

DOCTOR.—All things considered, they are really very good. The manager and his eldest daughter would do credit to the boards of any theatre, and the balance of the company sustain their parts most creditably.

LAIRD.—Are you fond o' the playhouse, Major?

MAJOR.—I used to be in "auld lang syne," but I must confess that a new novel, accompanied by a hundred or so of oysters, and a modicum of Mackay's ale, have now more charms for me of an evening than either sock or buskin! And now a days I experience little enjoyment from acting, as the idea is always uppermost in my mind, that it is *only* acting I am witnessing, and that the players are merely vocable machines, uninfluenced by the sentiments which they enunciate.

DOCTOR.—You may carry that notion too far. I once witnessed a pregnant proof to the contrary. I was behind the scenes of the Belfast theatre one evening, when Macready was enacting his cherished part of *Virginius*. In the first act, as perchance you are aware, the Roman father, crazed by his giant sorrows, grasps Appius by the throat, and the pair leave the stage in a deadly struggle. When Macready and Will Alexander, who enacted the cowed tyrant, came up to where I was standing, the former had such a desperate grasp of his mimic victim's throat, that Alexander was literally gasping for breath. In a few seconds the great tragedian recovered his recollection, and, withdrawing his hand, made the half-strangled Appius an ample apology, protesting that he had been completely absorbed and carried away by the spirit of the scene. Honest Will commissioned a *licitor* to procure him a pot of *Lurgan ale*, to restore his shaken nerves, and as he drained the foaming poculum, "registered an oath" that not for double salary would he again run the risk of anticipating the final sentence of the law.

MAJOR.—But you see nothing of that here, I should fancy.

DOCTOR.—I am not so sure of that; it is true that tragedy alone can produce such powerful feeling—but still there is scope enough in the pieces played at the Lyceum for a display of much feeling—I have seen really very good playing there—and I am glad to see that Canada can boast of having produced so much native talent.

LAIRD.—What d'ye mean by that?

DOCTOR.—I mean that Miss Nickinson is a Quebecker, and that Mr. Lee, a very promising and talented young man, hails from London, Canada West. I have seen both these young people repeatedly, and I am sure that either of them could make capital engagements in England.

MAJOR.—You surprise me!

DOCTOR.—I daresay I do—but it is a fact for all that. Go, Major, and judge for your-

self—and, if you do not come away much gratified, I will first eat my hat, and then swallow my lancets as desert.

LAIRD.—Hae ony o' ye heard tell o' this new poet that has lately burst upon the horizon o' England, to fill up ane o' the vacancies created by the quenching o' Wordsworth, and Campbell, and Moore, and Southey, and Coleridge?

DOCTOR.—By what name are we to call this newly developed "bright peculiar star?"

LAIRD.—Alexander Smith.

MAJOR.—Not a very romantic designation, I must confess.

LAIRD.—Granted, but ye ken what the sweet swan o' Avon says about names! Alexander is destined, or I am the mair mistaken, to mak' the name o' Smith as familiar in connection wi' poetry, as it is wi' political economy. If spared the lad will greatly add to our wealth o' *notions*.

DOCTOR.—Where did you stumble upon the works of this new *rara aves*?

LAIRD.—I have na stumbled upon them at a'. It was in the last number o' the Westminster Review, that I got an inkling o' the young bard, he is only in his twenty-first year. I hae marked some specimens given by the critic, which maybe Cullpepper will condescend to read. I would do it myself, but an' as hoarse as a crow wi' the cauld.

DOCTOR.—By Jove Laird, but you are right for once! This is the genuine metal, beyond all dubitation. [*Reads.*]

"Oh, that my heart was quiet as a grave  
Asleep in moonlight!  
For, as a torrid sunset boils with gold  
Up to the zenith, fierce within my soul  
A passion burns from basement to the cope.  
Poesy! Poesy! I'd give to thee,  
As passionately, my rich-laden years,  
My bubble pleasures, and my awful joys,  
As Hero gave her trembling sighs to find  
Delicious death on wet Leander's lip.  
Bare, bald, and tawdry, as a fingered moth,  
Is my poor life, but with one smile thou canst  
Clothe me with kingdoms. Wilt thou smile on  
me?

Wilt bid me die for thee? O fair and cold!  
As well may some wild maiden waste her love  
Upon the calm front of a marble Jove.  
I cannot draw regard of thy great eyes.  
I love thee, Poesy! Thou art a rock,  
I, a weak wave, would break on thee and die.  
There is a deadlier pang than that which bends  
With chilly death-drops the o'er-tortured brow,  
When one has a big heart and feeble hands,—  
A heart to hew his name out upon time  
As on a rock, then in immortality  
To stand on time as on a pedestal:  
When hearts beat to this tune, and hands are weak,  
We find our aspirations quenched in tears,  
The tears of impotence, and self-contempt,  
That loathsome weed, up-springing in the heart  
Like nightshade 'mong the ruins of a shrine;  
I am so cursed, and wear within my soul  
A pang as fierce as Dives, drownd with wine,  
Lipping his leman in luxurious dreams;