowers.
Death doth above my slumbering darling wave
Thro' dragging hours.

Oh! cloud-bound night, and naked sighing trees ;
Oh! wailing winds and mad waves making moan ;
Thy woe-tuned voices chant her litanies.
Love, Life, is flown.

A. L. McNAB.

STAGE REALITIES.

THE curious and gossip old Latin writer, Aulus Gellius, has handed down to posterity a singular story of a certain famous Greek actor named Polus. Playing on one occasion the title-rôle in Sophocles tragedy, "Electra," he was seen to burst into broken sobs over the urn which was supposed to enshrine the remains of Orestes, whom Electra believes to be dead. The vast Athenian assembly was moved to a man by the actor's tears, but few present guessed their terrible significance. The urn, in fact, contained the ashes of the tragedian's only son. This incident has not been without its counterparts in the history of the modern stage. Mrs. Siddons, as Lady Constance, wept motherly tears over her own boy; and Macready has himself described how the recent loss of his daughter gave poignancy to his emotion in the part of Virginius. These stories, and others that might be added, show us, indeed, how Diderot, and his followers notwithstanding, the world of reality, will sometimes invade the world of fiction, and the feelings of the actor be heightened and coloured by the feelings of the man. Perhaps it is impossible for an outsider ever to realize how often genuine tears have been shed upon the stage—not the tears of Quin in "Coriolanus," or Mrs. Porter as Isabella, or Talma in "Simais, fils de Tamerlane," in which cases the performers were admittedly influenced only by the dramatic force of the situation; but the tears of those who have seen in the parts entrusted to them, the faint reflections of individual griefs. The green curtain and the row of footlights have no magic to shut out the stern facts of everyday life. Not in this way alone, however, have truth and fiction been seen to overlap. The old Roman love of unrelieved realism—the love which, while it created the brutalities of the gladiatorial show, also prevented any genuine success in the higher walks of dramatic art—prompted them occasionally to introduce into their stage performances the actual exhibition of an occurrence, in place of a mere imitation thereof. Thus we read that once at least the death of Hercules, in "Hercules Furens," was represented by the burning upon the stage, and in full view of the audience, of a criminal who had been lying under sentence of death, and who was thus made at once to satisfy the requirements of the outraged law and to minister to the inhuman pleasure of the Roman populace. The revolting brutalism of such an exhibition of course very properly blinds us to its artistic implications; but it may be pointed out that, viewed on its æsthetic side alone, it reveals no greater misconception of the first principles of dramatic effect than is to be found in many modern developments of the realistic craze. But altogether apart from such premeditated occurrences, stage history furnishes us with many instances in which death, with a strange and striking appropriateness, has stepped in to round off the mimic scene. In France, the performer of the part of Judas, in an old mystery play, getting his neck entangled in the rope, was hanged in earnest before the spectators. Similarly in a Passion play performed in Sweden in 1513, one of the actors was so carried away by religious or dramatic excitements that he actually plunged his spear into the side of the person representing Jesus, killing him on the spot. Every reader of Molière will recollect how, playing the part of the pretended invalid in his own "Malade imaginaire," the great dramatist was smitten down by the real illness which so soon proved fatal. Coincidences even more singular than these are upon record. An actor of the name of Patterson, for example, was once appearing as the Duke in "Measure for Measure"—a rôle in which, it will be remembered, occur the following lines:—

Reason thus with life:
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep.

And scarcely had he uttered the words before he fell back in the arms of a brother actor, dead. Another performer named Palmer expired during the representation of "The Stranger," with the significant words:—

O God, O God!
There is another and a better world,

still upon his lips.

Perhaps among all recorded cases of designed stage realism none is more singular in its way than that mentioned in connection with a benefit performance which

