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SATURDAY, FEB. 7, 1908.

Stage and Actor.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

While Sir Henry Irving has been contributing to Collier's Weekly a paper on "The Mission of the Stage and the Actor," Madame Sarah Bernhardt has published in the "Cornhill Magazine," an article on "The Moral Influence of the Theatre." Naturally both these writers seek to establish the great educational and moral worth of the stage. There is considerable enthusiasm for their profession exhibited by the two. We would be glad to comment extensively upon the views and experiences of two such prominent members of the histrionic profession, but we shall have to leave that study for another time. However, the articles will keep and will deserve analysis later on as well as to-day. For the present we wish to simply draw attention to a few remarks, of a very significant character, made by Sir Henry Irving, in his introduction to his paper. He claims that the drama affords "the most intellectual recreation the mind of man has yet conceived." This may possibly be true; and we do not doubt that in the pure drama, divested of all that is suggestive or immoral, there is a keen recreation far more attractive than any other known to the world. But, again, this is not the exact point that we wish to discuss.

Sir Henry says that many critics of the stage insist that the efforts of the actor are mimetic and ephemeral, and that they pass away "as a tale that is told." This is an objection that we have heard made times numberless. We remember the famous Booth remarking that no person should begrudge the actor the applause he receives, for, after all, once he passes off the stage there is nothing left whereby he is remembered. He does not create anything lasting. There is very much truth in this; and the truth therein only accentuates the more Sir Henry's comments thereon. In fact, we have a great sermon, if we are prepared to so read it, in the passage from Irving's paper that deals with this phase of the actor's career. It is also a beautiful piece of English literature, and we consequently reproduce it. Sir Henry says:—
"All art is mimetic, and even life itself, the highest and last gift of God to His people, is fleeting. Marble crumbles, and the very names of great cities become buried in the dust of ages. Who then would dare to arrogate to any art an unchanging place from the scheme of the world's development, or would condemn it because its efforts fade and pass? Nay, more, has even the tale that is told no significance in after-years? Can such not stir, when it is worth the telling, the hearts of men, to whom it comes as an echo from the past? Have not more tales remained vital and most widely known, which are told and told again, face to face, and heart to heart, when the teller and the listener are adding, coming down the ages, strength to one current, of a mighty thought or a mighty deed, and its record?"

"Surely the record that lives in the minds of men is still a record, tho it be not graven on brass or wrought in marble. And it were a poor conception of the value of any art if, in considering it, we were to keep our eyes fixed on some dark spot, some imperfection, and shut over eyes to its aim, its power, its beauty. Poetry, painting, sculpture, music, architecture, all have a bearing on their time and—ay—beyond it. The actor, though his knowledge may be and must be limited by the knowledge of his age, so long as he sounds the note of human passion has something which is common to all the ages, and if he can smite water from the rock of one hardened human heart—if he can bring light to the eye or wholesome color to the faded cheek—if he can bring or restore in ever so slight a degree the sunshine of hope, of pleasure, of gaiety, surely he can not have worked in vain."

Here is a noble passage. The man who penned the foregoing must be animated with grand sentiments and must harbor lofty ideals. It tells us that all things human are only for a brief time; it shows us the crumbling of the mightiest things that the genius of man has constructed; it presents to us a picture of life, itself, as mimetic and ephemeral. He appeals to history, even as did a great Irish orator a century ago, and asks, in other words, "If all the dreams of ambition realized, all

the schemes of inventive greatness perfected, all the strength of arms, all the ubiquity of commerce, can secure to a nation the permanency of its possessions?" Alas! Troy, thought so once; but the land of Priam lives only in song; Thebes thought so once; but her hundred gates have mouldered; so thought Palmyra; where is she? So thought Pericopolis—her monuments are but the dust which they vainly intended to commemorate; and,

"You waste where roaming lions howl,
You place where moans the grey-eyed owl,
Show the great Persian's proud abode."

The second lesson we draw from this passage is to the effect that if man, in whatever sphere he may be called upon to move, only does his utmost to beautify life and to render better and happier those around him, his actions, though mimetic and ephemeral, in a sense, cannot but produce some good results.

