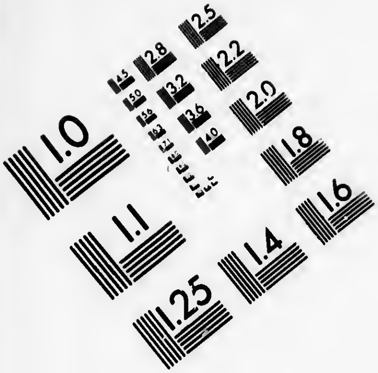
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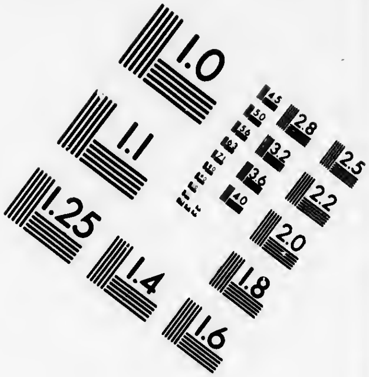
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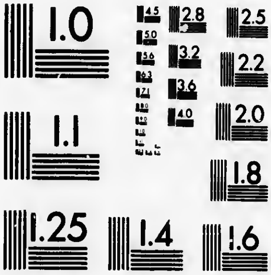
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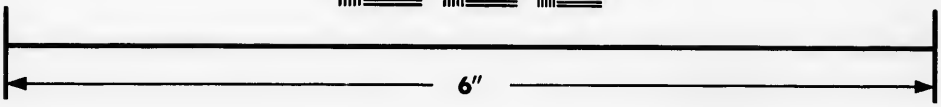

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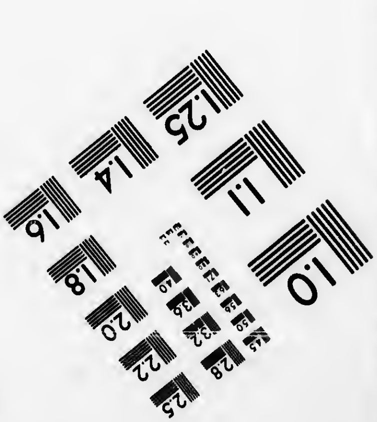
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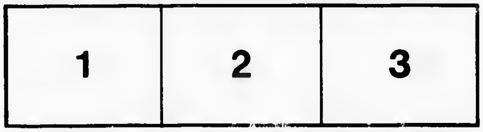

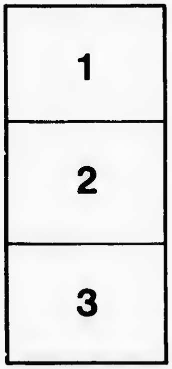

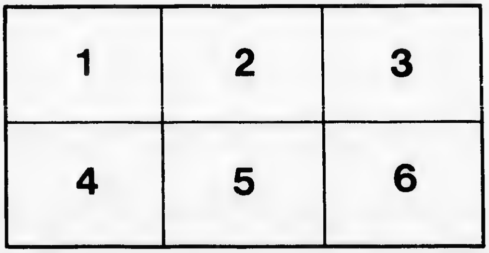

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AMATEUR ACTING

BY

J. KEITH ANGUS

Author of "Children's Theatricals," "Theatrical Scenes and Tableaux for Children," etc.

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
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1880

AMATEUR ACTING.

THE growing popularity which has followed the fortunes of the dramatic amateur, and the recognized position as students of the histrionic art which some have attained, are the excuse for the appearance of this book. No book of directions or suggestions will make a player, but a book containing hints may be of important value as a guide, and, more particularly, to those who are beginners.

In compiling this treatise the author has purposely avoided dividing the various subjects under separate heads or chapters. The minutiæ of theatre work are so closely interwoven, that separation is impracticable —that is, remarks as to properties must be treated at the time of using the properties, and the movements and duties of the prompter are essentially mixed up with the doings of the company; and so on with all the points of reference. Moreover, a dramatic amateur should aspire to know everything connected with the trade and profession. Perfect knowledge of detail should be acquired, so that any actor in a moment of emergency may be able to advise, or direct, or even assume an office which he was not designed to fill. Many a hitch or breakdown may be avoided by the players knowing how to avert the mishap. Thus, in these pages, the grains which make the harvest of complete information are scattered and yet blended; and, as the purpose of the book is to inform and educate on matters of stage-craft, those who "do not know," the lesson should be perused, from first to last, and treated more as an essay than as a bare volume of rules and directions. Much repetition will be met with, but this can only be excused upon the ground of the various branches of the art being so interlaced with one another.

The Press has now come to recognize the firmly-established position of the amateur actor; and in no less a degree has this been acknowledged by the professional, while co-operation and intercourse between the two are customary. Dramatic clubs and societies flourish in every town, and have, to an extent larger than is generally known, become the schools which furnish auxiliaries to the professional stage. In this we see a quietus given to the harsh verdict which dead-and-gone times recorded against the actor, when by law he was deemed "a rogue and a vagabond." The player of the present, who has risen to the third posture suggested by Goethe, and has begun to deem a play not only as "something going on," not only as an impulse creating a desire "to be made to feel," but as a loftier and more intellectual state of mind, "made to think," may well shudder at the knowledge that he is the successor to the players who, as Lockhart in his *Life of Scott* informs us, were by the Scottish clergy declared to be "the most profligate wretches and vilest vermin that hell ever vomited out; that they are the filth and garbage of the earth, the scum and stain of human nature, the refuse of all mankind, the pests and plagues of human society; the debauchers of men's minds and morals; unclean beasts, idolatrous papists or atheists, and the most horrid and abandoned villains that ever the sun shone on."

It should here be pointed out that the word "amateur" means only that the player does not appear on the professional stage, receiving pay in recognition of his services. It in no way lessens the responsibility of the position, nor does it condone for errors, careless or otherwise, of omission or commission. The amateur actor and actress who go the length of acting must not think that "great things' are not to be expected from them, or that, "being only amateurs," they are to be forgiven for errors or incompetency. In not a few points, indeed, the amateur should excel the professional, for, in the ranks of the former education has played a deeper part than in those of the major portion of the latter. Their position, when engaged in dramatic work, is identically the same, and the responsibility is equal. In both cases there is a duty to the art, to the individual himself, as well as to the co-mates on the stage, and no less to the audience.

Private theatricals may be defined as performances among friends, as against amateur theatricals—used in their widest sense—which may be performed in a theatre or public place, with money taken at the door.

> "There I could please, but there my fame must end,
> For thither none must come to boast—but mend."

AMATEUR theatricals may be got up by a constituted society or club; by a family and its friends, who have done so before and who know each other's capabilities; or by a family who have never undertaken anything of the kind. And such a resolution at once opens up a wide field of questioning, argument, and thought, the ingredients of which some competent person has to seek for and arrange. The determination to play at once suggests—is the performance to be done in public, semi-public, or private? what is to be its aim and object? is it to be for charitable purposes? what is to be the magnitude of the plays selected? the style of plays? and what dependence can be placed on the capabilities of those who are to act? is a company to be chosen to suit the plays, or are the plays to suit the company? where is the performance to be held? is there money at easy disposal to cover the cost of the entertainment? For, let it be remembered, a performance which may be safely played on the boards of the Theatre Royal Back Drawing-room, may be quite unsuited for presentation on the stage of the Theatre

Royal Blanktown. And this is a rock on which many an enterprise of this nature goes to pieces.

A constituted dramatic club will, of course, have the experience to surmount such difficulties, if, indeed, such impediments should arise; but by the more "private amateur" these hitches are not so easily conquered. Somebody who knows something about acting and stage management must be selected to take the lead—theories are of no use; it must be a practical knowledge which has to come into play. And here a note of early warning may be sounded—there are more enthusiasts in theatricals than in any other art; more jacks of theatrical trades who are masters of none; more aspirants to dramatic knowledge who talk as if they knew and had seen everything, but who in reality know little and have seen less. These are the persons to be avoided—but only a master of the art can discover the hollowness of their energies.

Taking, at present, the determination of a family to get up a theatrical performance, the first item to be considered is, whether it is to be performed in public or in private, and a very distinct and decided determination is essential on this point; because a performance of a minor character, played in a drawing-room among intimate friends, may possess charming attributes, which would not shew, but, on the contrary, have a shabby and starved effect if acted in a hall, however small, or in the presence of more critical strangers. And this primary determination is still more important, because, as the work advances and the spirit warms to the work, a tendency at once presents itself covering a subdued wish to do something greater and broader, to bestow the same energy on something more attractive, to jump from the little back drawing-room with its screens to the vestry-hall with its curtain. But the comedietta which will fill up about half-an-hour's time in the drawing-room, or, with the screens and chairs removed, will transform itself into a homely dance, will not be big enough to amuse an audience in a hall—and so the whole work of selecting the piece, casting or rehearsing it, is thrown away.

Then, again, the aim and object of the intended performance must be studied, for it may be brought forward only to test what the "boys" and "girls" of a family can do in this respect; it may be to bring to the test of practice some talent which one of the elder members of the family may have given evidence of possessing; it may be, that a daughter has evinced an aptitude for doing "pert" characters; there may be a son whose ideas soar to gloomy specimens of declamation; or, the merits of the family may vary, and yet in their very variety be of value in playing to each other's individual idiosyncrasies. Or it may be got up to enlist from other families talent which can be combined; or it may be the work of practised players, and altogether have no other aim or object but the amusement of those who play or those who witness the performance. But each of these specimen points of players and spectators, requires due consideration in the selection of the piece, and it will not do to rush to the conclusion that, because all the family have seen, say, *Still Waters Run Deep*, this is the piece to be chosen, because the scenery is easy and the dresses modern: the question is, who can play the old man Potter, who can undertake John Mildmay, or who can play Mrs. Mildmay? The query is not who "will" play these various parts, as well as the others, for the aspiring and enthusiastic amateur "will" do anything and everything—but the matter to be thought out is, who "can" play the parts? The point as to the willingness is still important, but it comes in as the second consideration—"will" the person who "can" do what is wanted, come to the rescue? If it be found impossible to fit the company to the piece, then the piece must be chosen so as to fit the company.

Moreover, the cost is a matter which demands early and mature deliberation—the performance may be arranged so as to cost nothing, or it may cost a great deal. The question of hiring a portable stage and dresses will be dealt with later on, but it is well that it should be pointed out that the details of a well-organized dramatic representation cost some money in their production. Against this, however, a small performance at home may be arranged, wherein the dresses, *&c.*, may be made at home; only, in the selection of pieces care must be taken that the scenery can be easily arranged, and that the dresses can be constructed out of those in modern use.

This gauging the exact motive of the performance is all-essential, for on the answer to it, hinge the magnitude of the pieces to be selected, and the style in which they are to be produced. For while an excellent evening's amusement may be got out of a couple of boys home for the holidays, by their playing Box and Cox, in the farce of that name, and with a sister to carry off the part of Mrs. Bouncer—yet, such a performance would be neither long enough nor dignified enough to play in the presence of a cultivated audience, or in any public place. It must not be forgotten—and this point bears upon our argument—that amateur theatricals are now so general, and are so well done, that comparisons necessarily arise as to the respective merits of performances given at various houses, and, therefore, the entertainment arranged must be small or great, and conducted in such a way that those invited are not led to expect more than they will actually get—but, under no circumstances, so far as it will affect their verdict, must they get less.

Taking for granted that a constituted or private company purpose giving an entertainment in a theatre or hall, the selection of the piece will depend a good deal upon the style of audience which is to witness it. In this respect it is possible to throw pearls before swine. The intelligence of the audience ought to be well gauged. For though to the players it may be more interesting to plunge into something poetical, classical, or satirical, such may fall very flat with the audience, and the result will be failure, or only medium success. In addition to the chief play, there will be a small opening piece, which is generally introduced so as to give a start to the entertainment, and allow the audience to be seated previous to the curtain rising on the chief representation. English audiences require much diplomatic coaxing in this. They never will assemble punctually when the play begins, but they invariably persist in bolting off before the play ends.

At this point a hint may appropriately be thrown in for the perusal of the audience. Nothing detracts more from the even going of a play than the appearance of late comers edging their way to their seats; the rhythm of the piece is disturbed, the calmness of the player irritated, and many points are caused to be omitted on the stage, or, if given, are unnoticed by the audience: while early goers are, however, a still greater perplexity. Nobody, persons having stage experience being excepted, has any conception of the oft-repeated labour which is spent in working up the details of positions on a stage. To the tyro or inexperienced beginner, getting up a performance is merely learning so many words to be repeated from memory; but, to a very great extent, this is a minor matter, for it is when the words have been learnt that the business and hard work begin. Of this, probably, three-quarters of the audience are in complete ignorance, and by inattention, by talking, or—worst of all features—by rising to go before the end arrives, they little know, or even suspect, how great are the care and devotion of study which have been given to render an effective picture or situation at the close; and how, some pages ahead in the book, and just when the spectators are beginning to collect their shawls and make preparations to leave, those on the stage, as if by clock-work,—for each step has been measured and a meaning given to each movement,—gradually clothe with an artistic harmony the climax of the story which they have been telling by force of language and dumb show. The excuse that certain individual members of the audience want to get to their carriages before the crush gets general, becomes impotent in the face of the aggregate following the example of the individual, and the only result accruing is, that the general rush begins previous to the ringing down of the curtain, when, out of courtesy to the performers, it should take place after the curtain has fallen.

As has been pointed out, the plays selected should be of a style suited to the audience as well as to the players. Thus, if a representation were to be given before an audience composed of farm servants, or country labourers, the inclination is at once to choose what may be called a rustic drama, or a piece full of boisterous fun. In the event of the performance being played for the edification and amusement of the more rational inmates of a lunatic asylum, it would not be politic to select such gloomy plays as *The Stranger* or *George Barnwell.* The level of the intelligence of the audience should always be tested, and to this important rule, no exception even in professional play-houses is permitted. Those who frequent the home of intense melo-drama would not thank a manager to give them a taste of high comedy; and those who frequent the realms where burlesque holds sway, would shudder at the bare thought of having to listen to the blank verse of Sheridan Knowles. The story is told of Mrs. Siddons, whose first appearance in Edinburgh was received with stolid coldness and indifference, that when, by a sudden call upon her powers, she strove to rouse the apathy of her listeners, all her reward was the cry of a critic in the gallery who, in his Doric diction, shouted "That's no' bad." The matter of the play, and the mastery of the player, were alike above the ken of the audience.

* * *

Having determined on the pieces to be played, it then becomes essential to select a STAGE MANAGER.

This post should only be entrusted to, or accepted by, a person of experience in histrionic matters, and his word in the conducting of the piece must be law. It is immaterial whether he acts in the piece, or merely superintends its get-up. During rehearsals he should place himself in front of the players, and make suggestions as to positions, actions and intonation of voice. In some cases his reading, or idea of the part, may to some extent vary from that of the performer. In such a case the matter must be argued between the two—not in the middle of a rehearsal, however—when some modification of each view or some compromise will no doubt be agreed upon, with the very probable result that, from the extra virtue which is supposed to be in two heads rather than that contained in one, a more completely accurate and artistic rendering will be brought about. But so important is the position which a stage manager should occupy, that his ruling should be held to be paramount; and, as the assumption is that none but a capable and experienced man would undertake so dictatorial and responsible an office, no great hardship need accrue from submission to his ruling. Sitting in front, and watching, he alone can see how the individual positions of the actors blend into a harmonious whole, for it is as essential to "stand" or "move" correctly as it is merely to speak. It is the delicacy of movement, and the grace of attitude, in which the audience see the attraction. One step taken too far to the right, or too far forward, will mar a picture. Imagine six players on a platform ranged so—

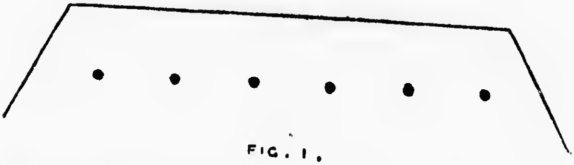


FIG. 1.

like a row of crows, a very common spectacle on the stage. Or so—

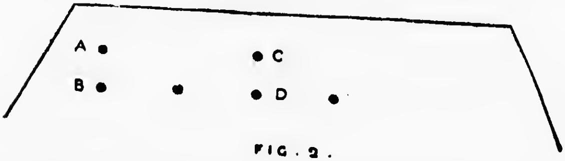


FIG. 2.

There B is concealing A, and D is hiding C, and a condensed row of crows yet remains. Of course no diagram can be drawn to suit or justify positions on a stage, but it is necessary to point out the vital importance of good management in this respect. Suppose that, in diagram 2, A has to speak to B, how awkward the positions have become—B must either make an ungraceful movement to right or left, and make a still more ungraceful turn, or A must make an inartistic move to gain the attention of B. With careful rehearsing of positions, the stage manager will have drilled the movements aright, and thus A and B will, at the various points, find themselves in easy and natural lines of juncture. As has been said, the positions must depend on the outcome of the plot or situation, but as a general example how very stiff the positions of the characters appear in this diagram:

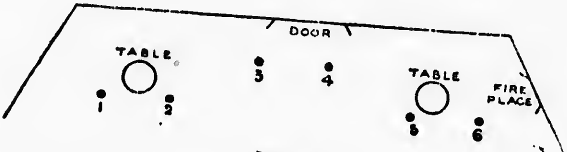


FIG. 3.

to what they do in this:

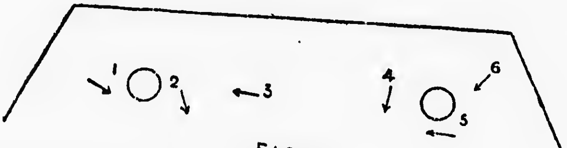


FIG. 4.

1 leaning forward with hands on table; 2 sitting with face slightly inclined towards 3, who is supposed to be speaking; 4 and 5 listening; with 6 standing carelessly at the fire, he being temporarily out of the dialogue. The arrows denote the way the faces are looking.

To this matter of movement the greatest attention should be given, and distances must be judiciously judged, the point of a fainting-fit shewing the necessity of this. Suppose A, the heroine, on hearing bad news, utters a cry and is supposed to faint and fall into the arms of B, her hero, what a mess and muddle would be occasioned if A was at one end of the stage hidden by a table, and B fenced off with a table and chair in front of him! Thus:

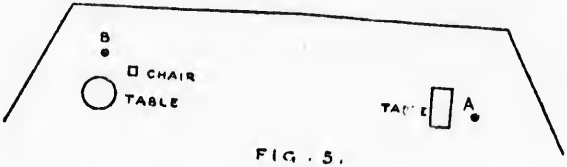


FIG. 5.

There is no reiterated exaggeration in making an especial point of these directions. And experience proves that to gain the desired end is no easy matter, for what will fit in to bring about one situation will entirely spoil the next. This is an item of rehearsal which wearies the less enthusiastic dramatic amateur, because, to conquer the difficulty and achieve success in the situations, the experimental work must be gone over and over again; tried back, thrown up, and tried back again, until the proper solution of positions be arrived at. All this the actor cannot possibly see so well as can some one looking on—some one whose eye has become accustomed to criticise stage posturing. Onlookers see most of the game. And the selected position must have reference equally to the future action as well as to the present; for, as has been said, the position in which A stands to achieve one point with B, may not be convenient for, say, an almost immediate point with C. Due care and caution given to this by the stage manager, and servile attention paid to him on the part of the players, will leave no room for hostile critics to sneer—"Did you notice how they all hugged each other on the stage?" or, "Did you observe when the servant should have slipped the note, unobserved, into his master's hand, he was standing so far apart, that all on the stage must have seen the transfer?"

And these positions are very necessary, so that while some important dialogue or action is being carried on by the central figures, the picture must not be blurred by enthusiasm from the minor ones, putting themselves forward and displaying a desire to draw on themselves the attention of the audience. Points of the play are often missed by the attention of the audience being distracted by "something going on" on the stage which ought not to be witnessed. The prominence incidental to these in the act of doing or saying something, must not be detracted from, nor in any way diverted to those who, in theatrical parlance, are not in possession of the stage. In professional circles some jealousies bring such clash of positions about, but it is undignified. O'Keefe, in his stage recollections, tells us how, "it is a method with an old stager, who knows the advantageous points of his art, to stand back out of the level with the actor who is on with him, and thus he displays his own full figure and face to the audience—but, when two knowing ones are on together, each plays the trick on the other. I was much diverted with seeing Macklin and Sheridan, in Othello and Iago, at this work—both endeavouring to keep back, they at last got together up against the back scene. Barry was too much impassioned to attend to such devices." This power of keeping quiet and unobtrusive on the stage is one of the most important rules of the art. Those who have witnessed Robertson's comedy of *Caste* will remember the very notable situation where the heroine is making one of her most touching speeches. Immediately at its close, the drunken father has to turn round with a drunken ejaculation. Now this character is drunk all through the scene: it is unnatural that he should suddenly turn sober so as to allow the delivery of the heroine's lines—the least comic movement on the part of the father would raise a titter amongst the audience, and the sublime would tremble in the balance of the ridiculous. Cases of this kind are numerous, and only by careful study can the difficulty be got over. The actor's artistic skill must here come and work with the natural surroundings—

> "'Twas this the ancients meant; nature and skill
> Are the two tops of the Parnassus hill."

The cultured and critical ear of the stage-manager will also detect false accentuations, as for instance when the stage-lover sarcastically banishes his sweetheart with the order

"Go *and* be happy—"

as if the sting of his farewell irony lay in the conjunction! He will note what phrases should be spoken slowly in contradistinction to those spoken quickly, and will decide what amount of dignity or despair should be conveyed in each sentence. Indeed, the stage-manager is the school-master and the players are his pupils. Both, however, are working towards one common end; and both should agree that a thing which is worth doing at all is worth doing well. At the first or second reading of the play a general idea of the mutual views is likely to be got, and there is no reason why the stage-manager should be looked upon as a tyrant—albeit that, in many cases, he requires to rule with a rod of iron.

The importance of this official, even with tried and experienced actors, may be more easily comprehended when it is shewn how impossible it would be to progress in rehearsal were the players, together, or each in his turn, to run to the front and test the effect. Most true is the proverb about too many cooks spoiling the broth, or rather in the action of the argumentative cooks preventing the original material becoming broth at all; and herein is seen the absolute necessity of having one efficient director.

It is the amalgamation of the energies of stage-manager and of the players that produces invariable success. And it must be laid down as a hard-and-fast rule that the opinion of the stage-manager must over-ride every other. In his mind's eye he sketches the picture, and works into harmonious detail the entrances and exits, and the positions; and however harsh a master he may seem, there should never be grumbling in the ranks at what may seem to be his fidgety behaviour in going over and over again the more intricate points of the play. There is nothing an audience detects sooner than the evidence of want of careful and studied rehearsal. From the stage-manager will come the suggestion in grouping the figures—so that the major, and not the minor, characters are held in the proper focus. The stage-manager will find his duties most difficult when he comes to deal with actors who take very small characters—unimportant as individual performances, yet of absolute weight and worth in the whole. Over such he has to hold a firm grip, and to such it may be appropriately remarked that no part in a play is too small to be unworthy of study and attention. The mere act of presenting a letter on a tray is what a gentleman in ordinary life, is unacquainted with, or unaccustomed to. In personating the character of a butler, the gentleman has to study how a butler does his work.

