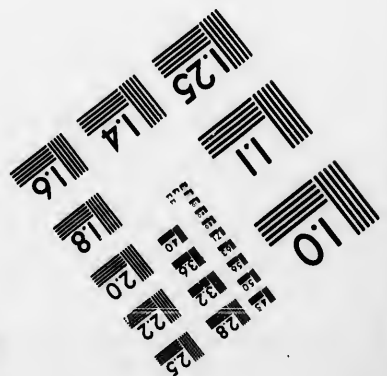
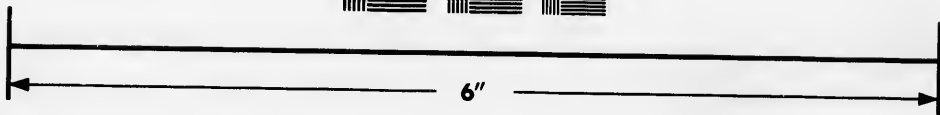
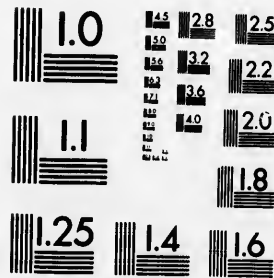


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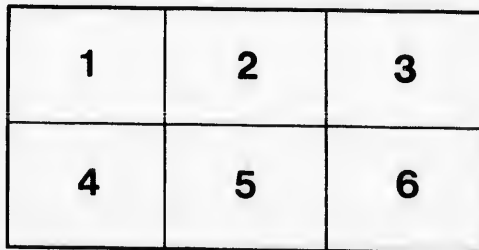
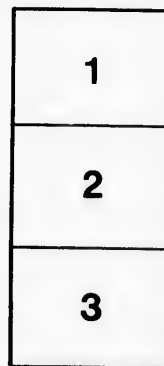
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OF THE  
**LIFE OF SARAH BERNHARDT**



*COMPILED FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES.*  
BY F. RIDGWAY GRIFFITH and A. J. MARRIN.

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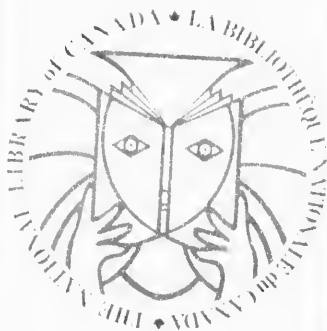
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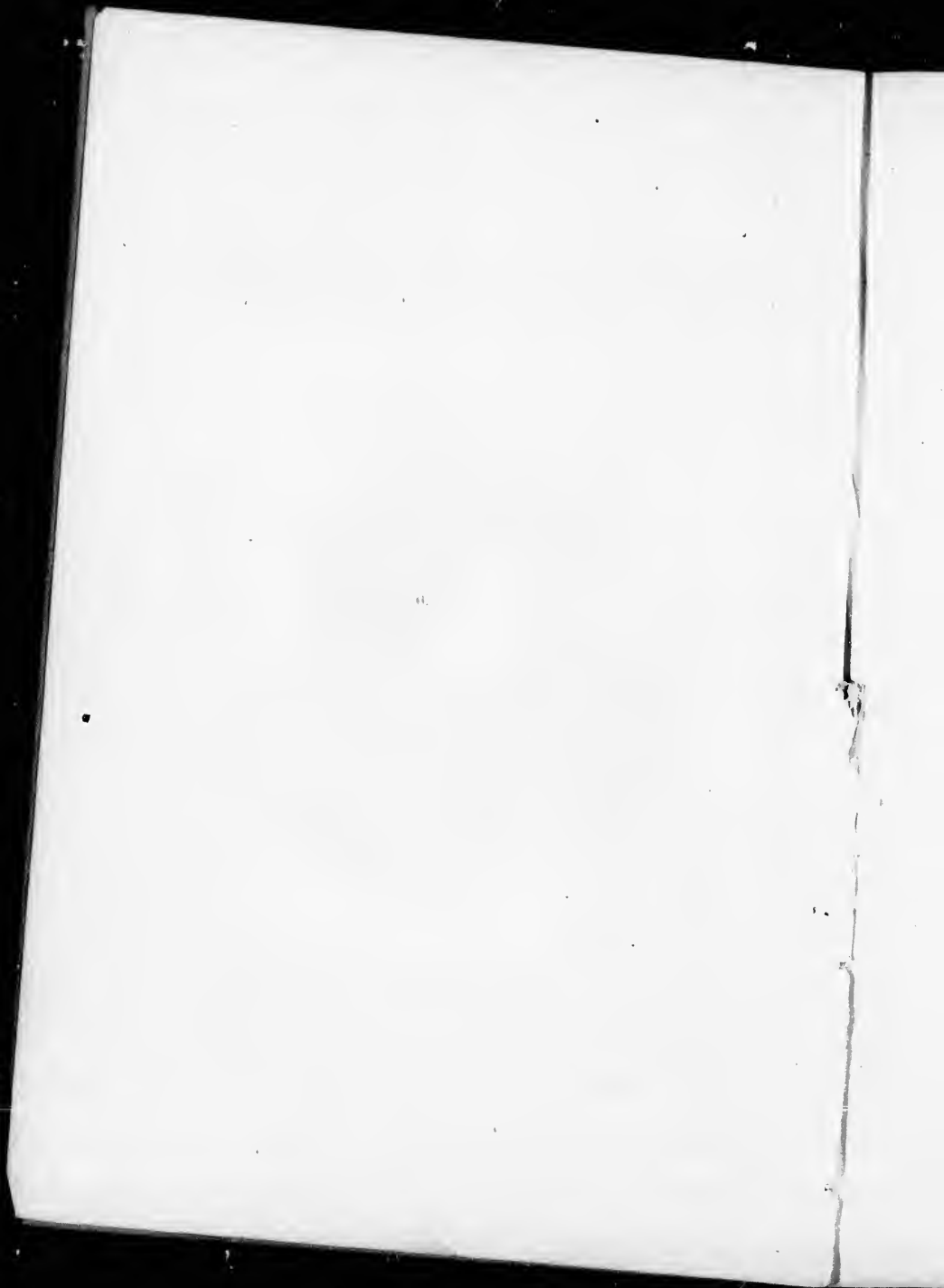
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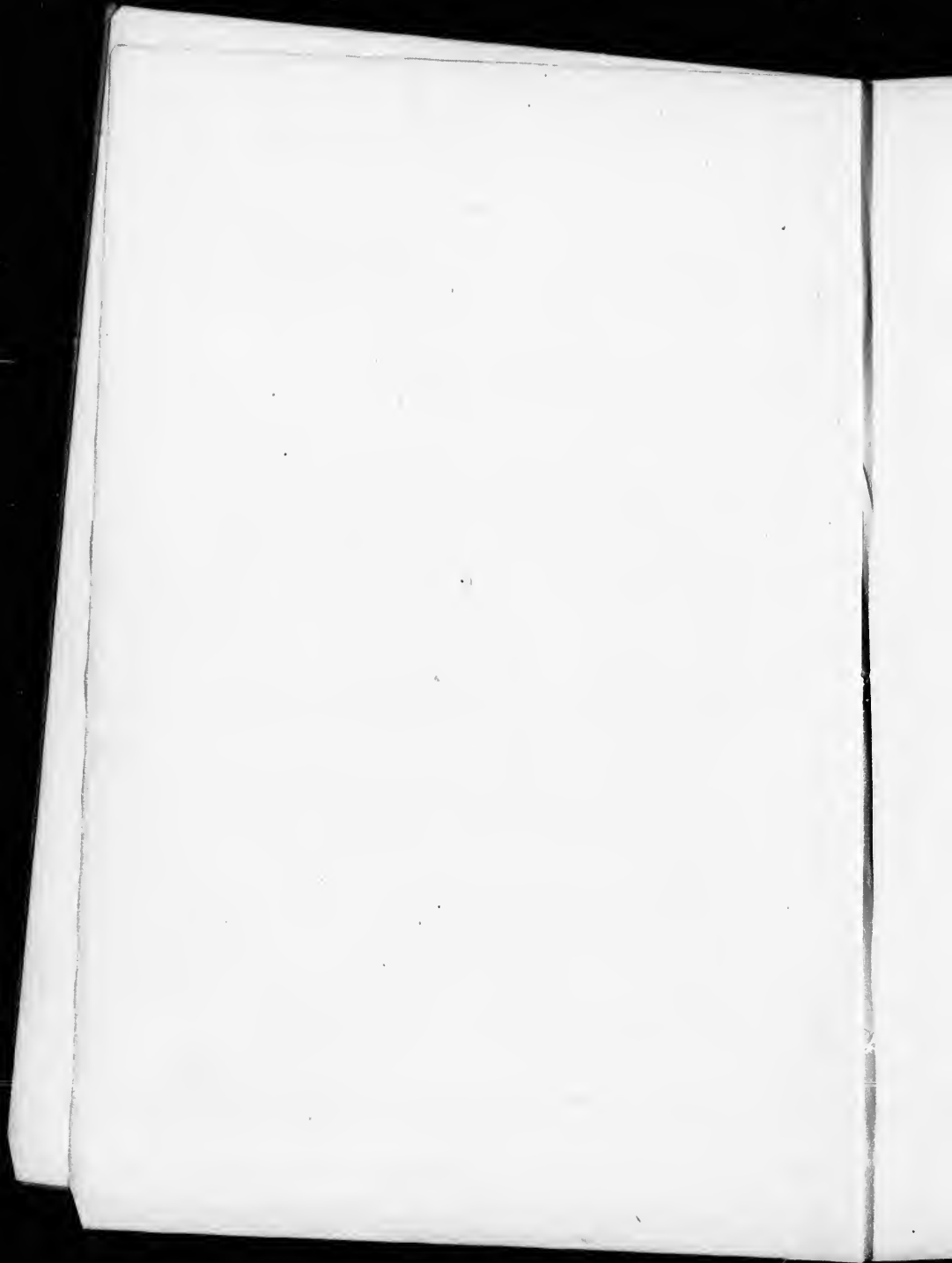
## PREFACE.

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IT has occurred to me that, in view of the extraordinary sensation created by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt whenever and wherever she has hitherto appeared, a sketch of her life would prove interesting to Americans, to whose judgment she will shortly appeal for a ratification of the unanimous verdict of enthusiastic approval passed upon her startlingly realistic impersonations by the patrons of the stage in half the capitals of Europe. I am fully conscious of the crudeness of the sketch, but if I have succeeded in giving the reader an idea of the irresistible power, the strange fascination, and the innate inspiration that enables this remarkable woman to defy criticism, and carry her audience as it were out of themselves, to revel momentarily with her, if only as spectators, in scenes displaying the utmost height and the lowest depth of the purest as also of the vilest attributes of our nature, my primary object will have been attained. I must not omit to make my acknowledgments to Mr. Arthur J. Marrin, who has been of the greatest assistance to me in collecting the information and making the translations I have taken advantage of in compiling this brief sketch of the most gifted daughter of the Comedie Francaise.

F. RIDGWAY GRIFFITH.

NEW YORK, October 1, 1880.



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# SARAH BERNHARDT.

## CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND EARLY CHILDHOOD—ROUGHING IT—SARAH RUNS AWAY FROM HOME—AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE POLICE—HER FATHER APPEARS—SENT TO A CONVENT—REPEATED SENTENCES OF EXPULSION PASSED ON SARAH—THE SISTERS FINDING HER CASE HOPELESS, SHE SELECTS THE STAGE AS A PROFESSION—BEFORE THE JURY OF THE PARIS CONSERVATOIRE—AUBER, FAVORABLY IMPRESSED, ORDERS HER IMMEDIATE ADMISSION—HER DEBUT AT THE THEATRE FRANCAIS—LEAVES THE FRANCAIS IN A FIT OF TEMPER AND APPEARS AT THE ODEON—HER QUARREL AT THE ODEON—SHE FLIES FROM PARIS—RETURNS, AND APPEARS UNSUCCESSFULLY UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME AT THE PORTE ST. MARTIN—SECOND APPEARANCE AT THE ODEON A PRONOUNCED SUCCESS.

THE pen that shall do complete justice to the transcendent talent of Sarah Bernhardt is still uncut. Her portrayal of a character is so perfect, flawless, and real as to defy the stereotyped analytical survey of the keenest of critics. He who has sat unmoved while witnessing the greatest achievements in the histrionic art of the most gifted players of the last two decades, finds himself carried away by the marvellous verisimilitude of this wonderful woman. Mademoiselle Bernhardt has mastered the one secret of the actor's art, she feels the character portrayed, while her rivals act the part. Herein lies the secret of her phenomenal success.

