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THE DRAMA—TRAGEDY AND COMEDY—THEIR OFFSHOOTS AND INFLUENCE.

The drama not only occupies, but is entitled to occupy, a very high position, among all civilized communities, as a means of instruction, amusement and relaxation. A large amount of talent is employed in the production of dramatic works, and a still larger amount in performing them and delineating the characters drawn by the authors. But, as a general thing, neither authors nor actors, pay that due regard to the permanent results, which the influence exercised by the drama upon the masses justly demands. Nor is this to be wondered at, when the condition of society throughout the world is fairly considered.

Dramatists do not assume the position of public reformers. They find that the drama has been, to a very great extent, placed under the ban of religion by zealots and bigotted ecclesiastics. They find, also, that society possesses certain tastes and desires, whether correct or incorrect, and their main objects being the gaining of applause, notoriety and pecuniary compensation, they seek to minister to those tastes and desires, and please the many, instead of endeavoring, as their main object, to raise the moral tone of society and imbue the public with more correct tastes.

We do not wish to be understood as saying that dramatic authors and actors are regardless of what influence their works and performances may exercise. They try to depict vice that it may be shunned; to portray virtue that it may be admired and sought after; but these are not the principal objects aimed at. And the existence of morbid tastes and prurient desires have called forth efforts, on the part of both authors and actors, to gratify the wishes of the many at the expense of correct taste and chaste feeling.

At various periods of the history of the drama, the tone of society has made this more conspicuous than at others. Shakespear's plays, in the original, and many of the old comedies, as well as the works of some of the older dramatists, abound with expressions and passages that are rightly rejected in their modern representations. The influence exercised by certain plays, prove how powerfully the drama acts upon society, where it is largely patronized, and the necessity for dramatic representations having a tendency to elevate the moral and social tone of society. One fact will speak more to the purpose than a page of argument. But a few years ago, the Lord Chamberlain of England was compelled to exercise his power, as theatrical censor, and prohibit the performance of Jack Sheppard, in the London theatres, in consequence of the rapid increase of juvenile thieves following its representation. Other instances of a similar character might be adduced did space permit.

There has been, quite recently, a rapidly growing taste manifested, both east and west of us, for theatrical representations of a character that the loosest expounder of morals would scarcely attempt to defend. And it is highly indicative of the tone of public feeling, that crowds should flock to see a lady out-rivalling lady Godiva of Coventry

notoriety, by performing in a costume remarkable for nothing so much as its scantiness.

In some large cities, comprising within their limits vast masses of population, there are numerous theatres which are conducted to gratify tastes of every shade. Some confine their representations almost exclusively to what is termed the legitimate drama; others gratify their patrons with the light and sparkling,—vaudevilles, burlesques and extravaganzas forming the principal part of the entertainments; while others, again, cater to the most morbid tastes, and nightly enact scenes of "blood, bluster and thunder," with "terrific broad-sword combats," to the admiring terror of crowds reeking with the fumes of drink, and energetically mixing with the smoke from the red fire of the tableaux or the gunpowder exploded on the stage, the same article from tobacco, still more offensive to sensitive nostrils. In such cities almost every kind of theatrical taste can be gratified. But in other places in the outside world where there is only one theatre, or at most two, the prevailing taste of the theatre-going public will very materially influence the proprietors or lessees in their choice of pieces. They will unquestionably select those best calculated to draw, by meeting the public taste. Thus, as the world goes, the public is to a very great extent responsible for the class of plays presented before them.

We have a theatre in our city which in its erection involved a very different object from that which generally governs those who construct such places elsewhere. It was not erected to meet a public want, and by so meeting it make money; but to meet a public want, and by so meeting it provide a place of relaxation, amusement and instruction. As a public we give an expression of our feelings with regard to the kind of plays we prefer, by our attendance or non-attendance at their performance. But when our hopes, our objects, and aims are placed in juxtaposition with those of the world at large, and it is considered how easily the human mind is influenced, it will be seen that much more care and judgment are requisite in selecting pieces for performance here than is considered necessary elsewhere. We have had tragedy, comedy and farce, and dramas of various kinds presented here, but a class of plays, very eagerly sought after by many in the world, have never been placed on the boards of our theatre, and we are glad of it.

Tragedy is presumed to deal with those passions which act most powerfully on the human mind. It has its admirers in every place where the drama holds a position, and most likely it has them here too, though we admit we are not among the number. Most of the tragedies that hold a place on the stage, are marked by a loftiness of thought and language, and display an acquaintance with the heart of man given up to the government of passion, that commend them to minds of a certain constitution. But there are plays, abounding with as beautiful sentiment, as chaste imagery, as poetical figures and as eloquent language as the most admired tragedies, yet lacking those objectionable features in tragedy which horrify the highly sensitive mind. Nothing but the most morbid taste could feel any other emotion than that of disgust at the brutal smothering of Desdemona on the stage by Othello, or the entrance of Macbeth with the gory daggers from murdering the innocent and amiable Duncan. It is related of Mrs. Siddons, that in her rendering of Lady Macbeth, she left such a feeling of gloom and horror upon the minds of the audience, that the most lively farce, put on the boards afterwards on the same night, could not remove the im-

pression and could scarcely excite a smile.

Such plays as the Lady of Lyons, Richelieu, Damon and Pythias, As you Like it, and others of a similar class, can gratify the most fastidious seeker after language and sentiment, and thought and characteristic description, yet the emotions and feelings excited by their performance are pleasant and genial, while the plays are instructive and elevating in their tendency.

