

power to direct and control simultaneously many large and widely separated armies, so that all their movements tended to one end, finally achieving the most admirable and exact co-operation known in military history. When Grant himself started for Richmond, he ordered Sherman to Atlanta, ordered Banks to Mobile, Sigel into the Valley of Virginia, and Butler up the James; and for nearly a year afterwards he supervised the operations of these different armies. During that period he sent Sherman on his famous march, renewed the effort against Mobile, watched over and reinforced Thomas in his defence of Nashville, inspired all Sheridan's brilliant campaigns, brought Schofield by land, in the depth of winter, from Tennessee to Washington, and from Washington sent him by sea to North Carolina, to meet Sherman coming northward on his victorious journey, brought the Fort Fisher campaign to a fortunate close, sent Wilson on a career of success into

the interior of Alabama, ordered Stoneman into Western Carolina, and all the while held the greatest Rebel army and leader in check, so as to insure the triumph of his own subordinates. He who is capable of administrative efforts as vast as these, is likely to prove fit for administrative functions in another sphere.

For it is the very intellectual qualities which we have seen so conspicuously displayed in the General that will be most in demand in the President. Clearness of judgment, knowledge of character, sagacity and tact in dealing with men, broad views of affairs, prompt intelligence in unexpected and pressing emergencies, ability to control numerous and vast and complicated interests, so that not only the success of each may be assured, but that each success shall directly contribute to the success of all, — if these are not the intellectual components of a character fitted to govern a great nation at a critical period, then all history is at fault.

THE NEW TASTE IN THEATRICALS.

THERE is this satisfaction in living, namely, that whatever we do will one day wear an air of picturesqueness and romance, and will win the fancy of people coming after us. This stupid and commonplace present shall yet appear the fascinating past; and is it not a pleasure to think how our rogues of descendants — who are to enjoy us æsthetically — will be taken in with us, when they read, in the files of old newspapers, of the quantity of entertainment offered us at the theatres during the season just ending, and judge us by it? I imagine them two hundred years hence looking back at us, and sighing, "Ah! there was a touch of the old Greek life in those Athenians! How they loved the drama in the jolly Boston of that day! That

was the golden age of the theatre: in the winter of 1868-69, they had dramatic performances in seven places, of every degree of excellence, and the managers coined money." As we always figure our ancestors going to and from church, they will probably figure us thronging the doors of theatres, and no doubt there will be some historical gossip among them to sketch a Boston audience in 1869, with all our famous poets and politicians grouped together in the orchestra seats, and several now dead introduced with the pleasant inaccuracy and uncertainty of historical gossipers. "On this night, when the beautiful Tostée reappeared, the whole house rose to greet her. If Mr. Alcott was on one of his winter visits to Boston, no doubt he stepped

in from the Marlborough House, — it was a famous temperance hotel, then in the height of its repute, — not only to welcome back the great actress, but to enjoy a chat between the acts with his many friends. Here, doubtless, was seen the broad forehead of Webster ; there the courtly Everett, conversing in studied tones with the gifted so and so. Did not the lovely such a one grace the evening with her presence ? The brilliant and versatile Edmund Kirke was dead ; but the humorous Artemas Ward and his friend Nasby may have attracted many eyes, having come hither at the close of their lectures, to testify their love of the beautiful in nature and art ; while, perhaps, Mr. Sumner, in the intervals of state cares, relaxed into the enjoyment," etc. "Vous voyez bien le tableau !"

That far-off posterity, learning that all our theatres are filled every night, will never understand but we are a theatre-going people in the sense that it is the highest fashion to be seen at the play ; and yet we are sensible that it is not so, and that the Boston which makes itself known in civilization — letters, politics, reform — goes as little to the theatre as fashionable Boston.