was given on behalf of Dr. Clancy. No one knows anything about Dr. Clancy nowadays, but in his own times he enjoyed a certain reputation as the author of one or two plays. His benefit took place at Drury Lane, on April 2, 1744, and the play chosen for the occasion was "Edipus"; Dr. Clancy, who was himself blind, performing the part of Tiresias, the blind prophet. The bill of the play, headed with the pathetic verse from Milton: "The day returns, but not to me returns," expressed a hope that the "novelty" of the performance, as well as the "unhappiness" of the doctor's case, would "engage the favour and protection of the British audience;" and it is certain that, from one cause or the other, the house was well filled. But it nevertheless seems to us that the representation must have been of a particularly painful and distressing character. But though we have hitherto referred only to their pathetic or tragic aspects, stage realities have their humorous side as well. It is said, for instance, that when a piece called "The Battle of Waterloo" was first produced upon the English stage, the violence of national prejudice suddenly betrayed itself in a somewhat curious way. As the play originally stood, a number of French soldiers had, in a particular battle scene, to drive their English enemies in confusion across the stage. This was well enough for a performance or two, but patience and endurance have their limits, and even the long-suffering "super," accustomed though he is to all the caprices of the managerial will, will, like the proverbial worm, turn in the end. So was it in the case in question. The English "supers" at length grew weary of having, night after night, to suffer ignominious defeat, amid the cat-calls of gallery and pit. One evening their patriotism proved too much for them. Instead of retreating at the proper cue, as dutiful "supers" ought to have done, they turned upon the "Johnny Crapauds" with all the hearty pugnacity of the genuine John Bull, and, much to the amusement of the spectators, and not a little to the dismay of all interested in the piece, drove them triumphantly from the scene. This story, by the way, reminds us of another, not unlike in general character, in which, however, the disturbing element of reality was introduced, not by the actors, but by a section of the audience. A good many years ago at Greenock, some performances were given of the once popular melodrama, "The Anchor of Hope," a play containing one exciting scene in which there was a fight between a band of smugglers and a captain. It happened that one evening a large part of the house was filled by a contingent of sailors from the Channel fleet, which had just anchored outside the town. All went well enough till the smugglers attacked the captain, and then in a moment the whole house was thrown into confusion. A perfect stampede of outraged "tars" struggled on to the stage, where they fell upon the smugglers and routed them, amid the intense excitement of the onlookers. It was only with the greatest difficulty that they could be made to understand that, after all, it was "only acting." It must have struck most spectators that the exigencies of dramatic performance often present extremely tempting opportunities for the exhibition of personal prejudices or spite. A dangerously suggestive situation in Lee's "Rival Queens" has been twice thus turned by distinguished actresses to meanly personal account. It happens that in a famous scene between the two heroines, Roxana and Statira, the former has to stab the latter with a dagger. Once in the hands of Mrs. Barry, and later in those of Peg Woffington, the dagger was aimed at the breast of the fair rival with a vigour which originated, not in the anger of the queen, but in the irritation of the actress. In much the same manner an incident in a play was once used by some "supers" for the punishment of a leading actor, by whom, as they thought, they had been treated with very scant respect. The actor, as an honest sailor, had to rescue a fair lady from the clutches of a band of pirates—in other words, from the aggrieved "supers." But instead of relinquishing their prize after a brief and heartless resistance, as the plot of the play required, the pirates fell inearnest upon the unfortunate sailor, and after bearing him by main force from the scene of action, returned, and, to the unspeakable astonishment of the audience, made the damsel secure in their own secluded cave. It is notorious enough that when an actor once gets well warmed up to his work, the faint line between jest and earnest is apt to be overstepped. Edwin Forrest, the great American tragedian, was in particular noted among the profession for his "powerful" acting, and was somewhat inclined, when the opportunity served, to perform with a vigour which made it rather unpleasantly hot for those who had to play to him. On one occasion, while rehearsing a Roman play, he roundly upbraided the "supers"—with whom he had to engage in a hand-to-hand struggle—for the lukewarmness of their attack. One of the band forthwith enquired if Forrest wished to "make a bully fight" of it, and Forrest at once said "yes." And a "bully fight" of it they certainly made. That night the mimic battle was for once turned into a hearty and thorough-going game of fisticuffs. The Roman minions struck out like men who meant business; the muscular hero answered with well-timed blow on blow. At length one "super" was knocked heels over head, four retired to their dressing rooms to have their wounds attended to, while the others took to flight; and thus the Roman warrior was left, breathless indeed from his unwonted exertion, but still the undisputed master of the field. It may fairly be assumed that for once at least Forrest had as much realism as he desired, unless indeed he belonged to that class

of men who never have enough of anything; like the manager who, having fined a "super" for not making up black enough as a negro, afterwards discovered that it was upon a real negro that he had expended the vials of his wrath.