Amateurs do not relish taking small parts, unless these are full of business, and, to some extent the feeling is natural, for the amateur is always perfectly convinced that he is a born actor. Now, to some extent, this feeling is brought about by the fact that unless the amateur had a feeling that he is capable of undertaking a part, he would not suggest himself as an exponent of the art. It is, of course, possible to over-estimate the virtue of this feeling, and to over-calculate the strength of the assumed powers. It is common enough, moreover, for a player to "feel" a part and yet not be able to act up to that feeling. Much comes from practice. The spark of enlightenment or inspiration, as to the true method of delineating a part, may come only after successive performances. This is common enough with the professional, whose improvements grow as the run of a piece progresses. New lights may break upon him, and the flash of what we term genius, comes to his rescue to light up dark places. The amateur has not the same chance, for, as a rule, his performances extend only over an uninterrupted run of—one night. He can, however, make a special study of a special character—it is well that he should do so—and with each successive representation shew new vigour in combating with the intricacies, and give more polish to the complete representation of the piece. It not unfrequently happens that the light of a great interpretation dawns upon an actor after he has given forth a comparatively feeble rendering. But practice tends to relieve the mind from grasping minor notions, embracing petty ideas, or forming unworthy conceptions, and practice means undertaking small parts. Many amateurs have never done small parts, and the absence of stage education can generally be detected in them. They can soar to big strides, but they are weak in the level of minor detail, and it is the mastery over details which proves the cultured actor. The benefits which a player derives from assuming small parts are manifold. He works up his energies to make much out of little, and generally succeeds in making too much, and then the stage-manager steps in and cools his ardour. If he possesses any wisdom or foresight, he sees the merit of the correction ; discovers that he is interfering with the piece to such an extent that he runs the risk of becoming the central figure, when, in reality, he ought to be far back in the rank of importance. But all this means education and discipline. He discovers that, because he wishes to be doing something, he is drawing attention away from the main pivot of the story ; and demonstrating an anxiety to make himself, and not the play, the centre of attraction. It dawns upon him at last that there is as much success to be earned in remaining quiet and unobtrusive, waiting for his own turn of playing to come round, and then coming into prominence, as in fuming and fretting from curtain-rise to curtain-fall. Even an audience not much acquainted with plays, players and playing, will at once detect the want of discipline in the actor who is always on the alert. It is the office of the stage-manager to curtail this activity. But the small part does not, from this, lose aught of its importance; on the contrary it gains, for even it has its something to do, and all the energy should be retained to make this doing, a notable exploit. It is in the doing of small parts that the actor who will be useful in doing big parts is discovered. The player, moreover, when he has, by the dictation and direction of the stage-manager, been sobered down, will find ample time for study. Apart from the mere necessities which attach to his own part in movement, gesture, and by-play, so as to connect himself with the other parts of the piece, the curious mind is certain to work out for its own immediate pride and benefit, how, supposing it had the chance, it would do this or manœuvre that; in what manner it would interpret this or that meaning; and how its organ of speech would declaim this or that line of words. These mental deliberations may be right or wrong—but they are none the less educational and disciplinary. The actor who has not condescended to play small parts has neither time nor inclination to pick up these items of minor details—he has a big part to play, full of big points, and these big points must be assailed in a big manner. But there will be apparent "vacancies" throughout the performance—a want of the knowledge of that stage-craft, commonly designated "stage tricks," which can only be got by having been well drilled under a stage-manager. History, perhaps, does point to Heaven-born actors, to wit the youthful Betty, but the histories of most actors who have acquired great names all tend to shew that they worked up the ladder, rung after rung; were content to do the weary provincial circuit; and, in the biographies of not a few, the acme of praise recorded is that they were "great in small parts." Churchill speaks of Mrs. Pritchard's "attention to all the less and seemingly unimportant business of the part." And "Weston's by-play," says Geneste, "was the most capital style of excellence. Who but remembers his surprise at breaking the phial in *Abel Drugger:* his returning for his shoes after his medical examination in *Dr. Last?*" Indeed, one of the best task-books, from which the amateur may glean knowledge of the art, is the history of the players of the past. Their biographers embody in their sketches the points of failure and the points of success, and the various ways in which points are made or lost. From these can be learnt where, how, and why the great players tried to rise to high positions, and to a great fulfilment of the elementary and fundamental axioms and rules of stage-craft. For though nature is the symbol to be aimed at, yet there are the "points" to be made which art demands.

> ". . . . Nature was his,
> Bold, sprightly, various; and superior Art,
> Curious to choose each better grace, unseen

> Of vulgar eyes; wild delicacy free;
> Though labour'd, happy; and though strong, refined."

These chronicles of actors, regulated as to some extent they were by the rules of their respective schools, are indeed mere narrative dictionaries of acting. The amateur may not gain his bread-and-cheese by the results of his being a famous actor, but the art, if worth loving at all, is worth loving well, and to the prosaic bread-and-cheese may be added the more poetical kisses of success. But to attain these one must climb from the bottom of the ladder, and on the nethermost step stands the stern stage-manager.

When Sheridan ruled the theatre in Dublin, in 1745-46, Garrick was his stage-manager. Geneste, in his remarks concerning this part of his work, gives us a good idea of the attributes which a stage-manager should possess and excel in. He writes, " . . . Happily nature had endowed him with the most essential requisites for this difficult undertaking; his temper was remarkably mild and gentle; though he always endeavoured to demonstrate the propriety of his regulations rather than to command, yet he was resolute in enforcing compliance to whatever he was assured was right. His understanding was clear, as his education enabled him to see things in their proper light . . His methods were so gentle, and at the same time so salutary, that they carried conviction with them; the good sense of the actors pointed out to them the propriety of the manager's conduct, and the necessity there was for conforming to his directions. . . . The most trifling incident of the night's performance was not omitted at the last morning's practice. . . At rehearsals his great judgment and knowledge of the stage amply qualified him for an instructor; his regulations were so proper and conveyed in so pleasing a manner, that they were irresistible, the minutiæ of the stage were diligently attended to." This general acquaintance with the subject is what the amateur should aspire to. But it is to be acquired only by patience and a steady perseverance. We are apt too often to accept and take for granted, as a fact, that all the good qualities of an artist or actor are the results of genius. We estimate a man by his powers, his force, and not by his littleness or weakness, instead of attributing these good qualities to the credit of perseverance and astute training. Only judicious training can bring about a successful end. Says the same critic on the same subject, "It must not, however, be imagined that all this was accomplished in a day—it was the work of years. Perfection is only to be attained by perseverance."

* * *

The next important personage is the PROMPTER, although, in the event of the stage-manager not being among the acting company, the post may fittingly be assumed by him. When, however, the stage-manager is a performer as well, some other person must be chosen to act as prompter, and the office is an important one. There may be found a difficulty in getting this official to be present at every rehearsal, but he should most necessarily attend the last three or four. Having mastered the story of the play, he will take due note of how the actors go through their parts, taking copious notes in his prompt-copy. He will very soon discover how and where certain actors exhibit a weakness in not having sufficiently well learnt their parts. This he should note, and be in readiness to give the word or cue. On the other hand, he will remember where certain performers make intentional pauses in the dialogue, and will avoid shouting the words to these under such circumstances. He must be careful "not to lose his place" in the book, as it is impossible to know at what point the memory of a speaker may fail him. In keeping his place in the book, too, the prompter must be careful to closely follow the sequence of the lines. In pages of matter where a lengthened sentence is broken only by the listener to it parenthetically exclaiming "Ah!" or "Well?" or some such interjection—on these words being repeated, the prompter, if his attention should be diverted from the book, is apt to get confused as to which verbal interruption has been given, and to throw out the wrong cue—probably the one too far in advance. The sentences thus omitted may not be able to be worked in again, and so parts of the thread of the narrative may be lost. These introductory stories, generally relating to the time previous to the date of the play, are, as a rule, of importance, to render intelligible the successive references as the plot proceeds. Amateur prompters are too ready to throw out cues without thinking whether the pause made by the actor is a hitch, or a pause made with just propriety. This matter comes up again for notice when the rules for rehearsals are reached, and it will be treated in connection with the players who are thus engaged.

To the prompter is usually entrusted the collection of properties—that is, the "things" used in the play—such as a letter, a bottle, a pistol, *&c.* Properties are very miscellaneous. In *The Antipodes*, by Brome, published in 1640, they are alluded to—

"He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties,
Our statues, and our images of gods,
Our planets and our constellations,
Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts and bugbears,
Our helmets, shields and vizors, hairs and beards,
Our pasteboard marchpanes and our wooden pies."

In performances not given in a theatre, it is much more safe and satisfactory for each actor to collect and carry with him his own properties. In hiring a theatre there are always the professional property man as well as stores of properties, which in an emergency can supply what may have been forgotten; there are professional scene-shifters or carpenters, who can produce or make anything at a few moments' notice; and there is the useful "call-boy." In amateur theatricals, not played under the ægis of professional auxiliaries, such useful resources are unknown, so that it may be taken as sound advice when the suggestion is made that each player should look after his or her own properties. Previous to the rising of the curtain these properties should be carefully checked over, to see that nothing is missing. Even in trusting, on the professional stage, to the property man or prompter, these items should all be proved to be within near or convenient sight, and not believed, through an act of faith, to be in waiting. Properties are as needful as words—indeed more useful, for the experienced actor, who misses a property, can always arrange his speech, as an impromptu, to suit the emergency. Preparation should always be made for this. It is absurd for a performer—because the words are in the book, and in his part—to allude by word of mouth, or pointing of hand to a clock on the mantel-shelf, when no clock is there. With regard to stage furniture, previous to the up-going of the curtain, or of the act-drops or scenes, the prompter should run his eye across the stage and note if all the furniture and other properties are on the stage, and, what is of equal importance, in their proper places. The position of properties is as essential to the smooth running of the piece as the positions of the players. No end of trouble, confusion or hitches, may result from, say, a letter being left upon a shelf instead of on a table; or a chair being removed and not put back, to the right of the stage, when it is necessary to the action which is to be performed on the left-hand side.

It is customary for the prompter to stand on the left-hand side of the stage, his position being in face of the audience. In general theatrical parlance this is called the "P. S." or prompt side; the right-hand side being the "O. P." or opposite prompt side. This position, however, is liable to change, in the event of there being more room at the opposite side for the players, off the stage, to congregate; for, let it here be pointed out, that it is not always possible to follow with exactness the stage directions given in the printed or manuscript copy of a play. Much depends on the shape of the scene, the number of entrances and exits it has, and where they are. Old scenery has, as a rule, to be used to meet the requirements of the stage, and the entrances and exits have to be modified, re-arranged or regulated by the number of doors, windows, *&c.*, which the scene possesses. In a drawing-room, where the space at the "wings" or sides, is necessarily limited, the utmost care must be devoted to this. Great difficulties often present themselves over this. For instance, if A has to go out, and B has to almost immediately come in, and they are not supposed to meet, it follows that the same points of exit could not be used ; to a small extent the exit by the door might be arranged, so that A going out, turns to the right, and B coming in, enters as if coming from the left-hand side. It can easily be surmised how multitudinous must be the hitches of this nature of which one must steer clear, more especially on a small stage, with dwarfed room behind and around it.

The prompter should have his copy of the play interleaved with blank sheets of paper, and on these should be written his various notes. These should embrace all the notes as to entrances, exits; properties to be taken on, or brought off; bells or knocks, cracking of whips; thunder, *&c. &c.*, all which latter, he is supposed to use in the course of the play. In the regular theatre he, of course, has the call-boy to do his behests. One of his leading cares is to arrange that stage waits or delays do not occur, previous to an entrance being made. To guard against this, his book should notify, some lines ahead of the actual word for entry, that so-and-so is wanted, and the player should be directed to be in attendance at the door, or other entrance, and in close attention to catch the proper cue.

In selecting the pieces for representation, as has been already pointed out, care must be devoted to the choice of suitable plays which will meet the requirements of the audience, and the ability of the performers. To amuse and satisfy a mixed audience in a theatre, a short comedietta, and a two or three act comedy is requisite; while in other cases the comedy alone would suffice; or a comedietta and farce might serve—this last, more especially if servants are to form part of the audience.

* * *

Then comes the selection of the company, and allotting the parts to the persons, and the persons to the parts. It is generally the case that certain plays are selected because the leading characters in them can be filled by those most interested in getting up the performance. The reputation and recognized ability of the amateur players should here be appreciatively dealt with. The amateur actor who highly esteems his art, will not refuse to play a small part simply because it is a small part, but he may not care—save out of friendliness—to devote the necessary time to it, because he knows, from experience, how, if he does not attend the frequent rehearsals, the other parts will be interfered with; and he knows, moreover, that, in the especial character, there is no chance for the display or use of his acknowledged ability. Refusal to play in such a case is reasonable. Many small parts are effective, many are not. To the beginner should be entrusted these minor parts, and critics and experienced players will at once detect in the assumption of the minor character whether the performer is capable, or likely to be capable through practice, of performing higher work. Let, therefore, no aspirant after histrionic honours despise small parts. If he shews any aptitude for acting it is certain to be noticed, and he, or she, is equally certain to be asked to undertake a longer and heavier part on a future occasion. The fact that one says that he, or she, can act, is not necessary justification for the assertion to be taken as gospel. Experience can be got only from repeated practice; knowledge of stage-craft and appreciation of stage effects can be acquired only by getting a general notion of shades and styles of playing. The theatre itself had an infancy:

> "Thespis, the first that did surprise the age
> With tragedy, ne'er trod a decent stage;
> But in a waggon drove his plays about
> And shew'd mean antick tricks to please the rout:
> His songs uneven, rude in every part;
> His actors smutted and his stage a cart."

Then as Creech tells us,

> "Next Æschylus did greater art express,
> He built a stage and taught them how to dress:
> In decent motion he his parts convey'd,
> And made them look as great as those he play'd."

Till, as Milton says:

> "Then to the well-trod stage anon,
> If Jonson's learned sock be on,
> Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
> Warbles his native woodnotes wild."

Human nature, however, asserts its self-conceit in this as in other matters, and everybody who acts has a natural inclination to soar to big parts, and carry out the wisdom of the writer who averred that it was a better ambition to try and discharge an arrow over the moon than merely to shoot it over a tree. But this ambition to play nothing but leading parts, and, having assumed such, not again to play minor ones, is a matter of history, which shews that the same spirit ruled dominant, in this respect, a century ago, just as it does now. Jackson, the well-known Edinburgh manager, in his reminiscences published in 1793, relates how he was beset with this difficulty—"An actor, who had formerly played the Ghost, having a few seasons ago, at a provincial theatre performed the part of Hamlet, when the company returned to the head-quarters at Edinburgh, and the play of Hamlet was ordered into rehearsal, the country Hamlet sent in as an excuse for his non-attendance, that having once acted the part of Hamlet, he could not possibly think of demeaning himself so far as to appear again as the Ghost. Let the reader figure to himself the embarrassment of a manager on receiving five other remonstrances almost at the same time and much to the same purport. Horatio had played Hamlet at Aberdeen, the King at Montrose, Laertes at Dundee, Osric at Perth, and the Player King at Stirling. They are inexorable, full of the same importance; one and all, with once voice, cry out, Hamlet or nothing! what is the manager to do in this case? He must either lay poor Hamlet on the shelf, or dress up some of his attendants and lamplighters to fill up the characters in one of Shakespeare's first plays; or be reduced to the necessity of adopting Mr. Foote's mode of creating actors, by filling up the deficiency with a number of pasteboard figures; which would not, perhaps, be esteemed a very pleasing expedient by an Edinburgh audience. Far strained as this anecdote may appear, or supposed perhaps to have been adduced only for the sake of argument, I here declare, the first season I was manager in Edinburgh I had six Hamlets in my company; but for the above very nice punctilio of not descending to an inferior part, I was compelled to lay aside the part for want of performers the whole winter." To a certain extent, with professionals there is something excusable in this, as the higher rôle an actor plays so is his salary affected; with the amateur it is otherwise, and as a guard against the abuse, most constituted dramatic clubs have rules applicable to such cases.

In selecting the company it is generally politic to consult the stage-manager elect, and to eventually leave in his hands the power to substitute, withdraw, or assign parts. It is useless to disguise the fact that extreme difficulty often besets the stage-manager in this respect, and matters have to be arranged with supreme and almost artistic delicacy.

The stage-manager cannot always be adamant, nor can a universally strict law control and guide his actions. He may be a comparative stranger to his host, and unacquainted with the company, all of which makes his position the more trying. Appreciating this situation, it becomes the more incumbent on the players to accept with heartiness the dictates of his generalship. Harmony can easily be secured, and this resolves itself into a happy policy of give and take—but still the stage-manager must be in the position of the chairman with the casting vote.

The choice of capable exponents for the varied and various characters will at once be suggested by the idiosyncrasies in the every-day characters of the friends of the host. Who does not know the man who has a tendency to gilding his own life with touches of eccentric character; or one whose voice, full and melodious in its tone, is just what one imagines a lover's should be; or the young lady with dreamy look, soft tones of speech, and graceful bearing, who becomes the ideal of some ill-used heroine; or one who having passed her teens, and is somewhat severe and austere in her every-day work-a-day manner? It is not difficult in the circle of acquaintance to single out your leading performers. Yet, in this respect, a matter of delicacy is introduced, and it will not always do to select characters which assimilate themselves to the mere personal idiosyncrasies of the willing performers. It is an unpleasant task to suggest to a lady who is not remarkable for good looks that she should play an ugly character, simply because the lady in question is no beauty; or to tell off a man to play an uncouth part simply because he is a somewhat rough diamond in his every-day behaviour. There is more difficulty in finding likely persons to play the small parts. Though, indeed, with the popularity which amateur acting has attained, reputations soon become fairly public, and amateurs are generally found to be ready and willing to oblige. It is well, in the case of a character having peculiar attributes, to select a performer who has either made a special study of it, or seems likely to carry it successfully through. It may, as a rule, be safely taken for granted, that amateurs select their pieces for the purpose of giving recognition and effect to favourite parts for which the leading players have a fancy. In some cases, however, the tyros possess no such ambition, and no such knowledge, in which case it is evident one must choose a piece with as equal a division of parts as can be got, and in which none are likely to overtax the histrionic power of those who assume them. Actors and actresses must walk before they run.

Thoroughness and earnestness should be the prevailing rules which govern the resolution to play. It is far better, if a performer is discontented with his part; or is not interested in the whole arrangements; or cannot or will not learn his or her part and attend rehearsals—it is far better, in such a case, to have an early fit of moral courage, and to decline to act at all. In accepting a part, the responsibility of the position, its relations to the host and the company, and the respect due to the art, should mingle, and stand as a corrective against inattention and carelessness. It is the last and final success which must be aimed at—

> "Act well your part, there all the honour lies."

Nor must that responsibility be too lightly accepted. A careless delineation of one part mars the whole; causes what might have been a complete success to be a partial failure, raises ill-feeling and creates irritability. Too much care cannot be devoted to the art, too much pride cannot be felt in working out subtle and cunning points which will tell with the audience and win their applause.

Hackneyed though the advice the Prince of Denmark gave to the players may be, yet it is full of pith and marrow, and represents, perhaps, the boldest condensation of golden rules to guide the player. It is worthy of strict analysis, and equally appropriate for quotation:

"Speak the speech I pray you, as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much . . . but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it a smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul, to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings; who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise; I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant: it out-herods Herod; pray you, avoid it . . . . . .

"Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor; suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this especial observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at first, and now, was, and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to shew virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one, must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players, that I have seen, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of christians, nor the gait of christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted, and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

". . . And let those that play your clowns, speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them, that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be considered: that's villainous; and shews a most pitiful ambition in the fool that used it."

It should be remembered that Shakespeare, who left this legacy of advice, was himself an actor as well as a play-wright. His experience of actors must have been vast, for he did the "provincial circuit" extending from Blackfriars to Inverness.

* * *

The next point to consider is—where is the performance to take place? It is customary for amateur clubs to hire a theatre and give afternoon performances, and of course, in this case, with all the professional accessories at hand, much trouble is saved. It is otherwise when the theatre has to be built at home, and on this latter point we must touch. Meantime the following diagram will show the shape of the stage, and, as in acting editions of plays there are abbreviated stage-directions which may read as puzzle signs to the uninitiated, these will be explained. The depth of a stage will of course regulate the number of entrances at the wings, but a full-sized theatre may be said to have a stage somewhat on the scale of the appended sketch. The same rules for construction

COMPLETE VIEW OF THE STAGE.

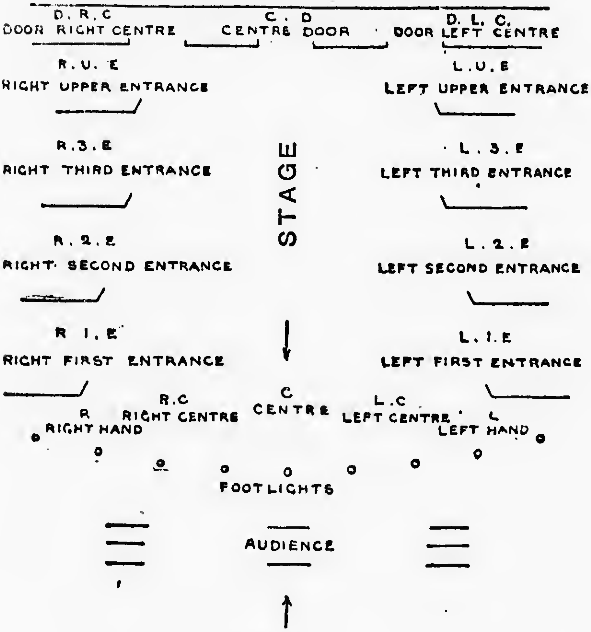

D. R. C
DOOR RIGHT CENTRE
C. D
CENTRE DOOR
D. L. C.
DOOR LEFT CENTRE
R. U. E
RIGHT UPPER ENTRANCE
L. U. E
LEFT UPPER ENTRANCE
R. 3. E
RIGHT THIRD ENTRANCE
L. 3. E
LEFT THIRD ENTRANCE
STAGE
R. 2. E
RIGHT SECOND ENTRANCE
L. 2. E
LEFT SECOND ENTRANCE
R 1. E
RIGHT FIRST ENTRANCE
L. 1. E
LEFT FIRST ENTRANCE
R
RIGHT HAND
R.C
RIGHT CENTRE
C
CENTRE
L.C
LEFT CENTRE
L
LEFT HAND
FOOTLIGHTS
AUDIENCE

FIG 6.

have to be regarded in the erection of the more mimic stage in the drawing-room, though this may often be so small, as to give room for only one entrance on either side, and to have no back entrance at all. The amateur treading the professional stage for the first time will notice that its flooring has a slope towards the foot-lights; that everything looks as if the wildest state of chaos and confusion reigned; and that what, to the audience appears new and clean, to those behind the scenes is worn, old and dirty.

Taking an imaginary batch of directions, the position of the player would be thus:

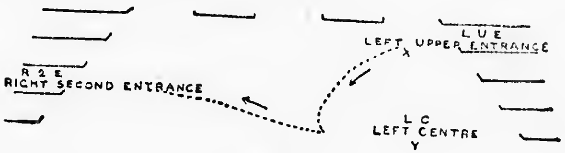

L U E
LEFT UPPER ENTRANCE
X
R 2 E
RIGHT SECOND ENTRANCE
L C
LEFT CENTRE
Y

FIG. 7.

X enters L U E, gives letter to *Y*, L C, and exits R 2 E. *X* enters D R C, comes to R and goes out R U E. *Y* enters D L C, comes to L and goes out L U E.

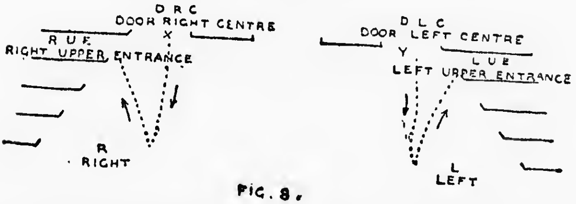

D R C
DOOR RIGHT CENTRE
X
R U E
RIGHT UPPER ENTRANCE
R
RIGHT
D L C
DOOR LEFT CENTRE
Y
L U E
LEFT UPPER ENTRANCE
L
LEFT

FIG. 8.

Many private houses have theatres attached to them, but to hosts who have not such, the erection of a stage in the drawing-room is always matter for serious consideration, and to its erection there are equally serious objections. Private theatricals "upset" a house—there is no use in disguising that fact. Not uncommon, therefore, is it for the giver of the entertainment to hire an empty, unfurnished house and invite the guests thither, and there is much wisdom in this. For, as every item of available space is wanted to get the audience in and out, so it is necessary that all furniture must be cleared out, and chairs or forms substituted. As the dining-room will, in all probability, be used as a supper-room, as the passages and staircases must be kept clear, and as the bedrooms will be occupied—where is all the furniture to go? As a matter of expense, if the performance is to be on a large scale, the outlay in this respect, if a trifle over what it would have come to without the extra rent, will easily be covered by what is saved in bother, annoyance, having workmen all over the house, and breakage. But dealing with the proposed performance on a minor scale, the matter can be undertaken at home, with no very serious difficulty.

