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raised their heads again, others sprang up from their fiery draught, and danced, half in a mad triumph, and half in the agony of suffocation, until they fell and steeped their corpses in the liquor that had killed them. Nor was even this the worst or most appalling kind of death that happened on this fatal night. From the burning cellars, where they drank out of hats, pails, buckets, tubs, or shoes, some men were drawn alive, but all alight from head to foot; who, in their unendurable anguish and suffering, making for anything that had the look of water, rolled, hissing, in this hideous lake, and splashed up liquid fire which lapped in all it met with as it ran along the surface, and neither spared the living nor the dead."

From these tragic memories it is easy to pass to others of a mild and radiant kind; for in Holborn the pickaxe is heard on every hand, and at every blow some memory starts to life. A little farther westward, on the north side of the street, there is a gap from which clouds of engine-smoke roll across the traffic. Here, in Fuller's, or Fulwood's, Rents, a shaft of the new electric railway is sunk on the very sight of Squire's and other coffee houses of ripe memory. Several of Addison's *Spectators* were dated from Squire's; and where the chain now grates on its windlass, and the whistle shrieks discordant, the good knight and the "Spectator" met for quiet talk. Sir Rogers's venerable figure drew the eyes of the whole room upon him, and

"he had no sooner seated himself at the upper End of the high Table, but he called for a clean Pipe, a Paper of Tobacco, a Dish of Coffee, a Wax-Candle, and the *Supplement* with such an Air of Cheerfulness and Good-humour, that all the Boys in the Coffee-room (who seemed to take pleasure in serving him) were at once employed on his several Errands, insomuch that no Body else could come at a Dish of Tea, till the Knight had got all his Conveniencies about him."

Another *Spectator* memory of Fuller's Rents may be recalled: it has a flavour which will cling to the spot even when the railway begins its carrying work. "This is to give notice," runs an advertisement in the *Spectator*, "that the three Criticks who last Sunday settled the characters of my Lord Rochester and Boileau, in the Yard of a Coffee House in Fuller's Rents, will meet this next Sunday at the same Time and Place, to finish the merits of several Dramatick Writers, and will also make an end of the Nature of the True Sublime." It is not recorded whether these gentlemen made an end of the Sublime. But Time, the greatest critic of all, is making an end of old Holborn.

PARIS LETTER.

(*From our French Correspondent.*)

Stephane Mallarmé.

In one of his dark pages—the darker since it will never be known if they were meant as a deliberate mystification or if the poet understood expression sincerely as a kind of Chinese puzzle—Mallarmé speaks of "the exquisite vacation from oneself." When M. Mallarmé, a simple and excellent professor of English in a French college, was not expounding the beauties of the English tongue to a circle of admiring students, who, I suspect, relished the poet for the singularly sympathetic and charming qualities of the man, it is charitable to assume that he was in frequent vacation from himself. Then it was he divagated, and wrote a language quite the most extraordinary and incomprehensible of the earth. Yet open a volume of his, and you will be surprised by the look of exquisite limpidity of the prose, by the appearance of incomparable polish of the verse.

The fact is, Mallarmé was a writer guided by sight, and not by ear or sense. What he writes is not meant to be read aloud or to be understood; it is written to be looked at. The juxtaposition of words is arranged for him, not by what these convey to the intelligence, but by their distinguished elegance, by their graceful look. They may mean nothing at all, or simply the grotesque. The thing for the printed page is to furnish evidence of choice.

"Is it willingly," Daudet once asked him, "that you have retired into *tenebrae* that the world may not follow you, to be alone with the elect, with yourself, with your dream—or is it involuntarily?" The delicious malice of Daudet's question rests for ever in interrogation. That "involuntarily" is delightful. To be sure, Mallarmé has his answer: "But, my dear fellow, the mere operation of writing consists in putting black upon white." Mallarmé never did anything else. Here is a page chosen at random, and heaven knows if they lack in the slender collection of his works—those impenetrable pages written in an unknown tongue, in the scorn of syntax, whose meaning he himself would describe as "absconse." The word is a favourite of his, as is the condition in intelligence. He describes an afternoon in which his lucidity is veiled in mental somnolence. He fancies a woman's skirts invades his solitude, and thus addresses the unseen lady (I could neither translate Mallarmé into French nor English, not often having the ghost of an idea what he means! Perhaps another reader will be more fortunate, and furnish me with the clue of this passage, which, I own, looks very pretty and simple in print):

"A quel type s'ajustent vos traits, je sens leur précision, Madame, interrompre chose installée ici par le bruissement d'une venue oui! Ce charme instinctif d'en dessous que ne défend pas contre l'explorateur la plus authentiquement nouée, avec une boucle en diamant, des ceintures. Si vague concept se suffit; et ne transgresse point le délice impreint de généralité qui permet et ordonne d'exclure tous visages, au point que la révélation d'un (n'allez point le pencher, avéré, sur le furtif seuil où je règne) chasserait mon trouble, avec lequal il n'a que faire."