W. H. H.

THE RAMBLER.

THE near approach of our Canadian winter, deemed so vigorous outside our own boundaries but not so difficult to endure if proper precautions be taken, reminds us that it was not always regarded with the complacent interest that we—in the last days of 91—exhibit. I came across an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* of about ten years ago setting forth the rigours of farm life in Muskoka, and, as I read on, it hardly seemed possible that the privations therein recorded by an Englishwoman of breeding but defective physique could be genuine. No wonder then that our villages decay and our young population comes into town. The truth seems to be that Winter, in such a city as Toronto, and Winter in distant country recesses are very different things. The desolation of remote Canadian districts, wrapped in snow and given over to solitude and isolation, renders existence insupportable. After all, the climate of Canada, of which we hear so much and so favourably, will prove her great stumbling block unless as years go on the continued clearance of forests will conduce to less rigorous conditions. The readers of that number of the *Atlantic Monthly* must have shivered and shook when they read it, and proceeded to thank the *Stars and Stripes* that they were not as these others were—red-nosed, blanketed, cheerless Canucks. I forgive the writer; she doubtless had suffered much, but it was scarcely fair to let such a picture of our civilization go into a foreign magazine.

Among the earlier records of the Hudson Bay Settlement, the letters to Lord Selkirk from Capt. Miles Macdonell in 1811, contain some very interesting passages relative to the rigours of the new climate. Shortly after they made a trip in 61 days from Stornoway, Capt. Macdonell writes:—

"Last winter was the severest ever known in those parts—game disappeared & many of the improvident natives perished thro' cold & want. The Thermometer was at 49½ degrees below 0.—It is well that it is past, & to be hoped this may be a mild one. We have had the Thermometer already at 8 & 9 degrees below 0, two succeeding nights, & we have now snow on the ground.—It is therefore time for those who are without houses to begin building."

The little colony was soon attacked by that dread foe of the pioneer—the scurvy, but before this, the brave Macdonell writes again to a Mr. Auld:—

"DEAR SIR,—We have had a small supply of fresh meat from Mr. Geddes since I had the pleasure of writing you last. A party was sent there a few days ago and only brought three Barrels of salted meat—Mr. Geddes informed Mr. Jno. Sloan, the officer with the party, that he had orders not to give us any more fresh meat but to reserve it all for the Factory. This must surely be a mistake of Mr. Geddes', as I understood both from Mr. Auld and you, that the motive of sending us to this place, was to be in a convenient situation to receive supplies of fresh meat for the preservation of the health of our people.

"There is scarcely provisions now on hand for one month's consumption, at the rate of 2 lb. of meat per day to a man—and at the expiration of that time there is not a probability of a communication being practicable between this and the Factory, it being very uncertain at what time we can cross the river on ice. Our situation here will consequently be most helpless. We have made every possible exertion to get Game, but hitherto all to no purpose, except about 3 brace of Wood Partridges which have been killed. We now occupy both sides of the river, and have a party at Sam's Creek—no Deer have yet been seen."

Further on we have the still more interesting report that to the want of vegetables "the people being very gross feeders may be ascribed in a great measure the scurvy at Y.F. and although they are not altogether strangers to this disorder at other Factories on the Bay coast, it is more prevalent at York than anywhere else. For the cure of this disorder many expensive articles are given which might well be spared. An Orkney man of last year's importation had by the 1st Feby. when I saw him at the Factory, drank out a Hhd. of English Porter with some gallons of Port Wine, & had besides used a quantity of crystallized salt of lemon, essence of malt & cranberries without getting well, while my men recovered in a short time by simply drinking the spruce juice. Spruce is the prevailing wood here & I believe of all these northern parts; were it an object that would pay, tons of the essence might be sent home, it is called the *pine* by the people, who were quite ignorant of its beneficial qualities, spruce, poplar, & larch are all the species of wood that grow to trees, and these are of a very moderate size, the last is called *Juniper*."

From all of which we still can learn a few lessons. You know that the intellectual ascendancy of Boston is popularly ascribed to the bean and pumpkin diet of the good old New England régime, and, apart from any desire to poke fun at peculiar customs, is it not the truth that out of that quiet corner of Unitarian Vegetarianism came