There is another passage in which the writer distinguishes between that which purifies and that which debases art. It is a natural sequence of what has already been said, and it is also charged with wisdom. He says:—

"For the consideration of the art of acting, it must never be forgotten that its ultimate aim is beauty. Truth itself is only an element of beauty, and merely to reproduce things vile and squalid and mean is a debasement of art. There is apt to be such a tendency in an age of peace, and men should carefully watch its manifestations. A morose and hopeless dissatisfaction is not a part of a true national life. This is hopeful and earnest, and, if need be, militant. It is a bad sign for any nation to yearn for or even to tolerate pessimism in their enjoyment, and how can pessimism be otherwise than antagonistic to beauty?"

The pessimism against which we are here warned is a general evil. Nowhere more than in religion do we find the opposite tendency. What more optimistic than the teachings of Christianity? What institution on earth more optimistic than the Catholic Church? Her index finger points constantly upward, to Heaven, to God, to eternal happiness. In her insistence in the Mercy of God, she keeps the optimistic view of the future constantly before the faithful. She is not pessimistic, even in regard to the most hardened sinner—teaching as she does, that a moment of repentance, and a flash of grace, at the last hour may suffice to preserve for even the guilty one an assurance of ultimate peace and happiness. The moroseness that Irving condemns in a people finds no place in the mighty scheme of Christianity. Consequently we perceive no small degree of true philosophy in these utterance of a professional actor.

We cannot refrain from giving one more quotation. It is the lesson contained in the initial sentences that we desire to convey. Sir Henry says:—

"Life with all its pains and sorrows is a beautiful and precious gift, and the actor's art is to reproduce this beautiful thing, giving due emphasis to those virtues and those stormy passions which sway the destinies of men. Thus, the lessons given by experience, by the certain punishment of ill-doing, and by the rewards that follow upon bravery, forbearance, and self-sacrifice are in the mimic stage conveyed to men. And thus every actor who is more than a mere machine and who has an ideal of any kind has a duty which lies beyond the scope of his personal ambition. His art must be to him something to hold in reverence, if he wishes others to hold it in esteem. There is nothing of chance about his work. All actors and audience alike, must bear in mind that the whole scheme of the higher drama is not to be regarded as a game in life which can be played with varying success. The present intention may be to interest and amuse, but its deeper purpose is earnest, intense, and sincere."

Let us remember this, life, with all its pains, and sorrows, is a beautiful and precious gift of God. Were this solemn truth more generally recognized, the ever increasing catalogue of suicides and of despairing crimes, would never darken the

annals of humanity. The most miserable life; the one into which every misfortune seems to have been crowded; the one that multiplies in itself the trials of Job; the life that is dark and apparently hopeless certainly joyless, is yet "a beautiful and precious gift," exactly because of the optimistic faith that man receives from God. No matter how miserable the stage upon which a life-drama is enacted, there is an immortal soul in the actor, and that spirit coming from the eternal source of all good must eventually return to that Fountain of happiness, provided it accepts the trials and sufferings of earth in the optimistic spirit of Christian resignation.

These are some of the lessons that we would draw from the writings of the great actor; and we believe that such a man is doing an abiding service to his fellow-men, in placing before them such hopefulness and such inspiring maxims.

A Plea For a Catholic Daily Newspaper.

To the Editor of the True Witness.
Sir,—In a recent issue of the "True Witness" I read with pleasure a timely article from your pen, and I must declare that your every word found favor in my sight.

It is not to-day, nor yesterday, that the "True Witness" has sounded the trumpet of warning, but for a number of years past I have been an attentive listener to her voice as she called upon the English-speaking Catholics of this Dominion to establish a daily press of their own where their best interests might be studied and their rights defended. But her sage advice fell upon deaf ears, and after a little explaining; her words of wisdom were allowed to pass unheeded.

Taking advantage of the carelessness shown by our people in their own welfare, the Protestant press of the country has enlarged and grown wealthy depending in great measure upon the patronage of a people whom they otherwise ignore and belittle on every occasion available.