There, if there exists an honest French or English man who can *prove* to me (not state merely) that he understands that page, and can convince me that it really means something, I am willing to bestow on him my last five-pound note. And when he has accomplished that astounding feat, let him kindly construe into French, or English, or even modest Chinese, which ought to be considerably easier than Mallarmé's private and very personal language, this mysterious sonnet:

"A la nue accablante, tu
basse de basalte et de laves
à même des échos esclaves
par une trompe sans vertu
quel sépulcral naufrage (tu
le sais, écume, mais y laves)
suprême une entre les épaves
abolli le mât dévêtu,
ou cela que furibond faute
de quelques perdition haute
tout l'abime vani éployé
dans le si blanc cheveu qui traine
avancement aura noyé
le flanc enfant d'une sirène."

For a prince of poets, confess that this is indeed a royal mystification. But there are a large gathering of mortals who reverse the talents of the sailor's parrot, and loudly admire the more the less they understand. Yet, strange to say, the man who could make this brutal assault upon our patience could now and then write verses suave and delicate and simple. I remember an essay by his cousin, M. Paul Margueritte, the novelist, who, in chatting about Mallarmé's little theatre at Valvins, where he died, quotes a couple of really charming sonnets actually written in French. Here is the summer adieu, recited by the poet's daughter to the friendly audience:

"Avec le soleil nous partons
Pour revenir au temps des roses,
Sans or, O Gilles et Martons!
Avec le soleil nous partons.
Mais il nous reste en nos cartons
De quoi chasser les jours moroses.
Avec le soleil nous partons
Pour revenir au temps des roses."

Who could ask for anything prettier clearer, more delicately musical? It is as sweet as an old French song. The haunting quality of these two lines:

"Avec le soleil nous partons
Pour revenir au temps des roses"

—has an echo of Ronsard. From time to time, in his rare lucid moments, he is rich in evocative charm. Take this lovely sculptured and luminous picture of the Faun on a hot afternoon, squeezing the grape and then laughingly watching the light through the mellow skin:

"Ainsi quand des raisins j'ai sucé la clarté
Pour bannir un regret par ma feinte écarté
Rieur, j'élève au ciel d'été la grappe vide
Et soufflant dans ses peaux lumineuses, avide
D'ivresse, jusqu'au soir je regarde au travers."

Whoever gave in five lines a more delicate and voluptuous charm to drunkenness? It is as sunny as the grape itself, as witching as the still perfumed woods of southern shores. Fine lines light up the obscurity like jewels.

"Mordant au citron d'or de l'idéal amer"

is unforgettable. Of a rare and radiant beauty also are those lines in *Apparition*:

". . . Tu m'es en riant apparue
Et j'ai cru voir la fée au chapeau de clarté
Qui jadis, sur mes beaux sommeils d'enfant gâté
Passait laissant toujours de ses mains mal fermées,
Neigir de blancs bouquets d'étoiles parfumées."

But lines like these—star-points in the heavy dusk of night—hardly explain to us the "culte" of Mallarmé and his title of "prince of poets," which greeted him on Verlaine's death. Now we hear that Heredia, in his stead, is the prince. Well done! That's a sovereignty we understand and accept. After night daylight. Perhaps Mallarmé's unexplained charm lies in the singularly rich effect of vision conveyed in seizing and quaint adjectives. At his best and clearest his originality is certainly distinguished for its sober elegance. "L'Azur attendri d'Octobre pâle et pur," which is all he says of softened sky and landscape, is a fair example of this haughty restraint so characteristic of him when at odd moments he condescends to be intelligible.

But will he live as other than a mad, strange sample of decadent French genius fallen into a kind of feline, unsoundable reverie? For his best verse has something of the deep green mystery of a dreaming cat's regard.

H. L.

DRAMA.

"MACBETH" AT THE LYCEUM.

Personality in Acting.

THE other day a diligent copymaker on one of the Paris newspapers entertained his readers with a collection of opinions, derived from dramatic authors, on the question whether actors, properly speaking, "created parts," or merely reflected the ideas entrusted to them. Naturally, the opinions were various, the actor being regarded either as a good or a bad collaborator according to circumstances—good when his personality happened to fit in with the author's conception of a character; bad when it differed from, or conflicted with, it. My own experience in the matter is small, but I well remember that in a couple of pieces of mine which were played in London some years ago the actors, in certain instances, vivified and defined my ideas—in fact, improved upon them; while in others, as M. Marcel Prévost puts it, they presented "images" more or less "deformed" in outline. Certain it is that the actor, whatever his abstract conception of a character may be, is, to a great extent, the slave of his personality. Theoretically, he adapts himself to his part; practically, his success is most assured when the part is adapted to his personality. This is so well understood by dramatists of experience, that they write, as far as possible, with a particular company of actors in view. The actor - manager has often been blamed for his habit of standing in the middle of the stage, and being fitted with a part as a tailor fits his customer with a coat; but there is no doubt that by this means success for author and actor alike is most easily and surely achieved. A dramatist who writes without regard to his interpreters is somewhat in the position of an artist who paints a picture in the dark; the result when the work comes to be exposed to the glare of the footlights may be either better or worse than he anticipated—it can never be exactly the same. This is why writing a play is so much like drawing a number in a lottery. The novelist or the essayist stands or falls by his own handiwork; the dramatist is at the mercy of half-a-dozen collaborators, who only approximately realise his conceptions, and he is fortunate if his picture, retouched by so many hands, comes out as an harmonious whole.