Sarah Bernhardt, who has by turns thrilled the Parisians with her marvellous dramatic powers, startled them by her curious talent for painting, sculpture, and literature, and amused them by her eccentricities, of which very Munchausen-like tales are constantly being dished up for the delectation of a scandal-loving public, is certainly the greatest tragedienne who has appeared on the boards of the Theatre Francais since the time of Rachel. Her recent visit to England was brilliantly successful, and it is predicted that her greatest triumphs are yet to be achieved in America. She ranks foremost among the artists of the Theatre Francais, who hold in their profession the same rank as the forty immortals of the Academie Francais hold in the scientific world. To live and die

a member of this corps, as societaire of the Maison de Moliere, is their highest ambition, and it is needless to add that critics of all nations are unanimous in declaring them to be worthy of their laurels.

But little is known of Sarah's early childhood. Of Jewish origin and Dutch nationality, she was one out of the eleven children of a wandering beauty of Israel. The future tragedienne was born in Holland about thirty years since, on the road, her mother being at the moment of Sarah's nativity in the act of moving her Lares and Penates to fresh fields and pastures new. Possibly, the nomadic conditions under which, as a puling infant, this strange woman drew her first breath, had an all-powerful influence on her after life. We have no record of her childhood, but at the age of fourteen being, as she claims, irresistibly impelled, Sarah ran away with a Dutch friend of her own age. The two girls were determined to go to Paris, and, having little money, undertook the journey by water. When they at length reached the French capital their slender resources were exhausted, and leaving an old trunk full of wood in the depot with the person who had greenly trusted in the weight of their baggage, the two friends left their hotel and took a walk in the Palais Royal. Overcome by fatigue they sat down, and were talking over their future prospects when the guardian of the chairs, who exacts a trifling fee from every occupant of these resting-places by the way, came up and demanded their *sous*. The girls were penniless, and being foreigners did not, perhaps, in stating their case, show sufficient respect for the petty official. Invectives in the Jewish and Dutch tongue, met by others no less forcible if more euphonious in pure Parisian slang, soon attracted idlers from the galleries; gamins came to the rescue, and a sergent-de-ville walked up. The scene which followed was worthy of the theatre close by. The intervention of the official guardian of the peace resulted in an adjournment to the nearest police quarters, when an explanation took place. It here became clear to M. le Commissaire that something had to be done with the fugitives, especially as regarded Sarah's friend, who a month later added a unit to the tale of the chosen people. But to return to Sarah: How she escape from this very innocent scrape does not appear, but the well-authenticated fact that she had a father not wholly unmindful of his erratic daughter's interests, seems to throw some light on the denouement of her first interview with the police. He appears on the horizon of her maiden life at a time when a protector was visibly indispensable, and being interested in his daughter's spiritual and temporal welfare, he put her in a convent near Versailles.

The name of the place was Grandchamp, and as this retired manner of existence did not suit Sarah's roaming and vivacious disposition, the reader will not be astonished when informed that her ways greatly shocked the nuns; and further, that she was, after a patient trial, expelled. But there was a lovingness about the girl, and she exhibited such sincere remorse for her numerous peccadilloes that she was restored to the bosom of the flock. On four separate occasions was she expelled from the sisterhood, and each sentence of banishment was the occasion of a new and fervent return to stronger application. She was, in fact, a rough diamond, and as such for a time defied all the efforts of the polishers. After a time she learned all the lessons taught at Grandchamp and it was thought expedient that she should seek a profession. Her bad and good marks were respectively totted up, and the bulletins on her conduct were collected. The sum in addition was not comforting. One prophetic note, however, penned by a conscientious nun, deserves mention. It runs: "Sarah is destined to become either a fearful subject of scandal in this world or a tremendous light in the Church." The latter part of this prediction has not yet been verified; as to the former, the word scandal may imply worldly fame or it may not, but all oracles being veiled until facts are consummated, to the future may be left the decision as to its prophetic value. When the young lady was personally referred to, and asked what she wished to be, she replied, "An actress or a nun." As nuns evidently did not run in the Bernhardt family, she was taught to recite verse, and promised she would pursue her studies at the Conservatoire, if admitted by the committee. In due course of time the day appointed for the trial of candidates before the jury of the Conservatoire arrived. Sarah, a thin pale girl with flashing eyes, stood up before an areopagus of critics, with Auber in the centre. It was customary on such occasions for would-be pupils to recite a tirade from Corneille or Racine, but the present candidate, unaware of this, was unprepared with anything of the kind. Fortunately, however, she knew La Fontaine's "Two Pigeons," and this she proceeded to recite. Scarcely had the lines,

"Deux pigeons s'aimaient d'amour tendre,  
L'un d'eux, s'ennuyant au logis,"

passed her lips, when Auber interposed. "Come here, mon enfant," said he, "I want to speak to you." The girl, with a degree of self-possession which brought a smile to the faces of the jurors, fearlessly approached the elevated platform.

"What is your name, little girl?"

"Sarah Bernhardt."

"Ah! a Jewess?"

"By birth, oui, monsieur, but I have been trained as a Christian."

"You recite very prettily, and will be admitted."

She entered the Conservatoire in 1861, and was a pupil of the celebrated actor, Beauvallet. Mlle. Bernhardt pursued her studies with such success that she gained the first prize for tragedy, and was in consequence entitled to a debut at the Theatre Francais. Thus did she pass at one bound from school to the first theatre in Europe. Her Iphigenia—the character in which she made her debut—showed her to be an actress of rare promise, and the journals distinguished for knowledge of the theatrical art praised the performance with a significant warmth. This was deemed a sufficient reason for obstructing her progress, and at length, too ambitious and spirited to endure unfair treatment, she left the theatre. She then went to the Gymnase, where it is stated, she made a complete fiasco. It was here she fell out with a rival, and rumor has it that the young interpreters of the immortal masters exchanged one or two slaps. However that may be, Sarah did not get parts at the Gymnase, and, returning to the habits of her childhood, ran away after the second night's representation. The discomfited actress wrote a farewell letter to the author, Labiche, with these concluding words: "Ayez pitie d'une pauvre petite toquee." She was waited for at the rehearsal, and, no one being ready to take her part at the performance, she was hunted for all over Paris. The report then spread that she had fled either to America or Brussels. M. Montigny, the manager, fairly infuriated, declared he would never forgive her, and when the culprit came back to Paris he kept his word. To be in Paris and not before the public was more than the aspiring actress could endure; she therefore took a false name, and came out at the Porte St. Martin in a fiery piece, the *Biche-aux-bois*, but her success was but indifferent, and she became despondent. She went to the Odeon, which was at this time under the management of MM. Chilly and Duquesnel, and supervised by a lover of fine arts, Camille Doucet. To M. Duquesnel, she said, "I have been turned away everywhere; but try me; I assure you that there is something there," pointing, not to her head but to her heart. M. Duquesnel greatly patronized Sarah, and sent her to M. Chilly, who, shrugging his shoulders, said, "She will do only for tragedy." M. Duquesnel was not of his partner's opinion, and asserting a right he owned, to select artists for the Odeon, he chose our wander-



ing and talented Jewess. And they soon found out at the Odeon that there was "something there." From this period down to the present Sarah Bernhardt's fame has ever been increasing, whether in the old repertoire or in modern pieces. Sarah made her *debut* at this theatre in the role of Sylvia in the *Feu de l'Amour et du Hasard*. In this character she did not shine; but when Alexander Dumas entrusted to her the leading female part in his *Kean*, her success was assured; and, although the play was coldly received, the house rewarded her individually with a perfect storm of applause.

## CHAPTER II.

SARAH AMONG THE WOUNDED—MARIE ROSE AND SARAH BERNHARDT—VICTOR HUGO'S CRITICISM—LA FILLE DE ROLAND—MAY AND DECEMBER—HER MAGNETISM—SARAH'S WAYWARDNESS—CONQUERING HER CRITICS—THE BITER BITTEN.

**D**URING the siege of Paris, Mlle. Bernhardt relinquished her engagement at the Odeon and figured among the foremost of the heroic women who devoted all their means and energies to organizing relief for the sick and wounded. On one occasion, when Mme. Marie Roze had rendered the ambulance under Mlle. Bernhardt's charge a particular service, the popular cantatrice received from Sarah a characteristic letter, of which the following is a translation :

"L'AMBULANCE DE L'ODEON.  
DEAF CHARMING ARTISTE : Thanks in the name of my wounded ! If ever you have need of me, count on my true gratitude. Your admirer,  
SARAH BERNHARDT."

Proving thus that she had a heart for sterner realities than those the stage imitates, Mlle. Bernhardt assisted the ambulances, and tendered her wounded countrymen with untiring care and lasting devotion until the close of the war. Then came the peace, and on February 2nd, 1872, the curtain rose again at the Odeon, on *Ruy Blas*, with Sarah Bernhardt as the melancholy Queen of Spain. Her triumph was grand, and she created a complete furor. Victor Hugo declared that as Donna Maria she realized the type of which he had dreamed. Before long her fame was such that the Comedie Francaise threw open its doors to her, and almost took her by force from the Odeon. At first her success was comparatively slight, as she was unfortunate in the parts allotted to her ; and even now, although France and England ring with her fame, she has had fewer original characters to create than have fallen to the lot of far inferior actresses. But Mlle. Bernhardt proved, in several of Racine's tragedies, that she alone of living French artistes was capable of wearing with grace the mantle that fell more than twenty years ago from the shoulders of Rachel. At length in *La Fille de Roland*, the talented lady found a most congenial character, in which the charm of her voice, the

bright intelligence of her diction, and her statuesque grace, had full opportunity for display. Her success was immense, and it sealed the future of an author who had waited even longer than his interpreter for public recognition. No Englishman could have watched Mlle. Bernhart, as *La Fille de Roland* winds her arms around the venerable form of Charlemagne, without thinking what an exquisite Cordelia she would make, and without regretting that Shakespeare is practically banished from the French stage. Her next tragic creation was that of the blind Postumia in *Rome Vaincue*; and here again it was her remarkable impersonation that redeemed the dullness of a heavy tragedy. Her part in the *Etrangere* was a distinctly individual creation, the actress completely merging her own individuality in that of the character she interpreted. The different renderings of the pieces she played at the Odeon, and later at the Francaise, have shown her in turn to be as great a tragadienne as she is admitted to be finished as a comedienne. Notwithstanding her physical disabilities, her energy is prodigious. No rehearsals can be too arduous; so long as there is a flaw, her will compels every one playing with her to go over the ground again and again until she is satisfied. She is also indefatigable. Her slight figure, her sunken eye, often reveal the painful results of over-exertion, but she exhibits an antique sort of grandeur in denying that any work can be too much for her. By the assiduous cultivation of her natural gifts she stands at the head of the French theatre, and has established a right to be ranked on the same level as Desaeillets, Champmesle, Adrienne Lecouvreur, Dumesnil, Clairon, and Rachel. Indeed it seems impossible that any actress could possess a more vivid and brilliant imagination, more exquisite sensibility, a keener perception of character, or a more powerful mastery of the resources of her art. That her physical powers are unequal to one or two parts in which she has appeared is obvious enough, but even when she is at such a disadvantage, the glowing energy of her spirit carries the spectator out of himself. The effect of her eclairs of passion is simply electrical.

Many stories are related of Sarah's peculiar characteristics. The following serve to illustrate her singular waywardness. Like other mortals, she has tasted the sweets of failure. On a certain night—it was one of the three debut nights, which made matters worse—a gentleman had the bad taste and (one must add) the courage to hiss her *sola*. She "spotted" him, learned his address, and called on him next day. Once alone with him, Mlle. Bernhardt observed that she had always endeavoured to do her duty as an artiste conscientiously; that her chief wish was to please the public; that it was a source

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of the deepest regret for her not to succeed in her object ; and, finally, would Monsieur kindly point out her faults in detail, that she might correct them? . . . How Monsieur got through the interview is not known ; but this is certain, that the poor wretch has ever since been among the most passionate of Sarah's devotees. She dealt even more energetically with the dramatic critics of the *Cigare*, who said that her hair was false and that her teeth were too brilliant to be real. On the day after this ungallant critique appeared, this theatrical scalper was surprised at his work by a lady who suddenly burst into the room and let down her hair in his presence. Seizing his hand, she made him clutch one of those luxuriant tresses, saying, "Is this real hair or not?" "Yes, yes," stammered the Gaul, who was considerably and not unnaturally scared. Then she caught his other hand, opened her mouth, and made him touch her teeth. "Are these false teeth?" she asked. "No, no, they're the most beautiful set of real teeth?" the man almost whined. This luckless being has also been yoked ever since to her chariot-wheels.

### CHAPTER III.

A GOOD REPUBLICAN—IDEAL HAPPINESS—SARAH'S WEIRD BEAUTY DESCRIBED  
—HER TALENT AS A SCULPTOR—MIDNIGHT MODELLING—HER SKILL AS A  
MUSICIAN—HER ABILITY AS A PAINTER—"LES FIANCAILLES DE LA MORT"  
—SLEEPING IN A COFFIN—A SPECTRAL ROOM-MATE.

