

# Memories of Actresses

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS

I



ACTORS have always held it as their peculiar misfortune that their work perishes with them and that they can leave behind them only the reputation they achieved in the

practice of their profession—a reputation unsupported by tangible evidence. For them there is no possibility of an appeal to posterity in the frail hope of reversing an adverse verdict. Moreover, even when the judgment of their own generation has been favorable, it is likely soon to fade away, having nothing to validate it except the unsubstantial echo of departed popularity. Joseph Jefferson used to say sadly that the comedian—and no doubt the tragedian also—could survive solely in the written report of the impression he made upon his contemporaries. That is to say, he can continue to exist only by virtue of their record of his achievement—his work having ceased to be at the very moment it came into being. If this commemoration shall fail him, then the abundant and superabundant applause he may have fed upon while he was on the stage will avail nothing to preserve him from swift oblivion. The fiery ardor of Edmund Kean still burns brightly in the luminous pages of Hazlitt and of Lewes; and the incomparable versatility of Coquelin is still made manifest for us in the essays of Francisque Sarcey and of Henry James.

Although I yield myself willingly to the contagious enthusiasm of Hazlitt and Lewes, Sarcey and James, I lack their power of recapturing their emotions and I have not their art of delicate discrimination. None the less do I feel that I should be ungrateful for past delights if I shrink from setting down a few of the most outstanding of my countless histrionic reminiscences. For sixty years now I have

been an incessant and indefatigable playgoer. In my earlier attempt at an autobiography, "These Many Years," and in one or another of my volumes of essays on the theatre, I have tried to assemble and to classify my recollections of the more important of the actors I have known, on the stage and off, Booth and Irving, Coquelin and Salvini, John T. Raymond and Nat Goodwin; and now I am moved to recall and set in order my reminiscences of certain actresses, who smile back at me as I hold up before them the mirror of memory.

When I had the youthful privilege of beholding Charlotte Cushman, Adelaide Ristori, and Adelaide Neilson I was too immature in judgment and too ignorant of the art of acting to form opinions worthy of record; but none the less do I cherish the immediate impression, even if I can do no more now than testify to the austere power of Miss Cushman as Queen Katherine, to the dignity and pathos of Signora Ristori as Marie Antoinette, and to the fragile charm of Miss Neilson as Juliet. I thrill again as I recall dimly the startling appearance of Charlotte Cushman as Meg Merrilies and the sinister suggestion which Ristori as Lucrezia Borgia insinuated into her "Don Alphonso d'Este, my *third* husband!" Unfortunately, my recollections of these actresses, seen only twice or thrice in my boyhood, are too few and too faint for me to revive them now after half a century; and I must perforce draw upon later recollections, abiding with me more solidly because I was older and better prepared to appreciate and because I had more frequent occasion to accumulate impressions.

II

RISTORI was an Italian who acted in French in Paris and in English in New York, and who conquered her audiences in France and in America in spite of her alien accents. Fechter was a Frenchman

who had spoken English from his youth up but who was never able to acquire the rhythm of our sharply accented tongue. Modjeska was a Pole who learned English only when she was a mature woman; and her speech always revealed itself as foreign, although some of her ardent admirers accepted this exotic flavor as adding piquancy to her delivery. That an Italian, a Frenchman, and a Pole established themselves on the American stage despite their incomplete mastery of English, may testify to our cosmopolitan hospitality; but it is evidence also of the artistic accomplishment of these polyglot immigrants.

I saw Modjeska during her first engagement in New York, when she was appearing in well worn plays of an approved popularity, the "Lady of the Camellias" and "Adrienne Lecouvreur." She had no difficulty in transmitting the customary emotion of the death scenes of these old-fashioned heroines. She had the gift of compelling tears; she had power and reserve; she could be brilliant without being metallic. What I recall in her performance of that lachrimatory consumptive Camille was her standing by the fireplace in the first act, toasting a dainty slipper, and telling her lover: "You see, I am very expensive"—a firm and delicate stroke. And I saw her later when she took possession of a series of Shakespeare's heroines, always dangerous for one not native to our speech. Of all her Shakespearian impersonations I found Rosalind the most satisfactory in its archness, its womanliness, its coquetry.