There is another class of plays, known as sensational, some of which are entitled to retain a place on any stage. As an instance we may cite the Colleen Bawn. While working out the dramatic incidents comprised in the plot, it gives a faithful picture of a certain class of society, in a country of the old world, with which few not natives of that country are acquainted. The strange sensation experienced in a certain part of the play is so brief, and is succeeded by such pleasurable emotions preceding and at the denouement, that the latter are rather heightened than otherwise by the revulsion. In this the dramatist has manifested better taste than did the talented author of the Collegians, the work from which it is adapted. But there are some sensational plays, which heap horror on horror, and have been written expressly to attract crowds of a class before whom the agony has to be piled on to an enormous extent or they would not believe they had received the worth of their money. None of these have been produced here yet, that we are aware of.

Comedy deals with what are sometimes called the lesser vices of society, and seeks to correct them by satire, and holding them up to ridicule in fictitious characters. Comedy is always pleasing, always amusing, often highly instructive. Out of comedy grows farce, broadly humorous and often ridiculously exaggerated. Its object is to make people laugh, and it is many times more effective than the doctor in giving a healthy tone to the mind and thereby arresting the progress of various physical ailments.

But there is still another class of plays that are always welcome, teach many a wholesome lesson, often stir up hidden memories, and incite resolutions for doing good in the future, while they amuse and please us. That style of plays known as the domestic drama comprises some of the neatest and choicest productions of the modern dramatists. Old Phil's Birthday, The Chimney Corner, The Porter's Knot, The Cricket on the Hearth, and many others that might be named, present such faithful pictures of actual life, that they approach as near to holding the "mirror up to nature" as any that we can think of.

Dramatic productions are nearly all, if not altogether, exaggerations. We rarely, if ever, meet in actual life with fac-similes of the characters we see on the stage. They are the embodiment of certain characteristics, peculiarities and whimsicalities that are met with, and a number of individuals may be required to furnish sufficient character to form one personality for the stage. Thus the mirror held up to nature presents a distorted or exaggerated picture before her. It cannot help being otherwise. The principle events of a lifetime, or it may be of a few days only, crowded into the space of two or three hours, necessitate it. Yet the illusion is many times so perfect, that an audience will sympathize with the characters, be melted to pity, convulsed with laughter, stirred with patriotic feelings, or thrill with emotion; and though they may feel and say—"It's only a play," an influence has been exercised upon them before which they have yielded for the time, and traces of which linger after the salient points of the performance have faded from memory.

We wish to see the drama cultivated among us, and cultivated to constantly wield an influence for good, inspire thoughts and feelings that will be elevating and ennobling, and ever be a source of amusement and healthful relaxation to our citizens.

HOME ITEMS.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS.—The fourteenth annual session of the Legislative Assembly was brought to a close at half-past one on Saturday morning. As usual, the last three days of the session was a busy time, and much business, the papers pertaining to which had been in the hands of the several committees, was disposed of. To give a full account of all that has transpired in the Assembly since our last issue, would require more space than we can allow in this number, therefore we prefer to show what was consummated.

The following is a list of the bills passed by the Assembly, and which received the approval of the Governor:

An act for the relief of A. P. Rockwood, Warden of the Penitentiary.

An act creating two new counties, and changing the county seat of Sanpete and Richland counties.

An act to incorporate the Uinta Road Company.

An act to incorporate Irrigation Companies.

An act pertaining to damage done by animals.

An act amending the Charter of Great Salt Lake City.

Resolution convening the Legislative Assembly.

An act concerning surplus stock.

An act to incorporate the American Fork Library Association.

An act to provide for the organization of new counties.

An act amending the charters of certain cities.

An act in relation to defrauding, and cheating or swindling.

An act granting to the Overland Mail Company the right to construct a graded road across Dugway Mountain, and to collect toll for the use of the same.

An act to extend the north boundary line of American Fork City.

Resolution in relation to papers on irrigation.

An act assigning Associate Justice McCurdy to a Judicial District.

An act to incorporate the Tooele City Library Association.

An act in relation to butchering and meat markets.

An act changing the boundary of Tooele City in Tooele county.

An act to amend an act entitled an act to incorporate the Jordan Irrigating Company.

An act to incorporate the Provo and Wasatch Road Company.

Resolution in relation to grants of land to States and Territories.

An act governing writs of attachments and garnishments.

An act consolidating the School Laws.

An act granting unto John Nelson and others the right to build a toll bridge in Cache county.

An act to incorporate Logan City.

An act to incorporate the City of Payson.

An act concerning Notaries Public in Great Salt Lake, Weber and Millard counties.

An act prescribing the manner of assessing and collecting Territorial and county taxes.

An act to extend the north boundary line of Springville City.

Territorial appropriation bill.

An act to incorporate the Ogden Canyon Road Company.

An act creating an agent to receive and manage the agricultural fund of this Territory.

An act to amend an act providing for a poll tax for road purposes.

An act authorizing the Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools to collect certain moneys.

An act to incorporate the Weber Canyon Road Company.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the State of Deseret convened, Jan. 23, in the State House in this city. The Message of His Excellency, Governor Brigham Young, was read in joint session by his Secretary, Mr. George Q. Cannon, and 1000 copies ordered printed. By request of the Assembly Lt. Governor H. C. Kimball, Governor Young, and Hon. G. Q. Cannon, elected Secretary of State, delivered interesting and pertinent addresses to the Assembly, prior to the dissolution of joint session.

The Message is published in this NEWS, and we cordially commend it to the careful perusal of all our readers.

After transacting the business before them the Assembly adjourned.

SABBATH MEETINGS.—SUNDAY, January 15, Bishop Leonard E. Harrington, delivered a short discourse in the forenoon, upon the text: "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm."

Elder Orson Hyde followed with a few appropriate remarks, and bore testimony to the truth of the address just delivered, and to the revelation of the fulness of the gospel in this generation.

In the afternoon Elder John Taylor preached on the social, political and religious condition