Mlle. BERNHARDT is a staunch Republican, and held receptions, when in Paris, at which the deputies of the Extreme Left were as free (and easy) as they were welcome. She might have aspired to the position of a French Lady Palmerston, but for the circumstance that her drawing-room was frequented by members of the sterner sex alone. Women rule in France, but on certain conditions.

In spite of her Liberalism, Mlle. Bernhardt thinks the life of an English nobleman the ideal one for a man.

"To be an English *grand seigneur*, with lots of money and Paris for one's residence—can the human mind imagine anything more delightful?"

Possibly Mlle. Bernhardt would be more difficult to please in sketching out a feminine ideal: but wealth would certainly enter into it. She enjoys all that is pleasant and exciting in life, including champagne and trips in a balloon. To sprinkle handfuls of sand on English tourists from the height of a thousand feet—this Mlle. Sarah thought the acme of fun; but to chronicle the deed after in print was almost as jolly.

The large painting by Clairin renders the nameless charm of the woman better than any other. She sits on a couch, as she sits in the *Etrangere*, an excessively frail but graceful shape, its outline half lost, half revealed, between masses of drapery trailing far beyond her feet in statuesque folds. Above it a thinnish face of intense power, with delicately-cut features, framed, as it were, in a wild, luxuriant growth of hair, falling low on the forehead, and forming a depth of shade to enhance the brilliancy of the eyes. You praise her because she looks like a picture; you praise the picture because it looks like the life. For any attempt to describe the quality of her charm, grace must be the first and last word—grace in diction, grace in dress, in gesture, attitude, regard; if still another word is wanted, *distinction* is the only one that can be found. Not content with the laurels she has gathered on the stage, Mlle.

Bernhardt has pursued other walks of art with remarkable success. M. Sarcey, the celebrated critic of the *Temps*, a warm admirer of Sarah, informs us how she became a sculptress. In 1869, when *Ruy Blas*, thanks to the admirable actress, enjoyed such prolonged success, M. Matthieu-Mensuier induced Sarah to pose to him for a bust representing her as Donna Maria de Neubourg, a character in the play. She consented. While posing in the artist's studio, Sarah attentively watched the process, and criticized the result in the free, independent way so characteristic of her. Her suggestions and remarks were so just and appropriate that the sculptor said to her, "You have an artist's eye, Mlle. Bernhardt; you should study modelling." Impetuous Sarah jumped at the idea. "You think so, Monsieur? Very well; give me some clay." She carried off her clay, but it was already late. She must go to the theatre, act, and be applauded. Any one else would have deferred to the morrow the preliminary trial. Not so Sarah. At the fall of the curtain the actress, casting aside hastily her diadem and royal mantle, hurried home. It was one o'clock in the morning when she entered. An hour's preparation, and all is ready. Sarah is about to make her *debut* in the new art, when she discovers, to her consternation, that a most important item is lacking—viz., a model. She hesitates a moment, then smiles triumphant. Ah, Aunt Brucke! just the thing. Poor Aunt Brucke, wrapped in sweet sleep, was unceremoniously awakened by her imperious niece and bidden to sit as a model. Disagreeable, indeed; but how could she refuse the caprice of her spoiled child! Aunt Brucke surrendered, and Sarah took her initiatory step in sculpturing. The young actress became an enthusiastic votary of that art, and her first serious work in this direction—a marble bust of a girl—was exhibited in the Salon of 1873. Another bust exhibited in 1875, attracting much attention, was that of her younger sister Regina, who died at the age of eighteen. In the Salon of 1876 she had several exhibits—a bust of Mme. Baretta and another of Mme. Moulton. But it was not until Mlle. Bernhardt produced an admirable marble group, "*Après la Tempête*," that her talent as a sculptress was fully apparent. The subject is maternal grief. An aged woman, bereft of reason by accumulated misfortunes, is represented with the corpse of her adored son lying across her knees. She is gazing on her only child, refusing to believe that he is dead, yet with a glimmering consciousness of the truth expressed in her withered face. The group is pathetic in the highest degree, and received the approbation of, and a special mention by the jury. The figure of the old woman is an altered portrait of the actress. When

Sarah executed this work of art she looked at herself in a mirror, wrinkled her forehead and temples in such a manner that persons calling on her were momentarily deceived as she assumed the aspect of decrepitude. In 1879 she exhibited a remarkable bust of Emile de Girardin; and she completed about this time also a colossal statue destined for the facade of the theatre at Monaco. Nor does this female Admirable Crichton stop here. Not content with the triumphs acquired in the above-mentioned walks of art, the indefatigable Sarah has found time to acquire a very high proficiency in music. When in the humor she has given some delightful musical soirees at her villa. She excels on the piano and harp (the latter being her favorite instrument, symbolic of her Jewish lineage). Nor is she a stranger to the palette and brush, as attested by her numerous collection of works exhibited in London. One of these is a very striking picture of Medea slaying her children. At another time, in her leisure moments she dashed off an excellent portrait of a young lady staying in her house. Two other remarkable paintings from her hand are the "Ophelia Morte" and a companion-piece, "Les Fiancailles de la Mort," representing a young girl "en toilette blanche" with orange-flowers, prepared to go to the altar, and to the figure of Death which lurks behind it. In her choice of subjects Sarah's taste leans toward the sombre in art. Indeed, they are typical of the melancholy that often overshadows genius. This spirit of sadness is especially noticeable at times in the gifted actress, and has given rise to many absurd stories concerning her. It was stated and believed that she habitually slept in her coffin. True, she had the fancy of having her coffin always near her, and actually did sleep in it once; but, as she afterwards averred, she found a bed infinitely more comfortable. But this constant companionship with the idea of death did not seem to cast a shadow over her gaiety, and perhaps many will agree with her that familiarity with the inevitable is preferable to a craven fear of the future. It was said she liked to play at croquet with skulls, but the story is not very well authenticated; but this is certain, that the skeleton which is in every household occupies a post of honor in that of Mlle. Bernhardt. Hers is the skeleton of a man who destroyed himself on account of a disappointment in love. His bony arms embrace the cheval-glass in her bedroom, and when she studies a new part she makes this gaunt, dumb prompter hold the manuscript of her part in his fleshless hand. This is one of the eccentricities of genius.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mlle. Bernhardt as a writer—A SPECIMEN OF HER CRITICAL ABILITY—SHE DESCRIBES HER OWN PORTRAIT—IN MALE ATTIRE—SARAH AS AN ARCHITECT—HER HOME IN THE ARTISTS' QUARTER—THE GORGEOUS INTERIOR DESCRIBED—ECCENTRICITIES OF HER DOGS—DRAWING-ROOM OR STUDIO?

WE have now to consider Mlle. Bernhardt in a new *role*, that of a "litterateur." Her first attempt was a humorous pamphlet written in 1879, and entitled "Dans les Nuages," the adventures of a chair in the monster balloon. While in London she wrote a series of notes on England for a Paris journal. With her usual energy she took up her new pursuit with ardor, writing a series of tourist sketches for another newspaper, and finally launched into criticism, assuming the position of Salon art critic for the *Paris Globe*, a fact which aroused no small covert jealousy in French literary circles. The strange mistrust that is almost universally entertained of those who excel in more than one branch of art received a striking illustration in the attacks made on Mlle. Bernhardt. Had she been content with her stage triumphs she would have been everywhere gladly accepted as the greatest of living tragic artists. But from the moment that she claimed the admiration of the public for her fine group of sculpture at the Salon, and developed her later talents, she began to excite the jealousy both of her histrionic playmates and of the artist whose privileged province she had dared to invade. The Parisian papers teemed with venomous little paragraphs in deprecation of her rare gifts. These had their inevitable effect, and her enemies were on the lookout for eccentricities at which they could carp. There is naturally some curiosity to see how this wonderful woman will succeed in the field of journalism, since she has pursued with so much success all other branches of art. The following critique of the Paris Salon of 1880 gives an idea of her style. It opens as follows: "'Criticism is easy and art is difficult,' says a verse of Destouches which has often been attributed to Boileau. Well—shade of the poet pardon me!—criticism is not at all easy. Nothing, indeed, is so disconcerting as the general aspect of a picture-gallery while the eye ranges over



good and bad paintings. Very fortunately for the amateur, after a few minutes the beautiful paintings stand out bright and encouraging. But the miserable daubs which are all around demand attention, fatiguing by their ever-increasing number, ending by irritating the nervous system. One is tempted to be severe without thinking that hard work, and perhaps talent, are sometimes necessary to make even a poor picture. Then one must appeal to the administration and to the judges (of the Salon). They are really culpable to encourage such efforts. The Salon is not a school, but a theatre. The artists are responsible for their acts, and the public are admitted to pass judgment on them. . . . There are in the Salon fifteen hundred canvases too many. Art should be elevated, not broadened."

Her description of a portrait by the artist whose portrait of Modjeska attracted so much attention is interesting and vivid; "Here is a portrait of Madame the Countess V., by Carolus Duran. It is superb. The head, with a slight smile on the face, and with yellow hair, stands out upon a russet background, calm and lightly poised. This background is a '*tour de force*.' The long and slender hand plays with an eye-glass. A yellow rose relieves the delicate tone of the flesh. The white satin dress is a marvel of execution, especially in the shadows of the skirt. A large fur cloak thrown back on the shoulders, and treated with a master hand, completes this admirable portrait."

The conscious vanity with which she refers to her own portrait is pardonable. "This young painter (Bastien Lepage) displays another very interesting picture. It is the portrait of a well-known actress. She is shown in profile, seated, erect and rapt in contemplation before a small statuette of Orpheus. This portrait is an exquisite marvel. The lustrous and delicate flesh and the red hair are a prodigy of execution. The white dress is in relief on the white background. A white fur cloak with gray shadows completes this harmonious *ensemble*. The hands are made of nothing—they are everything."

Whether Mlle. Bernhardt be a thoroughly competent critic or not, she shows the incisive familiarity with art which we might expect from her character and her own efforts; and the following, although subjectively rather than objectively critical, reveals the innate artist nature, which enables her to appreciate all that is good and artistic, and to condemn everything which is unworthy:

"Painting is idealization, not realism. It is indifferent to me whether the artist shows me a tree with all its leaves, and moss with all its spears. It is necessary, above all, that he

should convey to me the impression which his subject demands."

It will be seen from these extracts that Mlle. Bernhardt is an entertaining critic, as she is interesting in all she does, and fascinating in her personality. Everything that she touches, from the needle to the chisel and the pen, becomes imbued, as it were, with her singular and charming individuality, and she trips lightly from one subject to another in her criticism with an "I like antitheses," or some equally self-conscious remark. Her letters from England to Paris journals were read with avidity, and possessed no little charm. Those admitted to her acquaintance have reason to laugh at the stories of her employing others to do the work which goes forth to the world in her name; for all her work is done more or less in public. Her studio is generally filled with friends, and it is in their presence, and in the midst of bright conversation, that she paints her pictures and moulds the clay into shapes that will live when the fair sculptress is no more. She wears male attire, for convenience, when employed on some colossal statue such as that which has been set up in Monaco; but when she is working on a bust she receives her visitors in ordinary attire, in the superb studio which is all that an artist can desire. The consummate actress is best seen in the native elegance of the daughter of Judah, when she neither acts or dreams of her profession. All her gestures are simple and perfect. She is folded in her skirts, not dressed. Her great hobby was the building of a lovely home, and as long as that lasted she turned architect, and fascinated her bricklayers with as much ardor as if they were her Tuesday night admirers at the Theatre Francais. Enter the house, and you would say at once it was the home of an artist. It is in the artists' quarter. They dwell in sky-parlors at Batignolles or in the Pays Latin while they are learning how to make their fortunes, and in villas bordering the Parc Monceau when they have learned that oftimes arduous lesson. The streets are named after great workers with the brush, living or dead: one of them, for instance, bears the name of Fortuny; and it is at the corner of this Rue Fortuny and the Avenue de Villiers that Sarah Bernhardt lives, in a house built from her own designs. It is half studio, half mansion. The drawing-room window is large enough to illumine a cathedral, and there is as much skylight as roof. It has the same character within as without: the dwelling, one might think, of some fertile genius of the pencil, whose ideas overflowed with the canvas and the atelier to spread over all the premises. The hall is frescoed with paintings of Chinese life, and two winged figures join hands above the door of the

drawing-room. The ante-chamber is as a section of sketches in a public gallery, with this difference, that it also contains an immense painting of the hostess in riding costume, by Mlle. Abema, which is a finished work of art. With all this there are many things to remind you that you are in a home, and not in a museum: the solid, comfortable tapestries of walls and ceiling, and, above all, the frequent intrusion of one or other of half a score of big dogs—Russian greyhounds, looking like "Irishmen" of the same breed in light ulsters—and now and then a beautiful poodle. These come in and out, examine you, take back their reports, return for further particulars, and at last range themselves in order of procession at your heels when you enter the drawing-room. But is it a drawing-room, or is it a studio? Here there is more room than ever for confusion of idea. It is very broad, very lofty, lit both by the cathedral-window aforesaid and by a starlight—in consequence a studio. It is tapestried in velvet—a drawing-room, then. It contains easels, unfinished pictures, busts in the rough—studio. Daintily-finished chairs—*fauteuils*, satin couches—drawing-room; vases big as sentry-boxes, which may have come direct from the sale of the furniture and effects of the leader of the Forty Thieves—drawing-room again, if you like, but a drawing-room of Brobdignag. And to add to the variety of effects, towering tropical plants, and a fireplace worthy, in breadth and depth, of the kitchen at Windsor Castle. In truth, it is the home at once of an amateur of pictorial art and of the greatest living actress. It is just because Mlle. Bernhardt is at the pinnacle of her glory in one pursuit that she surrounded herself by so much that shows a taste for another. She has won all that is to be won on the stage, and her quick, ambitious spirit, to which rest is but a form of death, is moving to fresh conquests in another domain.