The stage is not an Institution with us, we should say ; yet it affords recreation to a very large and increasing number of persons, and while it would be easy to over-estimate its influence for good or evil even with these, there is no doubt that the stage, if not the drama, is popular. Fortunately an inquiry like this into the present taste in theatricals concerns the fact rather than the effect of the taste ; otherwise the task might become indefinitely hard alike for writer and for reader. No one can lay his hand on his heart, and declare that he is the worse for having seen *La Belle Hélène*, for example, or say more than that it is a thing which ought not to be seen by any one else ; yet I suppose there is no one ready to deny that *La Belle Hélène* was the motive of those performances that most pleased the most people during the past winter. The season gave us nearly

every kind of theatrical. In the legitimate drama we had such starry splendors as Booth, Hackett, and Forrest ; and we had many new plays of the modern sort, given very effectively and successfully at the different theatres. We had, moreover, the grand opera, and not in a poverty-stricken way, as they have it in the native land of the opera, where one piece is repeated for a fortnight or a month, but superabundantly, as Americans have everything, except quality ; twenty nights of opera, and a new piece, Italian, French, or German, nearly every night. Those who went said it was not very good, and I believe that the houses were no better than the performance. There was English opera, also ; but best of all, and far more to our minds than her serious sisters, was the *opéra bouffe*, of which we had nearly a month, with Tostée, Irma, and Aujac. We greeted these artists with overflowing theatres ; and the reception of the first, after a year's absence, was a real ovation, of which the historical gossip will not afford posterity an idea too extravagant, however mistaken. There was something fascinating in the circumstances and auspices under which the united Irma and Tostée troupes appeared — *opéra bouffe* led gayly forward by *finance bouffe*, and suggesting Erie shares by its watered music and morals ; but there is no doubt that Tostée's grand reception was owing mainly to the personal favor which she enjoys here, and which we do not vouchsafe to every one. Ristori did not win it ; we did our duty by her, following her carefully with the libretto, and in her most intense effects turning the leaves of a thousand pamphlets with a rustle that must have shattered every delicate nerve in her ; but we were always cold to her greatness. It was not for Tostée's singing, which was but a little thing in itself ; it was not for her beauty, for that is now scarcely more than a reminiscence, if it was not always an illusion ; was it because she rendered the spirit of M. Offenbach's operas so perfectly, that we liked her so much ?

"Ah, that movement!" cried an enthusiast, "that swing, that — that — wriggle!" She is undoubtedly a great actress, full of subtle surprises, and with an audacious appearance of unconsciousness in those exigencies where consciousness would summon the police — or ought to; she is so near, yet so far from, the worst that can be intended; in tones, in gestures, in attitudes, she is to the libretto just as the music is, now making it appear insolently and unjustly coarse, now feebly inadequate in its explicit immodesty.

To see this famous lady in *La Grande Duchesse* or *La Belle Hélène* is an experience never to be forgotten, and certainly not to be described. The former opera has undoubtedly its proper and blameless charm. There is something pretty and arch in the notion of the Duchess's falling in love with the impregnably faithful and innocent Fritz; and the extravagance of the whole, with the satire upon the typical little German court, is delightful. But *La Belle Hélène* is a wittier play than *La Grande Duchesse*, and it is the vividest expression of the spirit of *opéra bouffé*. It is full of such lively mockeries as that of Helen when she gazes upon the picture of Leda and the Swan: " 'aime à me recueillir devant ce tableau de famille! Mon père, ma mère, les voici tous les deux! O mon père, tourne vers ton enfant un bec favorable! " — or of Paris when he represses the zeal of Calchas, who desires to present him at once to Helen: " Soit! mais sans lui dire qui je suis; — je désire garder le plus strict incognito, jusqu'au moment où la situation sera favorable à un coup de théâtre." But it must be owned that our audiences seemed not to take much pleasure in these and other witticisms, though they obliged Mademoiselle Tos-tée to sing *Un Mari sage* three times, with all those actions and postures which seem incredible the moment they have ceased. They possibly understood this song no better than the strokes of wit, and encored it merely for the music's sake. The effect was, nevertheless, unfortunate, and calcu-