And let it here be repeated, as was laid down in the earlier pages, that previous to beginning the preparations, the proposed magnitude of the entertainment must be defined and immoveably fixed. Else it will be found that the snow-ball of ambition will roll itself into such proportions that, when almost too late to rectify the error, the room will not be found large enough to hold a third of the number of those invited; the stage will not be suitable for the crowd of performers who appear in the big piece which has become a second-thought substitute for the original small piece—or the whole affair too "simple" to satisfy those of "light and leading" who, accustomed to watching the antics of elephants, take no interest in the tremours of a gnat. For your spectator of amateur theatricals is nothing if he be not a critic; and still less if he be not an actor himself who has played the very parts he has come to witness others essay. Vanity is alike the ruling passion of the professional as of the amateur, and in the days when amateur acting has arisen to such a pitch of excellence, comparisons will, of necessity, arise. Let it, therefore, always be the rule that the audience get more than they expected or hoped for. As fruit is the outcome of the blossom, so is the verdict "Well done!" the crown of a performance. It must not be assumed, from these remarks, that audiences are uncharitably disposed, or that one dramatic amateur scorns the efforts of another—but as such a leaven does exist in the lump, it has to come into the calculation. In matters of this nature, there can be no half-measures. The *Area Belle* must be played with as much care as to detail as the *Corsican Brothers*. It may almost be asserted that now-a-days "everybody acts"—therefore, everybody is somewhat of a critic, and it is just as dangerous for the critic to think badly of the performance, as it is for him to give utterance to his thoughts.

Portable theatres can be hired, and these can be erected in a drawing-room, without injuring the walls. Dealing with this introduces a connection with the professional elements of stage-carpentering and scene-making. Further on, reference will be made as to how to set about this, and its probable cost. It is the inclination of many to take advantage of this professional aid and place the matter entirely in its hands—reserving nothing but the actual rehearsing of the parts. That is—a host about to give a dramatic entertainment in his own, or a hired house, can contract with those whose business it is to deal in such matters, to erect a stage ; supply the requisite scenes ; look after the lighting ; have scene-shifters in attendance : also with a costumier to supply the dresses and wigs. These two latter—"costumes" and "wigs"—are conducted as separate businesses, but an arrangement can be made to bring both under one head. It is quite possible to get an estimate as to what a performance will cost, to adhere to that estimate, and have no further worry about it, leaving the stage-manager to get his play into ship-shape by rehearsal. But it is none the less an interesting process to have everything prepared at home, so that the labour of the hands shall bring delight to the eye. This can be accomplished. Indeed in country houses this must be done. It is easy enough, even in a country mansion remote from railway connection, to have stage and stage carpenters, costumes, and dresses, sent from town; but the expense is an item of no little moment. It may be judicious, under such circumstances, to get the dresses from a costumier, more especially if the plays be from the category of those known as "costume pieces," because this gives correctness; but the amateurs may themselves prepare the stage, and, in some cases, there is no reason why they should not prepare the dresses. This, however, is a matter which is worthy of some calculation, as it may be discovered, in the event of the costumes not being

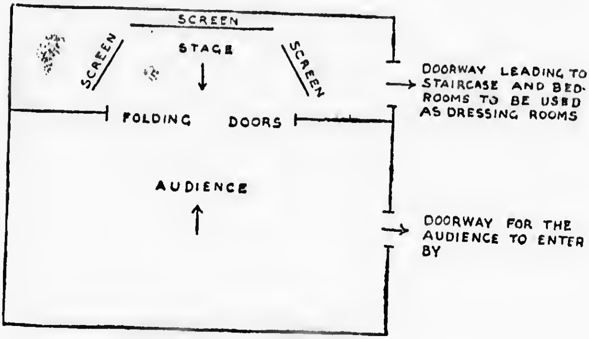
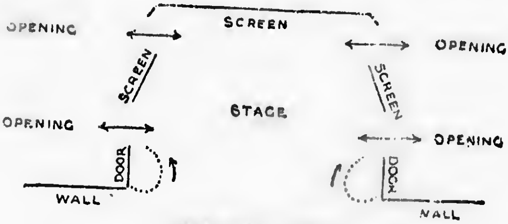

SCREEN
SCREEN
STAGE
SCREEN
FOLDING DOORS
DOORWAY LEADING TO STAIRCASE AND BED-ROOMS TO BE USED AS DRESSING ROOMS
AUDIENCE
DOORWAY FOR THE AUDIENCE TO ENTER BY

FIG. 9.

modern, that it will cost more to make them, even with unpaid labour, than to hire them. But the idea now under review is a performance of no ambitious dimensions, and what first comes to mind is—where is the stage to be? Now there are many drawing-rooms which at once suit themselves to every requirement. The drawing-room with folding doors, opening into a lesser withdrawing-room at once suggests itself. *Fig.* 9 gives this stage complete—and it carries with it no erection or cost in preparation. Even a curtain can be dispensed with, and the doors simply, but simultaneously, thrown open. These open, form part of the wings, an exit being left where they would join the scenes, thus:



LARGE DRAWING-ROOM
FOR AUDIENCE

FIG. 10

In this, three screens form back and sides of stage, with room all round for the players to assemble. There are two openings on either side, but none at centre or back. To arrange this, so that exits and entrances may not clash, shews the ability of the stage-manager. But supposing that a centre entrance is absolutely necessary—two extra screens will form it if arranged thus:

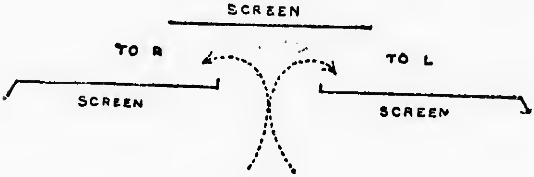


FIG. 11.

These screens may be covered with green baize, or have wall-paper hung down them—a different pattern being used for each scene—or left with their own patterns, and these, in the present style of interior house decoration, will not be found to be unsuitable. If a curtain be wanted, nothing is easier than to arrange one where the doors meet, and it can either be drawn up or be drawn aside. In this case the doors may be taken off their hinges, or left open to form part of the scene, as suggested above.

It is not, however, every room that shapes itself to stage requirements, and yet a little mental engineering can overcome the difficulty. Take a room the shape of *Fig.* 12. It is obvious where the stage should be, and the arrangement as to the screen scenes and curtains can be made as pointed out in *Fig.* 9. Presuming, however, that the space is limited, and that the dresses, *&c.* have to be changed between the pieces, or between the acts, a moveable screen should be put up meeting the edge of the curtain, and extending to cover the

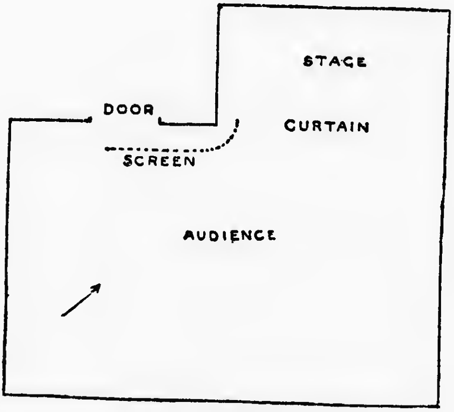


FIG. 12.

doorway, and behind this the players can pass from off the stage and get to a dressing-room, returning when dressed, when the screen can be folded up and removed. With a stage cut off to, and placed in one extreme end of the room, care must be taken to play well forward, so that the audience, seated where points the arrowhead, may not have their view intercepted. From this point they will not see any acting taking place towards the right upper entrance.

Here is another shape of a room, where the balconies come in as aids:

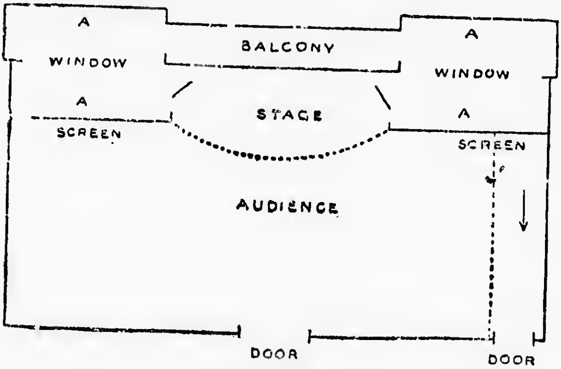


FIG. 13.

In this case the balconies must be enclosed with the usual coverings, the windows taken off their hinges, or removed from their frames, and the balcony used to form retiring, and even dressing-rooms. All the space marked A is vacant space behind the scenes. Should it happen that the door is at the corner of the room, a line of screens ranged as near the wall as will simply allow a person to pass would form an exit, if the performers wish to utilize the rooms of the house as tiring-rooms. This screen passage is indicated by the dots and arrow. By giving the ladies one window and the gentlemen the other, and dividing the centre balcony, dressing-rooms could be formed, unless the plays demanded a number of supernumeraries. As a rule, in a private house, acting is carried on under difficulties, and the coat of comfort must be cut according to the cloth at disposal.

In the ordinary square or oblong-shaped room there is, of course, no help for it, but to cut off a portion for the stage, of course as little as possible, so as to leave auditorium space, but yet enough not to encumber the players too much; for it must be recollected that besides space being required for individuals, there are the furniture and properties, and these have to be put somewhere.

These illustrations will give a general idea of where the stage should be. In all these cases, were the regular fitted-up stage to be hired, there would be no difficulty. This portable stage, however, occupies more room, but, of course, has the advantage of having a raised platform, with the addition of proper and defined scenery. As a rule, however, unless the rooms are very large, these occupy too much space—that is, they give, when both sides of wings are set, very little width. The portable stage with scenery, act-drops, flies, curtain and the like, gives a more complete realization of the play; but there are manifold difficulties in the way, if the house be in the country or in a small provincial town where stage costumiers do not exist. If there be space, and a lengthy purse, these can be sent from place to place, but the cost of this, and it is only one out of the many bills, is heavy. Local carpenters can, of course, easily raise a wooden platform, and erect a couple of supports with cross beam to act as proscenium and hang the curtain from, but, as has already been seriously impressed upon the reader, unless the room is large and the company very strong, it is more judicious to select small pieces, and the screen arrangement will be found to fill every demand and supply every requirement. These remarks, let it be understood, have especial reference to "private" theatricals, where the performance is given on an intentionally small scale, and where, in ten minutes' time after the end of the play, no trace of the impromptu theatre can be seen, but the room cleared for a wind-up dance. Amateur and private theatricals move in greater and less degrees. Indeed, taking the least degree of all, not even a curtain is necessary. An extra and ever useful screen can be placed in front of the aperture, and removed when the play is about to begin. It should be placed in zig-zag form in front of the two

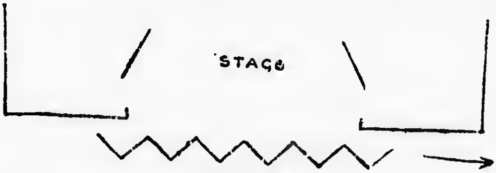


FIG. 14.

stationary end screens: and drawn aside in the direction of the arrow. By a little management of strings fastened to one end it could be drawn close, in telescope manner, and its one end being made a fixture could be opened again at the close of the act. Any way, a person standing behind it can easily fold it aside. A stout cord run across the tops of the two stationary screens would suffice to bear the weight of a light baize or chintz curtain, which could easily be drawn aside. This curtain is wanted only as a line of demarcation between actors and audience, and need not, therefore, be of any great height. It is essential that these front screens should be placed in as firm and secure a position as can be attained; where a screen forms the curtain it is better to try and arrange the commencement of the play with the actors, not discovered, but coming on to the stage, and the close so as to find the characters leaving, a stroke of a hand-bell denoting beginning and end of the scene.

In performances of this less ambitious character, the only other materials necessary are the stage furnishings and the lighting. The area of stage room being small, as little furniture as possible should be used, indeed, not more than the action of the piece requires, otherwise the space in which the actors may move about in becomes cramped. As such arrangement of screen scenery cannot very successfully be worked into out-door views, or landscape effects, preference should be given to selecting pieces where the action takes place in "interiors" or, as the scene will of itself suggest or actually represent, in a room. If an "exterior" or outside scene is requisite, the screens may be hung over with green baize, giving a nondescript appearance, yet removing the semblance of an interior, and the description of the scene should be notified in the programme. Prior to the time of scenery, when Shakespeare's plays, for instance, were first represented, placards were hung up with directions on them: to wit—"this is a street"; or "this is a hall," but it is unnecessary to imagine that the audience are to be so dull-witted as not to detect whether the actions of the play are moving in an exterior or an interior. To some extent the costumes, say hats or shawls, and the dialogue, would suggest this. Lights are very essential to a proscenium, for, without them, the players' faces get in the shade, but lights in a drawing-room are difficult to manage. If a gasalier or chandelier hangs in the centre of the room, the gas jets should be raised, facing the stage, and lowered facing the audience, or the candles lighted facing the stage and extinguished towards the audience. All the side lights in the room should be lighted, and an extra stream of light can be got for the stage, by having a small table, on which are large moderator lamps, at right and left first entrance. Footlights may be used—these, it may be necessary to explain, being the row of lights along the outer front edge of the stage—but, without a regularly fitted-up stage, footlights should be avoided as much as possible. If used, small oil lamps, or candles with reflectors must be substituted for gas.

* * *

In the event of a more pretentious stage being used, and props of woodwork, and a platform being erected, it will generally be found that somebody can be secured to paint the scenery. As no book instructions will make a painter, no hints need here be given on this point, save that due care must be taken to paint the scenes in accordance with the stage directions, for, probably, in the dialogue allusion will be made to these. Theatrical scenes are painted in "distemper," which Webster defines as "the mixing of colours with something besides oil or water, as with size and water, whites of eggs, *&c.*" Unbleached calico is the best material, and this must first be measured off, giving a fair margin over and above the actual depth and width of the stage, and then sewn together. When stretched tightly over a frame, it must be well coated with size and whitening, and left to dry. This will create a substance, over which the picture or design is traced in charcoal, and this is followed by the colours being painted in. As a rule the main tone or tint should be of a sombre hue, so that it does not clash with the colour of the dresses. There is no reason why, in the case of theatres being attached to private houses, the whole productions should not be carried out and executed by the amateurs.

"Instead," says the writer on scene painting in *The English Cyclopædia*, "of beginning with dead colouring, and then gradually working up his picture, the artist puts in all his effects at once—as in fresco-painting—the full tone of the lights and shadows, finishing as he proceeds, and merely retouching or glazing those parts afterwards, which require additional depth or brilliancy. In this kind of painting, *bravura* of execution, and strikingness of effect are indispensable, and nature must be rather exaggerated than the contrary; at the same time care must be taken lest mere gaudiness be substituted for brilliancy and richness." Side by side with this same rule lies the exaggeration of nature in the acting. To gain, in the verbal picture, the correct and telling perspective, nature must be heightened in some points, and only its undertone used in others. And, as if in corroboration of the principle laid down that those who undertake theatricals must know something of all branches of the art, the same writer goes on to say, "Further, as much of the costume of the piece depends upon him, it is important that the scene-painter should not only be skilled in architectural delineation, but also well-informed as to the styles of different countries and periods, so as to avoid those errors and anachronisms which are frequently committed, and which are sometimes so glaring, that no beauty of execution can atone for them." All are parts of a whole, but all are hinged on one another, and cannot go aright without sympathy and harmony amongst themselves.

In the case of the scenery not being thus painted, or old scenery being substituted, and the actor not being acquainted with it, a ludicrous effect may be produced, as was done on the first representation, as an opera, of *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* The scene represented a distant view of Windsor with a bright summer sky, while one of the actors declaimed lines to this effect, ". . . I think the sky is *overcast*—the wind, too, blows like an approaching storm, well, let it blow—I am prepared to brave its fury." He then commenced to sing, "Blow, blow thou *winter*'s wind!"

The scene-painter working in the theatre at home must necessarily stretch his canvas on one of the walls, or on a frame the whole size of the stage, and paint its upper portions standing on a ladder. There will not be depth under the stage to allow of his standing on the stage, and moving his canvas up and down as he requires it. In the theatres this frame is worked up and down by means of balance-weights.

In connection with this branch of our subject a brief explanatory description of the professional stage, with the technical expressions used concerning its various fixtures, may come in appropriately. It is culled from the article on the word "Theatre" in *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, edition of 1867:

". . . . . The stage extends backwards from the proscenium, and ought to be of considerable depth, so as to admit of the scenic effects, dissolving scenes, &c., now so much run upon. The great length of the stage from front to back is one of the most striking differences between the modern and the ancient theatre, and arises entirely from the introduction and development of moveable scenery—an invention of the architect Baldassare Peruzzi, the first used in Rome before Leo X., in 1508. The floor of the stage is not laid level like the floor of a room, but is sloped upwards from front to back, so as to elevate the performers and scenes at the back and render them more easily seen. The inclination of the stage is generally about half-an-inch to every foot. The stage department of a theatre not only requires to be very long, but also very lofty above, and deep below the stage, so as to allow the large frames on which the scenes are stretched to be raised or lowered in one piece. The stage itself is a most complicated piece of mechanism, a considerable part of it being made moveable either in the form of *traps* for raising or lowering actors, furniture &c., or in long pieces, which slide off to each side from the centre to allow the scenes to rise or descend. There are also *bridges*, or platforms constructed for raising or lowering through similar openings, some of them the full width of the stage. The traps and bridges are almost all worked by means of balance weights, and the sides by ropes and windlasses. Besides the large *frames* above described as containing pictures occupying the full opening of the stage, there are other scenes which are pushed from the sides to the centre, each being only one-half the width of the opening. These are called *flats*, and usually slide in grooves above and below. The *grooves* are arranged in clusters at intervals, having clear spaces between them called the *entrances*, through which the actors pass on and off the stage. But in modern French theatres, and in the opera-houses—such, for instance, as Covent Garden—these grooves are considered as an encumbrance on the stage, and are entirely done away with. Their place is occupied by narrow openings or slits in the stage, below which are blocks running on wheels, and containing sockets, into which poles are dropped from above, and to these the flats are attached. Another advantage of this system is, that the gas-wings and ladders may be made moveable, and slip backwards and forwards in the same manner as the flats. When occasion requires the whole stage can thus be entirely cleared. . . . . Besides the flats, there are also similar scenes, which move in the grooves. These are called *wings*, and are used to screen the entrance. Corresponding to the wings are similar narrow scenes dropped from above; these are called *borders*, and are used to hide the gas-battens. These and the scenes which are drawn up, the gas-battens, &c., are all worked by means of ropes from the *flies*, or galleries running along the sides of the stage at high level. The ropes from these passing up into the barrel-loft (a space in the roof filled with drums and barrels in which the ropes are coiled) and down again to the flies, form a complication which seems to the uninitiated observer an inextricable mass of confusion. While such is the usual arrangements connected with moveable scenery, it is to be noted that latterly a very great change has been introduced into the higher class of theatres. The change consists in the dismissal of wings or sliding side portions of scenes with intervening gaps, and substituting for them large pieces of scenery resembling the sides and further end of a room—an arrangement every way more natural. In cases of this improved kind, the actors enter on the stage and depart by doors. In connection with the stage, it is usual to have a large space set apart for containing scenery, called the *scene-dock*. This is frequently placed at the back of the stage, and may, on occasions, be cleared out, to give extra depth to the scene. There are also numerous apartments required in connection with the stage for the working of the theatre—such as *manager's room ;* dressing-rooms for actors and actresses ; the *green room*, in which they assemble when dressed and wait till they are called ; *star-rooms*, or dressing-rooms for the stars ; the *wardrobe*, in which the costumes are kept ; furniture stores ; scene stores ; property-maker's room ; and workshops for the carpenter, gas-man, &c. . . . . An interesting point on the stage is the prompt corner, from which the prompter has command of all the lights of the house, and bells to warn every man of his duty at the proper moment. He has a large brass plate, in which a number of handles are fixed, with an index to each, marking the high, low, &c., of the lights, and as each system of lights has a separate main pipe from the prompt corner, each can be managed independently . . . . . . The proscenium is lighted . . . . . . by the footlights, which run along the whole front of the stage. These are sometimes provided with glasses of different colours, called *mediums*, which are used for throwing a red, green, or white light on the stage as may be required. The stage is lighted by rows of gas-burners up each side and across the top at every entrance. The side-lights are called *gas-wings* or *ladders*, and the top ones *gas-battens*. Each of these has a main from the prompt corner. They can be pushed in and out, or up and down, like the scenery. There is also provision at each entrance for fixing flexible hose and temporary lights, so as to produce a bright effect whenever required. The mediums for producing coloured lights in this case, are blinds of coloured cloth. Another means of producing brilliant effects of light is the *lime-light*, by which, together with lenses of coloured glass, bright lights of any colour can be thrown on the stage or scenery when required."

The above quotation has been inserted to explain the various technical terms connected with the stage, but, of course, since it was compiled, many changes have taken place in the manner and mode of working scenery and the like. The theatre attached to the private dwelling is not likely to be rigged out so completely, but the above sketch pretty clearly indicates the system for stage administration, and the general plan and principle being accepted, its details can be modified. Unless on a properly constituted stage it is hazardous to attempt scenic or spectacular effects. Even on a small stage, regularly planned though it may be, the space is generally too limited to allow play for the necessary deception to be practised in bringing about stage illusion. By carefully editing certain passages of the words and re-arranging situations, still retaining the sequence and completeness of the story, many of these difficulties can be avoided ; and here appears an instance of the strict necessity for the dramatic amateur—if he has any ambition towards becoming perfect in his art—to be master of every detail, and to have the knowledge which ought to be possessed by stage-manager, prompter, scene-shifter, and actor all at his fingers' ends. It does not follow because each individual of a company is an adept at all this general information, that each, at a rehearsal, is to become director and dictator, but the knowledge does away with much waste of time and of labour in the suggestion and pursuit of impracticabilities. Besides, the actor never knows but that, at any moment, he may have to assume managerial duties, and the amateur who is known to have, and is credited with, the intelligence of his art, never knows when he may be invited to take charge of and direct a performance, and in such a case, it would never do for him to be found wanting. It may be generally stated as a broad principle that there is a "reason" and "motive" for every trifling detail, whether it be the movement of an individual or of a chair; the position of a book or walking-stick; the shape of a sofa or fireplace—and therefore the actor should become part and parcel of that motive and reason, be a link in the chain which unwinds during the process and progress of the play, and, by knowing the meaning attached to this motive and to that reason, becomes, as it were, the rhyme which ripples on towards the regulated completion of the whole.