## CHAPTER V.

Mlle. Bernhardt's industry—how she spends her days—tete-a-tete with her pet skeleton—her extreme delicacy of constitution—her own idea of the reason of her success—"Quand Meme!"—Hernani—at dinner with Victor Hugo—death invades the feast—she quarrels with the Comedie Francaise—her characteristic resignation.

A THOROUGH hard worker, Mlle. Bernhardt rises at eight, goes at once to her studio, where she makes her day's arrangements, writes letters, and receives visits from her intimate friends, painting and modelling meanwhile. A hurried breakfast is followed by more visits and artistic work and rehearsals. In the evening if not acting she writes or works in her studio by the light of powerful reflectors, going out very rarely, as she cares neither for society, receptions, *fetes*, nor even for the much-sought-after "first representations." She learns her parts chiefly in the dead of night *tete-a-tete* with her grim pet skeleton; and although gifted with an excellent memory, forgets as speedily, and is always obliged to relearn her *roles* if any be laid aside for a few days.

Very delicate, she often swoons with fatigue on the stage at rehearsals, and sometimes has alarming attacks of illness during the representations. If by the hazard of a call you have the good luck to be *tete-a-tete* with her, the conversation may easily take a turn that will lead her to give you her theory of life and art. The word that sums up her theory in life is WILL; the word that sums up her theory of art, NATURE. Her device is "Quand Meme." "Represent things as you see them," says she, as she points to one of her busts, after the manner of Carpeau, which has all the animation of life: eyes that seem to laugh, and a fulness of human expression that is never found in our modern imitations of the manner of the antique. "It is easy to say this," she goes on; "hard to do it. People come in your way with conventionalities, and you must have a will of iron to put them aside. When I went to the Francaise I startled them by saying 'Bon jour!' in a modern comedy just as I should have said it in a drawing-room. I was told that it ought not to be said in that way. Why? Because there was the classic tradition, dating perhaps from the foundation

of the house. They wanted more dignity; that is to say, more deliberation, solemnity, the pomp of the ancient manner. It was so all through. I dressed for my parts according to my notions, solely with an eye to my personal advantages and defects. It was wrong. Why, again? Because Mlle. Mars had not dressed so. But Mlle. Mars was almost an old woman when she appeared in that character, and I am a young one. That is no reason. It shall be reason enough. Now if you know the stage as I know it, you will see where is the need of my iron will. I insist; but my work is only half done. There is the public likewise under the same absurd prepossession. Things were not done like that in our day. Probably; but the world has changed, and what I am trying to show you is human nature as it has shown itself to me. Humor them, conform to the tradition, and you may win *some* admiration. Dare to disregard it, and bear the chill of their temporary disfavor, and you will win *all*. It is the shorter if it is the harder road. To have made concessions in the hope of slowly revolutionizing their tastes would have been to take the longer one, and I really had no time for that. I wanted to *arrive*. My life has been a struggle—a struggle to have my own way, where I felt I was in the right; and still I am only half satisfied. I have never yet had what I could call a part, a character that I could make mine. I think that I shall find it in Shakespeare.\* These sentiments afford a good insight into the actress's character.

Anything suited her if it only involved a departure from the usages of her sex, the ways of common life. The truth is, she was sowing the wild oats of genius in a sort of extravagant assertion of her own individuality. She would live after her own plan, but she sometimes made the mistake of thinking that she could know it for her own only when it was unlike the plan of everybody else. She had definite views as to the way of becoming a great actress; half of them were wrong, and they cost her many a humiliation; but half of them were right, and they served to assure her success. She won only by being resolutely true to all in turn, until she had tested their value—by allowing no one to step between her and her idea. She would *ARRIVE*, whatever happened, and as a sign of her determination adopted her appropriate device, "Quand Meme." Her vagaries and eccentricities were but *WILL* playing the fool in its plenitude of strength.

In 1879, *Hernani*, the production of Victor Hugo, was brought out at the Theatre Francais, with Mlle. Bernhardt in the leading *role* of Donna Sol. Mlle. Mars had made the character famous by her superb impersonation. Mlle. Bern-

hardt, by her novel and masterly rendition of the part, established at once and forever her supremacy as queen of the stage. The play enjoyed an unprecedented run, and its hundredth representation was celebrated by a complimentary banquet. Sarah may be said to have reached the highest elevation of histrionic fame when she sat at dinner at the Grand Hotel with Victor Hugo and a hundred and fifty of the most distinguished men in France. She was the honored guest, and the distinguished poet and host honored her in a speech as only he knows how to make, ranking her above Mlle. Mars, the greatest *artiste* hitherto seen in the part of Donna Sol. M. Sarcy, whose enthusiastic articles in the *Temps* may be said to have been the first announcement to Paris that a new star had arisen on the dramatic horizon, re-echoed the praises of Victor Hugo, and presented her, on behalf of numerous admirers, with a superb necklace of diamonds of the purest water. That was a memorable night, and yet a sad one.

M. Chilly, manager of the Odeon in Sarah's early days, and one of the guests on the occasion, suddenly fell down in a fit of apoplexy, which proved fatal.

At about this time occurred the famous breach with the Comedie Francaise which caused Sarah to drift away from the Theatre Francais and Paris, and afforded England an opportunity of judging of her talents. To become a *societaire* or member of the Comedie Francaise is a truly serious matter, seeing that the engagement is for twenty years, and its stringent conditions very onerous. No member can resign till after ten years' service. A year's notice must be given, and it must be renewed in the course of the last year. An undertaking, too, must be given not to perform on any stage in any country, or the resigning member loses the right to a retiring pension. To become a member of that society is a very natural and praiseworthy object of ambition to any dramatic artist in France. It is the highest distinction which the stage can give in a country where the stage is held in peculiar honor, and it confers at once a social distinction and a security against those changes of fortune to which actors in other countries are constantly exposed. To these substantial privileges are necessarily attached certain corresponding duties tending to strong *esprit de corps* and an abnegation of exclusive personal ambition. The Comedie Francaise thus tends to develop among its *societaires* a corporate sentiment, not without a touch of communism and compulsory equality. An actor who enters it sinks his own ambition, and seeks fame, not for himself, but for the society to which he belongs. Such a spirit of unselfish *camaraderie* is hardly to be found on the American stage, where

the excessive star worship is well nigh incurable. Mlle. Bernhardt's abrupt rupture, therefore, occasioned much comment and entailed in its wake a prosecution and lawsuit. Emile Augier's well-known *l'Adventuriere* play was reproduced in April, 1879, at the Theatre Francaise. Sarah made her first appearance in the piece as Donna Cloriade. She was enthusiastically received by the public, but a critic the next morning found fault with some of the details of the representation. As usual, Sarah had given the part her own readings, and inspired it with her own individuality. The critic, M. Vitu, of the *Figaro*, thought it was not a nice individuality in this instance. The lady, he insinuated, was loud and, if the truth must be told, a little vulgar. He wished she had not placed her hands upon her hips and scolded after the fashion of a fish-wife. He did not say after the fashion of a fish-woman, but after the fashion of Big Virginie in *l'Assommoir*, which was a good deal more offensive as Virginie is one of the typical scolds of French literature at the present time. This was too much for Sarah's fiery temper. She immediately sat down and wrote off her resignation to M. Perrin, the administrator of the Comedie Francaise. Here it is in her own terse style :

"You forced me, sir, to play when I was not ready. You allowed me only eight rehearsals on the stage, and the piece was only rehearsed entire once. I could not decide on appearing before the public, but you positively required it, and what I foresaw happened. The result of the performance surpassed my forebodings. One critic asserted that I played the Virginie of *l'Assommoir*, instead of the Donna Cloriade of *l'Adventuriere*. May Zola and Emile Augier forgive me. It is my first failure at the Comedie Francaise, and it shall be the last. I warned you on the day of the general rehearsal. You disregarded it. I kept my word. When you receive this I shall have left Paris. Pray receive my immediate resignation."

## CHAPTER VI.

MONSIEUR PERRIN—SARAH CLOSES HER HOUSE IN PARIS—SULKING AT HAVRE—THE "GAULOIS" INTERVIEWS SARAH—THE ACTRESS INDIGNANT—"I WILL NEVER GO BACK WHILE I LIVE!"—AN APPEAL TO THE LAW—MONSIEUR PERRIN'S DEMANDS—HER ADVOCATE'S REPLY—THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT.

M. PERRIN, a little, thin-lipped, determined man who rules these erratic ones—as the quiet men rule everybody—a sort of Moltke of that splendid stage army, having received probably hundreds of such letters in his time, took no notice, but quietly put it into his deepest pocket, and went on with his work. Sarah, perhaps, doubted her own resolution as much as he did, so to make it irrevocable she sent the letter to the papers. M. Perrin was then obliged to take it out of his pocket, and the matter was before the world. M. Perrin then began to take action with a dignity befitting the traditions of the "Maison de Moliere." He convened an extraordinary meeting of the committee of the theatre to consider Mlle. Sarah's letter. In the meantime Paris was on the *qui vive* to know what had become of the writer. Journalistic spies sent to the house in the Avenue de Villiers reported all deadly quiet, gates closed, blinds drawn, no one to answer the bell but a melancholy dog, left behind in the hurry of his mistress's departure. She had gone down to sulk in a little villa she possessed within a stone's throw of the steamship docks of the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique at Havre, and there with the sad sea waves for company she was fighting it out with her passionate heart. The committee, composed of Sarah's fellow artists, meanwhile sat in solemn deliberation. M. Perrin read two letters to them, one, which he had addressed to M. Augier, the author of the piece, expressing his great regret at the occurrence, and insisting that M. Augier should accept an indemnity for his pecuniary loss, sustained in the sudden interruption of the play; another the reply of the dramatist himself, reckoned about the wittiest man in France. M. Perrin altogether controverted Sarah's alleged facts. She had not been denied proper time for the rehearsals, but had expressed herself as perfectly ready, though at the eleventh hour she had asked for a postponement. He at once consented to the postpone-



ment until he heard that at Emile Augier's own request she had consented to play on the appointed night. Emile Augier confirmed all this. Sarah, he said, had consented not only to play, but had played with her usual success. When he went into the room behind the scenes, after the fall of the curtain, he found her surrounded by a flattering group, who were no less satisfied with her than she was satisfied with herself. "It was the unhappy criticism of the next morning," M. Augier added, "which has changed this happy state of things. It is all the fault of the critics. Hitherto they have treated her as a spoiled child. These ungrateful Athenians are beginning to weary of her success, but she at any rate will never be the woman to write like Aristides her own name on the shell. She would rather write yours (M. Perrin's), and it is very natural we must admit. Let us then be indulgent for this outburst of a pretty woman, who practises so many different arts with an equal superiority, and let us preserve our severities for artists less universal and less serious."

The publication of these letters in the journals was accompanied by an editorial note from M. Vitu, the offending critic. M. Vitu felt compelled to defend himself. The judge had in a twinkling, and by a mere stroke of Sarah's pen, become a prisoner pleading from the dock. He persisted in his assertion and had nothing to retract. The popular verdict was against Sarah. It was asserted that her object in making the disturbance was to make the most abroad of her ability and reputation and be perfectly free in her movements. Her triumphal visit to Holland in the preceding Easter showed the enthusiasm and profits she might command as compared with the meagre advantages offered by the Theatre Francais even to its best actors. It was the greed for gain, not a just cause of grievance, that drove her to this action.