lated to give those French ladies but a bad opinion of our understanding and morals. How could they comprehend that the new taste is, like themselves, imported, and that its indulgence here does not characterize us? It was only in appearance that, while we did not enjoy the wit, we delighted in the coarseness. And how coarse this travesty of the old fable mainly is! That priest Calchas, with his unspeakable snicker, his avarice, his infidelity, his hypocrisy, is alone infamy enough to provoke the destruction of a city. Then that scene interrupted by Menelaus! It is indisputably witty, and since all those people are so purely creatures of fable, and dwell so entirely in an unmoral atmosphere, it appears as absurd to blame it, as the murders in a pantomime. To be sure, there is something about murder — some inherent grace or refinement perhaps — that makes its actual representation upon the stage more tolerable than the most diffident suggestion of adultery. Not that *La Belle Hélène* is open to the reproach of overdelicacy in this scene, or any other, for the matter of that; though there is a strain of real poetry in the conception of this whole episode, of Helen's intention to pass all Paris's love-making off upon herself for a dream, — poetry such as might have been inspired by a muse that had taken too much nectar. There is excellent character, also, as well as caricature, in the drama; not alone Calchas is admirably done, but Agamemnon, and Achilles, and Helen, and Menelaus, — "pas un mari ordinaire . . . un mari épique" — and the burlesque is good of its kind. It is artistic, as it seems French dramatic effort must almost necessarily be.

It can scarcely be called the fault of the *opéra bouffé* that the English burlesque should have come of its success; nor can the public blame it for the great favor the burlesque won last winter, if indeed the public wishes to bestow blame for this. No one, however, could see one of these curious travesties without being reminded, in an awkward way, of the *morale* of the *opéra*

bouffe, and of the *personnel* — as we may say — of “The Black Crook,” “The White Fawn,” and the “Devil’s Auction.” There was the same intention of merriment at the cost of what may be called the marital prejudices, though it cannot be claimed that the wit was the same as in *La Belle Hélène*; there was the same physical unreserve as in the ballets of a former season; while in its dramatic form, the burlesque discovered very marked parental traits.

This English burlesque, this child of M. Offenbach’s genius, and the now somewhat faded spectacular muse, flourished the past winter in three of our seven theatres for months, — five, from the highest to the lowest, being in turn open to it, — and had begun, in a tentative way, to invade the deserted stage even so long ago as last summer; and I have sometimes flattered myself that it was my fortune to witness the first exhibition of its most characteristic feature in a theatre into which I wandered, one sultry night, because it was the nearest theatre. They were giving a play called “The Three Fast Men,” which had a moral of such powerful virtue that it ought to have reformed everybody in the neighborhood. Three ladies being in love with the three fast men, and resolved to win them back to regular hours and the paths of sobriety by every device of the female heart, dress themselves in men’s clothes, — such is the subtlety of the female heart in the bosoms of modern young ladies of fashion, — and follow their lovers about from one haunt of dissipation to another, and become themselves exemplarily vicious, — drunkards, gamblers, and the like. The first lady, who was a star in her lowly orbit, was very great in all her different rôles, appearing now as a sailor, with the hornpipe of his calling, now as an organ-grinder, and now as a dissolute young gentleman, — whatever was the exigency of good morals. The dramatist seemed to have had an eye to her peculiar capabilities, and to have expressly invented edifying characters and situations that her talents might enforce them. The second young lady

had also a personal didactic gift, rivaling, and even surpassing in some respects, that of the star; and was very rowdy indeed. In due time the devoted conduct of the young ladies has its just effect: the three fast men begin to reflect upon the folly of their wild courses; and at this point the dramatist delivers his great stroke. The first lady gives a *soirée dansante et chantante*, and the three fast men have invitations. The guests seat themselves — as at a fashionable party — in a semicircle, and the gayety of the evening begins with conundrums and playing upon the banjo; the gentlemen are in their morning-coats, and the ladies in a display of hosiery, which is now no longer surprising, and which need not have been mentioned at all except for the fact that, in the case of the first lady, it seemed not to have been freshly put on for that party. I hope the reader here recognizes preparation for something like that great final scene which distinguishes his favorite burlesque — is it “Ixion” or “Orpheus” or “Lucrezia Borgia?” — they all have it. In this instance an element comical beyond intention was present, in three young gentlemen, an amateur musical trio, who had kindly consented to sing their favorite song of “The Rolling Zuyder Zee,” as they now kindly did, with flushed faces, unmanageable hands, and much repetition of