She was a consummate artist, with absolute command of all her resources; yet she did not achieve the essential Englishry of Rosalind. She remained continental and not insular. As my friend H. C. Bunner put it aptly, "Modjeska's Rosalind would be perfect—if only we could admit that Rosalind was a pretty French widow." It was exquisite; it had high breeding and playful wit; it had every excellence—but it was exotic; and perhaps it was a little too complicated, a little too lacking in the simplicity which is an undeniable quality of Shakespeare's English girl. At times Modjeska's art was perilously close to artificiality. I do not mean to imply that she was ever

stagy or theatrical; she was too completely a mistress of her craft for any overstress of this sort; but she could not quite attain to that concealment of her art which is the ultimate perfection of craftsmanship. It was shrewdly said of Duse that "she sometimes overacts her underacting"; and it can be said of Modjeska that she never felt any temptation to underact. She gave good measure, pressed down yet not running over.

It was this slight suggestion of artifice which sharpens an anecdote (perhaps apocryphal). Maurice Barrymore was her leading man for several seasons and he was the author of a boldly effective piece, "Nadjesda," which she had included in her repertory but which she did not put in the bill as often as he desired and expected. When he urged her to appear in his piece more frequently, she explained that she found the part of Nadjesda very fatiguing, in fact, almost exhausting. Whereupon Barry blurted out: "You would have more strength to act at night, Madame, if you didn't act so much in the daytime!"

Shocked by this unexpected attack, she accused him of ingratitude.

"And why should I be grateful to you?" asked Barry.

"I have done so much for you," Modjeska explained. "I have taken you with me all over the United States. I have made you known."

"Made me known?" he returned indignantly, for he also had his full portion of the artistic temperament. "Let me tell you, Madame, that Maurice Barrymore was known from Portland, Me., to Portland, Ore., when nobody knew whether Modjeska was a toothwash or what!"

Even if she carried into private life more or less of the artifice which had become second nature, she had a sense of humor, exemplified in another story, which I can vouch for and which I cannot omit here, although I seem to recall that I have already told it in print. One Sunday evening at a reception she was asked to recite something in Polish. She excused herself on the ground that she did not remember anything in her native tongue. But after repeated urgings she smiled and stood up and began to recite.

At first she was apparently telling a simple story, possibly a folk-tale with the repetitions of primitive song; then her tones became sad and charged with feeling; the tears were about to roll down her cheeks; but at last, with the persistent recurrence of the same syllables, her voice became stronger and firmer until it rang out in triumphant accents. Just then the host happened to look out into the hall and he saw Modjeska's husband, Count Bozenta, laughing to himself because the Polish recitation which had so profoundly moved the company was nothing more and nothing less than the multiplication table.

### III

I DOUBT if I ever saw two actresses more divergent in their personalities and in their methods than Modjeska and Clara Morris—one was the fine flower of European culture and the other a wilding bloom of our own virgin soil, vigorous and uncultivated. Modjeska spoke English with an alien intonation; and Clara Morris had an accent of her own, which Londoners would have considered "American" and which New Yorkers called "Western." Modjeska had studied her art in a community with rich æsthetic traditions, under competent guidance, whereby she developed taste and discretion; and Clara Morris had spent the years of her youth in the stock company of an inland city where the bill was changed weekly and sometimes nightly. She began as an extra in the ballet; she was later entrusted with "utility parts"; and as she gained experience she rose to characters as important as Emilia in "Othello." Her schooling was arduous, varied, and invaluable; but it was deficient in imparting the delicate refinements of the art of acting. If only she could have had the severe training of a conservatory she would have been one of the foremost actresses of America. Even as it was she made an outstanding place for herself on the stage of her time.

It was to the Othello of E. L. Davenport, one of the most vigorous and versatile actors of half a century ago, that she played Emilia; and when Davenport joined the stock company with which Augustin Daly opened the Fifth Avenue

Theatre, he recommended her. Daly engaged her, to play any part he might assign; and her chance came when Agnes Ethel, the favorite pupil of Matilda Heron, found herself too fatigued (after the long run of "Froufrou") to undertake the heroine of Daly's dramatization of Wilkie Collins's "Man and Wife." In her autobiography, which is not deficient in self-appreciation, she does not overstate the extent of her unexpected success as Anne Sylvester. With that part she established herself in the favor of New York playgoers, who recognized the power and the sincerity of the performance, even if they were also acutely conscious of her occasional crudity. Despite this exhibition of her skill, Daly (who was the most autocratic of managers) cast her the next season as one of the half dozen girls who existed merely to be recipients of the intermittent attentions of the imperfectly monogamous hero of Bronson Howard's "Saratoga."