The next step at the Comedie Francaise was more serious. M. Perrin convened the judicial council of the society to consider how a remedy was to be found at law. While the committee was sitting, an interviewer of the *Gaulois* was speeding down to Havre by express train. He found the irate genius looking out upon the sea from her balcony. She was in a white peignoir and the sea breeze was her coiffeur for that morning. She probably had enough of the sea, for she was very delighted to see the interviewer. She showed him a big bundle of letters from all parts of France, and from all kinds of people, offering her all sorts of advice, encouragement and sympathy. Directors of theatres were among them, hoping to snap her up for their companies. She knew why the interviewer had come, and like a business woman plunged at once into a grand discussion. M. Perrin's denial was not true. It was false, false,

*false!* The fact was he hated her. He had subjected her to humiliations. He was jealous of her success in painting and sculpture. He was always working against her. It was hateful to him to think that she might gain a few thousand francs extra by playing in England during her holidays. It was not the first time she had told him all this. She had had a violent scene with him the other day, so violent that there was some talk of his giving in his resignation. The others wanted to make her apologize for it. She would rather be torn in pieces. "But you are going back after all?" said the matter-of-fact interviewer. "Never, understand me well, never! I will never go back while I live." "Seriously?" "Seriously, M. Perrin hates me, and so I shall leave the Comedie Francaise. I know I shall have to pay for breaking my engagement, but if necessary, I will sell my hotel, my jewels, the little house in Paris that I had built for myself and my son. For that matter the house is open to them and they can go in and seize at once if they like." The interviewer, a little bit shocked by this sublime ignorance of legal procedure, informed her that they could hardly seize until the affair had been brought before the court.

"Well," said she, "I shall defend myself, of course, and try to reduce the damages. They will have to estimate them according to the money I receive at the Theatre Francais, and that you know was not much—only thirty thousand francs a year. It is all very well for people who want to play forever, who are willing to play when they are twenty and when they are forty and when they are fifty, but when one does not exactly wish to grow gray in the theatre, one must earn more than that and live more quickly. I have not exactly taken monastic vows with the stage."

"But how!" said the scared interviewer; "you do not mean to say you are going to give it up altogether?"

"I tell you I have had enough of it. I have learned to carve statues and to paint. My pictures and statuary bring me in thirty thousand francs annually. I will go on working at them."

"But how about your journey to England?"

"Oh, as for that, I must go. I am under engagement, and the others who have entered into it with me will be seriously injured if I draw back. That will be my last campaign. You can believe me; what I tell you is the truth."

"They say you are going to America to tread a path strewn with innumerable dollars."

"No, I tell you I shall play nowhere but in England."

Such undoubtedly was Sarah's real intention, but it was overcome by Manager Abbey's princely offer.

In the meantime the awful judicial council had held its sitting. Two questions were put before it. Should Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt be compelled to return to the Comedie Francaise or should she be sued for damages. The first was soon found to be not worth consideration, as about the only means of making her come back would have been to force her on the stage between two gendarmes. The second course was decided on, and Mlle. Favart was appointed to her vacant position. The case was tried in the first chamber of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine. Mlle. Bernhardt was not present, she having in the meanwhile gone to London to fill her engagement. Maitre Allon appeared for the Comedie Francaise, and Maitre Barboux for the defendant. Maitre Allon, who spoke first, explained the three points in the demand of his client. "M. Perrin demands (1) the forfeiture by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt of her rights as *societaire* of the Comedie Francaise; (2) the seizure of the forty and odd thousand francs forming the reserve fund left at the theatre by the fugitive artist; (3) three hundred thousand francs damages." Maitre Allon argued that never was a demand better justified. He reminded the court of the circumstance in which Mlle. Sarah left the Comedie, to which she was bound by a treaty for twenty years, and how on the day after the revival of *l'Aventuriere*, she took as a pretext the criticisms of the press to send in her resignation. "Several excuses," he said, "have been offered for the actress; no excuse is good. The truth is that Mlle. Bernhardt has engagements elsewhere and a great need of money. Her value as an artist, her elegance as a woman, her talents as a sculptor, almost as a litterateur, had seduced the English public; she received brilliant offers for the following season, and she accepted them. It is true that she forgot to speak of that new engagement to M. Perrin, and to ask of him the indispensable authorization. The administrator of the Comedie Francaise waited a whole year for the confession of his *pensionnaire*. She took care to say nothing to him, but at the first pretext she was gone. It is thus that Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt gave up the envied position of *societaire* of the first dramatic scene of France, and the thirty thousand francs of income which that situation assured her. To the delicate applause of the Parisians she has preferred the vulgar curiosity of which she is the object abroad. A positive and calculating woman, although she poses for being capricious, she has just signed a new treaty with an American Barnum. She will be exhibited all over America. She will have twenty-five hundred francs a night; the third of the gross receipts up to fifteen thousand francs; fifteen hundred francs for her lodging and that of her three

chambermaids. Ah! gentlemen, that is no longer the *pauvre toquée* (the poor crazy creature), who asked pardon of Mr. Labiche for a similar escapade. I show you the woman of business, dazzled by gold, who has sold her soul to the devil!" "But," continued Maitre Allon, "the chastisement will come—it is the dethronement which will soon strike this great talent. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt will be punished for having quitted what, at the Comedie Francaise, is affectionately called 'La Maison.' Over there in England, in America, she will play surrounded by 'supers,' and she will not be understood. She can carry away her artist's reputation, like an exotic cargo; if her fortune increases, her renown will decline. Is she not already as it were a 'declassée?'"

The sum of three hundred thousand francs, which M. Perrin asked for damages, was, said Maitre Allon, the sum which had formerly been demanded of Rachel, and in support of the third point of M. Perrin's demand he cited the case of Mme. Arnould-Plessy, who had been condemned to pay one hundred thousand francs damages in similar circumstances.

Maitre Barboux, the advocate of Mlle. Bernhardt, did not attempt to justify his client. He devoted himself to pleading extenuating circumstances. Mlle. Bernhardt, he said, had entered the Comedie Francaise in 1872, at a salary of six thousand francs. She became a *societaire* with a full share in 1877. During eight years she received from the Comedie 179,230 francs and two centimes. During these years she created or revived thirty *roles*. Maitre Barboux waxed quite poetical at one point of his speech. He compared his client to an airy creation of Shakespeare, and described her as the daughter of Racine. He pleaded that she was ill and overworked when she ran off; that she had been spoiled and pampered by the applause of the public; that at the Comedie she had been replaced with advantage, and that she was sufficiently punished by having abandoned the stage of the Theatre Francais to rivals. The claims of M. Perrin he denounced as exorbitant.

The judgment of the court was that Mlle. Bernhardt be sentenced to pay a fine of twenty thousand dollars and costs. She, moreover, lost the eight thousand dollars standing to her credit in the reserve fund of the Comedie Francaise, as also the right and title to a pension. Thus ended the trial, but it has never yet been ascertained that Sarah has produced the twenty thousand dollars damages. She was away in England, far from the delicate applause of Paris, but reaping the more substantial harvest of London gold.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Mlle. BERNHARDT IN ENGLAND—HER FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE GAIETY—AN INSTANT AND PRONOUNCED SUCCESS—HER TERRIBLE REALISM AS "PHEDRE"—RACHEL AND BERNHARDT COMPARED—THE ENGLISH GO CRAZY OVER SARAH—SHE PERFORMS AT LORD DUDLEY'S SCANDAL AMONG THE GOSSIPS—SARAH'S SON—JOKES ON Mlle. BERNHARDT'S LACK OF EMBONPOINT—HER PICTURES ON EXHIBITION IN PICCADILLY—AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HON. W. E. GLADSTONE.

Mlle. SARAH BERNHARDT made her first appearance in London at the Gaiety Theatre, under the management of Mr. John Hollingshead, on June 2nd, 1879. The *Misanthrope* with Mme. Favart as leading lady, followed by the second act of *Phedre*, composed the lengthy programme presented, as Mlle. Bernhardt objected to make her *debut* before the British public, as had been arranged, in the character of Mrs. Clarkson, the adventuress in *L'Etrangere*. The second act of *Phedre* gives some opportunity in Hippolyte's avowal of his hidden flame for Arcicie; and a great opportunity to Phedre when, tearing off the thin veil of propriety in which she at first tries to conceal her guilty love, she stands revealed before her horror-stricken step-son, a creature all aglow with the white heat of passion—*Toute de larmes et de feu desseechee*—and after pouring out the lava-flood of her unreturned flame, in a transport of shame and despair, snatches the sword from the belt of Hippolyte, with a hoarse cry of *Donnez!* and tries to thrust it into her heart. This tremendous scene Mlle. Bernhardt rendered with a self-abandonment that took no measure of her strength. She seemed like a leaf whirled away on the torrent of her passion. And when at last the storm seemed to shatter her being, and she sank inert and insensible into the arms of CEnone, the house seemed rather to be relieving its pent-up feelings in its tumult of applause, then offering a tribute to the fair frail creature who had so held their breaths suspended on hers. Rachel's *sombre grandeur* was remembered, the concentrated passion that seemed to be glowing at a red heat in the core of her heart. Her *Phedre* might be more terrible and intense, but it was perhaps less womanlike, less sympathetic; less *entraînante* than the *Phedre* of Sarah Bernhardt. Before Rachel one turned cold with a thrill that seemed to travel the nerve-centres; before her successor, one felt an intense and

tender pity for the wretched victim of unhallowed love. There was something in the pleading action of those clinging arms, something frail and youthful and lovable in the whole aspect, which made one feel as if, of the two, Hippolyte was more to blame for his coldness than Phedre for her flame. And thus did Sarah Bernhardt at once conquer the sympathies of the London public.

The craze in England over Mlle. Bernhardt was something almost unprecedented of its kind. The brilliant actress, notwithstanding her equivocal social position, seemed to have captured the English capital in a way no less social than professional. All her evenings not devoted in advance to her necessary engagements at the Gaiety, were bespoken by society. For two weeks and more the tide of adulation ran higher and higher—even those unimpressible outlaws, the newspaper theatrical critics, in a spasm of rare lunacy, joined with the common herd in burning incense at her shrine. To say that she took the town by storm is nothing. To say that the people were eager to see her act is still less. It was not only the actress that people raved about; it was perhaps even more the individual woman, the extraordinary personality, so unlike anything known to the Londoner, that roused curiosity and developed the usual languid interest of well-bred Londoners into passionate admiration of the creature. The state of feeling may be described as a social phenomenon, not confined to one class or rank of life; but all-pervading. The price of admission to the Gaiety was raised fifty per cent., and even then the number of people turned away at the door was so great that holders of tickets bought in advance had the utmost difficulty to get into the house. She performed but twice a week at the Gaiety. In the meantime she could be seen, by those lucky enough to be asked, at various private houses. The great artiste had a most intelligent appreciation of the money value of her gifts and was not to be surprised into gratuitous exhibitions by any society artifice. When Patti or Nilsson or other eminent performers were guests at Grosvenor Square or elsewhere in the grand world of the West End, they were so prepared for the "Madame will sing us a little something" of their hostess, the Marchioness of Carabas, that they at once complied, thus paying for their supper with a song worth a hundred suppers. Sarah knew better. Enlightened by the experience of her first visit, she managed to make it known before an invitation had reached her that the artiste and guest were two different persons, and if she were asked to perform she expected to be paid. Her terms were five hundred dollars per night. This piece of happy audacity, instead of injuring

her popularity, made her more the social rage than ever—it was so eccentric. When she performed at Lord Dudley's house, he caused to be printed and distributed among his guests five hundred copies of the play in English. When expected as a guest at an evening party, everyone was on the alert. During two hours the question everybody asked everyone else was "Is Bernhardt here? Have you seen her? Are you sure she is coming?" The wits of the day coined a new verb "to Bernhardt." "Have you Bernhardtet" became a byword. Decorous, moreover, as the London papers are, they began to favor the public with anecdotes about Mlle. Bernhardt that lay far beyond the domain of her purely dramatic life. Of scandal and gossip there was a surfeit. There appeared among other things the following in the correspondence column of the *Era*:

*CURIOUS.—The son of Mlle. Bernhardt is about fourteen years old, and is with her in this country. Where then is Monsieur Bernhardt, and why does he not come to share in the triumph of his popular wife. And in this case it would be surely more polite to address the lady as Madame Bernhardt.*

A great many jokes were cracked about Sarah's supernatural thinness. Some paper offered what might be called a "puzzle prize" to the man who should discover the best means of utilizing a large fortune. Among the competitors was a gentleman who said that if he came into a "thumping" legacy, he should act in this wise: he would purchase a thousand ortolans, a thousand truffles, a thousand pates de foie gras, etc., etc. (enumerating all the good things of the earth). These he would beat altogether in a rich paste wherewith he would endeavor to fatten Sarah Bernhardt. The prize was not adjudged him, because it was felt that Sarah could not be improved upon. A woman less pretty and witty might fairly have been considered open to criticism had there been so little of her in the flesh. A young wit conveyed his impression of her want of substance by informing his audience that he had seen an empty carriage drive up to the Gaiety and beheld Mlle. Sarah alight from it. Mlle. Bernhardt took all this railleury in good part, and far from concealing her lack of embonpoint, greatly exaggerated it by her mode of dressing. She even joked about it herself, saying in her balloon book that when she entered the car, it seemed as though all the ballast had been thrown out. Of stories relating to her manifold accomplishments there was no lack. Accounts of her wonderful home in the Avenue de Villiers, of her dressing-room at the Comedie Francaise, of her studio, her dogs, her paintings, sculptures, of her many eccentricities, of her domestic relations and arrangements—all these abounded. Her photographs sup-

planted all those of the reigning beauties in the shop windows of London, and a stall for the disposal of them was placed in the vestibule of the theatre itself.