The ro-o-o-o—
The ro-o-o-o—
The ro-o-o-o-ll—
Ing Zuyder Zee,
Zuyder Zee,
Zuyder Zee-e-e!

Then the turn of the three guardian angels of the fast men being come again, they get up and dance each one a breakdown, which seems to establish their lovers (now at last in the secret of the generous ruse played upon them) firmly in their resolution to lead a better life. They are in nowise shaken from it by the displeasure which soon shows itself in the manner of the first and second ladies. The former is greatest in the so-called Protean parts of the play, and is obscured somewhat by the

dancing of the latter; but she has a daughter, who now comes on and sings a song. The pensive occasion, the favorable mood of the audience, the sympathetic attitude of the players, invite her to sing "The Maiden's Prayer," and so we have "The Maiden's Prayer."

We may be a low set, and the song may be affected and insipid enough, but the purity of its intention touches, and the little girl is vehemently applauded. She is such a pretty child, with her innocent face, and her artless white dress, and blue ribbons to her waist and hair, that we will have her back again; whereupon she runs out upon the stage, strikes up a rowdy, rowdy air, dances a shocking little dance, and vanishes from the dismayed vision, leaving us a considerably lower set than we were at first, and glad of our lowness. This is the second lady's own ground, however, and now she comes out — in a way that banishes far from our fickle minds all thoughts of the first lady and her mistaken child — with a medley of singing and dancing, a bit of breakdown, of cancan, of jig, a bit of *Le Sabre de mon Père*, and of all memorable slang songs, given with the most grotesque and clownish spirit that ever inspired a woman. Each member of the company follows in his or her *pas seul*, and then they all dance together, to the plain confusion of the amateur trio, whose eyes roll like so many Zuyder Zees, as they sit lonely and motionless in the midst. All stiffness and formality are overcome. The evening party in fact disappears entirely, and we are suffered to see the artists in their moments of social relaxation, sitting as it were around the theatrical fireside. They appear to forget us altogether; they exchange winks and nods, and jests of quite personal application; they call each other by name, by their Christian names, their nicknames. It is not an evening party, it is a family party, and the suggestion of home-enjoyment completes the reformation of the three fast men. We see them marry the three fast women before we leave the house.

On another occasion, two friends of

the drama beheld a more explicit precursor of the coming burlesque at one of the minor theatres last summer. The great actress whom they had come to see on another scene was ill, and in their disappointment they embraced the hope of entertainment offered them at the smaller play-house. The drama itself was neither here nor there as to intent, but the public appetite or the manager's conception of it — for I am by no means sure that this whole business is not a misunderstanding — had exacted that the actresses should appear in so much stocking, and so little else, that it was a horror to look upon them. There was no such exigency of dialogue, situation, or character as asked the indecorum, and the effect upon the unprepared spectator was all the more stupefying from the fact that most of the ladies were not dancers, and had not countenances that consorted with impropriety. Their faces had merely the conventional Yankee sharpness and wanness of feature, and such difference of air and character as should say for one and another, shop-girl, shoe-binder, seamstress; and it seemed an absurdity and an injustice to refer to them in any way the disclosures of the ruthlessly scant drapery. A grotesque fancy would sport with their identity: "Did not this or that one write poetry for her local newspaper?" so much she looked the average culture and crudeness; and when such a one, coldly yielding to the manager's ideas of the public taste, stretched herself on a green baize bank with her feet towards us, or did a similar grossness, it was hard to keep from crying aloud in protest, that she need not do it; that nobody really expected or wanted it of her. Nobody? Alas! there were people there — poor souls who had the appearance of coming every night — who plainly did expect it, and who were loud in their applauses of the chief actress. This was a young person of a powerful physical expression, quite unlike the rest, — who were dyspeptic and consumptive in the range of their charms, — and she tri-