Though, in the drawing-room, stage illusions and effects may be neither desirable nor practicable, yet in the erected theatre, even on the smaller scale, such may be admitted. Stage illusion and effect are not so varied or so extensive arts as may be supposed—indeed, the effect which astonishes and pleases the eye, and gratifies the sense of the audience is chiefly attributable to the illusion, and the simplicity of the contrivance, were it known, would remove much of the romance, or pleasantness of mystery. Sudden transformations should, in amateur performances,—

unless on a full-sized stage, and with capable or trained, workmen—be avoided, and, in selecting the pieces to be played, as little ambition as possible should be directed towards producing scenic effect. Such should only be attempted when it can be done completely and well. On the regular stage of the properly designed and completely built theatre, anything that professionals attempt, can or ought to be done by amateurs, because the mechanical appliances for the production of these effects are equal—but the amateur whose appearance is limited, as a rule, to one performance, as against the "run" of the professional representation, should, like the wise builder, sit down first and count the cost. In giving performances in aid of distress or for the cause of charity, this counting the cost of production is one of the points to be primarily considered, for, while a successful result is anticipated with regard to the performance, a pecuniary result which may be placed on the credit side of the account is also looked for. Now it stands to reason that one night's door-receipts cannot be expected to pay for a new and elaborate performance, and, therefore, the promoter must prepare to cut and carve the shape of the coat in proportion to the length of the cloth he may deem it likely he will receive. And whatever proper and justifiable vanity he may have in getting up a "grand" performance, he must control his ambition by remembering the necessity of having a considerable and effective monetary balance. But in all matters of amateur acting this consideration of cost should be uppermost in the start, for, as a rule, the cost of one night's entertainment of this description, is of no small magnitude. It is the desire after effect and illusion which swells the bill, and, while carefully planned effects and skilfully manœuvred illusions are to be desired and encouraged, they must be produced and brought into effective play only in the case of the proportions of the entertainment warranting their intrusion. Space is necessary for effective illusion—thus a "full-moon," which is formed by an almost transparent circular patch of white cloth, with a bright focussed light held or placed behind it, does not look real or effective unless it has a proper depth of stage from which it may be manipulated, or along which its vista may be worked. All these effects of early morn, dawn, daylight, sunlight, sunset, twilight, moonlight, or night are brought about by the use of the coloured medium glasses previously alluded to. The varied tints of these, with a powerful light, and their numerical force, very easily impart a glow of warm colour to a landscape or a cold weird effect to a night scene with accompaniment of storm, and rage of the elements of nature. The regulation of these lights, by gradual movement, brings about, for instance, the soft dawn breaking into sunrise, while the mist effect is produced by layers of gauze which, worked off the stage by degrees, clear, as it were, the mimic atmosphere. These are the leading effects, with their adjuncts and attributes, rain, snow, wind, thunder and lightning. Rain is produced by having a long narrow strip of a box, its interior crossed and recrossed with irregularly planted zig-zag portions of wood, and then a couple of handfuls of hard peas thrown in. By reversing the ends of this box, with more or less rapidity and force, in accordance with the effect required, the idea of slight or heavy rain is brought to the ears of the audience. Snow is produced by basketfuls of white paper, cut or torn to about the size of ordinary snow-flakes, and allowed to fall gently, but evenly in the supply, from the flies. It is usual in scenes where snow has to fall, to have a white floor-cloth spread over the stage. This is of dual use—it resembles snow-covered ground, and is, by the ends being rolled or folded to the centre, a capital and ready conveyance for carrying the snow away, as if the stage had to be brushed to effect this, dust would be raised and much time lost. A good effect can be produced by sprinkling flour over this white sheet, and, if the actor, before entering, will slightly damp the soles of his boots, his footprints will be left, and "realism" secured. There is a further detail which may be added to this snow effect--as exemplified, for instance, in the hut scene in Robertson's comedy of *Ours*—where persons entering a dwelling with a snow storm raging outside have snow on their dress, this being a sprinkling of a hard white powder, and the impression is also conveyed and heightened by raising a blowing cloud of this as the door opens. The noise of wind is produced by the rubbing of tightly extended lengths of silk cloth. Thunder is evoked from a thin sheet of iron, which, being shaken and giving out a rattling noise, constitutes no bad imitation of the real thing. Lightning has several growths, either by a flash-box which can be obtained from those who deal in stage gear; or by blowing a quickly igniting powder through an open light at the wings. The best is Lycopodium, described by Webster as "a fine yellow powder, the seed of the club-moss, which burns with a bright flash."

There are numerous noise effects also, which the prompter looks after—such as a ring at a door-bell or a knock at a door. Smashes of crockery, crashes of broken glass, *&c.*, are effected either by springing a watchman's rattle, or rolling on the floor a sealed box or basket which contains broken glass or shreds of tin.

Between the players and the foot-lights, a couple of wires ought to be stretched to prevent the dresses catching fire. Buckets of water and a flannel sheet or blanket should always be in readiness at the "prompt" corner for the purpose of quenching or subduing flames either on costumes or scenery.

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The sequence of events and setting up a performance have now reached the era of Rehearsal, and it is at this point where the mental capabilities are judged, and where the real work and patient study begin. As has been previously noticed, the minutiæ of the art are so interwoven, that here, under heading of Rehearsal, we have to deal with stage-manager and prompter as well as player. It may not always be convenient to get the prompter to attend every rehearsal in preparation for home theatricals, but he should be at the early ones and certainly at the last. The prompter who understands and appreciates the importance of his office will, during the earlier rehearsals make mental notes to himself of the strong and weak points of each individual player. He will discover that one, trying hard as he evidently does, is never able to master a perfect recollection of the words as they appear in the manuscript or book, but he will notice also that the speaker gives the full and complete sense to what he is saying, and is never at a loss for a word. An unprofessional prompter discovering such a case upon the night of the performance would probably, and perhaps naturally, keep prompting and re-prompting till he not only put the actor out of speech and out of temper, but by degrees would inadvertently convey to the audience generally, the idea that nobody knew his part. The prompter has to learn what view of the character the actor takes; and he must watch his style of delivery to ascertain whether it be slow or quick, as well as where he pauses in the dialogue, filling the blank up with by-play. Nothing can be more distracting to the actor who is working out an expression of feeling by pause or pantomime, than to have the prompter bawling his cues to him. All this knowledge the prompter can acquire only by attendance at rehearsals. The idiosyncrasies which infest the brains of a player in learning his or her part, are both amusing and confounding. Some one gets a phrase, other than is in the book, and cannot help introducing it; others get sentences inverted, and thus proclaim a meaning totally opposite to that meant to be conveyed by the text; others at a given point in the dialogue will invariably come to a dead halt, try they ever so hard to get over the verbal rock. For all these probable delinquencies the prompter must be prepared, and the actor soon becomes acquainted, as the rehearsals progress, with his own weak points, when these discoveries should be communicated to the prompter or marked in his copy, so that he may be the more readily prepared to avert a hitch or stage wait. The functions of the stage-manager, coming as they do now so prominently into action, have already been discussed.

Rehearsals should be as nearly as possible complete as to the attendance and appearance of all the characters. This, with amateurs, is not always practicable, but it should be carried out as nearly as it possibly can, for even in the case of the least important players, the one position affects the whole sequence of the positions of the others. A servant, for example, who has nothing more to do than to announce a guest, or hand a letter, neglecting to enter at the exact moment, not only causes a perceptible hitch and stage-wait, but may, by prolonging a piece of quick acting or rapidly achieved by-play, turn a serious point or a climax into a situation which becomes ludicrous. It is in matters of this nature that the evidence of careful and studied rehearsal declares itself. For, from the instant the curtain is rung-up and until it falls, a clock-work movement as to time of entrances or exits should be manifest. Here too comes in further evidence of the necessity for the actor being master of all the details of his art, for the quick, the ready, the experienced actor will often avert flaws, hitches, or delays from becoming apparent to the audience. And here let it be pointed out that many flaws which occur during a performance, and are, of course, visible enough to the actors, pass unnoticed by the house, and, therefore, it becomes those on the stage not to appear guilty as to any omission or commission having taken place, because, so long as the slip does not blemish the story, or mar the action, or interfere with the business, there is practically no harm done, and no significant laugh or gesture of surprise should betray this to the spectator.

There should be about six complete rehearsals, and these ought to be augmented by private and separate rehearsals between those who have long or intricate scenes to play together. The first meeting should be held for the purpose of "reading the piece," and this should be the time selected for any malcontent to state any grievance he may have as to the part assigned to him; as well as for a self-conscious actor to suggest that, while complimented by and grateful for a leading part having been assigned to him, he yet feels that it is beyond his powers to accomplish it with due satisfaction to himself or co-mates. And here we get the glimpse of that feature in acting which declares whether the actor is acting for the delight and pleasure accruing from the patient study of acting—of acting for the sake of acting, and of the actor who undertakes the work "for the fun of the thing." Acting is education. The schoolmasters of the past saw this, for we gather how, in 1740, Daniel Bellamy wrote plays for the use of the scholars at his wife's seminary at Chelsea. Concerning these, says the *Biographia Dramatica*, "all these little pieces were expressly written to be performed by the young ladies at Mrs. Bellamy's boarding-school at Chelsea, at the stated periods of breaking-up for the holidays, for the improvement of themselves and for the amusement of their parents and friends. They are well adapted to the purpose, being short and concise, the plots simple and familiar, and the language, though not remarkably poetical, nor adorned with any very extraordinary beauty, yet, on the whole, far from contemptible. They are calculated for showing the peculiar talents of the young ladies who were to appear in them; and to set forth the improvements they had acquired in their education, especially in music, to which end songs are pretty lavishly dispersed through them all. In a word, the design on the whole is laudable; and it were to be wished that an example of this sort were to be followed in more of the seminaries of education, both male and female, as these kinds of public exhibitions constantly excite a degree of emulation which awaken talents that might otherwise have lain entirely buried in obscurity, and rouse to a greater degree of exertion those which have already been discovered." Though amusement to both players and spectators, is the primary aim of amateur acting, yet the student of dramatic work who esteems as well as enjoys the play, will find much food for reflection and study in the various processes gone through in getting up a piece. In the case of historical events, or classical legends being depicted on the stage, a world of study unveils itself. It becomes an animated picture of history. The builders, surnamed the actors, become for the time the very makers and framers, thinking out the patterns and designs of dresses, not as they would like to wear them, but as the fashion of the time then was; they become the architects who are to see that the style of dwelling and furniture is arranged not so that it may look well on a stage, but as it was at the time when the houses and furniture were wont to be in use; they become the historians who deal with the verbal story and tell, not what would sound of special note and interest, but what really did happen in the days gone by; they become the life and soul, the veritable counterparts of those men and women who lived, and loved, and married, and died, in the days concerning which the play deals. And the spectators, gazing on the scene, forget the individuality of the men and women who are playing the picture of life, and see only the life itself. They are forced, so genuine is the humour, to laugh over the follies unravelled in the historical sketch, and they are driven, so strong is the passion roused, to weep over the sorrowful tints portrayed. They come to see a living picture; they see, or ought to see, the life itself, and when the glare of the street rubs off the glamour of the theatre, they find that it was but a living imitation after all, but then, how lifelike, and how well done! Here are enterprise for the brain, employment for the hands, education for the mind. Study must be education of some kind, be it for good or evil, and in learning plays we get a study of men and manners, of costume and of speech. Let the players be well used, quoth Hamlet, "for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time."

By a second rehearsal, the stage-manager will have shewn his supremacy as paramount dictator, and he will have brought his culture and experience into play by having substituted one actor for another, omitted one altogether, or filled the part from outside. Rehearsals take place in all quarters: on the stage of the theatre, in a barn, or in a drawing-room. In the last mentioned, the positions of the stage, with its entrances and exits, must be described and then imagined; though there is no reason why its complete shape should not be marked out by tacking lines of white tape to the floor, and marking where doors and windows come. This impromptu stage should be, as nearly as possible, the same size as the stage on which the performance is to take place. This is chiefly necessary as regards the width, as, distances being measured and agreed upon during rehearsal, an ill-effect is produced if the proportions of the subsequent stage are at great variance with the one on which rehearsals have taken place. All the furniture should be on the stage at every rehearsal. Postures cannot be practised too often, and efforts to secure good and effective positions should never be abandoned until artistic success be attained. It will mostly be found that amateurs do not "act" during rehearsals—at least, say, until the dress rehearsal. No stringent rule can well be laid down as to this. The capable and thoughtful actor will, as rehearsal follows rehearsal, be inwardly working out his scheme of representation, and these mental ideas he will test in private or in front of a looking-glass. But he must be careful to give his cue both in word and in action, so that taking up the following words or action may come naturally to the other players; or, in the event of "business" being introduced, that is, lengthy by-play or dumb-show, he must explain what he purposes doing, how long it will take, or at what specific point the thread of the spoken story may be resumed. A story is related of the actress, Miss Brand, who was very particular in going through all her business at rehearsal. At one rehearsal, after a pause of considerable length, when all around were lost in amazement, she turned round to the prompter with great state and said, "Observe, I have stopped thus long that you may remember at night, all this length of time I shall be weeping." The non-experienced should act as much as possible, both with body and voice: it is good training for both, more especially the latter, which, if unaccustomed to long speeches, or untutored in reserving its strength, is apt to give way at inopportune moments. The more intricate and subtle touches, between two or three, as incidents in the progress of play suggest themselves, should be separately rehearsed, or mutually studied, by those who undertake the parts.

This measuring the time occupied in declaiming certain sentences, or performing certain scenes, ought to be nicely and closely calculated in the event of any of the performers having to change a costume. The duration of time occupied in accomplishing this change should be rehearsed, and more than once, because, upon the estimate of the time required, will those upon the stage have to slacken the pace of their dialogue, or introduce pauses, or engage in by-play so that the lines shall not all be spoken, and the business all performed, while yet the change of dress has not been made. Otherwise the result, of course, is an awkward stage-wait, and, from the hurried entrance of the next performer, the audience is enlightened and initiated as to the cause of this. It is necessary, sometimes, in these cases, to introduce what is termed "gag" —the introduction of language other than that of the author. Save and excepting when such has to be done to cover sins of this nature, the custom is much to be deprecated. It is quite enough to be satisfied with what the author has written. Gag is usually adopted by the low comedian, and by those to whom the master-dramatist alluded in his advice to the players when, as already quoted, he wrote, "And let those that play your clowns, speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered." It is true that many of our professional star-actors, gag all through the play, but they soon earn a reputation for this, and it becomes quite an understood thing that the skeleton plot of the character is only borrowed from the author and creator, and the words supplied by the delineator. Actors who have reached the top of the ladder can afford to take liberties with the text and with the audience. But the custom is not a wholesome one, and is apt to degenerate into buffoonery. Unless, then, there be some distinct rhyme and reason for an alteration, the author's text ought to be adhered to. At all events, gag is a dangerous weapon in the mouth of an amateur—dangerous to the piece as well as to his own reputation. Shakespeare, who, it must be confessed, shewed a well-disciplined conception as to "cause" and "effect" in nature, pronounced the custom as "villainous," and says that it "shews a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it." "Gag," of course, does not consist in the substitution of one word for another, or such like, but the wholesale introduction of alien verbal matter, giving a complete malformation to the author's text.

The rehearsal occurring last in the series, or just prior to the performance—it usually takes place the evening before—is called "The Dress Rehearsal," and is generally conducted with costumes, scenic appointments and all accessories. On an occasion like this many little flaws and oversights are discovered which, hitherto, have escaped notice. Blots on a complete picture are more easily discerned than an unfinished sketch. In private theatricals in a house, the Dress Rehearsal generally serves as an entertainment for the servants, and an audience of some kind or other is desirable. It puts the less experienced performers at ease upon the following night when they have "to speak before people," and brings out something of the responsibility of acting aright. It is very essential that rehearsals with scenery should take place, but such cannot always be done; nor can the wigs and costumes be got on two consecutive days, unless special arrangements be made for this. With old and ripely experienced histrions all this is not so absolutely necessary, for, as a rule, they know their stage business, and they will have interviewed the costumier and wig-maker, and will have chosen, arranged, and tried on their dresses and wigs. But Dress Rehearsals should not be despised as being useless, or slurred over as unnecessary trouble.

Professionals have their stated hours for rehearsals, and such are as much part of their work and calling as performances. With amateurs it is different, and here we encounter one of the difficulties of amateur acting—the difficulty of collecting the complete company at one place and at one hour. No rules will ever bring this to perfection, and the only way to attain success in this detail is by making early and mutual arrangements. On the first night of reading the piece, the dates and fixtures of rehearsals should be discussed. What suits the majority must be adopted, and a list of places, days, dates and hours, should then and there be fixed. It is incumbent on those who have associated together to respect and adhere to these dates, and to throw over other appointments, so that the rehearsals may remain open, free and undisturbed by other engagements. Experience does not shew that this is always or even often done; but efforts towards it should certainly be made, because part rehearsals, when complete rehearsals have been called, are rarely successful, or of any practical value, and, moreover, the time of the many has been sacrificed through the carelessness or selfishness of the few or one. It is as needful to attend rehearsals as it is to attend on the night of a performance; and if it be deemed worth the trouble, for trouble there undoubtedly is, to undertake the performance, it is also worth the trouble to respect the rehearsals.

Each player should be supplied, at the outset, with a list of the rehearsals, and it is a good method to insure attention to these, to send a reminder on a post-card the night previous to each—for, even with excellent intentions, the best regulated mind is apt to to go to sleep and to forget. The host or stage-manager should undertake the sending of these reminders. In the event of unavoidable circumstances preventing, at the last moment, any of the company from attending, a message should be sent to the place of rehearsal, indicating that the absentee cannot attend, or that he will be present at a certain hour. The extension of this slight courtesy will prevent the loss of much valuable time, as the parts in which the absentees do not appear may be, in the meantime, rehearsed. In most companies it will be found that some one out of the number is careless and lax in attending rehearsals. If he cannot be dispensed with, he must be humoured, and the best mode of securing his presence at rehearsals is by the, to him, pleasant punishment of securing his company to dinner, either at the house of the host, or by the actors taking him in hand by turns.

Rehearsals soon take the conceit out of one. The cunningly devised entrances and postures are found to be impracticable, and the repeating and reiteration of situations shew that even with those who have attained distinction as dramatic amateurs, there is always something to be learnt, some difficulty to be thought out and conquered—some "ever climbing up the climbing wave" till hard climbing and devotion have secured success.

As to the mode of learning parts, this must be left to the discretion and inclination of the student. One method may suit one person and not another. One of the most customary methods is to lay a sheet of paper across the page of the book and hiding what the reader wishes to learn, the cue, or tag-end of the previous speech is read from the book, and the speech to be learnt is then declaimed from memory. Previous to this it must have been read over several times, and it will require a series of close and constant repetitions to learn it correctly. It is in this learning that the actor is apt to commit the blunder of "gag," in the moderate and minor degree of substituting his own diction for that of the author, while carefully retaining the sense and the meaning of the original. But why improve, or try to improve, upon the author? The work stands on its own merits, and the language introduced may not tally with the style nor with the rhythm of the whole; for all writers and composers have a style peculiar to themselves, and a natural method, be it good or bad, in selecting their words and phrases. A passage taken from a play of Mrs. Centlivre would not do mixed up with one taken at random from a comedy by Mr. Henry J. Byron. In like manner, the actor's style may vary from that of his author in every respect. It is not often that the language introduced exceeds so much as to come under the lash of this argument, but mention is made of it, because the principle is wrong, and should be discouraged and avoided. Indeed, as a rule, the interjected sentences are mere condensations of the author's ideas. They are distinct errors, for they trip over the turn of the sentence, and do not leave the impression of completeness which ought to be manifest in the whole. They become slurs in the even-ness of the composition—and thus result in unfair treatment to the author. But the substitution, through repetition, becomes familiar, and, as an outcome, the force of memory gets concentrated on the introduced words and not on the original text. Thus, again, when the sentence comes to be declaimed aloud, it is wanting in the polish of completeness—it is angular, where it should be rounded; harsh, in place of being sympathetic; it does not span the proper length; it does not scan in proper measures. This is more noticeable in the declamation of verse, but it is a charm necessary to the correct enunciation of prose. This touches on the confines of elocution—a point of vast importance. Says that sage critic Colley Cibber in his history of Betterton: "In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetic, it is scarce credible upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection. The voice of a singer is not more strictly ty'd to time and tune, than that of an actor in theatrical elocution. The last syllable too long, or too slightly dwelt upon in a period, depreciates it to nothing; which very syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole."

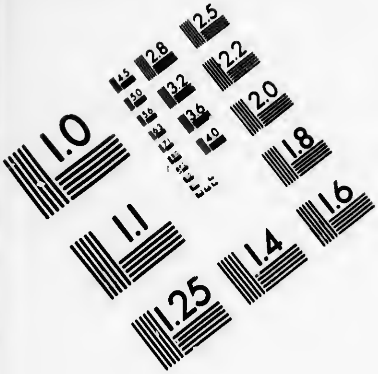
Some are quick at learning, some are slow. To one the mere writing out of the part leaves a fairly accurate recollection of the words; while another, by reading the printed matter over a few times, finds it photographed on his mind, and can mentally see and read the words. This latter, however, chiefly applies to printed matter as against plays in manuscript. Some get friends or companions to read the other parts, while the student first reads, and then tries to recite from memory, his or her part. But a trial of the various modes will soon reveal which is most suitable and pleasant to the individual case. And no little virtue lies in this expression "pleasant." To the amateur there must be no hardships in acting. He is not dependent on it, as the professional is, for his livelihood, and if the aspirant does not love it as an art, and gain pleasure in its study, and recreation from its attributes, then plays should be as a sealed book to him, and the stage as an unused door. It may be that, loving the art and willing to join in its carousal, the amateur may not be able, owing to his other vocations in life, to follow it. To him the rush to attend rehearsals, the stolen moments in which to learn his part, the engrossing topics of business giving him no time for study nor inclination for reflecting—to such an one something of unrequited labour may be associated with playing. But this case is different from that in which there is no feeling for, or love of, the art. In the one there can be no seriousness; while, with the other, there is the presence of the spirit, although obstacles—those obstacles which are to be found in the very best regulated families and societies—bring weaknesses, not of purpose, but of opportunity, to the front. Says Henderson, a careful player who flourished about 1777, on this head: "To learn words indeed is no great labour, and to pour them out no very difficult matter. It is done on our stage almost every night, but with what success I leave you to judge—the generality of performers think it enough to learn the words, and thence all that vile uniformity which disgraces the theatre. Garrick assures me that he was upwards of two months rehearsing Benedict before he could satisfy himself that he had modelled his action and recital to his own idea of the part."

Learning the words is very essential, but it is not all. It is not until the words have been learnt, and the stage-manager's mandate of "no books," has gone forth, that the acting can properly begin. It is impossible for an actor to perform the delicate and nervous points of acting with a book of word-reference in his hand. The sooner, therefore, the words have been committed to memory, the better; and the more, at the outset, the performer relies on the prompter for hint, cue, or correction, the easier does the study of the words become. It is but the possession of a natural feeling which makes one rather bashful in acting, at an early stage of rehearsal, without the book; but one never can tell how much one knows till one tries the feat of trying to recollect, when the responsible functions of memory are allowed their full and legitimate play. It will be found that some parts or sections are glibly remembered, and that others are forgotten, but the omission supplied by the prompter becomes impressed upon the memory of the actor, just as the stern correction of the teacher gets moulded in the memory of the child. And here the prompter, his temporary substitute, or the stage-manager, should try and efface any inclination on the part of the performers to substitute their own language for that of the author of the piece. Experience shews that, with rare exceptions, the text is eminently better than the introduced verbal interpretation of the story. These rare exceptions may include the change or omission of a word here or there; may tally with the preparation and lead up to the fulfilment of the actor's reading of the part; may be necessary owing to the proposed alteration in the stage directions; may have reference to the unwieldiness of properties; or so as to give time for some effect; or may be permitted, in the case of theatricals in a drawing-room, to concede the omission of certain dubious words in the dialogue which pass unnoticed in the theatre, but which draw long faces among the spectators in the drawing-room. But, as a standing rule, let the original text be adhered to. And also, let both the furniture and properties which are required by the author be used as often as possible.

We come now to acting. "A good play, acted before a well-bred audience," writes Steele, "must raise very proper incitements to good behaviour, and be the most quick and most prevailing method of giving young people a turn of sense and breeding." The ingredients of this apply to amateurs. First, they need rarely act a bad play, for, as a rule, they ought to act what has been proved a success by representation on the professional stage. And then, they generally act "before a well-bred audience." To some extent, this presence of a well-bred audience does not work for good. There is a non-critical spirit reigning in it; a recognition of friendship; a want of warm appreciation of merits and of depreciation of faults. It is a wise measure to keep the particulars of the performance as secret as possible before the rising of the curtain. Let the audience be struck with surprise; let them be caught by novelty; let better things await them than their wildest expectations conceived—and then some of the well-bred element will be removed, and the glamour of friendship dispelled. This means that the kindly disposition of an audience is apt to put the player off his guard, and steal away some responsibility from the entertainment. For on this head, there should be no difference between the professional and the amateur—the respective abilities may vary and differ in degree, but the assumption of the art is the same; and the same strenuous efforts after success should be made.