Her chance came again when Daly adapted a turgid and tawdry melodrama, "Article 47," by Adolphe Bélot and cast Clara Morris as Cora. I recall the absorbed stillness during the final act at the first performance of this play, when Cora was seated on one side, taking no part in the dialogue, and when we suddenly became aware, I know not by what means, that the silent woman rocking her body to and fro was going mad before our eyes. That was Clara Morris's hour of triumph; and there was no doubt that she deserved it. Her acting might be unequal and uncertain; but now and again it was illumined by flashes of insight and inspiration; and in "Article 47" she displayed histrionic imagination. So she did a little later in "Alixé," a lachrymose heroine, whom she impersonated with touching pathos. I recall this performance in "Alixé" as the perfection of simplicity in accord with the poignancy of the situation.

After she left Daly's, she went to the Union Square, where she had a part entirely within her compass, the weepful heroine of a weepful play, "Miss Mul-ton," an adroit rehandling of the story of "East Lynne," by two skilful Parisian playwrights, Nus and Bélot. Clara Morris had not only the power of compelling tears from the spectators, she

could herself shed them at will. That admirable comedian, James Lewis, who was with her in the company at Daly's as he had been with her in her 'prentice days at Cleveland, used to say to her, "Cry for us, Clara, won't you?" and the obedient tears would course down her cheek. The gift of tears is not uncommon, but it is rarely possessed by the most accomplished actresses; and, therefore, it is sometimes despised by those who hold that the art of acting must be independent of the emotion of the moment. Coquelin, the best equipped of comedians, once said to me that a certain actress of great popularity "actually weeps on the stage—therefore, she is a mediocre artist." Highly as I rated Coquelin's opinions about the art in which he excelled, I confess that this seemed to me a harsh judgment. No doubt, Coquelin agreed with the remark that Émile Augier is reported to have uttered to a temperamental actor rehearsing a leading part: "A little less genius, if you please, and a little more talent!"

The last time I saw Clara Morris was when she headed the English-speaking company engaged to support Salvini, and when she played the wife of Conrad in "Morte Civile." I can pay her performance of this pathetic part no higher compliment than to express my opinion that she was not unworthy to stand by the side of the Italian tragedian. She had dignity and reserve; she curbed her old-time exuberance; and she displayed all her old-time power. She controlled her genius and exhibited her talent. In her account of her career she took pleasure in telling us that she was able to suggest to Salvini a modification of a customary piece of "business," a suggestion which he considered an improvement. She had a gift of invention; and she earlier recorded a novel effect devised by her when she was acting Emilia to the Othello of E. L. Davenport.

There was a delicate discrimination in the complimentary lines which Edmund Clarence Stedman sent to Clara Morris, when once she reappeared on the New York stage after a prolonged absence:

Touched by the fervor of her art,  
No flaws to-night discover!  
Her judge shall be the people's heart,

This Western World her lover.  
The secret given to her alone  
No frigid schoolman taught her:—  
Once more returning, dearer grown,  
We greet thee, Passion's daughter.

#### IV

At one time or another Augustin Daly managed four theatres in New York. Clara Morris appeared in "Man and Wife" at the original Fifth Avenue Theatre in 24th Street. When this was destroyed by fire Daly opened a house in Broadway opposite Waverley Place, which had been a church and which was later the Old London Street; and it was there that Clara Morris played in "Alixé." Then the second Fifth Avenue Theatre (still standing on the corner of Broadway and 28th Street) was built for Daly; and there Clara Morris acted in "Article 47." After several unprofitable seasons Daly was forced to relinquish management, but after an interval he was able to secure control of Wood's Museum, on the corner of Broadway and 30th Street, remodelling it and calling it Daly's Theatre. This house was under his direction until his death; and it was there that Ada Rehan slowly won her way into the affections of our playgoers.