umphed and wantoned through the scenes with a fierce excess of animal vigor. She was all stocking, as one may say, being habited to represent a prince; she had a raucous voice, an insolent twist of the mouth, and a terrible trick of defying her enemies by standing erect, chin up, hand on hip, and right foot advanced, patting the floor. It was impossible, even in the orchestra seats, to look at her in this attitude and not shrink before her; and on the stage she visibly tyrannized over the invalid sisterhood with her full-blown fascinations. These unhappy girls personated, with a pathetic effect not to be described, such arch and fantastic creations of the poet's mind as Bewitchingcreature and Exquisitelettlepet, and the play was a kind of fairy burlesque in rhyme, of the most melancholy stupidity that ever was. Yet there was something very comical in the conditions of its performance, and in the possibility that public and manager were playing at cross-purposes. There we were in the pit, an assemblage of hard-working Yankees of decently moral lives and simple traditions, country-bred many of us and of plebeian stock and training, vulgar enough perhaps, but probably not depraved, and excepting the first lady's friends certainly not educated to the critical enjoyment of such spectacles; and there on the stage were those mistaken women, in such sad variety of boniness and flabbiness as I have tried to hint, addressing their pitiable exposure to a supposed vileness in us, and wrenching from all original intent the innocent dulness of the drama, which for the most part could have been as well played in walking-dresses, to say the least.

The scene was not less amusing, as regarded the audiences, in the winter, when the English burlesque troupes which London sent us, arrived; but it was not quite so pathetic as regarded the performers. Of their beauty and their *abandon*, the historical gossip, whom I descry far down the future, waiting to refer to me as "A

scandalous writer of the period," shall learn very little to his purpose of warming his sketch with a color from mine. But I hope I may describe these ladies as very pretty, very blond, and very unscrupulously clever, and still disappoint the historical gossip. They seemed in all cases to be English; no Yankee faces, voices, or accents were to be detected among them. Where they were associated with people of another race, as happened with one troupe, the advantage of beauty was upon the Anglo-Saxon side, while that of some small shreds of propriety was with the Latins. These appeared at times almost modest, perhaps because they were the conventional *bal-lerine*, and wore the old-fashioned ballet-skirt with its volumed gauze, — a coyness which the English had greatly modified, through an exigency of the burlesque, — perhaps because indecorum seems, like blasphemy and untruth, somehow more graceful and becoming in southern than in northern races.

As for the burlesques themselves, they were nothing, the performers personally everything. M. Offenbach had opened Lemprière's Dictionary to the authors with *La Belle Hélène*, and there was commonly a flimsy ravelling of parodied myth, that held together the different dances and songs, though sometimes it was a novel or an opera burlesqued; but there was always a song and always a dance for each lady, song and dance being equally slangy, and depending for their effect mainly upon the natural or simulated charms of the performer.

It was also an indispensable condition of the burlesque's success, that the characters should be reversed in their representation, — that the men's rôles should be played by women, and that at least one female part should be done by a man. It must be owned that the fun all came from this character, the ladies being too much occupied with the more serious business of bewitching us with their pretty figures to be very amusing; whereas this whole-