No volume of canons and rules will make an actor, *nascitur, non fit,* for the genius must be inherent or born in him ; but a study of the art or bowing down to approved conceptions, may bring about a useful culture which will exalt the otherwise latent or dormant faculties into action. There is an alphabet to acting, and a subsequent course of study in stages. Too many aspirants come to grief because they will strive to run when they should only endeavour to walk. Everybody wants to essay leading parts at once—to play Hamlet, or Juliet, as the inauguration effort, and then ensues the general result of doing the part so badly that the actor-dog gets the proverbial name, and no more is heard of him. The features wanting in such attempts and the failures are at once apparent to the critic, and even the general audience can detect the weakness, although unable to name it or to suggest an improvement. The flaw of "appearing" to have been schooled to a certain part ; of having to raise the hand at a certain point ; and raise and lower the voice at certain stages, and all performed in such a stilted, wax-work, and unnatural manner—all shew that the rudiments of acting, if learned by rote, have never been tested by experience. The movements of the body, and modulations of the voice, appear stiff, and though the audience, for the most part, may decipher the reasons and motives which should direct these, it is equally apparent that the performer does not.

The first question the beginner is apt to ask is whether, in acting, the person so employed should feel the character? It is in this that the strength of the great actor lies—he feels, but yet is able to control. He gives himself away to his rage or passion, but he has to keep a firm hold on his powers, and curb and pull them up, at a moment's notice. It is regulated by degree, for if the actor of emotional parts were not to hold the mastery over his feelings he could never rely on his power to produce those subtle shades and cunning texture in his work. Without this bit in the teeth of his irritated feelings he would "tear his passion to tatters, to very rags." The nervous qualities of man's nature become the playthings, the subordinates, of the actor. Yet, while holding this sway and mastery over them, he must still have the delicate shades of feeling, and on the experience of this feeling he must act. He must know what he is going to do; must have the mental picture ever before him, for, as has been finely expressed, "the poet cannot write while his eyes are full of tears, while his nerves are trembling from a mental shock, and his hurrying thoughts are too agitated to settle into definite tracks. But he must have *felt*, or his verse will be a mere echo." And this train of reasoning shews how seriousness and devotion must be applied to the art, and it is only a weakness to assert, or imagine, that because one is only an amateur, there is no need to strive after such excellence, and that such weariness of devout study may be safely left to those whose calling in life it is to rise on, or fall from, the ladder of this fame. But on the bare supposition that one is paid for his work, and the other is not, does there lie any reason why the will and the soul should not be employed in furtherance of the art? The schoolboy who has made up his mind to be a soldier, is none the less enthusiastic in making long scores at cricket, so that he may win the prize bat—although that he knows that professional cricketing will not be the destiny of his talents. Be he professional or be he amateur, his duty towards the art is quite the same. He must strive to appreciate and feel what he is doing. Does the actor feel? Touching on this point, that able critic the late George Henry Lewes observes:—"The answer to the question,—How far does the actor feel? is something like this: He is in a state of emotional excitement sufficiently strong to furnish him with the elements of expression, but not strong enough to disturb his consciousness of the fact that he is only imagining—sufficiently strong to give the requisite tone to his voice and aspect to his features, but not strong enough to prevent his modulating the one and arranging the other according to a preconceived standard. This passion must be ideal; sympathetic, not personal. He may hate with a rival's hate the actress to whom he is manifesting tenderness, or love with a husband's love the actress to whom he is expressing



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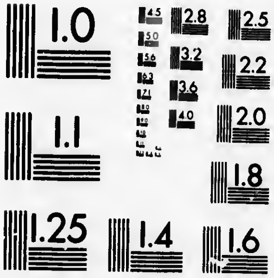
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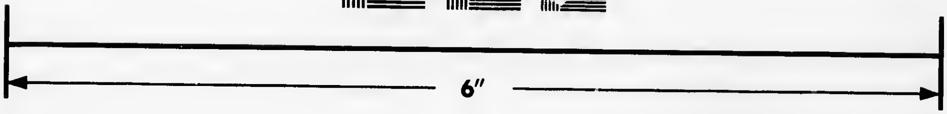

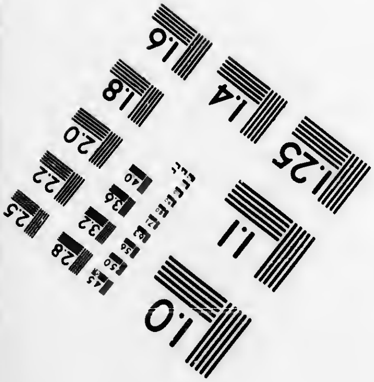

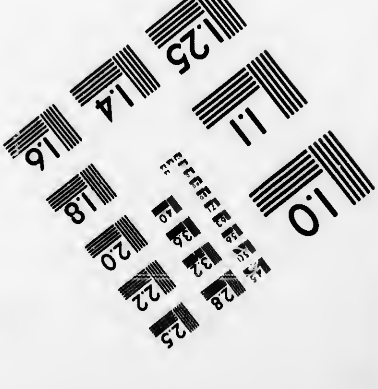

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vindictiveness; but for Juliet and Desdemona he must feel love and wrath. One day Malibran, upbraiding Templeton for his coldness towards her in the love scenes of *La Sonnambula*, asked him if he were not married, and told him to imagine that she was his wife. The stupid tenor, entirely misunderstanding her, began to be superfluously tender at rehearsal, whereupon she playfully recalled to him that it was during the performance he was to imagine her to be Mrs. Templeton—at rehearsal Mdme. Malibran.

"We sometimes hear amateur critics object to fine actors that they are every night the same, never varying their gestures or their tones. This is stigmatised as 'mechanical'; and the critics innocently oppose to it some ideal of their own which they call inspiration. Actors would smile at such nonsense. What is called inspiration, is the mere haphazard of carelessness or incompetence; the actor is seeking an expression which he ought to have found when studying his part. What would be thought of a singer who sang his aria differently every night? In the management of his breath, in the distribution of light and shade, in his phrasing, the singer who knows how to sing never varies. The *timbre* of his voice, the energy of his spirits, may vary: but his methods are invariable. Actors learn their parts as singers learn their songs. Every detail is deliberate, or has been deliberated. The very separation of Art from

Nature involves this calculation. The sudden flash of suggestion which is called inspiration may be valuable, it may be worthless: the artistic intellect estimates the value, and adopts or rejects it accordingly. Trusting to the inspiration of the moment is like trusting to a shipwreck for your first lesson in swimming."

And it will be noticed that the expression which occurs in this extract, "preconceived standard," has had its echo rung throughout these pages, and as, just because of this preconception being gathered during rehearsals, it is necessary for the player to have motives and reasons produced as correctly as possible, so in the same direction, is he the abler exponent who has mastered, not only his individual work, but has the motives and reasons of the other parts meandering through and interwoven with his own. Depend upon it, at some period of the play these hinge on one to another. The smallest detail tends to give colour and finish to the whole. Miss Pope wrote concerning the actor Dodd that "no one took snuff like him—this was a trifling circumstance, but he made it produce a good effect."

This feeling which the actor has to produce and control, is closely allied to the forms of speech which he uses. The one suggests the other. This was seen by Shakespeare when he wrote his advice full of meaning to the players, and directed that there should be a combination between speech of the tongue and movement of the body—

"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action."

The sequence of this should be noted—the action should start, if anything, prior to the word, as if the nerve had suggested the speech. It ought, indeed, to come simultaneously, but with an inclination to be before, but never behind, unless, as an instance of italics, when a movement may be repeated still symbolic of what has been spoken. A double emphasis is thus secured through force lent by this pantomimic action.

This interpretation of speech in dumb show is common enough ; it is seen in the ballet, and in the marionette show, and not a few plays—take, for instance, *The Dumb Man of Manchester*—have mute characters in them. In ordinary acting the combination is required. Shakespeare saw the value of this, though chroniclers tell us that the Ghost in *Hamlet* was about the highest piece of acting he soared to, and for a sequence of doleful monotony perhaps no part can excel it. In this junction the mental and the physical meet and, as it may be said, resolve themselves into mental acts. "And thus," says Dr. Maudsley, "each word represents a certain association and succession of muscular acts, and is in itself nothing more than a conventional sign or symbol to mark the particular muscular expression of a particular idea. The word has not independent vitality, it differs in different languages; and those who are deprived of the power of articulate speech must make use of other muscular acts to express their ideas, speaking, as it were, in a dumb discourse. There is no reason on earth, indeed, why a person might not learn to express every thought which he can utter in speech, by movements of his fingers, limbs, and body—by the silent language of gesture." Indeed, in the course of every-day life and conversation we give this "silent language of gesture" continual play, as when, by placing the finger to the lip we call for silence; or by a rapid jerk of the thumb towards the shoulder we denote that some one is approaching. "Delicate impulses," writes Dr. Andrew Wilson, "transmitted to the brain, result in images of things seen, or in sensations of things heard; and as brain-force or mind appreciates in this case, so does the same force, when stimulated in another direction, become transformed into the audible ideas whereby we know ourselves, and become known of others."

In the present era, moreover, the player has more scope for utilizing this brain-force than was customary of yore. Much that clogged the progress of the drama and of dramatic invention has been expunged. Mere imitation has given way to originality, and the actor of to-day is able to dare to do what is original. There is no one accepted school of acting

—that is dead and decently buried. *Oui, autrefois, mais nous avons changé tout cela.* Each actor has his own groove in which he may succeed or fail. Alluding to the Shakespearean epoch, writes Clarke Russell :—

"To the hypothesis of the greatness of the players of that period it may be objected that the dramatic art was in its infancy; and that as there were no precedents from which to filch the materials with which greatness is reared, these performances must have been rude, exaggerated and exuberant; that the audiences they were called upon to please were wholly destitute of critical taste, is demonstrated by their capacity for enjoying the monstrous absurdities of their 'mysteries,' and the awkward fooling of their courtyard mimes. But if dramatic history proves anything at all, it proves that precedents are not necessary to good acting. The numerous schools which have been formed, and which have been shewn inadequate by the easy manner in which they have been exploded, all point to this. Betterton's school was exploded by Garrick; Spranger Barry's school was exploded by Kemble; Kemble's school was exploded by Kean. The very term school, indeed, illustrates a deficience, for nature has no school. Yet in speaking of schools of acting, let us be careful to discriminate between the founders and their imitators. When we smile at the school of Betterton and Quin, we certainly do not smile at the greatest

Hamlet or Falstaff of their age, but at the mouthing, raving, solemn race of coxcombs that tried to reproduce them: at Mossop's gasp, at Macklin's tediousness, at Davis's mumbling, and at Sheridan's ponderosity of movement. Every testimony of his period concurs in proving Kemble a great actor; yet, were it possible for any actor of the day to embody in his personations the traditions of Kemble's excellences—the majestic stalk, the classic severity, the black-browed frown of the noble Roman, would it be easy to conceive any spectacle more likely to move our mirth, or provoke our contempt?"

Nor are our dramatists in working together the matter for stage exhibitions fettered by the absurd rules of dramatic unities which erstwhile were severely binding on their art. These unities were supposed to be three in number: those of time, place, and action. It was thus, in the time arrangement, made out that the action of a play should not exceed twenty-four hours. Quoth Aristotle:—"Tragedy attempts, as far as possible, to restrict itself to a single revolution of the sun, or to extend it but little, whereas the epoch is indefinite as regards time, and in this respect differs." While another point lay in the time of representation being exactly that in which the real event depicted in real life would occupy. And as to place, it was rigidly excluded that the audience should, in one act or scene, imagine themselves to be in Rome, and in the next in London. The actor of to-day is unfettered and free, save for the compass of those few fundamental rules, respect for or adhesion to which, have been found to be absolutely important for the arranging of decent stage-craft.

What is this acting? It is something akin to representing an ideal, and yet not a complete but a medium ideal—neither too high nor too low. It is a series of typical illustrations, broad enough in their sombreness or humour to be easily recognized as representative. The same class of character may be depicted in humanity by a hundred different specimens, but the actor must grasp one whose marks are prominent. There is the villain in real life, who would not do for the villain on a stage. It is, indeed, the holding the mirror up to nature, but it must be to nature brought, as it were, into a focus. Each item of assumption and delineation must be representative: it must be such that the careless and casual student of human nature will recognize it. It must be representative of classes. This ideal, however, must be sought from a common and not an exotic range. The same mental type of character may be hidden under a multitude of outside appearances—thus a representative specimen must be chosen, and this selection, while sufficiently stamped and marked in its design to satisfy the penetrating curiosity of critic and audience, must yet be in common sympathy with what the author intends; for, in working out the scheme of his characters, the literary builder must deal in shades, and may wish certain lines of character to appear either more subdued, or more robust, than the ordinarily accepted type would present. The delineator must carefully work on the basis of the author's intention. Thus a "funny" man need not necessarily be a buffoon. Exaggeration of character must be avoided, for exaggeration is beyond the probable, and runs a neck-and-neck race with being beyond the possible; it has, therefore, a false ring.

Acting must be dealt with from an artistic platform and point of view. It must represent every-day life, but gilded, refined, and toned down. Harshness and crudeness must be eliminated from it, else the picture will be a blotch. And here comes in the point to be considered as to what natural acting is, and how far nature, or effects after nature, are to be represented on the stage. Now, in the story of real life, there are an unlimited mass and surrounding of confusion, and a length of web which goes back to the past or forward to the future. There is amalgamation, and little distinct isolation. In a play, items out of lives only are taken, and as these items are to be used for one settled purpose, it is necessary that they should be, in their item existence, as nearly complete as possible. Each of the characters of the play is a complete picture, a definite study, its peculiar attributes being used as contrasts, or resemblances, in working out a plot. Therefore, in each character there must be this difference from its counterpart in real life, that it has the excellence of completeness. It has been pruned and dressed ; all flaws have been removed, and all unnecessary branches lopped off. It is something of an improved edition, a well-bound copy of commonplace life. Therefore, again, if the character has all the vices, or all the virtues of humanity condensed in it, it can scarcely be said to represent an actual likeness of actual nature, so that the conduct of a person on the stage must be guided by the ruling of art. This may be more simply illustrated by the common instance of how far and how long a person on the stage may turn his back on the audience. Now, in a drawing-room, a person's position in talking to another, may be, as it were, out of the general picture, and his conversation carried on in low tones ; but this on the stage would transgress art. It would be correct enough for an actor to turn his back on the audience, but his movement must not be a haphazard one, but one which has been previously regulated, measured, calculated, and rehearsed. Into this some artifice must creep, for awkward positions in a stage picture are unpardonable flaws. The actor, therefore, has this to study: if he turns his back on the audience and proceeds towards the back of the stage, will his voice be heard in the auditorium? will his facial expression and by-play be observed? Will he be placing himself in a position from which,—though it be suited at the moment to the co-mate he is addressing,—he will yet not be able to answer the next speaker, or to suddenly make an "aside" remark indicative of some important point? There must be drill on the stage which does not exist off or apart from it. As the best is taken out and dressed for exhibition, and the worst put aside, so does the language on the stage differ from the colloquial language which one meets in every-day, street, and drawing-room life. There is not, or, more truly, there ought not to be, any more put in than is sufficient to tell the story, and all the sentences should be rounded and fined off; more than one voice should not be heard at one time, and no meaningless interruptions should take place. So artistically—therefore unnaturally—is the whole condensed and blended, that no feature strikes the listener more forcibly than, when a piece has been filled up with verbal "padding" to spin it out to three acts, it becomes painfully apparent that it should have been wound up in two. It palls and grows wearisome, as do the wild digressions of a story which has to tell itself out in three volumes when already, to all pleasant and practical intents and purposes, it has been told in one. The events of a stage story must be sharp and decisive. Were a person to speak carefully prepared, or grammatically corrected, sentences in ordinary conversations off the stage, much mirth would be occasioned. While again, the blemishes and imperfections of every-day speech could not pass muster on the platform.

And yet, the consistency of things demands that nature must be imitated and approached upon the stage. Simply because it is perfect nature and, for necessary reasons, soars above the apex of nature, so does it become artificial. And the argument already adduced that the actor, in giving way to violence of passion or emotion, must yet hold the reins of control, shews where art comes in. Nature can be assumed, cherished, or adopted to its fullest point, and then finished off by a touch of art. Positions on the stage assert the necessity for the combination, for to suit the requirements of stage grouping, semi-artificial, semi-natural situations have to be adopted, but natural pose should always predominate. Art comes in to do something in the emergency. To action, therefore, or speech, as much of nature should be given, as will not interfere with an artistic rendering. It is here where the by-play of words and movements comes to the rescue. Hesitating and casual attention bestowed on the binding of books lying on the table, while an important speech is being spoken, or confession is being made, naturally associates the idea of nervousness, or the assumption of indifference. The toying with a flower or piece of embroidery work during a love passage, betokens a coyness, or the tremor of the mental pulse agitated by some outward act. The easy, careless lighting of a cigar, and playing with the match, when one expects to hear bad news, emphasize an indifference which yet conveys the idea of guilt, or of cold and callous bedevilment. Even in the small matter of writing a letter on the stage, there comes especial need for natural acting. As a rule, this is hurried over in such a manner as to be provocative of mirth amongst the audience, while the spasmodic dives of the pen into the inkstand causes more amusement. Though ink need not necessarily be used, there is no reason why the words should not be fully described on the paper with an inkless pen. Snatches of conversation and by-play can always be effectively introduced during the dictation and writing of a letter. All matters of this kind should be demonstrated as nearly as possible to the way in which they are done in real life. All these, according to the delicacy or roughness of their treatment, give emblematic negation or affirmation to the conversations. To again quote Dr. Andrew Wilson, "Primary gestures and signs over sounds are factors in the production of language. The movements of speech, then, do not differ in kind from those exhibited as the results of other bodily actions; their connection with the mind is simply more intimate than that which is implied, say, in the act of raising the hand to the mouth." And says Dr. Maudsley, "The word has not independent vitality." If there were not so many minor plots which work up towards the completion of the central plot, a play might be intelligibly presented in dumb show, only, here the art is more gossamer, more delicate, and requires more study and more schooling. It is common enough to notice how a player may deliver his or her lines of speech with due care and precision, but fail lamentably in the acting. Acting is not only "speaking" but "doing," and, although the relationship exists between thought and deed, yet, as regards interpretation of thought, it is far easier to say than to do.

As has been pointed out, the ideal selection for the study of the actor must be representative of the class or school in the grade of life from which the character is drawn, and it must also be presented in a masterly manner before the audience. The tones and the gestures, with the thousand and one items of detail, must all be produced in such a significant manner that everything done or said becomes, as it were, a stone in the structure of impersonation. The intonation of the voice, the restiveness or listlessness of action, all ought to mean something, and, of course, something akin to the nature of the life-picture being drawn. Edmund Kean excelled in this. Says one of his biographers, "He vigilantly and patiently rehearsed every detail, trying the tones until his ear was satisfied; practising looks and gestures until his artistic sense was satisfied." In carrying out this, moreover, the actor must needs settle his mind intently on his work, and while he may be said to feel the part he is playing, he must retain his control over his powers. For the time being, he is the character. Nothing, therefore, of an extraneous nature should be allowed to tickle his fancy, or attract his attention. Unforeseen events, trifling or great, happening in the auditorium, should be unheeded, as if unnoticed by him, and, on the stage, mishaps or unrehearsed effects ought never to move him. And quaint mistakes are often made during the progress of the play. Being unrehearsed effects, the actors notice them, but the audience are innocent as to their intrusion. A smile, however, from the player, indicates that something untoward has happened. This must also be avoided.

It may sound as rather droll and exaggerated to assert that one of the first lessons of stage trickery to be impressed upon the neophyte in acting, is the art of—standing still. Criticisms, it is true, are freely passed concerning actors as to their being "blocks" because they get transfixed to one spot; or that they have no "life" or "go" in them, but this is simply because the players do not know when to move, and how to move. Although it has been pointed out that action should accompany speech, this is more directed to actions of the hands or facial expression, rather than to walking, or complete movement of the body. When A is delivering lines, B should not be wandering all over the stage, else the attention of the audience will get centred on B, with expectations that he is about to do something connected with the story being told, and so the point that A may have been striving to impress upon his listeners gets lost. It has already been significantly observed that no movements of this nature should take place without being previously rehearsed, and without having some connection with the piece. All these movements, crossings, and the like have to be treated seriously at rehearsal, and, in particular, the regulation of the hands and arms. In the records of Voltaire, it is chronicled how, to tone down and thwart an uncontrollable tendency which one of his acting-pupils possessed, he arranged that the lady should have her hands tied behind her back during rehearsals. This succeeded very well, till, at length, heated with the passion of the thoughts and words, she, in a resolute moment, burst the slender cords that bound her unwilling arms. To her surprise, instead of chiding her, the master applauded the result, because it was natural to the moment of acting, and because, bent upon a truthful delineation of the part, she could not help it. This motionless acting is all the more hard and difficult to acquire, when a long interval elapses between the speeches of the player. Despite his being for the time out of the picture, the performer has yet to learn how to be natural and how, as it were, to do nothing in a graceful manner. For he must not commence unstudied by-play for the sake of creating a between-time part for himself, nor, by so doing, interfere with the progress of others. In an old play yclept *News from Parnassus*, which was acted at Covent Garden in 1777, there is a conversation among the characters concerning the dramatic author's work and the actor's mission, and bearing on this very point of keeping silent. Rantwell, one of the cast, says, "My name is Rantwell, you may read it in capitals three times a week in the play-bills. . . . . I hate to be silent in a scene—you have kept me here a long time without speaking a syllable, and let me tell you that is the hardest thing in action." A quiet, unobtrusive style soon tells with the house, and comment is made on the graceful outcome of the performance. There is nothing more common than for a person on the stage to have the appearance of not knowing what to do with his hands, or, indeed, with his body. Attitudes of inartistic mould are not noticed by the players themselves, nor by those on the stage, but when the picture gets focussed to the house, the defect is seen. And many of these defects accompany movements which are of every-day occurrence in real life off the stage. The fact is, that on the stage we are seen as others see us. Now, as a common illustration, there is nothing more difficult than, with graceful mien, to walk across a drawing-room. In a crowded room this is not observable, but take the case of an individual—there are, of course, exceptions—walking across a large ball-room, the centre portion of which is denuded of guests. Are not the movements crude and angular; is there not evidence of hesitation in every movement; is not the whole body alive with a visible self-consciousness? On the stage the space is more limited, and therefore the crudeness of the carriage is not so much seen, but still the movements are of a more individual style, and the dignified or undignified sweeps of a lady as she makes her exit off the stage, are plainly, even ruggedly, perceptible to the audience. Not less so with the man—there are trepidation and uncertainty in his action, what looks like "discontent" in his arms, and looseness about his head. A bad exit, or an inexact entrance, often mars and obliterates the merits of a scene—the lame exit giving a bad finish, the impotent entrance making a bad start. Here, too, should be pointed out, as regards speeches which finish with the retirement of the speaker from the stage, that the actual exit and actual tag-end of the speech should be made almost simultaneously, but care is to be taken that the words be delivered clear on the stage, intelligible to the audience, and not blurted out with the head half through the doorway. But preparation for this spoken exit must be made, and it is often a nice calculation. As it looks highly inartistic for a speech to be delivered in the centre of the stage with profuse accompaniment of emphasis, and then for the actor to beat a hurried retreat, so, by means of repetition at rehearsal, must the speech be broken up, so as not to overlap the natural movements made towards the door. And the trick of first jerking so many words out, and then jerking so many steps along the stage, must also be carefully avoided. Granted that the manœuvre is a calculated one, it must not be made in over-harmonious flights, and after the fashion of the repetition of a lesson. True it is that the audience should see the perfection of practice—but they must see only the perfection, and not the steps of practice. It may seem a small matter, say as regards kneeling, which knee goes on the floor, but, in a stage picture it is of dire importance. If the knee furthest from the audience be knelt on, the effect of symmetry is entirely lost; while the artistic eye will at once catch the ease of the position which keeps the leg furthest from the audience up, as a background, and the leg nearest lowered, and kneeling on the floor. So in standing, the leg nearest the footlights extending and covering the other is not only ineffective but positively graceless and awkward. In sitting, the position of the legs is still a study, and the "any way" of leg position in a smoking-room chair, will not do on a stage. Nor, with ladies, must graceless and prominent postures be passed over without correction. Allowing that such and such a posture may be polished enough in a room, it is so because, from the proximity of the onlookers the deformity is not seen, but all eyes are bent on the "picture" on the stage. We do not, as a rule, see graceless attitudes in sculptures; although these same attitudes may not be commonplace, they have to bear the critical test of the eye in their blending harmony with the whole. It is soft roundness, not sharp angularity, that is required. All movements on the stage should commence at the extremities, and be long drawn out—that is, the leg must be worked from the thigh, the arm from the shoulder, and the hand from the wrist, and full swing given to the muscles. Much by-play can be successfully wrought with hands and arms. The eye plays a very essential part on the stage, and a range of expressions can be worked by it. But there is another point connected with the eye which, behind the glare of footlights must be studiously attended to. The eye gives life and expression to the face, producing what may here be termed, countenance; therefore, the eye must be seen, else the face darkens and loses its vitality. Actors, unskilled in the range of working facial expression, are apt to droop the eyelid and thus hide the eye; or they scan the floor, producing a like result; or they keep the eye peering no further ahead than the orchestra, which produces an almost like effect. In none of these cases will the bulk of the audience decipher any animation in the face. The head should be kept well erect—not stiffly, but easily—and the eye pitched against the end of the auditorium, and above the level of the heads of the people, in which case the play of face will be seen by all. All this, however, must not be held as separate, but as part and parcel of the speech, the interweaving of the details. This combination of nature and art, must be obtained by natural and artful movement—using the word artful, not in the sense of trickery. There is a grammar of stage tricks, whereby effect is brought about, but it is not one which grows upon us as our acquaintance with, and respect for, the art warms up. Progress can be made without it, for, as was critically written of Daniel Terry, "no actor on the stage had less trick than Terry; his conception of all his various characters was invariably just and happy; his words were never slubbered over in haste; his action was never redundant, but always appropriate, and well suited to the matter he had to deliver."

