

the Rachel legend almost without a sense of change. America, which has long been collating all sorts of notoriety from abroad in a spirit of collectorship, would be very willing to consider an actress who should adhere to Racine, a writer whom it knows nothing about and respects. To appear very visionarily and palpably, to imitate statuary and expire every night in parts from the French-Greek drama, to come only once and die of an American cold, is the career of a heroine in this peculiar mythology. The part was waiting for Mlle. Bernhardt, if she had been willing to assume it. To take the lower place almost at once in mere dramas of disease, dramas which make "Adrienne" appear like a classic by contract, was very human, very modest. It was modest because there are inherent dramatic vices in both the more modern plays which frustrate the best efforts of the artist to personate an interesting and sympathetic character.

In "Froufrou" the dramatist makes his heroine work up an elaborate quarrel with a faultless sister, without providing the ghost of a pretext, merely to start a couple of extra acts, thus reducing to nothing the fine intuitive sense of things which she displays in the rest of the piece, and making the actress's efforts to express native tact and intuition a derision. As for *Marguerite*, of all the characters who have sawed perpetually on one string, without the ghost of intelligence, and have produced effect by constant pressure on the auditor's nerves instead of by stimulating and inspiring him, she is the most rapidly intolerable. The thinness of *motif*, the want of relief, in both book and play, are as little as possible to Dumas's credit; iteration is all the emphasis he has learned. Accordingly, the actress's best-directed efforts to play at delicate feelings or perceptions were very much thrown away. *Gilberte's* exquisite intelligence, her flashes of discernment, her declaration to her sister that she proposes to keep her faults of character, her declaration of the statement of the proposed appointment from "ambassador" to "ambassadress," her selfishness as of a blameless and consistent product of nature, her quick objection to a duel on her account which would for ever tarnish the *naïf* prettiness of her character—all these delicate hits, which Mlle. Bernhardt delivered with precision and relish, were made as nothing because the character of *Gilberte* is forced into a gawky fraternal quarrel whose attitude on her part would have been impossible to her nature. After that quarrel—which the actress made a superb separate success, playing for the moment an independent rôle, and leaving on the mind an ineffaceable image of the hissing, serpentine, voluble victim—the part became a blemished ideal, and sympathy with *Gilberte*, here misconceiving things so stupidly, and elsewhere conceiving everything with flashes of tact, was lost. So with *Marguerite Gautier*, there is a *fonds* of self-consciousness, of posing as a victim, of harping on disadvantages, in the conception, which made it quite labour wasted for the actress to receive her lover's father as sweetly as a pastoral ingénue, to entertain her guests with the good-heartedness of a housekeeper and the caprices of a kitten, to die like a saint. The story is patched with traits foreign to its tissue, and it was necessary to rub one's eyes and convince one's self that the same person was still treading the boards, when the dramatist made the most contrary rôles thus into one.

Mlle. Bernhardt shows all the time the most fascinating sense of manners, of behavior in exigencies. In *Marguerite*, her way of listening to the doctor's aside which delivers her death-sentence, while busily writing a feminine billet, was perfection: so was her insult to Varville, who has computed his visits foolishly—"Vous ne dites jamais que des bêtises"; this was not thrown at the interlocutor, but delivered in the lowest, most rapid tones of self-reflection, as if the observation were forced by circumstances, and as if she half-hoped the other would not hear. Sometimes the style was a little more pronounced, as with *Gilberte* burying her chin in her fists, immersing herself in her book, and saying "*Jes vous écoute*" to her husband. These sketches of manners, as important to our century as the illustrations of Restif de la Bretonne to a past one, were not unmixed with inspirations, the great moments of the artist, which were so rich and deep as almost to efface all minor impressions. The scene with the elder Duval, in Dumas's play, was such a masterpiece of pure pathos as has seldom been seen on our stage; the pity it evokes is stainless, is separate from the character, and does the heart good; it is femininity revealed. The quarrel-scene with the sister in "Froufrou" was equally great, as a piece of concentration; the boiling-up of hot, thin, fine-cut words had a brilliant air of spontaneity. It was not like a rôle studied, but like an impromptu shot at a mark and hitting. The death-scenes of the two characters were not unlike, and were models of pathetic grace. A painful company, of the sort of *outré* mer inane we have been accustomed to with Salvini and Ristori, endeavored to annul the labors of the star.—*N. Y. Nation*.

Mlle. Bernhardt is somewhat of an artist, and her pictures have been exhibited in the *Salon*; as to their merit it is a very debateable question, some critics having even gone so far as to assert that those which were passable were doubtlessly done by another artist. One of the paintings is of herself and there is a dog lying at her feet—of which was sarcastically said that it represented a dog gnawing a bone—rather a verbal caricature of this eccentric woman's thinness.

BEAUTY'S DAUGHTERS.