A collection of her paintings and sculptures, some thirty in all, were placed on exhibition in a gallery in Piccadilly and attracted throngs of visitors. There Mlle. Bernhardt would oftentimes become the centre of a group, the members of which were continually renewed as one made way for another, exchanging a few sentences with the hostess. There were many ladies. If they did not choose to be presented they need not. Not every lady cared to reverse the social distinctions maintained in Paris with reference to Mlle. Bernhardt, but so freely relaxed in London. But there remained a large number who were presented. Many singers and actors were of the company, notably Madame Nilsson, with her radiant face, and Mrs. Theodore Martin, *nee* Miss Helen Faucit. Early one afternoon came Mr. Gladstone, the Premier, and a lane was made for him at once through the crowd till he reached Mlle. Bernhardt. A circle stood about the two as the introduction was accomplished. The scene was very striking, the contrast very marked between the veteran statesman's powerful rugged features and the delicate fragile lineaments of the actress. The actress received the statesman with marked grace and dignity, while he, on his part, was very deferential in manner. They conversed together for some minutes. Many artists were there to see the pictures; Mr. Millais among the first; then Sir Frederick Leighton and half a dozen other Academicians. The critics were present in force, and fashion sent representatives by the score, who mingled amicably enough with the delegates of art and literature and joined at least as warmly in admiration of their hostess.



## CHAPTER VIII.

POETS INDITE VERSES IN HER HONOR—SHE AGAIN BECOMES CAPRICIOUS—DISAPPOINTS A LARGE AUDIENCE ASSEMBLED AT THE GAIETY—OFFENDED BY THE MANNER OF HER RECEPTION AT THE MANSION HOUSE—"ALL-RAIGHT"—HER LETTER TO THE LONDON "STANDARD"—SARAH AGAIN IN FAVOR—A SPITEFUL ACT—"ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR"—ANOTHER BRILLIANT AUDIENCE—THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES PRESENT—CONGRATULATORY LETTER FROM MR. GLADSTONE—THE STORY OF THE PLAY—NOTABLE POINTS IN Mlle. BERNHARDT'S RENDITION OF THE CHARACTER OF "ADRIENNE."

SARAH seemed to have fired the heart and caused to roll in fine frenzy the eye of the topical poet. Here is the effusion of an exuberant enthusiast in *Punch*:

### TO SARAH.

"Mistress of hearts and arts, all met in you!  
The picturesque, informed by Soul of Passion!  
Say, dost thou feed on milk and honey dew,  
Draining from goblets deep of classic fashion  
Champagne and nectar, Shandy gaff sublime,  
Dashed with a pungent smack of *eau de Sarah*  
Aspasia, Sappho, Circe of the time!  
Seductive Sarah!

"'Muse' ? All Mnemosyne's bright brood in one!  
Compound of Psyche, Phryne, Britomarte,  
Ruler of storm and calm, Euroclydon  
And Zephyr! Slender Syrian Astarte!  
With voice the soul of music, like that harp  
Which whilom sounded in the Hall of Tara.  
How dare Philistines at thy whimsies carp.  
Soul-swaying Sarah!!

"'Poseuse ?' Pooh! pooh! Yet who so well can pose  
As thou, sweet statuesque slim sinuosity?  
'Stagey ?' Absurd! 'The death's head and the rose ?'  
Delicious! Gives the touch of tenebrosity  
That lifts thee to the Lamia level. Oh!  
Shame on the dolts who hint of Dulcamara,  
Serpentine Sarah!!!

"Clinging enchantress, supple siren, sweep  
 In lithely languorous attitudes forever,  
 Bewitch my gaze and make my pulses creep !  
 So Naiads glide—save thee, gross mortals never !  
 About thee plays the brightness of Queen Mab,  
 Dashed with romance of the girl page in *Lara*,  
 Suggestive Sarah ! ! ! !

"Oh, idol of the hour and of my heart !  
 Who calls thee crazy half and half capricious ?  
 A compound of Lionne's and Barnum's part,  
 In *outré* rather injudicious ?  
 Ah ! heed them not ! play, scribble, sculp, sing, paint,  
 Pose as a Plastic Proteus, *mia cara* ;  
 Semillante Sarah ! ! ! ! !

This, however, does not exhaust *Punch's* ideas on the subject, for on the next page is another outburst called "A Query of the Day:"

*Che sara Sara ?*  
*Avis per-rara !*  
 Sculpstress and paintress,  
 Poseuse and faintress,  
 Swooning and swaying  
 Playing and praying,  
 For praise or for profit,  
 On stage or off it.  
 Of actresses, actress ;  
 Press—benefactress—  
 Critics—uppoking,  
 Canard—provoking,  
 Paragraph—feeding—  
 Puffery—breeding—  
*Che sara Sarah—*  
*Avis per—rara ?*

And so on. The idol of the hour could fill a large album with the prose and poetry which have been poured forth by enthusiastic London.

About this time Mlle. Bernhardt, while at the very zenith of her popularity, managed to grievously offend the Londoners by disappointing a large and fashionable audience assembled to witness one of her marvellous impersonations at the Gaiety. Her defence was that she was prevented by a sudden attack of illness, and she maintained that before midday she had informed the management that it would be impossible for her to appear. A sharp attack on her appeared in the London *Standard* of the following day, in the form of a letter signed "Belgravia," to which Sarah replied in French, entering on a defence in which she strenuously denied having offered an intentional insult to the English, who she said had earned her

warmest respect and regard, concluded by shyly hinting that though in France her frequent attacks of illness had been universally deplored, she was commiserated rather than blamed for their too frequent recurrence. No sooner was this little difference between Sarah and the British public adjusted than she took umbrage at the manner of her reception by the Lord Mayor of London and the civic authorities at the Mansion House, where Mlle. Bernhardt and her company were entertained at a banquet given in their honour. The presence of a bust of Wellington, that occupied a conspicuous position in the chamber where the festivities took place, was considered as an outrage on good taste by many members of the company; but Sarah herself appears to have been more incensed by the Lord Mayor's appearance at the head of the table without his wig, a tonsorial appendage without which she persisted he had never shown himself in Paris. At this gathering of wealth, wit, beauty, and talent, the lovely Sarah set at rest forever the much-disputed point as to whether or no she understood and spoke English. She paid great attention to the speeches, and applauded vigorously when any sentiments were expressed that met with her approval, and further shouted "all-rai-ght" with great gusto at the end of an oration which presumably was entirely in accord with her feelings and sentiments. The good people of London soon forgot their favorite's petty offences, and she was in the course of a few days as great a favorite as ever. But her animosity against M. Perrin, the *Comedie Francaise*, and those unlucky critics of the Parisian journals who had attacked her, was as firmly rooted as ever; and with the view of annoying these worthies, she resolved to make her first appearance in the title role of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* in London instead of in Paris. This necessitated the critics undergoing the horrors of a channel passage, as it was preposterous to suppose that the only successor to Rachel could be permitted to attempt one of her great prototype's most successful characters without the Parisian critics being present. The audience that assembled in the Caiety Theatre to pass judgment on this effort of the greatest of modern tragediennes was certainly one of the most brilliant ever gathered together within the walls of a theatre. Royalty was represented by the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the boxes and stalls were crowded with the members of the British aristocracy and the *elite* of London society. Mr. Gladstone, a rare visitor to a theatre, was there, and earnestly watched the performance from the rising of the curtain until its fall, amid a tumult of applause, at the close of the last act. Sarah's triumph was complete, and the next morning revealed columns of laudatory criticism

in the London journals, pronouncing the impersonation the most magnificent piece of acting that the present race of playgoers had seen. Even Mr. Gladstone wrote the actress a congratulatory epistle, adding that he had experienced keen enjoyment in witnessing her wonderful triumph. Sarah was now more than ever the rage, and her house, at 46 Prince's Gate, ivy-clad, and furnished in a luxurious and artistic style to suit its temporary occupant, was daily besieged by callers. Its mistress, however, was rarely at home, save to her intimates, and many an aristocratic equipage drove away without setting down, whose occupants possessed the *entree* to the inner circle of homes of fashionable London.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Mlle. BERNHARDT'S SECOND APPEARANCE—THOUGH OUT OF FAVOR, HER MAGNIFICENT IMPERSONATIONS COMPEL ENTHUSIASTIC RECOGNITION—A TICKLISH INTRODUCTION—OFF TO AMSTERDAM—RAPTUROUS RECEPTION IN HOLLAND—THE MARSEILLAISE AT COPENHAGEN—THE KING AND QUEEN OF DENMARK ATTEND EVERY ONE OF HER PERFORMANCES—THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR PROPOSES SARAH'S HEALTH AT A BANQUET—HER SCATHING REJOINER—FURTHER INSTANCES OF HER PETULANCY.

Mlle. BERNHARDT appeared a second time in London in the spring, again fulfilling her engagement at the Gaiety Theatre. Birds of ill omen predicted a failure, alleging that the actress's previous triumph had been ephemeral, and that sober London, having recovered its senses, would refuse a second time to fall down and worship at the shrine of the French siren. True it is that the English were a trifle "hipped" by the scant courtesy that society considered the fair Sarah had exhibited toward her audience on the memorable occasion on which she had failed to put in an appearance during her prior engagement; but notwithstanding the croakings of the prophets of evil, it was again a case of *Veni, vidi, vici*, and on the morning of the day following the "first night" of her re-entree upon the London stage the tone of the critics of the London dailies showed that Sarah was again to score a distinct success. The indications of the first night—enthusiastic applause and a perfect ovation at the fall of the curtain—proved thoroughly reliable and the great actress played another triumphantly successful engagement before the *elite* of London society. Again all sorts of absurd canards were in circulation regarding the all-conquering tragedienne. One of these bits of society gossip is worth repeating. It was said that the actress was greatly incensed that she was not invited by the Queen to visit her at Windsor Castle. This may or may not be true; but had the fascinating Sarah been more intimately acquainted with the usages of the English court she would have known that it is a very rare occurrence for any member of the dramatic profession to be invited to approach royalty. Mrs. Pemberton, *nee* Amy Sedgwick, is, if memory serves us, the only living actress who has, since the death of the Prince Consort, visited the Queen by invitation, and in this solitary

instance her Majesty's admiration for and keen appreciation of this gifted lady's elocutionary powers was probably the *raison d'être* of an invasion of that which would almost appear to be a line of demarcation in the Queen's visiting list, drawn at the dramatic profession. Wouldbe wits said that Master Bernhardt was the stumbling-block that lay between Sarah and an introduction to the lady who rules over the destinies of poor humanity in every quarter of the globe. It would be too "awfully awkward," you know, hisped London swelldom, if Mlle. Bernhardt should persist in taking her son with her to Windsor Castle, should her Majesty condescend to tender her an invitation to visit that august pile; for who knows but that she would adopt the same form of introduction in presenting the youthful scion of the House of Bernhardt to the Queen of England, that it was currently reported she had used in introducing him to a duchess whose town house is, during the London season, a rallying-point for the beauty and fashion of the metropolis? Said Mlle. Bernhardt, as she led the blushing boy into the presence of this noble representative of the *sangre azul*, "Permettez moi, duchess, de vous presentez mon petit accident." This event as related is hardly credible, but the story appears to be worth reproducing, if only as instancing how Mlle. Bernhardt's success has exposed her as a target for the shafts of ill-natured wit.