In undertaking to act a part, it is very essential that an amateur should rightly estimate his own ability, and not, by reckless acquiescence, find that he is handicapped in his work. He has not only to learn the words and enact them, but he has to "create." No actor should confine himself to being a mere copyist. If he has never seen the piece selected, as played by the original exponents, or, indeed, by any exponents, on him must necessarily devolve the task of interpreting the part according to some standard or other, and that standard he, too, must frame. It must not be a haphazard determination as to its general colouring, but a deeply conceived leading idea; a train of thought merging into articulate speech and animate action. It must be a conception. This, what is termed the "reading," may vary in minor points, or be even in direct opposition to the idea worked out by the original creator—and neither may be the ideal conception of the author! As a rule, of course, authors and actors work conjointly in this. But the amateur will most probably have to create afresh and anew. Against this comes the amateur's experience as a playgoer. Every student and aspirant should study the living, as well as the written history of the art. So, as a fairly well accepted rule, it may be taken for granted that the amateur has seen the professional play which he has in his turn to play. But, though from this, a general idea of the character may be gained, he who is content with that, and does not take the trouble to work out new points of his own—which need not necessarily be new simply for the sake of difference—must be endowed with poor imaginative powers. It is most unlikely that two minds will conceive an identical drawing of one character. In much they may agree, but there must be differences in detail, and even in the ideas where agreement takes place, there is a difference in the powers of delineating and interpreting these ideas. One man may strive to achieve a reading, but may utterly fail to convey to his audience what he feels or means. This reopens the question as to the strength or weakness of the actor in portraying intelligibly what he feels. His canvas must be very blank if his audience cannot decipher his words and acts. So it is that, resolving on such and such an effect, which is to be produced by movement of the hand or body, by the expression of the face, and by the tones of the voice, due experiment has to be made, as to whether the deliberately expressed action and deliberately uttered voice, *do* represent what they are meant to represent. Too often they convey the opposite, and while the man feels an affirmative he speaks a negative. Meaning well is often doing ill. Herein lies the true study of acting, and it must be avowedly apparent that, to guarantee such result, there must be study and experiment, and not the bare, and often false, hope of genius lighting up a spark, and, combined with providence, making all end well. Genius may come to the rescue, but genius, after all, in that isolated form, is only the discovery of what persistent study has been doing for her. But genius may not come to the rescue: what then? Some grains of explanation as to the author's intention, may be gleaned from the sequence of motive as it runs through the play, and from the effect produced by friction with the other points. Students should be careful not to be over-original, just for the bare sake of originality. There are familiar mile-stones in every picture and phase of human life, and in the effort to do too much, the verve of nature gets lost, and the tint of art gets destroyed. These are the commonplace incidents of commonplace life, and these, in their common shrines, must be expected. The impression must be even, and, without exaggeration, the correct expression can be given. A look, a gesture, a shake of the hand, a curl of the lip, the glare of an eye; all can tell their own story. There is magic in a word. How many renderings are there to the word "Good-bye!" What diversity can be thrown into it, and all by simple intonation! A curt good-bye, a polite good-bye, a warm good-bye,—where shall the series end?

> "Although pronounced so many times a day,
> 'Good-bye' is not an easy word to say;
> Some words can wound us by a simple touch,
> They *sound* so little, but they *mean* so much."

There is the other phase of imitation, which appropriately comes in at this juncture, and that is the bald imitation, and copying of, a professional actor's antics, voice and peculiarities. No greater mistake can be made. It is undignified, and it is seldom absolutely successful, because, at the best, it is a parody and an imitation. If, moreover, it be worth studying a lengthy part, it is surely worth giving some individuality to it, in contradistinction to merely mangling out at one end what has gone in at the other. If, again, this art of wholesale imitation comes as a relish to the mimic himself, it may be neither palatable nor acceptable to his audience.

They may have come to see him act and not to see him imitate. Thus writes the satirical Churchill:—

> "The actor who would build a solid fame,
> Must imitation's servile arts disclaim;
> Act from himself, on his own bottom stand,—
> I hate e'en Garrick thus at secondhand."

Although the divisional study of reading and speaking — what is termed elocution — has been hinted at, being at one with action, it is still a subject that should be treated, in its elementary stages, by itself. "Reading is the delivery of language from writing; speaking is the utterance of spontaneous composition," writes an authority, and, in the study of dramatic declamation, the germs of both come into play. Stage speaking comes under the first point of the above, and is the delivery of language from writing, but it goes further than the second, for although it is not the utterance of spontaneous composition it must be given out as if it were. We know this art as elocution—the power of fluent speech; the power of expression or diction; eloquence; beauty of words; oratory. Says Dryden, "The third happiness of the poet's imagination is elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought so found, and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words." In learning the words of a part, the first requirement is that the matter be read over, and the meaning grasped. The thoughts of the author must become the thoughts of the reciter. In the sequence of a sentence there is a long string of minor ideas, explanatory and parenthetical, which lead up to the point where the emphasis is needed. This emphatic point, must, necessarily, be paused upon with greater deliberation than the mere expletive or explanatory phrases. These ellipses, similes, and the like are made apparent by modulation in the tones of the voice—some quicker, some slower. Thus, during the declamation of a pointed and significant sentence, where the emphasis is slow and emphatic, the sudden appearance, say, of a servant in answer to a summons, would require, in the order given—"Take this letter, *&c.*"—a quieter tone and more quick expression, the interpolation being but of minor importance; and then, in continuation of the primary speech, there would be a continuance of the originally pitched key of voice. In public speaking, where the sound of the voice has to travel some distance, it is necessary that the speaking be slow, so that, in their progress through space, the words may not race each other, and thus get jumbled up into a mere babel of noise. And, owing also to this necessity of the vocal sounds having to travel, the speaker must not allow the voice to drop, as in ordinary conversation, at the close of a sentence, for it is essential that the last word should be heard as distinctly as the first. The inflections of the voice must, however, be matters of study, for the voice is apt to give uncertain sounds. Nor must the diction be allowed to become too slow, or too monotonous. This latter is a common error, and the result of the sing-song has a most depressing, sleep-provoking effect upon an audience. With a heated atmosphere, and the even buzz of monotonously drawn-out sentences, a mesmeric effect is produced, which produces a visible dreariness amongst the spectators. But, with the varied shades of meaning involved in the majority of sentences—for few have not explanatory or interjectional interruptions—there need be no excuse for any such tedious and dull intonation. The theatrical word "mouthing" is a very suggestive one. More particularly in the recitation of blank verse is this apparent. A pomposity of diction is assumed. But the main fault lies in not according a close attention to the punctuation. If read according to this, the smoothness of verse will give forth its own cadence: it is only polished prose—and the prose of some writers reads like poetry. And poetry does not necessarily mean rhyme. The polished prose of many writers scans almost into verse. In the writings of Charles Dickens, moreover, we come across touches which are poems. Take this from *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and note the ease with which the lines flow, set as the prose is to rhyming measures:

"It is a dark night, sang the kettle, and the rotten leaves are lying on the way; and, above, all is mist and darkness, and, below, all is mire and clay; and there's only one relief in all the sad and murky air; and I don't know that it is one, for it's nothing but a glare; a deep and angry crimson, where the sun and wind together; set a brand upon the clouds for being guilty of such weather; and the widest open country is a long dense streak of black, and there's hoar-frost on the finger-post and thaw upon the track; and the ice it isn't water, and the water isn't free, and you couldn't say that anything is what it ought to be; but he's coming, coming, coming!—"

Or take this from the *Plays and Puritans* of Charles Kingsley: does it not read like deftly tuned blank verse?

" . . . . . . Did not the glowing sunset, and the reed-beds which it transfigured before him into sheets of golden flame, seem tokens that the glory of God was going before him in his path? Did not the sweet clamour of the wild-fowl, gathering for one rich pæan ere they sank into rest, seem to him as God's bells chiming him home in triumph, with peals sweeter and bolder than those of Lincoln or Peterborough steeple-house? Did not the very lapwing, as she tumbled, softly wailing, before him, as she did years ago, seem to welcome the wanderer home in the name of Heaven. . . . . . And was there no pattering of their voices, no light in their eyes, no trembling pressure of their hands, which said more, and was more, ay, and more beautiful in the sight of Him who made them, than all Herrick's Dianemes, Waller's Saccharissas, flames, darts, posies, love-knots, anagrams, and the rest of the insincere cant of the court?"

Indeed, the player must study the art of reading, and must do so at home; and must also learn to read aloud. Now, in the two quotations given above, what a string of diversity of thought runs through them: how richly tutored and varied must be the inflections of the voice to read properly the prose quoted above, without descending into a monotonous drawl of sing-song, and yet giving distinct life to the varied expressions and ideas! By constant practice in reading—by impressing on his mind the style of the writer, and appreciating the harmony of the prose or poetry—the student soon learns to acquire the art of proper intonation. And, moreover, the organ of voice gains strength for the strain of repeated elocution. The voice must be kept in training, and it is well, unless the actor is continually at the work, to use the voice lustily at rehearsal so as to get its powers matured. The expressions of feeling need not, however, always be repeated at their highest pitch.

When Shakespeare laid down his advice to the players, he, in another play, unintentionally no doubt, set them a very excellent task. In *As You Like It*, the speech on the seven ages of man is a very apt illustration for changing the inflection of the voice, and producing, by means of it and action, a series of symbols and ideals. For in the allusion to the various human actors who perform in this condensed drama of Life, the declaimer must needs jump from one illustration to another, and make these intelligible representations to his audience.

> "All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players;
> They have their exits and their entrances;
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages."

Here, in the following suggestive portraits, the actor, without too gross a colouring, must reconcile the specimen introduced into the era of which he is the symbol. The changes are rapid, and jump from the infant to the schoolboy; from the lover, and soldier to the justice; from the pantaloon to death. The study and analysis of the various passages are not unworthy lessons. It continues:

> "At first, the infant,
> Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
> Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school."

There is a semi-unimportance about this stage, but a cunning intonation is required to significantly testify the unwillingness of the boy to go to school; his "creeping" along, as if looking wistfully back over the fair expanse of meadow. The matter becomes more robust as the scene diverges into manhood—the meekness and bashfulness of the lover, with the opposite extreme of the vigour and dash of the soldier—

> "And then, the lover,
> Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
> Made to his mistress' eye-brow"—

as if there were something contemptible in this puny caricature of manhood.

> "Then a soldier;
> Full of strange oaths, and bearded like a pard,
> Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
> Seeking the bubble reputation
> Even in the cannon's mouth."

There is room here for the story-teller to open his lungs and suggest the dare-devil noise and excitement of battle—all emblematic that the velvet of the youth has given way to the broad-cloth of the man. Then, as life ages and mellows down, something bereft of excitement and significant of care and repose is expected, and it must come accompanied by some reward. And so with the reward of good living, and the importance which age gives, comes

> "The justice;
> In fair round belly, with good capon lined,
> With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
> Full of wise saws and modern instances,
> And so he plays his part."

Here comes a pause—the top of the hill of life has been reached. There are familiar cities and landmarks behind, but uncertain, unknown paths ahead, and we almost totter, as in doubt, when we push ahead. And the voice begins to lose its richness and to sound as blown through a reed.

> "The sixth age shifts
> Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon;
> With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
> His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
> For his shrunk shanks; and his big manly voice
> Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
> And whistles in the sound."

And then the plains beyond; the sad perpetual music of the cataract's fall; the soft odours of the trees; withered blossoms, fallen fruit; harvest and—the aftermath,

> "Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

In this, as in other cases, the use of the voice can amply explain the story, and the intervention of by-play and action may strike the notes required. But action and by-play must be softened down, and dealt sparingly with. Action, however, may come to the rescue in many a scene of vivid word-painting, for

> "Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th' ignorant
> More learned than the ears."

One further note must here be added. Let the pronunciation of proper names, names of places, expressions in foreign languages, *&c.*, be all pronounced in the same manner. It must be Mar*quis* or Mar*quess*, which latter is the more correct of the two, all through the dialogue, or Mar*key*—taking the latter spelling as symbol of the sound—but not both.

The chief items then which the amateur histrion must affect are—due appreciation of the work in hand, and careful and industrious study of the general performance, and his individual part in it, so as to raise it above the common level of mediocrity. Such a result can be acquired only by marking every tone, gesture, word or act with studied style and finish. Nothing in any piece, no character in any piece, is so insignificant that something at least may not be made out of it, and sometimes, even on the stage, the least is the greatest. Wilkes, in speaking of great performers who have acted small parts says, "We have seen Woodward, in his highest favour with the town, play a soldier in the *Rehearsal*, bringing in a message."

The end may be briefly summed up:

Act with care, colouring your impersonation so that it shall resemble real life as closely as is compatible with stage delusions and requirements.

Speak slowly and distinctly, observing carefully punctuation and rhythm; and always retaining the voice well up to its high pitch to the end of the sentence. Be careful also, in this speaking, not to continue your sentence while applause is going on, else some important verbal link of the part may be lost; and do not intrude your speech, as an interruption, until your co-performer has finished what he has to say.

In matter of dress be studiously correct, even down to minute details.

Golden above other rules is this—learn and *know* your part. "Which do you consider your best sermon?" was asked of an eloquent French preacher. "The one I *know* best," was the reply.

◆

In the construction of amateur dramatic clubs the various classes of actors and actresses are divided under the following heads:

Tragedians, a line scarcely ever adopted with anything approaching success by amateurs: *First* and *Second Walking Gentlemen*, meaning those who take the male lead and subordinate lead; *Old Men*, taking what the term denotes; *Light* and *Low Comedians*, representing, as a contrast, the polite from the vulgar comic element; *Servants, Peasants, &c.*, which cover the supernumeraries. There are also attached to these a separate grade with the prefix of "eccentric," alluding to comedians and old men who have a special power of mimicry or assumption of special peculiarities of character. The same grades apply to the female divisions, with the addition of the "Singing Chambermaid," a theatrical term for a pert servant girl and burlesque actress.

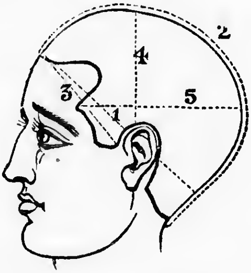
It does not follow from this that because a member s old in years, he necessarily is the best "old man" of the company. On the contrary, it is often found that many young men make the best old men for stage exhibition. Most men who aspire to be actors have some peculiar idiosyncrasy which displays itself in minor chords, in real life, giving evidence where their "line" of acting lies. Equally true it is that many have got a settled idea that they were born and cut out for doing parts which are in distinct variance with their capabilities. The acting-manager of the amateur dramatic club must be the elect and chosen dictator, and all his subordinates must cheerfully acquiesce in his authority and determination. Into the classes before enumerated, he will, when he has gained an intimacy with their histrionic powers, divide his brigade, and, on a piece being selected for representation, he will cast it accordingly. In even the most amicably arranged and concerted corps, this will lead to trouble, for somebody must take a minor part, or a part he thinks he does not like, and it not unfrequently happens that the player selected to do the "wounded soldier" has a strange partiality for playing the Thane himself. As most modern dramas are written for "stars," and thus become "one character parts," this difficulty more necessarily and naturally arises, and there flows from this fact the natural result that one or two out of the company are always cast for good parts. It may be adduced as being fair treatment all round, that the leading actors of the corps should get leading parts in order, and that, in the sequence of plays produced, diversity in these should be aimed at, so that each of the more capable exponents should get a chance of displaying his powers. It is very true that the "stuff" that may be in an actor never shows itself till it gets a chance for full development, and then unthought-of latent talent is found to exist where no genius or inspiration was ever supposed to have been lying dormant. This sudden bound from mediocrity to patent success is common on the professional stage. But the ranks of both professionals and amateurs are so packed and crowded, that the chance only comes to one out of the many. And it is a question which contains in itself opportunity for much nice argument—how far the members of an amateur dramatic corps are justified in making experiments as to the virtues and excellences of an untried actor, and before a paying audience? The amateur, be it remembered, not, as a rule—and certainly not in the case of the untried one—having gone through the painstaking and tedious, but necessary drill of stage manœuvres.

* * *

Dress and make-up are important features of study to the player. As regards dress, in selecting the pieces, a primary thought should be devoted to considering what magnitude and importance the performance is to hold. Not a little of the ultimate success of a piece rests on the characters having the proper and appropriate costumes assigned to them. In minor drawing-room entertainments, plays which call for "powdered wigs" should be avoided, as also those asking for costumes of certain eras in history. These can only be obtained at a theatrical costumier's, and at once greatly increase the bill of expenses. On the other hand, an additional charm is lent to drawing-room pieces, when the costumes are rustic and picturesque, thus forming a happy contrast to the ordinary costumes of the audience. Such dresses may generally be unearthed from private wardrobes, and need only a little tailoring to make them fit, and a scrap or two of ribbon to make them look smart and bright. Let them however, be as nearly correct as possible in their semblance to the proper dress of the persons whom they are supposed to represent. Above all, in this matter of dress, personal vanity must be laid aside. It is a creditable enough ambition for a player to make him, or herself, as nice-looking and neat as can be done with the forthcoming clothes, but rectitude must not be sacrificed at the expense of personal charms; therefore if the part be a lodging-house maid-of-all-work, the dress must be copied from real life, and not from the professional stage, where, in the dressing of these servant characters, it is generally found that the ladies playing them possess the neatest high-heeled shoes, deftly clocked stockings, the best of fitting dresses, the daintiest of caps, and a profusion of jewelled rings. In real life the domestic "slavey" has generally a "smudge" on her face, and her dress is not over-clean, nor her hair very smooth. The lady's-maid again, though dressed in quiet and becoming style as fits her place as semi-companion to her superior, ought not, for the bare sake of appearances, to be smothered in purple and fine linen. And if a character, male or female, in the piece, is alluded to in the dialogue, as being poorly dressed, so must that character appear; and if the dialogue mentions that she wears a red cloak or he a white hat, it is essential that a red cloak or white hat should be worn, or else the dialogue should be altered to suit the exigences of the wardrobe. And if the idea of the character represents it as being carelessly dressed, or ostentatiously dressed, or badly dressed, so must the costume appear, despite the disagreeable fact that it may not shew off the performer to any advantage. But, let the performer remember during the play, the character has left off the knowledge of self, and has entered into a different and alien being. If, too, the character should be elderly, so must the dress tally, and be in harmony, and this, too, although the part is being played by a young and good-looking man or woman. And, here again, the question as to the dialogue having to be suddenly changed to meet a sudden exigency, such as a description of dress different from that used in the text of the play, suggests a repetition of the explanation as to how far the actor, while assuming a feeling or character, yet retains control over himself. If the player is entirely "lost" in the character, he would be unable, in a natural manner, to change his language. There may, for instance, have been no dress rehearsal; the players may not even have seen their costumes; but in ordinary rehearsal, A has been alluding to B as wearing a blue coat. Suppose that, through some error B enters with a brown coat. Is A still to stick to his text and insist that the coat is blue? Even on the professional stage, carelessness and want of thought provoke such ridiculous and apparent flaws. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that the actor should have complete control over himself, and be in readiness to make himself an apt master of what should be said or done to meet every unforeseen difficulty or necessary change. People have a marvellous aversion to making themselves look "ugly" on the stage, or, indeed, disguising themselves. No greater error can be conceived. It is by the aid of this disguise, formed by facial make-up and dress, that the spectator dissociates the individuality of the actor, and listens to him and watches him, not as he is himself, but as the character he is creating. It may seem of trivial moment and superfluous to make such an emphatic note as to this. But it is not so. The experience of stage spectators all points to errors of omission and commission in this very respect, and the criticism is common and universal as to "not looking the part;" to being "too well dressed for the position represented;" to being "too clean," and the like. In cases of large private houses, where there is ample room both for stage and auditorium, there is no necessity for having restrictions as to dress. Some attention, too, should be given to harmonize and blend the colourings of dress on the stage, and it is well for the players to intimate to one another what colour each purposes to wear—lest by a stroke of fate, everybody should appear dressed in garbs of a kindred hue, or, what is equally as bad, should afford too prominent contrasts. In the case of getting costumes from a professional emporium, it is often impracticable to get them for two consecutive nights, unless specially agreed upon, and this prevents a dress-rehearsal taking place. A dress-rehearsal is of great advantage, as many faults and slips are discovered during it. But to old stagers it is not so necessary. However, under any circumstances it is essential that the dresses should be previously tried on, to see if they are complete and if they fit. It is very dangerous work leaving all this to take care of itself on the night of performance. The player should always provide himself with needle and thread, pins and pieces of tape or twine, as repairs have to be made in very unexpected emergencies.