Sermons, letters, articles from the pen of non-Catholics upon every subject of debate—politics, science, religion are gladly accepted yea, even canvassed, while the letter sent in by a Catholic subscriber in defense of some article of his holy faith which has been ruthlessly assailed by some prejudiced writer inevitably finds its way into the waste basket. It is also noticeable that when any item of Catholic news is admitted for publication it is generally inserted upside down. Yet, we Catholics will, in spite of all this, lend our support to such biased journalism. How long is this sort of affairs to continue! Will the warnings sounded by the "True Witness" be further ignored or will a halt be called and a step in the right direction taken; time will tell.

Are there not enough of English-speaking Catholics in this Dominion to support a paper of their own, which will be ever ready to defend their rights as citizens of this great country? Surely there are. And is there an English-speaking Catholic in the country who would refuse to subscribe to such an undertaking? I for one, do not think so. Then, let the question which is now ripe for opening, not be shelved again as it has been on so many occasions in the past. Let the stone be put a-rolling and it will not be long before the Catholics of this country will possess an English daily, of which they may well be proud.

How can such a project be successfully carried out?

I propose a plan, if followed, success seems assured. Let every English-speaking Catholic family contribute one dollar towards the establishment of an English Catholic daily with a promise that they will become a subscriber to same as soon as it is a reality.

Is this too much to ask from you Catholics of this Dominion, is it too much to give your mite towards the defense of your Church and country? If there are any among you who think so, then such are unworthy of the name Catholic. Let us hear what others of your readers have to say on this important question, Mr. Editor, with the hope that a solution of it will be outcome.

Respectfully

ONE PROUD OF THE TRUE WITNESS.

Irish Antiquities.

BY "CRUX."

AST week I gave the readers the benefit of another of those admirable essays from the pen of Thomas Davis. It seems to me that I will be equally thanked for what I purpose reproducing this week, from the same writer. As I have already remarked my aim is two-fold; I wish to emphasize the importance of the study of the Irish language and the perpetuation of Ireland's national traditions, while, at the same time, doing something, in my own way to revive the splendid works of some of Ireland's most renowned scholars and writers. Hence the lack of originality on my part, as so far to be found in these contributions. As a continuation of last week's contribution, consisting of that essay by the first editor of the "Nation," I will give a few extracts from another of his articles, on the important subject of "Irish Antiquities." It runs thus:—

There is on the north (the left) bank of the Boyne, between Drogheda and Slane, a pile compared to which, in age, the Oldbridge obelisk is a thing of yesterday, and, compared to which, in lasting interest, the Cathedrals of Dublin would be trivial. It is the Temple of Grange. History is too young to have noted its origin—Archaeology knows not its time. It is a legacy from a forgotten ancestor, to prove that he, too, had art and religion. It may have marked the tomb of a hero who freed, or an invader who subdued—a Brian or a Strongbow. But whether or not a hero's or a saint's bones consecrated it at first, this is plain, it is a temple of high two thousand years, perfect as when the last pagan sacrificed within it. It is a thing to be proud of, as a proof of Ireland's antiquity, to be guarded as an illustration of her early creed and arts. It is one of the thousand monuments of our old nationality, which a national government would keep safe.

What, then, will be the reader's surprise and anger to hear that some people, having legal power or corrupt influence in Meath, are getting or have got "a presentment for a road to run right through" the Temple of Grange!

We do not know their names, nor, if the design be at once given up, as in deference to public opinion it must finally be, shall we take the trouble to find them out. But if they persist in this brutal outrage against so precious a landmark of Irish history and civilization, then we frankly say if the law will not reach them public opinion shall, and they will bitterly repent the desecration. These men who design, and those who consent to the act, may be Liberals or Tories, Protestants or Catholics, but beyond a doubt they are tasteless blockheads—poor devils without reverence or education—men who as Wordsworth says:

"Would peep and botanize
Upon their mother's graves."