some man and brother, with his blond wig, his *panier*, his dainty feminine simpering and languishings, his falsetto tones, and his general air of extreme fashion, was always exceedingly droll. He was the saving grace of these stupid plays; and I cannot help thinking that the *cancan*, as danced, in "Ivanhoe," by Isaac of York and the masculine Rebecca, was a moral spectacle; it was the *cancan* made forever absurd and harmless. But otherwise, the burlesques were as little cheerful as profitable. The playwrights who had adapted them to the American stage—for they are all of English authorship—had been good enough to throw in some political allusions which were supposed to be effective with us, but which it was sad to see received with apathy. It was conceivable from a certain air with which the actors delivered these, that they were in the habit of stirring London audiences greatly with like strokes of satire; but except where Rebecca offered a bottle of Medford rum to Cedric the Saxon, who appeared in the figure of ex-President Johnson, they had no effect upon us. We were cold, very cold to all suggestions of Mr. Reverdy Johnson's speech-making and dining; General Butler's spoons moved us just a little; at the name of Grant, we roared and stamped, of course, though in a perfectly mechanical fashion, and without thought of any meaning offered us; those lovely women might have coupled our hero's name with whatever insult they chose, and still his name would have made us cheer them. We seemed not to care for points that were intended to flatter us nationally. I am not aware that anybody signified consciousness when the burlesque supported our side of the Alabama controversy, or acknowledged the self-devotion with which a threat that England should be *made* to pay was delivered by these English performers. With an equal impassiveness we greeted allusions to Erie shares, and to Mr. Fiske, and to Mr. Samuel Bowles.

The burlesque chiefly betrayed its

descent from the spectacular ballet in its undressing; but that ballet, while it demanded personal exposure, had something very observable in its scenic splendors, and all that marching and processioning in it was rather pretty; while in the burlesque there seemed nothing of innocent intent. No matter what the plot, it led always to a final great scene of breakdown,—which was doubtless most impressive in that particular burlesque where this scene represented the infernal world, and the ladies gave the dances of the country with a happy conception of the deportment of lost souls. There, after some vague and inconsequent dialogue, the wit springing from a perennial source of humor (not to specify the violation of the seventh commandment), the dancing commenced, each performer beginning with the Walk-round of the negro minstrels, rendering its grotesqueness with a wonderful frankness of movement, and then plunging into the mysteries of her dance with a kind of infuriate grace and a fierce delight very curious to look upon. It was perfect of its kind, that dancing, but some things one witnesses at the theatre nowadays had better be treated as a kind of confidence. I am aware of the historical gossip still on the alert for me, and I dare not say how sketchily these ladies were dressed, or indeed, more than that they were dressed to resemble circus-riders of the other sex, but as to their own deceived nobody,—possibly did not intend deceit. One of them was so good a player that it seemed needless for her to go so far as she did in the dance; but she spared herself nothing, and it remained for her merely stalwart friends to surpass her, if possible. This inspired each who succeeded her to wanton excesses, to wilder insolences of hose, to fiercer bravadoes of corsage; while those not dancing responded to the sentiment of the music by singing shrill glees in tune with it, clapping their hands, and patting Juba, as the act is called,—a peculiarly graceful and modest thing in woman. The frenzy grew

with every moment, and, as in another Vision of Sin, —

“Then they started from their places,
Moved with violence, changed in hue,
Caught each other with wild grimaces,
Half-invisible to the view,
Wheeling with precipitate paces
To the melody, till they flew,
Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces
Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
Like to Furies, like to Graces,” —

with an occasional exchange of cuffs and kicks perfectly human. The spectator found now himself and now the scene incredible, and indeed they were hardly conceivable in relation to each other. A melancholy sense of the absurdity, of the incongruity, of the whole absorbed at last even a sense of the indecency. The audience was much the same in appearance as other audiences, witnessing like displays at the other theatres, and did not differ greatly from the usual theatrical house. Not so much fashion smiled upon the efforts of these young ladies, as upon the *cancan* of the Signorina Morlacchi a winter earlier; but there was a most fair appearance of honest-looking, handsomely dressed men and women; and you could pick out, all over the parquet, faces, evidently of but one descent from the deaconship, which you wondered were not afraid to behold one another there. The truth is, we spectators, like the performers themselves, lacked that tradition of error, of transgression, which casts its romance about the people of a lighter race. We have not yet set off one corner of the Common for a Jardin Mabille; we have not even the concert-cellars of the gay and elegant New-Yorker; and nothing, really, has happened in Boston to educate us to the new taste in theatricals, since the fair Quakers felt moved to testify in the streets and churches against our spiritual nakedness. Yet it was to be noted with regret that our innocence, our respectability, had no restraining influence upon the performance; and the fatuity of the hope cherished by some courageous people, that the presence of virtuous persons would reform the stage, was but too painfully evident. The doubt whether they were not nearer