The word "picture" has more than once been used as descriptive of the result of well-rehearsed, carefully-positioned, and correctly-dressed scenes. The costume has much to do with bringing about this effect. The costume is, as it were, the background. The actor, playing the part of a country bumpkin may, from peculiarity of speech or assumption of rustic diction, give a fair rendering of the part; but there is no picture, no transformation deceiving the on-lookers. The man, in drawing-room attire, but with the rustic's voice and manner, is but an imitation: but, when the drawing-room attire is cast off, the rustic garb assumed, the red face and unkempt hair arranged, there comes to the spectator the ideal of representation of the part as it exists in real life. To all intents and purposes the imitation ceases and the reality begins—for, if the costume and make-up be correct, and the voice and gestures appropriate, there is none to say that it is not a real country clown who is performing. Amateur actors are somewhat liable to forget the importance of this, and are loth to assume ill-becoming garbs. But entire disguise on the stage is a very needful desideratum, as it relieves both actor and audience from that too obstrusive desire to recognize each other. The costume, however, ought to be representative, and unless the character is meant to be eccentric or to have peculiarities it should neither be exaggerated nor made indistinct. As a rule, stage dresses are inclined to over-do the resemblance wanted. The miser is generally too-pronounced in the meagreness and poverty of his attire. An exotic specimen of the class is selected in place of a general and commonplace one; the drunken working-man is generally more besotted in appearance than there is any necessity to represent him. Yet, though in this matter of over-colouring, care must be taken not to make too much of it, caution must also be adopted so that, in keeping with the spirit breathed through the dialogue, the character is not under-done. Not only has the language of the stage to present itself intelligibly to the ear of the audience, but the costume and scenery of the stage has to present an agreeable realization or picture to the eye. Here again, therefore, is a farther excuse for impressing on the actor the need of thinking out all and every detail, be it big or little. As the component parts of a play, necessarily condensed so as to fit time of telling, are only those taken from the complete story in the sequence of a kind of mason-work, one verbal and motionary stone fitting on to another, so no ingredient is so trivial as not to require devotion, and care and thought being given to it. In plays of greater magnitude, where historical semblances assert themselves, this absolute correctness is of greater importance, for, in such, there is more necessity for the completeness of the "picture." Without the quaintness of costume, the dialogue loses its force and meaning. Without the sombre quietude of the quaker dress, the words "thee" and "thou" would sound out of similitude to, and be out of harmony with the picture. Our minds have been tutored to associate language with dress, and both with distinct periods of time. "S'death!" as an interjection, comes glibly from the mouth of the buccaneer of the Elizabethan era, but it would scarcely be in harmony as a part of speech in the days of a modern Victorian. There is, in costume, the same long string of details as there is in acting. There are powdered heads, and patches on the face; there is the use of gloves or mittens; of fans and eye-glasses; of high-heeled shoes and periwigs. All these, when worn, must be kept to their proper dates. Carelessness or inattention in items of this nature are crimes against history. Powder, as the chronicles have it, came in with the reign of James I., rose to its height with the Georges, till the tax levied on it, in 1795, pushed it somewhat out of fashion. To these divisions of time, therefore, must the use of powdered wigs be reserved. It is not likely that William the Conqueror wore a patch to hide a dimple! The wearing of gloves began in the eleventh century, but the custom did not become common till about the fourteenth, and it may be added, was not carried to extremes until the nineteenth century. Periwigs saw light or use about 1529, and the gay days of the court of Elizabeth brought high-heeled shoes into vogue. As acting is a picture of the lives which have been lived, and of those we now live, so, in that acting must appear the multitudinous items which characterized the lives of the past and characterize the lives of the present.

In the event of persons living at a distance, and not being able to visit the costumier for the purpose of trying on the dresses, measurements should be sent. Theatrical costumes, when hired, must not be expected to be perfect fits, but still they will be sufficiently adapted to their purpose. The distance between stage and auditorium in this respect lends some enchantment to the view. For ladies, a measurement as to length of skirt, with length of body, width of breast and length of arm should be sent, but if the bodice is required to fit with great



Rules for Measurement.

No. 1. The Circumference of the Head. No. 2. Forehead to Poll. No. 3. Ear to Ear, across Forehead. No. 4. Ear to Ear, over the top. No. 5. Temple to Temple, round the back.

accuracy, a specimen bodice should be sent. For gentlemen, width across shoulders and length of arms are the important measurements. In wigs, the measurements as per annexed drawing should be sent.

There is also an important piece of advice to be given to those who, during the same scene or act, have to alter or completely change their costumes. There is, sometimes, not overmuch time to effect this in, so it is prudent and safe to put as much of the one costume above another as can be conveniently accomplished. The outer costume should therefore, on measurement being taken, have allowance made for this. And, of course, the dress which is last seen should be put on first. It is not likely to be feasible to get more than one entire costume on, but the underclothing of the others can be put on, and, for instance, stockings can be drawn one over another. In making these changes, this difficulty presents itself only when they occur during the progress of the scene, and without the welcome wait between the acts. As has been previously hinted, the time occupied in making these changes should be rehearsed, and the dialogue and action arranged to meet the necessities of the possible pause.

Closely allied to and associated with costume, of course, comes what, in theatrical parlance, is called the "make-up." This has reference to the alteration made to the appearance of the face, so as to indicate youth, age, or "character;" or bring about effect of nationality. This is an especial art, and one which it requires close study and practice to become an adept. It is by far the most difficult lesson to describe. It may here be put down as seasonable advice that, in the case of a performance of any importance, the services of a professional "dresser" or peruquier should be engaged, for there are very few amateurs who have made any study of this branch of our subject. Better results, moreover, can be obtained, and much trouble done away with, in collecting the many necessary adjuncts connected with the art. A contract is usually made with the tradesman who supplies wigs, and deals in the various materials used in the professional make-up; and, this being arranged, the player, on reaching the theatre, or wherever the performance may be taking place, will find the "wig-man" established in a corner of one of the larger of the dressing-rooms, with a mirror in front of his chair, and on the table or shelf the complete paraphernalia of his transforming art. It will have been necessary to those who have to wear wigs, that they shall have previously called at the shop, and described exactly what they want to wear, and to have tried on their wigs. All this preliminary method of reaching a conclusion necessitates the use of time and the expenditure of trouble, but no theatrical entertainment can be carried out, without an ample bestowal of both in the preparations. In

London and the larger cities, these professional agents have the costume and make-up of nearly every character known in dramatic history, at their fingers' ends. The costumier will unearth from his store of apparel the representative garb required ; the peruquier will produce the identical style of wig, and have, in his mind's eye, the identical tint and tone of feature which has been associated with the character, ever since the literary artist created it. Theatrical costume and make-up are apt to run in grooves : certain styles of characters have accepted and recognized fits of dress and of make-up : and this is, after all, only natural—for, as has been already urged, the assumption of character ought to be, in its appearance, a representative one, and this ideal representation has already gone through a course of study. Author, actor and costumier have put their heads together, and worked out a result, always with the aim of a medium representation being acquired, and yet with due regard to historical accuracy, pictorial art, and the exigencies of the dialogue and descriptive figures of speech. So, too, in this art of make-up, there are recognized and accepted rules which, if carried out, produce certain expected results. And what will strike the tyro on his first sitting under the dresser, is the rapidity with which, with seemingly no thought given to the matter, a line is dashed in here, and a dab of rouge put on there, with the marvellous result of a complete transformation of the features and expression. But all this is done simply by acquiring and following the rules of the art. The more experienced player, however, will not readily acquiesce in any hurried make-up. He will have formed a mental conception as to how he wishes to look, and will have described this. Then will commence a series of studies in the make-up all working towards the desired end. So complete is this study, that a knowledge of the art will suggest how the lightest drawn line across the face will bring about a result in change of expression which, seen at a distance when all the marks and tints of colour become blended in harmony, could scarcely be believed to have been so easily brought about. Let it be remembered that, in this case, where one artist has to undertake the making-up of a whole company, and the costumier has to assist at the dressing thereof, it is of vast importance that players should assemble in their dressing-rooms in plenty of time previous to the commencement of the performance, and that no stage-wait is thus occasioned by players not being ready. And the necessity of this early attendance becomes at once apparent, when it is pointed out that, in cases of amateurs, repeated custom has not simplified the modes of wearing certain dresses; and that there is, save when the company has assumed the rank of old stagers, an excitability which brings into due prominence the truth of the proverb about there being, in more hurry, a less degree of speed.

There should be no confusion in the dressing-room, and the player on arriving at the destination should select a corner where he will leave his everyday-attire, and, in the case of there being a series of dressing-rooms, a notice should be put up detailing the various names of those who are to occupy such and such rooms. Valuables, such as watches, scarf-pins, rings, money, *&c.*—save a little of the latter—should, unless worn throughout the evening, be invariably left at home. As comfort is a matter of no little consequence, and as, oftentimes, the players have to meet when the performance is ended, so it is a natural desire to evince a wish for cleanliness to the face. But what is one towel among so many? Let, therefore, each player provide himself with his own towel, or a piece of old linen if he does not care to be burdened with carrying it away again. Soap will generally be found, and this is a very necessary adjunct with which to remove all traces of rouge and paint from the face.

It is not always feasible to have professional aid in this matter, nor is the performance always of such magnitude as to warrant the expense. As, however, it has been shewn that much of the result of make-up is acquired through following rules, it stands to reason that the amateur, though he may not attain to great perfection, may yet gather sufficient knowledge of the mysteries of the art as to produce fairly good counterparts of artistic make-up. In the published lists, there is generally a very imposing display of requirements, and though each of these may have some especial use, it will be found, in practice, that a very few will cover all real requirements. All these can be purchased separately, or in regularly fitted-up boxes. Violet powder, rouge, powdered carmine, powdered chrome and Indian ink; with a powder-puff; hare's foot for the rouge; camel-hair brush for making the lining with Indian ink; and a piece of cotton-wool for dabbing on the carmine or chrome, will be found sufficient for all colouring purposes. There are also pencils for the eyebrows and marking in of veins, but the brush with Indian ink will do just as well. There is a joining paste for connecting, without a division being seen, a bald wig to the forehead; a bottle of spirit-gum with which to stick on hair; and, what is termed *Email Noir* for giving the appearance of vacant teeth in old characters, though a little melted wax or gutta-percha is equally effective. Side by side with the descriptive text are a series of illustrations which shew the different effects produced, by lines, shading with coloured powders, wigs and hair, on the face. These illustrations, it should be explained, are all drawn from the same original lines, and only shew the various changes in appearance by the additions of make-up. And they only shew the result of the make-up as seen by the audience. Following the directions herein laid down, such results will be secured,

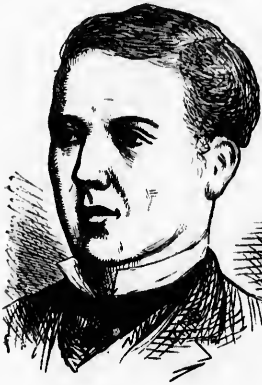


FIG. 1.

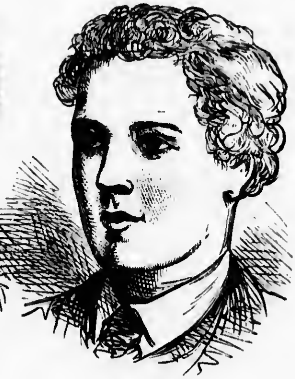


FIG. 2.

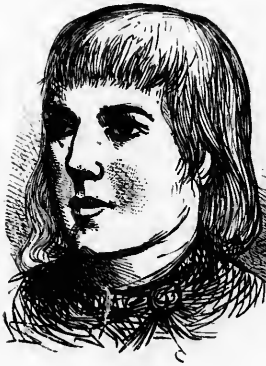


FIG. 3.

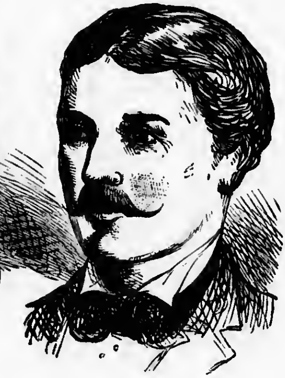


FIG. 4.

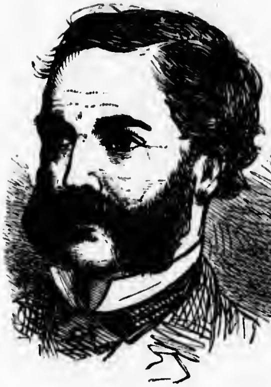


FIG. 5.

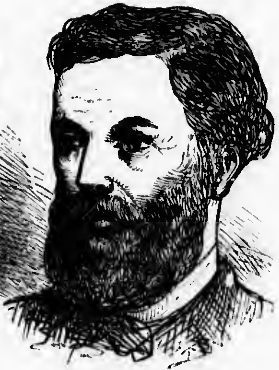


FIG. 6.

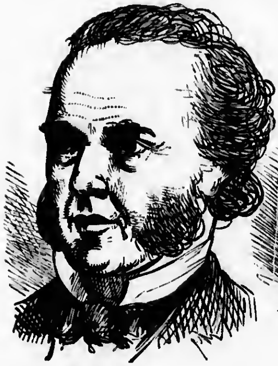


FIG. 7.

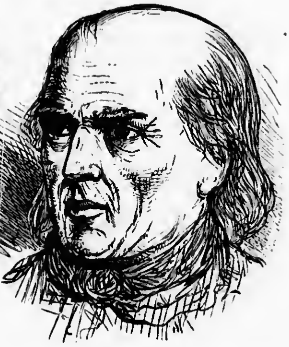


FIG. 8.

though on close inspection of the face, a crude, harsh, and unnatural picture is seen. Previous to beginning with placing colour on the face, a damp towel should be run over it, so as to remove grease, and then the face should be freely powdered over with violet powder which gives a dry ground on which to operate with colours. In youthful characters played by youths, or old characters played by elders, there is not much make-up required, though, for the sake of doing away with the identity of the performer, the addition of a wig, suitable to the age of the character, may be worn, but, as regards young characters, it is as well to avoid too much effort after a make-up. These items, however, are essential. No actor should go before the footlights without having rouge on the cheeks, lines round the eyes, and the eyebrows darkened. The glare of the footlights imperatively demands this ; wanting these additions, the face is bereft of all expression, and is rendered entirely vacant of decided feature. In *Fig.* 2 we have a juvenile effect given from the face unpainted, except so far as has been suggested above, and this aspect is heightened by a curly wig being worn, or the ordinary hair, if long and soft enough, brushed in similar style. *Fig.* 1 is exactly the same size and shape of face as *Fig.* 2, as reference to the nostril and lower lip will at once shew, but, with the substitution of close-cut wig, or the wearer's own hair damped and brushed flat, and a few extra lines. The essential rouge on the cheek-bone is the same, as also the lining round the eyes, but we have an additional, but very slight shading down from the side of the nose to the corner of the mouth; also a little rouge on the chin. So far, there must be no lines on the brow or lines protruding from the corners of the eyes. But the slight line on the cheek imparts a severer look to the face of *Fig.* 1 than to those of *Figs.* 2 and 3; another effect, by the simple change in style of wig being brought about in *Fig.* 3, which, by still examining the characteristic points, will be found to be the same design of face. In *Fig.* 4, we get a still older, or rather maturer, cast of countenance, and this is brought about by the simple addition of two or three narrow black lines run out from the outward corners of the eyes. This lining of the eyes brings about very important results, and the direction which they are given, whether up or down, produces entirely opposite effects. According to the age of the character, so must these lines be emphasized, but they must be finely drawn, else, when seen at a distance they are apt to appear as having run into one another, and a "smudge" is the result. These lines merely represent the "crow's-feet" in the faces of living people. Now, if these lines are given a downward direction, as in *Fig.* 5, they give an expression of a happy disposition; while, as in *Fig.* 6, being drawn upwards, they produce a look of gloominess, and, by the addition of a curved line from the nostril, also downwards, the tone of severity is added. Reaching the riper years of manhood, as represented in *Figs.* 5 and 6, we have the same preliminary start; the advance process which opens up the make-up of all faces destined for whatever condition of age or life they may be intended. In addition, however, to the lines from the corners of the eyes—and the preliminary drawn line under the eye may here be made slightly stronger than in previous cases—a couple of lines, or "wrinkles" must be added to the brow. These should be put in, either with a soft pencil or light paint-brush, and a slight touch of violet powder to tone down their prominence. The "expression" make-up of *Figs.* 5 and 6 are the same, excepting the direction of the lines from the corners of the eye, which, as examples of effect, are made to differ, but they might be made the same. In getting correct delineations of feature in the more elderly phase of life, much is brought about by the style of wig, and hair on the face. *Fig.* 5 has an older look than *Fig.* 6 because of the hair in the composition of the wig being more scant; because of its exposing more of the upper extremity of the brow; and because of the "clean-shaven" chin. This latter effect is heightened and intensified by a line being marked in under the lower lip, a slight line in the shape of a curve, ⌒, round the chin-bone, and a little extra rouge on the chin itself. It is when we reach beyond the period of middle age, or in making faces up for "character" or "eccentric comedy" parts, that the merit of the making-up art comes to the front. We have to attend to more minute detail in *Fig.* 7, for here we have to use a partly-bald wig, and trace much more significant lines on the face. First as to the wig. The natural hair being brushed back from the forehead, and off the temples, over the ears, the wig is then "drawn" upon the head, being pulled tightly down at the back, towards the neck, so as to cover the natural back hair. Previous to this, however, some of the "joining paste," which is bought in "sticks," is rubbed over the top portion of the brow, and to this the bald part of the wig clings. The end of the stick of paste is then rubbed firmly along the edge of the scalp of the wig where it joins the brow, and leaving a wax deposit, causes the obliteration of any joining mark. A little rouge is then rubbed on brow and scalp of wig, and thus the colour and tone of the two become equal. A line or two is then run along the scalp of the wig to indicate, as before explained, the wrinkles of age, one being measured off so as to come where the wig and brow join, and thus any chance of a joining being seen, is deftly turned into a wrinkle. These artificial wrinkle lines should be marked where the natural wrinkles have made their lines, so that a double set may not appear. Next, from the level of the eyebrow, two lines are drawn towards the nose. The ordinary rouging is then carried out, only with a little extra force as to depth of colouring; and the usual lines round the eyes. But the face, to get this effect of age, has to assume enough lines to make it look, at close quarters, as if striped like a zebra; but all these lines being blended and toned down with powder, show at the distance the effect desired, but not the cause of that effect. Two further lines are wanted from the inside corners of the eyes down the cheek thus / \; a little dark colouring round the inner side of the nostril; with short lines, as if continuing the width of the mouth, and with an inclination to slope downwards. All these in addition to the lines and shadings previously described for the other diagrams. A "suspicion" of chrome may be used on the face as well, if a sallow or unhealthy expression is wanted, and a little blue powder lightly rubbed on the chin gives an unshaven appearance, and tends in a large measure to do away with the previous familiarity of features. According to the style of appearance must the rouge be applied; in very meagre quantities and almost hidden by either white or yellow, if sickliness, or hypocrisy be intended, and with full colour if a hearty constitution is to be expressed. The paler the face, the more the make-up has the tendency to become the "representative" of villany; the redder the face, the nearer the exemplification of robustness or joviality. As the quantity of years, so the quantity of the lines. There are, of course, various styles and degrees of bald wigs, and there are various important effects to be got from the manner of putting the wig on, for, as, in real life, there is a fund of character to be gleaned from the shape and size of the human forehead, so the wig can be arranged so as to give these effects, by a mere shifting it, and thus curtailing or lengthening the extent of forehead area. This effect, produced by the position given to it, is applicable to all wigs—with a massive display of forehead, we have the hopeful expression produced for a Mr. Micawber; by slouching it down, and narrowing the space of forehead, we have the striking appearance of Bill Sikes. In coming to more definite and decided old age, as in *Figs.* 8 and 9, we have recourse to the same lines, only, these must be, in all cases, lengthened and intensified. Creating the effect of "hollowness," however, is what makes the transformation. The part under the eye should be darkened, also the slight cavity on the upper lip, and that between the lower lip and chin. A still greater degree of effect, in this direction, may also be attained by slightly darkening the centre of each cheek. The lines must be considerably intensified and extended: those on the brow, for instance, extending round to the temples, and those starting from the inner corner of the eyes running well down the cheeks. Wrinkles should also appear at the junction of cheek and chin, and on the throat. The addition of the grey or white hair of the wig, and eyebrows, will regulate the

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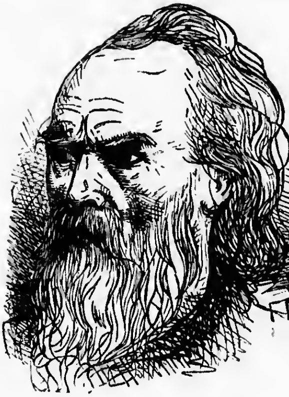

FIG. 9.

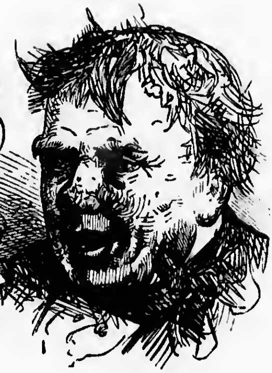

FIG. 10.

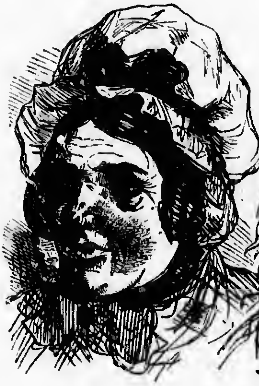

FIG. 11.

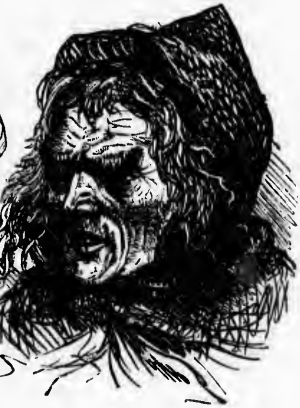

FIG. 12.

further effect of age. *Fig.* 8 represents the face, with bald pate, and hairless face, and from it, a good idea may be conceived as to where the lines and hollow effects should be placed. *Fig.* 9, having whiskers, moustache and beard to hide the lower half of the face, shows that only the upper half requires to be made-up. *Fig.* 10, which, for the sake of illustrated example, represents a somewhat bloated and unwholesome face, may be said to come under the heading of makes-up for eccentric or low comedy parts. The make-up is the same as in the previous pictures, but, of course, requires a little extra "touching up." The unkempt condition of the hair helps, in a great measure, to produce the dissipated appearance of expression, and, in place of rouge, powdered carmine will be freely used, which will heighten the tint of the complexion, the extremities of nose and chin being well rubbed with colour. In the make-up of female faces, the same rules apply, and the same principles guide, as in the devices resorted to in the make-up of the males; but more attention has to be devoted to the style of hair-dressing and to the class of wigs. Except in costume pieces in which powdered wigs must be worn, for the purpose of giving the appearance of age; or for some other reason or intentional design, it is as well that ladies avoid wigs as much as possible. They are expensive to buy, or hire; they never appear so natural as a wig on a male head does; nor do they fit so well—

more especially at the side points where they touch the face. The drawings on the title-page shew a pair of girls' faces, with hair in modern and costume styles: and *Figs.* 11 and 12, with touch of character about them, suggest a landlady and a witch.

There are a few other points connected with the trickery of make-up. Apart from the wigs, attention must be given to eyebrows, moustaches, whiskers and beards. A great variety of character can be manœuvred with these. For the mere purpose of emphasis, Indian ink applied with a camel's hair brush, is all that is required; but for purposes of extra disguise hair should be substituted. Eyebrows are very effective, and a great improvement has taken place in the substitution of loose "crape hair," for the old-fashioned made-up eyebrow. This crape hair can be purchased at the shops which deal in theatrical wares, and may be obtained in various colours. To make a pair of eyebrows, cut off two short ends of the hair, each about an inch long, rub them, each separately, between the palms of the hands, which imparts a crisp and frizzled appearance to the hair. Then having trimmed them, with a scissors, to the size and shape required, lay them on the natural eyebrow, over which a small brush wet with "spirit gum" has been passed. Slightly press, so as to cause adherence to the skin, and the matter is complete. This spirit-gum is of great and excellent value, as it is light, dries almost immediately, and has strong adhesive qualities. In like manner, whiskers and moustaches should be made, though these can also be got from the dealers, already designed and made up. The subject of the shape of these is of moment in bringing about effective changes of countenance. It should here, also, be thrown out as a warning, that those who are unaccustomed to wear wigs and the like, have great tendencies to be continually "handling" them. This is due to nervousness and doubt as to whether the wig has gone awry, or the eyebrow is falling off. Properly adjusted at the start, and examined after each act, there is very little chance of any such calamity befalling; but, with repeated tugs to see if these be in their proper places, there is every probability of their getting adrift from their proper position. This is peculiarly noticeable with ladies, who keep fidgeting with their wigs, suggesting to the audience, a fear that the back hair is coming down. A like vice is noticeable in members of the other sex who, if their hands are not engaged in "dabbing" their eyebrows on, are strenuously pulling at the ends of their moustaches.

