

STAGELAND

When the curtain drops finally, after eye and ear have been kept strained and attentive for two or three hours, we realize that our evening's entertainment has been anything but the 'rest' we desire; we go out into the night, often fevered with the emotions, excited, wearied with the strain upon sight and hearing. The play may be amusing, exciting or instructive, but if it be worth anything it is rarely restful.

Rarely, I say, because there are pretty poetic idylls, such as "The Professor's Love Story," as played by Willard, or those homely blendings of pathos and humor belonging to the Sol Smith Russell school, that entertain without wearying, stirring us to an amused tenderness that yet does not touch the deeper emotions.

But usually we pass from the brilliant auditorium out into the night, feeling the effects of two senses held so long in strain.

To be relieved of such strain, — to have the story told so that ears may be quiescent, and only eyes continue receptive, — this is the mission of pantomime, the highest form of dramatic art.

To tell a story in words is comparatively easy, but to tell it in gesture requires dramatic gift amounting to genius.

It is natural that the best exponents of pantomime should come from the French, since they are preëminently past masters of the pantomimic art. A Frenchman says more by uplifted eyebrow, shrug, or gesture, than an Anglo-Saxon could express in a torrent of words.

"L'Enfant Prodigue," played in Toronto two or three seasons ago, showed us what might be done in wordless expression. Since then we have had no other until Mlle. Jane May came to us in "Miss Pygmalion" in the late December weeks.

Mlle. May is a genuine Parisienne. She left Paris only two months ago for her present and first American tour, and she speaks but few words of English.

She is Parisienne also in not realizing the different moral standards, or at least the difference of outward moral expression, between the French and English public.

"Miss Pygmalion" is a charming and highly artistic bit of comedy in pantomime. Mlle. May gives a finished representation of her dual rôle as the artiste who falls in love with the statue, and as the statue come to life. Her wordless interpretive work is flawless, but, being Parisian, she carries her wooing of the unresponsive statue to a point beyond that which is acceptable to audiences on this side of the ocean.

Mlle. May has suffered unjustly, because her managers have not had sense enough to give the judicious pruning usually needed before a Parisian play becomes acceptable to the best class of theater-goers on this side of the Atlantic.

She is a bright and clever actress, quiet

and unassuming in private life, with a husband and little child awaiting her return to Paris. Meeting her in the quiet of a morning chat, one cannot help realizing the allowance that must be made for a stranger in a strange land, nor condemning her managers who, knowing the moral standard of the higher class theater audiences in America and Canada, should permit the setting forth of Mlle. May's unusually finished art to be dimmed thereby.

* * *

The prettiest thing in the Hunt Club entertainment was the wood nymph dance, or as one little maid aptly phrased it, "the cloud dance." Those pretty young girls, in their floating white draperies, gliding about the stage, filling it with soft plenitude of whiteness, were really entrancing. The effect was



something beyond airiness and grace; it was spirituelle, in its purity.

* * *

If Toronto likes Mr. Lewis Morrison, there is not a shadow of doubt that the compliment is returned. Mr. Morrison and his charming little wife, Miss Florence Roberts, are cordially glad to greet Toronto audiences.

The geniality that even the *Mephisto* rôle cannot conceal, creeps through each of Mr. Morrison's impersonations, and places him in kindly rapport with his audience; while in private life it pervades the whole man, and makes him many friends.

In "Yorick's Love," Mr. Morrison has opportunity to show fine work, and he takes full advantage of it.

In the impersonation of *Yorick*, the gentle, large-hearted comedian, — eager to play trag-

edy, and playing it in such unconscious reality the while, he touches high tide of artistic work.

"Yorick's Love" has an Elizabethan setting, the lines are measured and stately, and it has a fine old dramatic flavor.

The dance is particularly pretty; the solos, or perhaps we should say duets, introduced in the pauses of the minuet add considerably to the interest of that somewhat monotonous of stately dance.

Miss Roberts, whose portrait in the rôle of *Julia* we give this month, makes an attractive *Alice*, winning the sympathy of the audience in a way peculiarly her own. Her dresses for this rôle are most picturesque, and set off her delicate prettiness to advantage.

In the first act she appears in a rich brocade of yellow satin. In the garden scene she wears an "apple blossom" gown of delicate pink and green combination over white under robe of lace, with cambric coiffe knotted with pink and white roses.

The play is altogether splendidly presented, and won much favor with Toronto audiences.

* * *

The play is done; the curtain drops,
Slow falling, to the prompter's bell;
A moment yet the actor stops,
And looks around, to say farewell.
It is an irksome word and task;
And when he's laughed and said his
say,

He shows, as he removes the mask,
A face that's anything but gay

One word, ere yet the long year ends:
Let's close with a parting rhyme,
And pledge a hand to all young friends,
As fits the merry New Year time.
On Life's wide scene you too have parts,
That Fate, ere long, shall bid you
play;

Good night! with honest, gentle hearts
A kindly greeting go away

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the Awful Will
And bear it with an honest heart.
Some miss, some win an earthy prize;
Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail, or if you rise,
Be each, pray God! a gentleman!

* * *

I dropped into the Toronto Opera House one evening, and stepped softly within the darkened auditorium. Every eye was upon the stage, following the thrilling adventures of *Jack Harkaway*.

It was melodramatic, but it was wholesome melodrama, breezy, enlivening, and with plenty of good stock sentiment to appeal to the gods.

I arrived just in time to see a mutiny, a shipwreck, a raft, and a rescue, carried out with good scenic effects; after that came

prisons, sieglements, British ships to the fore, the British grenadiers, bombarded forts, fireworks, and cheers, which were heartily echoed from both gallery and pit.

Of course *Jack* came out on top, and his pretty little lady-love was rescued; and the villain was disposed of in some orthodox fashion.

AUDREY.



DEAFNESS AND HEAD NOISES

Overcome by Wilson's Common Sense Ear-Drums, the greatest invention of the age. Simple, comfortable, safe and invisible. No wire or string attachments.

WRITE FOR CIRCULARS (SENT FREE) TO

O. B. MILLER,

Freehold Building, 10 Victoria Street,
Toronto, Ont.

SOLE AGENT FOR CANADA.