All over Europe the governments, the aristocracies, and the people have been combining to discover, gain, and guard every monument of what their dead countrymen had done or been. France has a permanent commission charged to watch over her antiquities. She annually spends more in publishing books, maps, and models, in filling her museums and shielding her monuments from the iron clutch of time, than all the roads in Leinster cost. It is only on Time she needs to keep watch. A French peasant would blush to meet his neighbor had he leveled a Gaulish tomb, crammed the fair moulding of an abbey into his wall, or sold to a crucible the coins which tell that a Julius, a Charlemagne, or a Philip Augustus swayed his native land. And so it is everywhere. Republican Switzerland, despotic Austria, Prussia, and Norway, Bavaria and Greece, are all equally precious of everything that exhibits the architecture, sculpture, rites, dress, or manners of their ancestors—nay, each little commune would guard with arms these local proofs that they were not men of yesterday. And why should not Ireland be as precious of its ruins, its manuscripts, its antique vases, coins, and ornaments, as these men of France and Germany—nay, as the English, for they, too, do not grudge princely grants to their museums and restoration funds.

This island has been for centuries either in part or altogether a province. Now and then above the mist we see the wheel of Sarsfield's sword, the red battle-hand of O'Neil, and the points of O'Connor's spears; but 'tis a view through eight hundred years to recognize the sun-burst on a field of liberating victory. Reckoning back from Clontarf, our history grows ennobled (like that of a decayed house), and we see Lismore and Armagh centres of European learning; we see our missionaries seizing and taming the conquerors of Europe, and, farther still, rises the wizard pomp of Brian, and Tara—the palace of the Irish Pentarchy. And are we, the people to whom those whose fathers were painted savages, when Tyne and Sidon trod with this land, can address reproaches for our rudeness and irreverence?

(Here comes a lengthy quotation from the "Athenaeum," that is not necessary to reproduce. I am only anxious, while indicating the spirit of the men of sixty years ago, to give an idea of the simple, but sublime eloquence of that master of English prose, as well as of English verse.)

He thus continues:—

The Catholic clergy were long and naturally the guardians of our antiquities, and many of their archaeological works testify their prodigious learning. Of late, too, the honorable and wise reverence brought back to England, has reached the Irish Protestant clergy, and they no longer make antiquity a reproach, or make the maxims of the iconoclast part of their creed.

Is it extravagant to speculate on the possibility of the Catholic, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian clergy joining in an Antiquarian Society to preserve our ecclesiastical remains—our churches, our abbeys, our crosses, and our father's tombs, from follows like the Meath road-makers? It would be a politic and noble emulation of the different creeds, restoring the temples where in their sires worshipped for their children to pray in. There's hardly a barony wherein we could not find an old parish or abbey church, capable of being restored to its former beauty and convenience at a less expense than some beastly barn is run up, as if to prove and confirm the fact that we have little art, learning, or imagination. Nor do we see why some of these hundreds of half-spoiled buildings might not be used for civil purposes—as almshouses, schools, lecture rooms, town halls. It would always add another grace to an institution to have its home venerable with age and restored to beauty. (I had this passage many times in my mind when recently reading about the Chateau de Ramzay in this city.)

We have seen men of all creeds join the Archaeological Society to preserve and revive our ancient literature. Why may we not see, even without waiting for the aid of an Irish Parliament, an Antiquarian Society, equally embracing the chief civilians and divines, and charging itself with the duties performed in France by the Commission of Antiquities and Monuments?

The Irish antiquarians of the last century (18th century) did much good. They called attention to the history and manners of our predecessors which we had forgotten. They gave a pedigree of nationhood, and created a faith that Ireland could and should be great again by magnifying what she has been. They excited the noblest passions—veneration, love of glory, beauty, and virtue. They awoke men's fancy by their gorgeous pictures of the past, and imagination strove to surpass them by its creations. They believed what they wrote, and thus their wild stories sank into men's minds. To the exertions of Walker, O'Halloran, Vallancey, and a few other Irish academicians in the last century, we owe almost all the Irish knowledge possessed by our upper classes till very lately. It was a small, but it was enough to give a dreamy renown to ancient Ireland; and if it did nothing else it smoothed the reception of Bunting's music, and identified Moore's poetry with his native country. While, therefore, we at once conceded that Vallancey was a bad scholar, O'Halloran a credulous historian, and Walker a shallow antiquarian, we claim for them gratitude and attachment, and protest, once for all, against the indiscriminate abuse of them so long going on in our educated circles.