To produce an emaciated appearance of face, hands, and arms, an additional touch of "Dutch Pink" is given to the skin, also a tinge of yellow added, but the leading marks are got by exaggerating the hollow parts, and the veins. The hollow appearances are got by rubbing a little blue powder—antimony is very generally used—where the surface of the skin undulates ; by lining, with paint-brush or pencil the veins and natural wrinkles ; and darkening obtruding points, such as the knuckles, finger-joints, and elbow bones. It is essential to continue the make-up beyond the face, to whatever other parts of the bare body may be seen. Thus, nothing could look more unnatural or unreal than the bronzed face of a sailor, and beneath it, a delicate white throat and chest. The make-up of the face must be toned down over the neck. So also, the face of a tottering old man, with a pair of dainty white hands, would not be in unison with each other. As in acting so much by-play is performed with the hands, it is necessary that these should get their share of make-up as well as the face. Let all make-up be softened down with a delicate "puffing" of violet powder. And this, too, must be regulated, in a more or less degree, by the distance between the stage and the audience, and the power of the gas-lights. On the professional stage, it is desirable that actresses whiten their arms and hands. This is necessary, and should be imitated by the amateur. Red arms, and still more, red hands, look unbecoming on the stage, and the glare of the footlights is a keen detective in shewing up blemishes and imperfections. The application of white to the skin, when put on in somewhat heavier doses, is of further value. Take, for instance, a player leaving the stage, and returning in a frightened or agitated state ; if, during the interval when off the stage, the powder puff be applied to tone down the rouge, and blanch the cheek, the effect of fright and dismay will, on the return before the flare of gas on the stage, be clearly perceptible to the house; and, even, by cunning and artistic trickery, such as by having a powder-puff concealed in a handkerchief, and with the player's back to the audience, a like result of the appearance of fear may be brought out, by merely using the handkerchief against the face, and thus imparting the white to the skin. But tricks of this nature must not be clumsily performed.

In low comedy characters, old men, and the like, other imitations of nature can be produced. The loss of a tooth makes a marvellous change to a familiar face, and this is done by painting the tooth, which is supposed to be missing, with a liquid substance called *Email noir*, which dries on the ivory and is easily scraped off at the finish of the performance. In absence of this, a shred of soft, dark-coloured wax will do as well, while some have resort to common black sticking-plaster. In faces where the appearance of dissipation is wished for, such is brought about by painting on the face, pimples, blotches, scars, and such like disfigurements. The nose may be dealt with in various ways, such as turned into an Eastern shape by darkening the hollow above the bridge, and thus giving the bridge more prominence; or it may be increased in size, by the affixing of cotton wool on it, well wet with the spirit gum, and brightly coloured with rouge and carmine. In arranging a facial make-up, whether it be grotesque or otherwise, a mental design should be first formed, and the result built up from that plan and picture. The player, too, must needs play in the similitude of the character presented by the make-up. If an old man, an old man's voice must be assumed, and so on. This rule is not always adhered to, as, not seldom, old men are seen upon the stage, possessing lungs which give out volumes of lusty voice about the stage. There be many players who have one idea of their character, and another idea, as to the tone and key in which the voice for it should be pitched. The kindly weaver-actor, Bottom, evidently knew more about weaving than acting. He was anxious to play all and every part, and many modern players are quite as ambitious, and, like thoughtless Bottom, are prepared to look one character and act another: "I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an' 'twere any nightingale."

* * *

One of the leading features which tends to make a dramatic performance a success, is the precision and vigour with which it goes. Very trifling circumstances will make an audience discontented, and unless the spectators are comfortable and really enjoying the playing, there is certain to be a coldness in reception and an almost gladness when it is over. Punctuality in the start, decision and precision as the play proceeds, and no vacancies or gaps, are all indispensable attributes and adjuncts. There is nothing wearies an audience more—and weariness brings about discontent—than having to wait a long time before the piece begins, or having to endure long waits between the acts. Now this first evil in getting a fair and punctual start is generally to be attributed to some of the players being late in commencing to dress. There is no excuse for this. The arrangement that the curtain should rise at a given hour ought to be strictly adhered to. A few minutes previous, the overture should commence, and as between the overture and the ringing up of the curtain there should be no interval, but the one follow sharply on the other—those appearing in the early parts of the play should be at their stations with the commencement of the music. Presuming that all is in readiness and every one punctually dressed, one note on a spring hand-bell should be sounded as a signal for the orchestra to begin, and whether the orchestra be composed of a complete band, or be an individual performing at a piano, the same preliminary announcement should be made. This note of the bell calls the attention of the hitherto gossiping and chattering audience to the work of the evening. The overture should be of a somewhat lively description—that is, it should be a piece of concerted music, and not a minor composition such as a waltz. This latter comes in as an appropriate style of music between the acts. The overture, however, need not be a gloomy composition. The conductor must also be careful not to play too loudly—as is too often done—thus displeasing the audience, and chiefly those sitting in the front rows, for though there is no reason why the overture should not be listened to in silence and with attention, still experience shews that it scarcely ever does get such courtesy extended to it, the audience preparing to hold a friendly and miniature conversazione during its performance. Yet, rightly or wrongly, the overture must be sacrificed to get the audience into a pliable state of mind, and into good humour. During it the stage-manager should see that his company are collected on the stage; that the stage furniture is in proper position; and the actors should give one last scrutiny to see if their properties are where they ought to be.

Previous to the last few bars of the overture, the stage-manager will cry "clear the stage," and all must immediately retire to the neighbourhood of their wings of entry, saving, of course, those who figure in the scene on the uprising of the curtain. The lights will also be raised to their proper height—the footlights having been previously turned on simultaneously with the first note of the overture.

In the cases of comedies, it is often customary for soft and appropriate music to accompany a slow rising of the curtain. In this case no speaking must take place on the stage until the music has ended; nor until the curtain is completely up; nor, in the event of applause greeting the opening of the scene, until such applause has ceased. With regard to this latter, it should also be pointed out that all stage conversation and action must be suspended in the event of applause breaking in at different stages. By continuing the dialogue under such circumstances, much of the words of the plot may be drowned in the noise. Critical opinions as to this introductory music vary very much, but there can be no doubt that a soft and sympathetic realism of feeling is caused by the music; at points during the play, chiefly, however, in melo-drama, it is sometimes used as an accompaniment of emphasis of a telling speech or situation, but save in excessive melo-drama, its admittance is not to be encouraged; but its aid may very properly and artistically be called into use at the close of scenes or acts. In this case, language may be used while it proceeds, but the music must be toned down so as not to obtrude too much in deadening the effect of speech. An early cue as to this should be arranged with the band, the members of which should try and get their instruments into position without attracting the notice of the audience or, by bodily movement or noise, breaking the spell which has been cast over their imaginations. With the act complete—but it may be a position or situation subsequent to the last word having been uttered—one note on the bell will be the signal for the fall of the curtain, and this fall must be quick or slow, according to the effect which is wished to be produced. A death scene, or mournful, or romantic situation at the end would invite a slow lingering descent; while an entrance of surprise or announcement of catastrophe would sanction a rapid lowering. Between the acts in a theatre, or in places where it exists, the division is marked by the fall of the act-drop—the curtain only being used at the end—but whichever is in use, on its fall, the positions on the stage must remain as they were, until it is seen whether the audience testify their appreciation of the entertainment, by giving a call. If in the affirmative, the tableau will be retained, or another one emblematic of a further epoch in the story, substituted—this having been previously designed and rehearsed. The stage-manager will collect his company previous to each act, intimation having meantime been given to the orchestra to fill up the interval. An encore is altogether inadmissible in theatricals: and no matter how urgent may be the thoughtless calling of the audience, no player is to re-enter during the progress of the play or bow acknowledgment, or make any sign of noting applause during the play, save by stopping in his dialogue till it has subsided.

It is customary for an audience to applaud the entry of a favourite actor, and this compliment is returned by a bow from the stage. The recognition on the part of the audience is admissible—though it should not be carried to anything beyond a brief welcome—but the answering recognition, if polite, is reprehensible. The actor is not on intimate terms with the audience till he has fulfilled his contract and done his work—then he can bow grateful acknowledgments to his heart's content. During the play, however, applause coming from the audience should only be inwardly felt. These remarks in no way suggest that the audience should not cheer, but on the contrary—for applause breaking in at judicious moments is a useful tonic to the player. As it may be reasonably assumed that the actors are doing their best, leniency in notes of disapproval should be the maxim of the house—but there is no reason why the audience should not hiss distinctly bad acting. It is a delicate and argumentative point, and one not likely to entrench on the work of amateurs, as hissing generally is dealt in on the first night of a play, when it is directed chiefly against the piece and not the players. Connected with this, a story is related of Lee, the actor, who, on one occasion when he was performing, was struck by an apple thrown from the house; he stepped forward, and with his genuine and rich brogue, exclaimed interrogatively, "By the powers, is it personal? Is it to me or the matter?" At the end of the play—not unfrequently as the result of a double call after each act—the players may be called, when they now file past the audience before the curtain, going as nearly as possible in pairs, and in the connection they have had together in the piece. All being over, the orchestra will play the National Anthem, and the footlights be lowered ; also the lights on the stage, but not those in the auditorium until the audience have dispersed. The players will then retire to take off their dresses, and here let it be observed, that in doing this, the costumes, wigs, properties, *&c.*, should not be carelessly tossed aside, but laid all together or given in charge of the attendant costumier or wardrobe keeper. In cases where professional dressers and makers-up are in attendance, it is customary to give a small gratuity—nothing being done *gratis* on or off the stage—and such recognition ensures extra attention on future occasions, and is in many ways quite worth the slight tax, which should not be withheld.

Mention should here be made of Prologue, Epilogue, address, and, what is termed, the "tag" to a piece. The former two are rarely met with in these modern days, and this, perhaps, is not to be regretted. A play should be complete enough in its texture, and clear and concise enough in its argument, not to require an introductory note of explanation, or an afterthought apology for shortcomings. In performing old plays, however, these should be retained, as they keep intact the record of the style of the old playwright. Prologues, when explanatory of the play, are generally dull, as Fitzpatrick in his own prologue to his play of *The Heiress* says,

> "Prologues, like Peers, by privilege are dull."

Epilogues, too, somewhat mar the artistic finish to a piece. The modern epilogue either takes the form of an appeal to the charity of the audience, as in the generality of tag-ends to farces, or in rhymed remarks, which, as a rule, have little or nothing to do with the outcome of the piece, as in comedies. A well-conceived finale, whether comic or otherwise, is a far more intelligent and intelligible conclusion to a play. There is no little art in the proper declamation of a prologue, and with the old school of actors, much was made of these. The *Theatrical Biography* tells us that "King excelled particularly as the speaker of Prologue or Epilogue. There was a happy distinction in his ease, manner, familiarity, and acting these dramatic addresses, so as to render them in his post session, entertainments of the first kind." The prologue of the past has its place usurped by the "original address" of the present, which is generally a rhymed speech, argumentative concerning, and describing the aim and motive of the performance, and not of the play. This being delivered as a separate item, and in no way connected with the play, affords a pleasing introduction. The elocution in the giving of such an address should be of a high class of excellence and attainment.

Allusion has repeatedly been made to the choice of plays, and to the cost of performances, and these points require some further explanation. In the first, it may be taken as the general rule that amateurs play pieces fairly well-known—indeed, are too apt to make the mistake of playing pieces too well-known, and thus lessen some of the interest which should attach itself to the representation. Such, upon the assumption that familiarity breeds contempt. Some thought should be given to this, for, though genuine and enthusiastic playgoers do not weary in seeing the oft repetition of a good piece, so that it be decently well done, this class of votaries to the drama is a very limited one. There are, indeed, not a few persons who derive intense amusement from being spectators of a badly acted and arranged piece, but the acting and arranging must be extremely bad and bordering on the burlesque or ridiculous, to promote fun at its misfortune, or to win such a description as Edwin Waugh gives of a performance he saw in a small provincial theatre, where "The tragedy was a farce; the comedy was downright murder; and the music sounded like an accompaniment to tooth-drawing. But the scanty audience evidently enjoyed the whole thing; and so did we. It was so gloriously ill-done, that it was impossible not to be pleased with it." Another danger lies in selecting pieces which happen at the time to be making a successful run at a theatre, and where a certain actor or actress is calling down especial critical and public approval by the delineation of some character. To attempt playing the same piece in the same town, and at the same time, is injudicious, and, perhaps, savours somewhat of bad taste. But there is no reason why, after a certain lapse of time, or in a district where the play is not known, amateurs should not essay to perform these successful plays, and why individuals from their ranks should not emulate the successes of the professional. Plays, with the few exceptions of original pieces, which are written by amateurs for amateurs, first see light on the professional stage, and it stands to reason that these will have been seen and approved by amateurs, previous to their being selected for representation. There is nothing more difficult or troublesome in this respect than striving to choose a piece from a list of printed copies of plays. Unless with great knowledge of acting and of stage requirements; unless with the complete knowledge of all stage departments as there have been advocated in the preceding pages; without ample leisure to read plays, and, while reading, to picture effects and situations—

there are very few persons who could be trusted to make anything like a judicious selection. It is too common a practice for an idle person, simply because he, or she, is idle, to be entrusted with the difficult task of reading plays, and deciding on their merits. Some plays read well, and play badly, and others do the reverse. Like an egg, a play should be "full of meat," and it is because out of the mass written, so few are so, that the list of usually acted plays is so poverty-stricken in its length. All have been played, on trial, but with less than more success, and being with less, soon find rest upon the shelf of oblivion. This is peculiarly noticeable in the programmes of the professional playhouse, where, ever and anon, the old dishes come up in the course of farces, and revivals of a set of comedies, the numerical strength of which may be almost counted on the fingers, are invariably selected. At the same time, many plays get so common and familiar by repeated playing that, becoming stale, they get a rest; such may, after the lapse of time, be fittingly revived. But only to one cognizant with the practicabilities and impracticabilities of the stage should the selection of pieces be entrusted. Then, when chosen, the cast may be roughly selected, subject to the ultimate supervision of the stage-manager. And caution, as against haste, must be used in regard to this dispersion of parts, Friendship for any particular person, and the wish declared by that person to act, must not be deemed necessary qualifications to make such a selection off-hand. Undue haste in this respect causes endless confusion and raises social ire. It is not always easy or palatable to ask a person to retire and permit himself to be substituted by another, for aspirants after dramatic honours are, perhaps, imbued with a more dangerous and explosive pride than any other class of persons. Having generally discussed the proposed entertainment, and all its primary and consequential attributes as previously hinted at, and arrived at a conclusion as to the plays to be undertaken, and the fact being notified to the company, copies of the piece should then be distributed, and the work commenced. The only recognized library for the publication and sale of plays in England, is that carried on by Mr. Samuel French, 89, Strand, London. Books of the words of plays cost sixpence or a shilling each copy, but the price of the majority is sixpence, and the plays are sent post free to any address in the United Kingdom for this fee. But it should be here pointed out that because printed copies of plays can be thus purchased, it does not follow that they can be played free of expense. Plays are the properties of their respective authors, or of those to whom, during the term of duration of copyright, the authors have sold their plays. For the most part, the collection of fees for the playing of pieces is regulated by the Dramatic Authors' Society, the offices of which are at 28, King

Street, Covent Garden, London. To the Secretary of this Society application must be made for permission to act pieces which may be enrolled on their lists. Professional theatres are divided into classes, with fixed tariffs for the performances, and a fixed tariff is also arranged for amateurs. As regards the collecting of fees from amateurs, a general impression prevails that this charge is made only when money is taken at the door, and that, in the event of the audience being brought together by invitation, and without advertisement, that the plays can be presented without payment of authors' fees. Some writers are very jealous of allowing this, and reasons of good weight and worth, unnecessary to detail here, have been advanced in support of the author's view of the matter. The Dramatic Authors' Society, an association of the principal play-writers in England, maintains that authors are entitled to fees for all performances of a public, or semi-public character, and this society has obtained various judicial decisions which support their view of the aw. The society claims fees for all performances, except those which take place in a private house, for the entertainment of the people residing in such house, or their guests. It is, according to this view, immaterial whether money be taken at the doors or not, or how the audience gains admission, whether by card, or by invitation, or by direct or indirect payment. There is an Act of Parliament which protects the rights of dramatic authors, and imposes penalties upon those who perform plays without permission of the authors to whom they belong. But, laying aside the legal, there is the moral aspect—why should not the author who lives by his brain-work, obtain fees from the public who make use of his property? It certainly is courteous, for the author or owner of a play to be applied to, for permission to act his piece; and the general custom is to apply for such permission, which is scarcely ever refused, and to pay the fees. It has been contended that an author benefits by frequent performance of his plays, and the amateur actor has been known to argue that the representation of a play is always an advertisement for the piece and its composer's name, and that it raises discussion concerning the two, and brings both into publicity—but this view contains very questionable logic. An author might reply that an inadequate representation of his play would bring his work into contempt and disrepute. With reference to the liability of a person who gives an unauthorized entertainment, he is not only liable for the loss or damage sustained by the author, but he may be sued for the full benefit derived from the performance, or for a fixed penalty of forty shillings; and every one taking part in the performance, "representing or causing to be represented" as in the words of the Act, is individually liable, and for a separate penalty if the forty shillings penalty be sued for. As to charitable entertainments, and the remission of fees, the authors contend that people ought not to be charitable at their expense, and whether the object is charity or otherwise fees are invariably required; at the same time some authors do occasionally return fees in the shape of subscriptions to charities: but that is an individual act of charity.

This preliminary fee must be added to the expense of the entertainment, and will be found to vary considerably. Thus, the fee for amateurs playing the comedy of *The Two Roses* is five guineas; the comedy, *War to the Knife*, two pounds; the comedietta, *A Cup of Tea*, five shillings; the farce, *A Kiss in the Dark*, ten shillings. These specimens have been selected from the list, simply because the titles of the pieces will be familiar to most playgoers.

It should also be mentioned that all new plays when acted "for hire," have first to get a sanction and license from the Lord Chamberlain, and so tight is this rule held that the bare fact of excisable liquors being sold, as refreshments, in the place where the play is being enacted, brings the performers under the category of actors for hire. The powers vested in the Lord Chamberlain come under sections 12 to 15 of the Act for regulating Theatres, 6 & 7 Victoria, cap. 68. Referring to the above, Clause XVI. runs:

Clause XVI. And be it enacted, that in every case in which money or other reward shall be taken or charged, directly or indirectly, or in which the purchase of any article is made a condition for the admission of any person into any theatre to see any Stage-play, and also in every case in which any Stage-play shall be acted or presented in any house, room, or place, in which distilled or fermented excisable liquor shall be sold, every actor therein shall be deemed to be acting for hire.

Fees have to be paid to the Lord Chamberlain for reading and licensing plays, and the subjoined directions have been prepared for the guidance of the public:

1. One copy of every new Stage-play, and of every new Act, Scene, or other part added to any old Stage-play, to be sent to the Examiner *seven days at least before* the first acting or presenting thereof.

2. Manuscript copies of new Stage-plays sent for examination and Licence should be clearly and legibly written, as they are not returned but registered and bound in volumes for preservation in the Dramatic Library of [illegible]s Office.

3. The Reading Fee to be paid at the time when such Stage-plays are sent to the Examiner; and the said period of seven days shall not begin to run until the said fee shall have been paid.

The scale of Reading Fees, as fixed by the Lord Chamberlain, in accordance with the Act of Parliament, is as follows:—

For every Stage-play of 3 or more Acts . . . . £2 [illegible].
For every Stage-play of less than 3 Acts . . . . £1 1*s*.

All communications for the Examiner of Stage-plays to be addressed to "The Lord Chamberlain's Office, St. James's Palace."

The clauses of the Act referring to the powers of the Lord Chamberlain are:

Clause XII. And be it enacted, that one copy of every new Stage-play, and of every new Act, Scene, or other part added to any old Stage-play, and of every new part added to an old Prologue or Epilogue intended to be produced and acted for hire *at any theatre in Great Britain*, shall be sent to the Lord Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household for the time being, seven days at least before the first acting or presenting thereof, with an account of the Theatre where, and the time when, the same is intended to be first acted or presented, signed by the Master or Manager, or one of the Masters or Managers of such Theatre; and during the said seven days no person shall for hire act or present the same, or cause the same to be acted or presented; and in case the Lord Chamberlain, either before or after the expiration of the said period of seven days, shall disallow any Play, or any Act, Scene, or part thereof, or any Prologue, or Epilogue, or any part thereof, it shall not be lawful for any person to act or present the same, or cause the same to be acted or presented contrary to such disallowance.

CLAUSE XIII. And be it enacted, that it shall be lawful for the Lord Chamberlain to charge such fees for the examination of the Plays, Prologues, and Epilogues, or parts thereof, which shall be sent to him for examination, as to him from time to time shall seem fit, according to a scale which shall be fixed by him, such fee not being in any case more than two guineas; and such fees shall be paid at the time when such Plays, Prologues, or Epilogues, or parts thereof, shall be sent to the Lord Chamberlain, and the said period of seven days shall not begin to run in any case until the said fee shall have been paid to the Lord Chamberlain, or to some officer deputed by him to receive the same.

CLAUSE XV. And be it enacted, that every person who for hire shall act or present, or cause to be acted or presented, any new Stage-play, or any Act, Scene, or part thereof, until the same shall have been allowed by the Lord Chamberlain, or which shall have been disallowed by him, and also any person who for hire shall act or present, or cause to be acted or presented, any Stage-play, or any Act, Scene, or part thereof, or any Prologue or Epilogue, or any part thereof, contrary to such prohibition as aforesaid, shall for every such offence forfeit such sum as shall be awarded by the Court, or the Justices by whom he shall be convicted, not exceeding the sum of Fifty pounds; and every licence (in case there shall be any such) by or under which the theatre was opened, in which such offence shall have been committed, shall become absolutely void.

It is impossible to estimate exactly what a performance will cost, until the whole matter has been arranged. Much variation, of course, will be caused by the style of entertainment, and the charges to be made by costumiers and other professionals, will depend upon the distance the materials have to be forwarded, the number of men employed, and the time occupied by these. But it is the wiser course to make contracts and to adhere to them. The charge for costumes necessarily depends upon whether new dresses have to be made, or whether such can be got in stock, and whether there are a number of supernumerary characters to dress. As a contract can be made to dress the pieces, this is evidently a cheaper way than paying for each item of costume separately. The usual fee for the hire of the portable stage, with the attendance of scene-shifters, is ten guineas; but this, again, would be increased in the case of long and distant carriage of the frame-work being necessary. So much depends on circumstances, that no accurate statement of cost can be made prior to the contracts being entered into, and the complete details arranged. It is deemed customary that the giver of the entertainment should bear the entire cost, and that no pecuniary burden should fall on the individual players. Thus those engaged in the plays have only to go to the costumier and perruquier, with whom the contracts have been made, and select and try on their dresses and wigs. In cases of performances being given for charity and the like, the same rule exists as to indemnifying the players from personal expense, by the simple plan of deducting the entire cost of entertainment from the proceeds of subscriptions and takings at the doors. It will, however, give an idea of approximate cost to quote the figures of a strictly private performance given in a hired hall, so as to avoid trouble in the private dwelling, and also to secure extra space for the audience. The performance consisted of a one-act comedietta and a two-act comedy. Rent of hall, £6 6*s.*; hire of portable stage, £10 10*s.*; hire of costumes, £5 5*s.*; hire of wigs, 1*s.* 6*d.*; fee to professional prompter, 10*s.*; fees to scene-shifters, optional, but usual, 6*s.*; fees to police to attend at doors, 10*s.*; printing invitations, the programmes being covered in costumier's charge, 10*s.*; sundry gratuities, 7*s.* 6*d.*, giving a total of £25 10*s.* 6*d.* To this some minor expenses out of pocket may be safely added, such as purchase of books, &c. In performances of a greater magnitude, and, say, with the extra rent of a theatre and authors' fees, these figures would be considerably magnified. All this, however, emphatically confirms the experience that amateur acting can only be successfully carried on when serious thought and arrangement are to be given to its preparation.

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QUINCE. *But, Masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night: and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight: there will we rehearse. In the meantime I will draw up a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you fail me not.*

BOTTOM. *We will meet, and there we may rehearse. Take pains: be perfect: adieu!*

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