(By the Author of "Phyllis," "Molly Bawn," "Airy Fairy Lilian," etc.)

CHAPTER I.

"I'm tired of it all; I think I shall settle down and marry Kitty," says Sir John, his voice coming lazily through the small silvery cloud of smoke that curls upward from his lips.

"The idea is charming," replies his cousin, with a half smile; "so is your modesty. But Miss Kitty—are you quite sure she will accept you?"

"One is never quite sure of anything, dear boy, in these degenerate days, but as nearly as possible I think I am sure of Kitty. She is not the sort to play fast and loose with any man. She is very honest, and very real, and—er—quite different from the usual run of women," winds up Sir John, pleasantly, unaware that his remark is paltry, inasmuch as all men say this—and think it—of the women they chance at the moment to love.

"Yes, the others are a poor lot," says Arthur, faint amusement in his tone. "And you believe Miss Tremaine likes you?"

"I think so. I hope so. And at all events I am utterly positive I like her, and—that's all," finishes Sir John, rather abruptly, the ash of his cigar having grown beyond all bearing. He shakes it off gently, and, leaning back in his chair, awaits his cousin's answer.

"I thought you were equally positive about Miss Lisle, the year before last,—Mrs. Charteris, I mean."

"Was I?" Laughing slightly. "I hardly remember. My memory was never my strong point."

"If I were in love with a woman I don't think I should get over it so easily," says Arthur, meditatively.

"But was I in love with Fancy Charteris? I almost forget. No, I think not,—not really."

"You were terribly *épris*, at all events."

"Not even that. I confess I rather affected her society, because she was the most affording person I knew; but no more. For instance, I don't recollect the time I ever envied that elderly gentleman she called 'Robert.'"

"Charteris, you mean. For my part, I always liked what I knew of him,—which was very little."

"So did I, for that matter. He was what one would call sterling, I dare say; but—"

"Yes?"

"There was a good deal of him, wasn't there?" says Sir John, plaintively. "He was all over the place. I never met so aggressively thriving a person, except, perhaps, in the matter of hair; and he *was* bald! Even there you see, he excelled, because he was the baldest man I ever saw,—not a single hair on his head, I give you my word! And then I can't forget the buttons! Of course a fellow must make a fortune if he hasn't one; but surely there is something wrong about buttons. I don't think I ever quite got over it."

"I rather admire self-made men," says Arthur, with an attempt at severity. "There is a truer nobility in talent than in mere birth,—which, after all, is but an accident."

"I entirely agree with you. That is quite the sort of thing a man ought to say who is well-born himself. So liberal, you know, and that. But frankly, now, was there true nobility in Charteris's nose? And though his fortune was, surely there was no necessity why his clothes should look—self-made. And why on earth couldn't he try Mrs. Allen, or somebody, and cover his head? I never could imagine what Fancy saw in him."

"His money, I suppose," says Arthur, contemptuously.

Sir John regards him reflectively. He seldom troubles himself to think, but just now it does occur to him that his cousin's troubles are unpleasant.

"What did Mrs. Charteris do to you?" he asks, presently.

Blunden smiles.

"You think me severe," he says; "but the fact is, I never saw Mrs. Charteris, and only knew her husband very slightly before my marriage. So I am not speaking through personal pique; but, from all I have ever heard of her, I should not imagine her a very estimable character. Fast, wasn't she? Eh?"

"Not a bit of it," says Sir John. "People always say that of a woman if she happens to be pretty and good-humored and run after by men. One has to squint nowadays and wear red hair, and sit in a corner, if one wants to escape calumny. I always thought her charming. You knew the Lisles; how did you escape meeting Fancy?"

"Being abroad so much, I suppose. I really think I haven't been through a regular London season for seven years."

"And now you are going away again. You don't let us see too much of you, old boy, do you?"

"I'm a restless beggar," says Arthur, flinging away the end of his cigar and stretching his arms above his head. "I can't content myself for long anywhere. But I sha'n't give you the chance of forgetting me this time. Let me see: this is August, and I dare say I shall be back again about the beginning of May. By the by, if it does come off, shall I be in time for your wedding?"

"I hardly think so. If Kitty says 'Yes,' I shall marry straight away. We have known each other quite long enough for that, you know."

"Three months, is it not?"

"An eternity, as we judge now."

"Look here, Jack," says Arthur Blunden, somewhat earnestly. "Before proposing to Miss Tremaine I would see Mrs. Charteris again if I were you. You used to talk a good deal of her in the old days, I remember; and you were considerably cut up when she married Charteris; and—I always thought there was something in it. I cannot altogether divest myself of that idea even now; and I certainly will be awkward if, when you meet her later on, you still find you feel sentimentally disposed towards her. She is a widow now, you told me. Take my advice and try it all over again with her first before saying anything serious to Kitty Tremaine."

"I had no idea you were such a careful man," returns Sir John, with an