But no one should lie down under the belief that they were the deep and exact men their contemporaries thought them. They were not patient nor laborious. They were very graceful, very fanciful, and often very wrong in their statements and their guesses. How often they avoided painful research by gay guessing we are only now learning. O'Halloran and Keatinge have told us of the bardic romances with the same tone as true chronicles. Vallancey twisted language, towers, and tradi-

tions into his wicker-work theory of Pagan Ireland; and Walker built great facts and great blunders, granite blocks and rotten wood, into his antiquarian edifices. One of the commonest errors, attributing immense antiquity, oriental origin, and everything noble in Ireland, to the Milesians, originated with these men; or, rather, was transferred from the adulatory songs of clan-bards to grave stories. Now, it is quite certain that several races flourished here before the Milesians, and that everything Oriental, and much that was famous in Ireland, belonged to some of these elder races, and not to the Scoti or Milesians.

Premising this much of warning and defense as to the men who first made any history of ancient Ireland known to the mixed nation of modern Ireland, we turn with pleasure to their successors, the antiquarians and historians of our own time. We liked for awhile bounding from tussach to tussach, or resting on a green esker in the domain of the old academicians of Grattan's time; but 'tis pleasant, after all, to tread the firm ground of our own archaeologists.

(To the student of Irish literature, antiquities, or records, there is a splendid lesson in this divesting oneself of the pleasant but misleading romances woven into the real history. Here we see Davis as a student, a man of originality, a writer of independence, and one who could delve, and think, and judge for himself. This is what must be done by whosoever wishes to master the story of Ireland.)

A Feminine Financier.

"George," she said, "mother has sent me a check for \$40 to get a new gown."

"Very thoughtful and nice of her," he commented. "It's to be spent for nothing else."

"Quite right."

"I wish you'd put it in with your bank account and I'll ask you for it when I want it. I can't do my shopping just now."

That was the first chapter of this financial tale. Now we come to the second.

"George," she said about a week later, "I wish you'd bring me home that money to-night. I'm goking down town to-morrow."

He brought the money home and gave it to her, and that ended the second chapter. The third had a surprise.

"George," she said, toward the close of another week, "I wish you'd bring me home that \$40 that mother sent."

"Why, I gave you that last week," he protested.

"O, you gave me \$40, of course," she admitted, "but you remember mother said her money was to be used for a gown and nothing else?"

"Yes."

"Well, I didn't use that for a gown, so the money wasn't hers. I got some things for the children and the house with it, and now I want her money for the gown."

"Oho!" he exclaimed, "so you misappropriated funds."

"I did nothing of the kind," she asserted.

"She gave you the money for a certain purpose and you expended it for something else," he argued. "That's a clear case of misappropriation."

"Not at all," she insisted. "If I had spent it for the gown it would have been her money; but so long as I didn't use it was yours, and I spent it for your children and your house. Now I want the money that mother sent."

And what could the poor man do? Why, nothing at all, except bring home \$40, and wait for the next chapter.

"Well," she remarked in the course of another week, "you have \$15 left of mother's money, and I believe I'll take it now."

"But I gave it all to you," he protested.

"You gave me \$40," she replied, "and I spent \$25 of it for a skirt. That was mother's money all right, but the other \$15 went for the children and the house, so that wasn't mother's. There's just enough left for a jacket."

"I'll meet you to-morrow," he said, "and we'll go together and get that jacket. I don't believe I care to take any more chances with that money."

If we would not fear the terrors of the judgment seat on judgment day, let us regulate our lives, be faithful in the service of God, so that when our time comes we may approach the God of justice with joy, knowing that we have ever striven to be His faithful children.