In Copenhagen another complete success was achieved. Mlle. Bernhardt appeared on five occasions, and was throughout her engagement greeted with the utmost enthusiasm by crowded audiences. The King and Queen of Denmark were present at every performance, and were not the least demonstrative in the almost continuous applause that was lavished upon the idol of the hour. Invitations poured in from all quarters, and as in London all sorts of ruses were adopted to secure the presence of the fascinating Frenchwoman at the numerous receptions that were given by the Danish aristocracy during her stay in Copenhagen. At one of these gatherings the erratic Sarah managed to create a genuine sensation, her passionate devotion to La Belle France inspiring her, as she maintained afterward, to make a *faux pas*, which it were impossible to defend as the action of a person presumably cognizant of the usages of polite society. At the banquet referred to, the toast of France, given out of compliment to the fair guest, was intrusted to the German minister. When the state of the feeling existing then as now between France and Germany is taken into consideration, the delicacy of the compliment implied in the generous attitude assumed by Baron Magnus was so apparent as to insure, it was thought, an equally pacific

reception of the toast by warm-hearted, patriotic Sarah. But, alas, evidence was soon forthcoming that Mlle. Bernhardt is not to be judged by the standard of ordinary women; nor can she be relied upon to act under certain circumstances as would ninety-nine of her sex similarly situated. No sooner had the German minister, after delivering a glowing panegyric on the "adorable Sarah" and the nation that claims the high honor of holding her name enrolled among its citoyennes, invited the assembled guests to drink to the prosperity of La Belle France, than Mlle. Bernhardt arose from her seat, and, glass in hand, thus addressed Baron Magnus: "You drink to France, M. le Baron," said she. "If entire France is the toast, I will join you." The Minister was nonplussed, and general confusion ensued. But Sarah as usual won the day. The sympathies of the hardy Danes were with her, and her pointed reference to the fact that the German flag still flies from steeple and turret o'er the fair French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine evoked sympathetic cheers from the guests who had assembled to do honor to one of the most accomplished and bravest daughters of France.

## CHAPTER X.

Mlle. Bernhardt's Taste in Dress—Her Wardrobe Described—An Expensive Outfit—Her Gorgeous Dressing Room at the Theatre Francais—Chef d'Œuvres of Sculptors and Painters—A Riddle for Manager Abbey.

THE taste of the great French actress is as noticeable in matters of the toilette as in all else on which she deigns to bestow her royal consideration. It in her choice of costumes occasionally the blending of colors may momentarily strike the observer as a trifle bizarre, familiarization with the daring contrasts soon leads one to the conclusion that for the true combinations in colors we must look to nature, and not to the emasculated taste of finniking Frenchmen whose days are spent in designing presumably harmonious blends of shades and colors for their inartistic lady patronesses. These fair dames in turn aim to rival a bird of paradise or a South American parrot as to the number of colors crowded on to a single costume, but forget that art must ever fail in an endeavor to improve upon the arrangements of nature—at any rate in the blending of colors. Mlle. Bernhardt would say, and her assertion would be backed by sense and reason, that the vivid green of the struggling shoots of the trees in spring-time are perfectly in keeping with the azure blue background of the skies in the year's adolescence. What then incongruous in the blending of the same colors in the costume of a lady? But breathe it not to Worth, whisper it not to Elise, or the terribly *gauche* taste indicated by the suggestion would deprive these worthies of their languid appetite for their caviare and *pate de foie gras* for an indefinite period.

Appended, for the benefit of lady readers, is a brief description of the brilliant costumes with which Sarah Bernhardt purposes dazzling the vision of her American audiences during the present visit. The cost of twenty dresses was 75,000 francs. After this what free-hearted American can grumble at the next little bill presented for payment by his wife's modiste? For *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, all Louis XV. style, one toilet with ivory-satin train and front of skirt of china-blue drapery, with garlands of red and tea roses, and Alencon lace on a pointed bodice. . . Another toilet of brocade silk, specially



made in Lyons, with cascades of flowers embroidered on the skirt, and the bodice trimmed with Bruges lace. The goods alone of this dress cost twenty-five hundred francs. Another *deshabille* toilet, all of satin and Languedoc lace. For *Camille*, a ball dress of white satin, with large embroidered camelias covering a ground which is wholly of pearls, a court train and a novel arrangement secured at the shoulder and draping at the side. This dress cost ten thousand francs. Another dress for a *deshabille* toilet, wholly of Valenciennes lace and pearls. For *Frou-Frou*, ivory-satin dress covered with embroidery of pearl and mother-of-pearl. One Lampas dress with crimson flowers on a cream ground. One dress all of black satin and jet, low-necked, with a cuirass. For the *Sphinx*, one sensational dress, with yellow satin skirt, black and jet waist, with two huge ravens upholding the skirt. A house dress of brocade silk, with crimson and pale roses on a cream ground, and ruby satin train. The great actress could well afford these luxuries, as her brief London tour netted her forty thousand dollars. As an addendum to the above, a description of Sarah's dressing-room at the Theatre Francais may be quoted as a further instance of her eccentricity in the selection of colors. "The walls of the dressing-room are hung with a snuff *caroubier*, tinted; at the windows, and as screens at the entrance, there are curtains of yellow satin embroidered with arabesques; on the floor is a costly Eastern carpet; a *chaise longue* is covered with stuff of red silk, with Oriental designs of exquisite taste; at the entrance is a *queridon* with an enormous bouquet of roses in a crystal vase, which spread their perfume with profusion; there is an antique *bahut* with artistic scruple, on which are some costly vases; on each side of the mirror, which occupies all the space of a panel, are lamps of old Rouen *faience* on stands; on the chimney-piece is an owl in bronze, curiously peering into a skull, with the word 'Rien' on the base; on a support of old oak is another skull; on the walls are water-colors and sketches; her portrait in outlines—somewhat too *impressioniste*—by her friend Louise Abema; a water-color drawing, signed Adrien Marie; and another charming one by Colin, entitled 'On Fait divers,' with some fanciful lines in verse. There is a small bust of the actress (but which does not resemble her in the slightest), representing her in her *role* in the *Passant* of Compee, played at the Odeon. It is by Monier, who was her professor in sculpture, and for whom she seems to have retained an affectionate attachment. There is an immense wreath of laurel and gold offered by the town of Havre to the great artist, some chairs and fauteuils in fine old tapestry; every thing, in fact, attests the artistic taste of

the mistress. A *baie* separates the *loge* from the *cabinet de toilette*. There stands on the dressing-table an ebony casket with silver incrustations and mountings, and the petty accessories requisite for an actress. On the walls are sketches of some droll Parisian caricatures—'Les Invisibles en *Tete-a-tete*,' and 'Le supreme Bon Ton,' dating from the time of the first empire; a painting which represents (also in caricature) all the actors of the modern Theatre Francais, and several heads, one of a pretty infant, with some lines in verse by the artist Bourgoing."

After perusing this description one is tempted to pity manager Abbey, who, with all his liberality and good taste, will surely be sorely puzzled to provide a sufficiently attractive cage for his splendid capture.

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## CHAPTER XI.

ALFRED DE MUSSET'S OPINION OF RACHEL—HIS CRITICISM EQUALLY APPLICABLE TO SARAH BARNHARDT—HER IMPERSONATION OF THE WIFE IN "CHEZ L'AVOCAT" AT THE FRANCAIS—AS ARCIGIE IN "PHEDRE"—HER CROWNING TRIUMPH AS PHEDRE—A TERRIBLE CLIMAX—HER PATHOS AS BERTHE IN "LA FILLE DE MADAME ROLAND"—ENNOBLING AN AUTHOR'S TEDIOUS LINES.

WRITING under date of the 1st of November, 1838, Alfred de Musset, in an article on "Tragedy," said: "An event has happened at the Theatre Francais which is unexpected and surprising; it is a matter of curiosity for the public, of interest for those who busy themselves with the fine arts. After being completely abandoned for ten years, the tragedies of Corneille and Racine have suddenly reappeared and regained the favor they had lost. Never, even in the greatest days of Talma, has the house been more crowded." Writing of Rachel, who had wrought this sudden change, he intimated that those who expected a tragedy queen to possess great physical force and produce conventional effects, would be disappointed. Mlle. Rachel was slight; there was a perfect simplicity in all she did; her voice was penetrating, her features penetrating: "du reste elle semble d'une sante faible: un role un peu long la fatigue visiblement." Thus far the description written of Rachel might be applied, with scarcely a word changed, to Mlle. Bernhardt. Belonging, as Rachel did, to a race which has given to the world many of its greatest men, she has the same simplicity and directness of action and intonation, the same air of slightness and weakness, and the same genius triumphing over the want of great physical force which Musset found in Rachel. Whether Mlle. Bernhardt's genius is fully equal to or surpasses that of Rachel may be left for those who have seen both actresses to determine; but those who never saw Rachel may be surely well content with having seen her successor.

As was the case with Rachel, Mlle. Bernhardt did not leap into fame at once, as soon as she had taken to the stage; her powers needed time and practice to make themselves fully felt. Few who saw her in what were practically her early days at the Francais, playing with M. Coquelin in a bright little piece

called *Chez l'Avocat*, in which a husband and wife meet in a lawyer's ante-room, whither each has come to get a separation on the ground of incompatibility of temper, and are by degrees reconciled to each other, could have guessed that before very long Mlle. Bernhardt would appear as the only successor to Rachel in *Phedre*, although in its own way the one performance was as admirable as the other. It was soon after *Chez l'Avocat* that Mlle. Bernhardt appeared as Arcicie in *Phedre*, and the tenderness and dignity of this impersonation were as admirable as was the playful pettishness of the offended wife in *Chez l'Avocat*. Mlle. Bernhardt, without a suspicion of obtrusive self-assertion, raised the character of Arcicie to the first rank. In other words, she played a part of secondary importance with the force and skill of a first-rate actress. But even from this feat it would have been difficult to guess that in a comparatively short time Mlle. Bernhardt would abandon the second for the first part in *Phedre*, and play the heroine as perfectly as she had played Arcicie. This was to be, however; and thus far Mlle. Bernhardt's masterpiece is, as Rachel's is recorded to have been, the performance of *Phedre*. The part is full of difficulty from beginning to end. It cannot be easy to carry an audience back to the time when irresponsible and irrevocable fate was held to rule the emotions and actions of mankind. Yet Mlle. Bernhardt, from her first appearance to her last, manages to suggest this idea, and to make her audience accept it as possible. She seems at the same time sustained and burned up by the passion that an irresistible power has implanted within her. She is appalled and yet exalted by a kind of demoniac possession. She is carried away by her longing for crime, but the longing does not come from her own nature; she is tortured by it, although she cannot resist it; and her suffering finds supreme expression in the speech in which it is confessed, with a mixture of loathing and triumph, to *Enone*:

*Enone.* Aimez-vous ?

*Phedre.* De l'amour j'ai toutes les fureurs.

*Enone.* Pourquoi ?

*Phedre.* Tu vas ouir le comble des horreurs, j'aime. . .

A ce nom fatal je tremble, je frissonne : j'aime—

*Enone.* Qui ?

*Phedre.* Tu connais ce fils de l'Amazone, ce prince si longtemps par moi-meme opprime.

*Enone.* Hippolyte ? Grands Dieux ?

*Phedre.* C'est toi qui l'as nomme.

The difficulty to the actress of leading up to this climax is enhanced by the fact that one knows what is coming. Yet so

great is the power with which the words are given that one hangs upon each pause in dreadful expectation of the next revelation, and when the actual confession is hurled at CEnone, it shatters the faculties of the listener, even as it seems to blast the whole being of the woman who makes it. It contains a world of contending passions; it conveys the utmost stretch of tragic horror, the depth of remorse, the ecstasy of martyrdom, and, with all this, a cunning triumph in the fact that Phedre has not herself spoken her infamous secret, but has left it to be put into the shamelessness of words by CEnone. Mlle. Bernhardt's delivery of Racine's verse is admirably limpid, and her diction confers upon the text its full value, while her electrical bursts of passion are full of stirring power. She has elaborated what was at first a fine and original conception into a finished and magnificent piece of acting. In contrast, or, perhaps, as complimentary to the fiery passion of Phedre we may refer to the penetrating pathos of Berthe in M. de Bornier's fine play of *La Fille de Roland*, and to the mingled dignity, tenderness, and passion of Donna Sol in Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, and the heroine in Voltaire's tragedy of *Zaire*. In each of these parts the actress's genius revealed itself under new conditions, and therefore under a new form, and in them the spontaneousness and absolute identification with the character represented are to be seen in a marked degree. In Dumas' *l'Etrangere*, she gave life and consistency to a character which is, as written, incomprehensible and impossible, and delivered a long tirade, which is tedious and affected enough in itself, with a skill and power that raised the author's ill-considered sayings to eloquence. It may be said, in fine, of Mlle. Bernhardt, that there is nothing which, as an actress, she has touched that she has not adorned.

## CHAPTER XII.

Mlle. Bernhardt's visit to America—keen competition among speculators to secure her—Mr. Abbey's princely offer finally accepted—Mr. Schwab proceeds to Paris and engages a company to support her—particulars of her tour in this country.