right who have denounced the theatre as essentially and incorrigibly bad would force itself upon the mind, though there was a little comfort in the thought that, if virtue had been actually allowed to frown upon these burlesques, the burlesques might have been abashed into propriety. The caressing arm of the law was cast very tenderly about the performers, and in the only case where a spectator presumed to hiss, — it was at a *pas seul* of the indescribable, — a policeman descended upon him, and, with the succor of two friends of the free ballet, rent him from his place, and triumphed forth with him. Here was an end of ungenial criticism; we all applauded zealously after that.

The peculiar character of the drama to which they devoted themselves had produced, in these ladies, some effects doubtless more interesting than profitable to observe. One of them, whose unhappiness it was to take the part of *soubrette* in the Laughable Commedietta preceding the burlesque, was so ill at ease in drapery, so full of awkward jerks and twitches, that she seemed quite another being when she came on later as a radiant young gentleman in pink silk hose, and nothing of feminine modesty in her dress excepting the very low corsage. A strange and compassionate satisfaction beamed from her face; it was evident that this sad business was the poor thing's *forte*. In another company was a lady who had conquered all the easy attitudes of young men of the second or third fashion, and who must have been at something of a loss to identify herself when personating a woman off the stage. But Nature asserted herself in a way that gave a curious and scarcely explicable shock in the case of that dancer whose impudent song required the action of fondling a child, and who rendered the passage with an instinctive tenderness and grace, all the more pathetic for the profaning boldness of her super-masculine dress or undress. Commonly, however, the members of these burlesque troupes, though they were not like men, were in most things

as unlike women, and seemed creatures of a kind of alien sex, parodying both. It was certainly a shocking thing to look at them with their horrible prettiness, their archness in which was no charm, their grace which put to shame. Yet whoever beheld these burlesque sisters, must have fallen into perplexing question in his own mind as to whose was the wrong involved. It was not the fault of the public—all of us felt that: was it the fault of the hard-working sisterhood, bred to this as to any other business, and not necessarily conscious of the indecorum which pains my reader,—obliged to please somehow, and aiming, doubtless, at nothing but applause? *La Belle Hélène* suggests the only reasonable explanation of the new taste in theatricals: "*C'est la fatalité.*"

The new taste, as has been said before, is not our taste. It came to us like any other mode from abroad, but, unlike the fashions in dress, received no modification or impression from our life; so that, though curiosity led thousands, not in Boston alone, but in all our great cities, to look at these lewd travesties, it could not be said that we naturalized among us a form of entertainment involving fable that we could not generally understand, satire that we cared nothing about, lascivious dancing, singing that expressed only a depraved cockneyism. It is with these spectacles, as with all other dramatic amusements, now so popular, and growing year by year in favor. They draw no life from our soil; they do not flower and fruit again in our air. For good or for evil, Puritanism has had its will. The theatre has never been opened since the Commonwealth, in our civilization. At this moment, comedy is almost as foreign here as the Italian opera, and the same anomaly is presented in the favor which either enjoys. The modern dramas deserve to be liked by playgoers, and I think they have been affectedly and unjustly scorned by criticism. I, for one, am not above being delighted by Mr. Charles Reade when he dramatizes one of his novels; and I am in the