The bearing of these remarks upon Mr. Forbes-Robertson's revival of "Macbeth" at the Lyceum is obvious. What a wholly different play it is, to be sure, from that which was presented on these same boards by Sir Henry Irving nine or ten years ago! Shakespeare would probably have found it difficult in either case to recognise his own handiwork. Sir Henry Irving's rendering was the widest departure from tradition that the stage has seen. As the rude, stalwart soldier, physically brave, but morally weak, lay beyond his compass, he gave us an intellectually subtle, poltroonish, uxorious Macbeth, swayed partly by "skyey influences," but more by the passionate entreaties of a wife to whom he was devotedly attached; while Miss Ellen Terry for her part depicted Lady Macbeth as the fond and tender spouse, ambitious solely for her lord's advancement. So much for personality. The picture so presented was consistent enough after its fashion, but as unlike the traditional view of "Macbeth" as night from day. In the present case we have a rendering of the tragedy similarly governed and limited by the personality of the chief performers.

Mr. Forbes Robertson is an actor possessed of a rare intellectuality and refinement, whose Hamlet placed him in the forefront of Shakespearian actors. But the very qualities that contributed to his success as the scholarly, philosophic Prince militate against his assumption of the rude and impetuous Scottish thane. That he is too true an artist to do violence to the text one sees at a glance. He knows the tradition of the part and would adhere to it. In physical make-up he is all but perfect, a living portrait of the uncouth, unkempt Scottish chieftain of the eleventh century. But the effort to accommodate himself to a part so wholly at variance with his personality checks his spontaneity. Laying aside the gifts with which he is accustomed to conquer his public, he fights the battle like a man with one hand tied behind his back, the result being a certain tameness or flatness in the performance which is painfully felt in comparison with the vigour and vitality of the Macduff of the cast, a part spiritedly embodied by Mr. Robert Taber. This latest Macbeth, in a word, is a gratification to the eye but a disappointment to the understanding. Although not definitely acknowledged as a factor in dramatic art, the limitations of personality are practically recognised in what are known as "lines of business." Every actor has his line—a sort of part in which he admittedly excels; and, presumably, it is not his intelligence which confines him to this groove, but his physical means of giving expression to his ideas. Nevertheless, the Shakespearian actor is supposed to range over the entire field of human nature: to pass at will "from gay to grave, from lively to severe." On no other hypothesis could we suppose a first-rate Hamlet undertaking the part of Macbeth. Mr. Forbes Robertson's comparative failure in Macbeth is in no wise derogatory to his powers as an actor; it only shows that the actor's personality will assert itself, whether recognised or not.

Happy the actor who knows his limitations; and the actress too! for thereby much chagrin and heartburning is avoided. The objection I have taken to Mr. Forbes Robertson's Macbeth applies with still greater force to the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Clever actress as she is in the line of the modern adventuress—all her powers were revealed like a flash in the part of the second Mrs. Tanqueray—she is one of the most hopelessly uninspiring Lady Macbeths that I remember to have seen. Her murderous counsels are delivered without conviction, while her remorse is without a shred of plausibility or pathos. Nothing in her rendering of the part conveys the smallest thrill or shudder to the house. Her very sleep-walking lacks impressiveness; she gives one the idea that she is a woman awake, hoping to conquer sleep by a little nocturnal exercise. With a personality typically modern, not to say decadent, like hers, the attempt upon which Mrs. Patrick Campbell is engaged, to conquer a Shakespearian reputation, appears to me a wholly mistaken one. Manner, look, accent, enunciation, temperament—everything is against her. A more striking example of the limitations of personality it would be hard to find.

Apparently, melodrama is degenerating into a rivalry between authors in the production of mechanical sensation, to which everything is sacrificed. The genesis of "The Great Ruby," given at Drury Lane, for example, is very obvious. Last year Messrs. Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton contrived a deadly hand - to - hand fight between divers at the bottom of the sea. In the present instance they have reasoned with themselves, Why not go to the opposite extreme—from the waters underneath the earth to the air above—and thrill the public with a life and death struggle between two men in a balloon? The great diamond robbery committed in Piccadilly last autumn while this sensation was in process of being concocted must have suggested the motive of such a struggle, the obtaining possession of a stolen jewel of great price. With these ideas the authors must have sat down to write, working back from the balloon to the robbery of the "great ruby" from a jeweller's shop in Bond-street by the "diamond gang." Nevertheless, they are not ideas of a very tractable kind, for, although the robbery constitutes an effective first act, the authors have not succeeded in working in their balloon sensation without a considerable sacrifice of plausibility. Like the famous "pattes de mouche" of Sardou, the stolen ruby passes through a variety of adventures until it finds itself innocently