ANY sketch of Mlle. Bernhardt's career would be inexcusably incomplete if it did not include mention, however brief, of the engagement she is about to play in this country under the management of Mr. Henry E. Abbey. This gentleman's enterprise is worthy of all commendation; nay more: his liberality and downright pluck in embarking so large an amount of capital in that which, after all, is a speculation, demand the recognition which they will doubtless receive at the hands of a generous nation, by the hearty patronage of the theatre-going public, which alone can render the undertaking a successful one. It was indeed an anachronism that Mlle. Bernhardt should have played two engagements in London, not to mention, furthermore, that the inhabitants of two second-rate capitals of Europe had been afforded an opportunity of witnessing her marvellous impersonations, and should yet be a stranger to the boards of the American stage. Surely New York, with its enormous wealth, its refined and rapidly-increasing upper class, its liberality in relation to the encouragement of the fine arts, and its world-wide renown as the Tom Tiddler's Ground of operatic and histrionic celebrities, should no longer sigh inefficaciously for a sight of the idol of the modern stage. But while half of the dilettanti of New York were thus thinking and murmuring, Mr. Abbey was acting, and in May last he went to Europe to open negotiations with the adorable Sarah for a season in America. On his arrival he soon found that he was not the only Richmond in the theatrical field holding out baits of untold dollars with which to attract Mlle. Bernhardt to these hospitable shores. Mr. Stetson, of the Globe Theatre, Boston, was ready and willing to close an engagement with the heroine of the hour for one hundred performances, for which he was willing to pay the princely price of \$100,000. A French millionaire, whose knowledge of matters theatrical was limited to the ordinary experience of those whose place in the house is insured by a monetary pay-

ment, offered the actress similar terms, and, further, was willing to put up the whole amount before she sailed for America, and even allow her to handle one fourth of the money before she regretfully bade a fond farewell to the country of her adoption. But, until Mr. Abbey appeared upon the scene, Sarah's was inexorable, and refused to listen to the voice of the charmers, regardless of the amount of gold and wisdom woven into their tempting proposals. With the arguments with which that enterprising American manager backed his offer of \$1,000 per night for a series of 100 performances, supplemented by a share of the profits and a liberal allowance for expenses while in the United States, as also the payment of all expenses from place to place of Sarah and her suite, only Mlle. Bernhardt and himself are *en rapport*. Certain it is that the engagement was made, and the cable flashed the news beneath the waste of waters dividing the two continents that the bright particular dramatic star of the Eastern hemisphere was coming to exhibit the wealth of her talents before the cognoscenti of the Western world. Simultaneously Mr. Abbey cabled Frederick A. Schwab, asking him at once join him in Paris to organize a troupe to support the star, and select and purchase the wardrobe for Hernani, Phedre, and Adrienne Lecouvreur. Mr. Schwab's valuable services were promptly secured; one of the secrets of Mr. Abbey's success as a manager being his quick appreciation of the fact that he who would have the best of its kind that the market affords must not be niggardly in the price he pays for the indulgence of his whim. Mr. Schwab at once started for Paris, and on his arrival Mr. Abbey returned to look after his numerous ventures here, leaving his trusty representative to conclude all the arrangements. Mr. Schwab, who is a thorough cosmopolitan, soon got together a first-class company, eighteen in number, comprising the following artists, all favorably known to the Parisian public: M. Angelo as leading man, M. Gally, M. Bouillond, M. Ganglott, M. D'Orsay, M. Chamonnin, M. Deletraz, M. Thefer, M. Joliet, Mlle. Jeanne Bernhardt, Mme. Mea, Mlle. Sidney, Mlle. Vernet Laffeur, Mlle. Mea, Mlle. Martel. He also purchased the wardrobes for Adrienne Lecouvreur, Phedre, and Hernani, in every particular of material and style identical with the ones in use at the Theatre Francais. The salaries of the company, exclusive of that paid to Sarah, amount to 35,000 francs a month. Mlle. Bernhardt, her son and sister, and M. Angelo will sail for New York by the Amerique on October 16th, and the rest of the company take passage by the Wieland of the German line on the same day. During her stay in New York the star will take up her residence at the Brunswick Hotel,

where, without any great stretch of the imagination, she may stroll out into Madison Square and imagine that she is in her beloved Paris. Her first appearance will be made at Booth's Theatre, on November 8th, where Mlle. Bernhardt and her company will play for four weeks. They will then open in Boston, playing there two weeks, then appear two weeks in New England, travel thence to Philadelphia, where Sarah will enliven the sober Quaker City for one week; on to Chicago, where they will play a two weeks' engagement, and thence to St. Louis for one week. The next stop will be at New Orleans, where two weeks will be spent, and then the company will return by way of Memphis, Louisville, Cleveland, Pittsburg, to New York.



## CHAPTER XIII.

PEN-AND-INK PORTRAITS OF SARAH—A BUNDLE OF ANECDOTES—THE PRINCE OF WALES AND M<sup>lle</sup>. BERNHARDT—SARAH AND THE ARCHBISHOP—CHAM'S REVENGE—HARD ON A RUSSIAN—MYSTERIOUS MODELLING.

WITH the personal appearance of M<sup>lle</sup>. Bernhardt, in as far as an idea of her face and form can be conveyed to the observer through the medium of photograph or engraving, the world is already pretty well familiar. An enterprising New York photographer has paid a large sum for the privilege of a series of sittings from the fair lady, and it is to be hoped that he will prove more successful in the reproduction of her features than have his brothers of the camera of Paris and London. In vulgar parlance, Sarah does not "take well," so that the numbers of pictures of her that have appeared of late in the illustrated journals give but a faint idea of the nameless charm of expression that irradiates her by no means faultless features. Henri Tessier dashed off the accompanying word-picture of her charms :

" Des pieds de petit Chinois,  
La musique d'une voix  
Des mains dont on pourrait dire  
Qu'un baiser les ganterait !  
Trente-deux perles de lait  
Dans l'écrin d'un frais sourire !  
De l'esprit, de la gaité,  
Un talent fin, très goute,  
Telle est cette blonde actrice,  
Qui, pendant longtemps, pleura  
—Comme Calypso—l'ingrat  
Ulysse !"

And here is a couplet from the pen of another of her admirers :

" Les yeux noirs plus beaux,  
(Eyes of the blackest hue.)  
Mes amis ! Deux miroirs ! Deux rayons ! Deux flambeaux !  
(My friends ! Two mirrors ! Two rays of light ! Two burning torches !)

Sarah is of a restless, never-still-a-minute sort of disposition, and the subjoined graphic sketch of her manner of conducting herself among her friends happily hits off some of her eccentricities of demeanor.

She smiles, presses your hands, sits down, gets up, chats with everybody very rapidly: "J'ai faim—J'ai soif—me voila—bonjour—Je suis bien contente—grands succes, rappels—vite, quelque chose, n'importe quoi—un biscuit—merci!" In plain English, "I am hungry—and thirsty—here I am—good day—very much pleased—great success, encores—quick, with something, no matter what—a biscuit—thanks."

She snatches a cake served up on a silver salver, nibbles at it, and throws the rest to her pet dogs.

It has been stated on another page that all kinds of stories have been told in which Mlle. Bernhardt is credited with "playing the lead." As a fitting finish to this imperfect sketch, a few of these bits of society tattle are appended:

The Prince of Wales was present as a private spectator at the last performance of the Comedie Francaise. While *Davenant* was being played, the "divine" Sarah shared the royal box. At the conclusion of the piece, H. R. H. sent for Got to congratulate him, when Sarah, with her accustomed effrontery, proceeded to criticise Mlle. Dudlay's delineation of the hero, a part which Sarah herself had rehearsed *eight* times, and which her substitute had undertaken at *forty-eight hours' notice*. When, therefore, the divine one drew forth her depreciation of Mlle. Dudlay's representation, Got fairly lost his temper, and told Donna Sol that her desertion was more than a fault, it was "a crime," and that she ought to be ashamed of herself. But what annoyed Sarah most was that H. R. H. backed up Got, and said he was of the same opinion.

Sarah had a stall at the Albert Charity Fair, held in London, and although in competition with dowagers, duchesses, and countesses, she netted the largest receipts (£256), of which £10 came from the Princess of Wales for two kittens. Her autograph commanded a pound per letter. The Prince of Wales was her best customer.

Mlle. Bernhardt had the misfortune to offend Cham, the celebrated caricaturist, and he revenged himself by picturing her with a diminutive head attached to a disproportionate body, appending this inscription: "Mlle. S. B., bloated by her success, receiving the homage of her numerous adorers." The next attack was announced in the following preliminary heading: "She sees in her dreams Mars, Duval, and Rachel holding up the hem of her robe." But in the meanwhile Sarah had tendered her apologies to the irate artist, so the second caricature never appeared.

Yet another covert sneer at her extreme thinness appeared in a French paper.

A near-sighted person approaches her: "Take care, mon-

sieur, you will sit upon me." "Fichtre!" exclaims the near-sighted one, recoiling in comic horror, "what a narrow escape from impalement."

And her rivals have added, "She could take a bath in a gun-barrel. She could clothe herself with a shoe-string."

One day, so the story goes, the Bernhardt feigned illness, so as to take a ramble in the country. The doctor's adverse report caused her unwilling appearance at rehearsal, during which she incessantly groaned. "Ah, you suffer, then, really?" asked a companion. "Suffer! yes indeed! a terrible malady." "Which you call—" "An *inadmissible hypothesis*," "Hey! what! Parbleu!" "The doctor has written it out in big letters on his report. 'The illness of Mlle. Bernhardt is an inadmissible hypothesis.'"

In the following story Sarah plays second fiddle to the Church; but it will bear repetition notwithstanding:

While in her studio an archbishop remarked, "What is that behind the screen?" "An Amphytrion, monseigneur." "Ah, indeed, let us see." "I beg pardon," said the embarrassed artist; "but I fear this statue may displease your eminence." "Why so?" "It is so scantily draped." "Scantily or not at all draped?" questioned the prelate smilingly. "Ma foi, monseigneur, not at all!" "Show it then, mademoiselle, show it." "There is naught but the 'decollete,' which is indecent. The nude in art is a costume."

Said some one to Dumas, while discussing the features of the fair Sarah, "Why are Jews so ugly and the Jewesses so pretty?" "Because," he answered, "the Jews crucified the Saviour, and the Jewesses bewailed his sad fate."

One evening after an argument with a Russian actress, in whose physiognomy seemed to be reflected the polar breezes and the ice-floes of the Neva, Alice the Rusienne, worsted, began to shed tears. Sarah was remonstrated with. "You were wrong to go so far. The poor girl is deeply moved. She weeps." "She weeps?" retorted Sarah, incredulous. "Come now, you deceive yourself; she is merely thawing."

Anything is easily accomplished when one knows how to do it. When Hermann the conjuror visited Dr. Tanner during the progress of his phenomenal fast, he offered to wager any amount of money that, under similar conditions to those self-imposed by the Minnesota man, he would exist for an indefinite period.

A story has been the round of the papers to the effect that Mademoiselle Bernhardt is busy rehearsing, with Madame Damaïn, a kind of dramatic duologue which promises to attain great vogue in fashionable drawing-rooms. A duchess, who is

somewhat incredulous as to the plastic and graphic talent of Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt, calls upon the lady and gives her a commission for a sculptured portrait, on condition that it be modelled before her eyes. Mademoiselle Bernhardt accepts the commission and executes a "speaking likeness" of the duchess in sight of the audience. The time taken to complete the model does not exceed five-and-twenty minutes.

The idea is a prettily ingenious one; but it is obvious that not every lady of dramatic genius is withal so plastically gifted and so practised in the use of the modelling-tool as to be able to complete an *alto rilievo* portrait in less than half an hour. For the benefit of lady amateurs who would like to "get up" in their own drawing rooms an adaptation of *Le Pari d'une Grande Dame* we may point out a very short and easy way of surmounting the plastic difficulty. "First catch your hare" (as Mrs. Glasse did *not* say), that is to say, first have ready a carefully modelled and well-baked medallion portrait of the lady who represents the duchess. Then send for some red modelling clay. Smother your medallion, as roughly as possible, with this red clay well moistened. All you have to do when the action of the *petite comédie* commences is, with a variety of artistic flourishes, gradually, by means of your fingers and your modelling tools, to remove the damp red clay from the dry red terra-cotta. Be careful to take a step or two backward now and then, shading your eyes with one hand, to see how your work is getting on. In the end the features of the medallion portrait will be wholly laid bare, and then you can give the "finishing touches" by picking out the last crumbs of clay from the hard medallion. *Voilà la chose.*

Many years ago, in a piece called *Benvenuto Cellini*, at the Porte St. Martin Theatre, the actor who played the part of Cellini modelled a full-length statuette "in sight of the audience." It chanced that he was (like Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt) as good a sculptor as he was an actor; but when the piece was printed the fly-leaf contained the recipe which I have formulated above for the benefit of provincial Benvenuto's who are actors, but not painters as well. The cunning *supercherie* is akin to the trick sometimes practised by Mr. Clown, when "in sight of the audience" he takes the portrait of Mr. Pantaloon, in a broad, bold, black outline on a white board. To all appearance the drawing is spontaneous and free-hand. In reality, the artist's brush mechanically follows an outline already pencilled, but which, having been covered with a thin coat of whitewash, is invisible to the spectators at a distance.

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