belief that one should look a long while in the classic British Drama for a play so entirely charming as "*Dora.*" They have given it in Boston in a manner which left nothing to be desired,—certainly not a comedy of Goldsmith's or Sheridan's in place of it. We all knew the story as it was outlined in the poem, and the playwright had kept in spirit very close to the poet; there was genuine sentiment in the piece, passion enough, wit enough, character enough; and it lost nothing in the acting, or in any theatrical accessory; so that it was a refined and unalloyed pleasure to witness its production. One must have been very stupid or very brilliant indeed not to enjoy Mr. Robertson's comedy of "*School,*" though of course it was of flimsier and cheaper texture than "*Dora.*" It was full of admirable situations; and if the hits were a little too palpable, they were still genuine strokes of nature, while the action and the *mise en scène* were nearly as perfect as in the better play. The same author's equally popular, but less artistic play of "*My Lady Clara*" merits all its success. It deals with several fresh persons and situations, and freshly with the old ones; it is in great degree impossible, of course, but its sketches of character are as lifelike as they are delightful. Even the sensation drama is founded for the most part upon the principle of fidelity to contemporary life. "*Foul Play,*" at the Boston Theatre, was justly interesting; one need not have been any more ashamed to be thrilled by it, than by the marvelous and fascinating novel from which the drama springs; and if you come to such plays as "*After Dark,*" and the "*Lancashire Lass,*" with their steam-power effects and their somewhat wandering and incoherent plots, there is no denying but they make an evening pass quickly and pleasantly,—how much more quickly and pleasantly than the most brilliant party of the season!

But after we have praised these modern plays to their full desert, we must again recur to their foreign character. They have no relation to our life as a

people ; we can only appreciate them through our knowledge of English life derived from novel reading. Their interest all depends upon the conditions of English society ; their characters are English ; their scenes are English. Does some one tell me that the locomotive, which so nearly runs over the hero in "After Dark," has an American cow-catcher ? I reply that, in the "Lancashire Lass," it is into a purely English dock that the "Party of the name of Johnson" is pitched ; and that, at any rate, these tricks of the property-maker do not affect the central fact. Even the actors who present these English plays so charmingly are, except the subordinates, nearly all English and of English training ; and it is undeniable that, while the theatre has been growing more artistic and popular among us, it has been growing less and less American. It was not in nature that the old Yankee farce should keep the stage ; still less that some pre-historic American like Metamora should continue to interest forever ; even the noble art of negro minstrelsy is expiring among us, and we have nothing to offer in competition with the English plays. The fact is not stated to raise regret, but merely to

show that the comedy is, like the opera, alien. This does not interfere with the enjoyment of either as it appears ; and as long as we are free to believe that their success here is due to our cosmopolitan spirit in receiving and making experiment of every sort of pleasure, we may feel rather proud of it than otherwise. Whether for the same reason we might take the same satisfaction in the success of the English burlesques, is a question which I shall not try to decide, chiefly because it is no longer "a live issue," as the politicians say.

It is very probable that we shall not see the burlesques again next winter, and that what has been here called the new taste in theatricals will then be an old-fashioned folly, generally ignored because it is old-fashioned, if not because it is folly. This belief is grounded, not so much upon faith in the power of the stage to reform itself, or the existence of a principle in the theatre-going public calculated to rebuke the stage's wantonness, as upon the fact that matters have already reached a point beyond which they cannot go. In the direction of burlesque, no novelty now remains which is not forbidden by statute.

REVIEWS AND LITERARY NOTICES.

An Address in Commemoration of Alexander Dallas Bache. Delivered, August 6, 1868, before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, by BENJAMIN APTHORP GOULD, President of the Association.

THIS is a very interesting biographical sketch of the late Dr. Bache, by one who for years has been his valued friend, and during long periods of separation his daily correspondent. It is certainly not with any pretence of impartiality that Dr. Gould can speak of the distinguished man upon whose counsel it has long been his privilege to rely, and whose cordial approval gave him

such strong moral support in his well-known contest for the highest interests of American science at the Dudley Observatory. But with so many noble facts to exhibit, there is little temptation to mar the grand figure they suggest with dabs of vulgar coloring, such as the obituary paint-pot is ever ready to supply.

Dr. Bache seems to have encountered his full share of the petty hostilities and jealousies which no man of the largest usefulness can wholly escape. Indeed the mechanical law, that bodies gravitate to each other directly as their masses and inversely as the square of their distances, seems too often reversed in the case of its most competent