I recall distinctly the impression she made upon me on the opening night. She played an inconspicuous part in "Newport," Olive Logan's clumsy adaptation of "Niniche." She was then a lank and gawky girl—and in one scene she had to wear an unbecoming bathing-suit. The play did not please; and the newcomer did not attract any attention. No one could then foresee that, under the judicious guidance of Daly, she would develop into a performer capable of carrying off the leading parts in Shakespeare's comedies. Only by degrees did she advance in her art and capture the admiration of the public. With John Drew as her partner, with James Lewis and Mrs. G. H. Gilbert to complete the quartet, she frolicked and rollicked through a swift succession of Daly's arbitrary localizations of pieces by the German playwrights. In these she disclosed an American sense of fun and a Celtic exuberance of humor; and her singing of "Miss Jennie O'Jones" was an exhilarating exhibition



of comic farce; of sheer *vis comica*, of spontaneous and effervescent gaiety.

In time, these contemporary farces alternated with older and old-fashioned comedies which forced her to broaden her methods and to refine her style. Perhaps she was most abundantly successful as Peggy Thrift in Garrick's "Country Girl" (a most skilful deodorization of Wycherley's unspeakable "Country Wife"). But only second to this were her successive impersonations of the heroines of "She Would and She Would Not," the "Recruiting Officer," and the "Inconstant." As she gained in experience, her figure filled and her beauty made itself manifest. She had a wholesome femininity; and her winning personality never appeared to better advantage than when the heroines she impersonated had to disguise themselves in manly attire—a useful preparation for her later appearances as Rosalind, Viola, and Portia.

Year by year she improved by practice in parts of varying character; her art ripened; her individuality asserted itself; and she acquired authority, the precious quality which adds command to charm.

It was in the "Taming of the Shrew" that she first asserted this authority with compelling amplitude and assurance. When she rushed on the stage in her wrath, with her flaming gown and her hair flaming above it, she was a superb embodiment of youthful energy, a magnificent animal in a magnificent rage. And it was as Kate the cursed that she took London by storm and was rewarded by a fervor of appreciation more exalted than any she had received in New York. Here we had seen her climbing the ladder; and there they beheld her at the summit of her artistry. We had the full value of her later mastery shadowed by our recollection of her earlier novitiate. The British might be less than half-hearted in its liking for Daly's idiosyncratic rearrangement of Shakspeare's text, but it was whole-hearted in its acknowledgment of Ada Rehan's genius—a large word which I prefer to use with caution but which the enthusiastic Healey applied to Ada Rehan without hesitation. The British were captivated, both by her personality and by her power of impersonating.

I do not mean to suggest that Kather-

ine was the best of her Shakspearian performances, but it was the first in which she triumphed. Her Rosalind was delightful in its playfulness and its tenderness; it was blithe and buoyant and, above all, womanly, without taint of self-consciousness and with unfailing enjoyment of the situation. Her Rosalind was fitly companioned by John Drew's Orlando, which was one of the most satisfactory it has ever been my privilege to admire. Indeed, the full effect of Ada Rehan's Rosalind was due, in a measure, to the fact that John Drew's Orlando frankly accepted Ganymede as a lad and never allowed us to suppose that he suspected all the time that this lad was his very Rosalind. I have elsewhere recorded that Ada Rehan's Portia gave us a new and truer and more effective rendering of the Quality of Mercy speech than it had ever had before; she did not make it an elocutionary stunt, as is the wont of most actresses; she spoke it as a direct appeal to Shylock, pausing between sentences in the vain hope that her words might soften his hard heart. And I may add now that her voice was vibrant and melodious; and that she had mastered the difficulties of blank verse, never chopping it into halting prose and never weakly falling into singsong.

In the fall of 1887 Daly asked me to aid him in editing "A Portfolio of Players," a privately printed volume containing a score of photogravure portraits of the leading members of his company with brief commentaries by H. C. Bunner, E. A. Dithmar, Laurence Hutton, William Winter, and myself. My own tribute to the irrepressible and irresistible fun of Miss Rehan in her repetition of an empty song called "Jenny O' Jones" was a little too brief to fill out the space allotted to it; and when Daly wrote asking me to lengthen it a little, he called my attention to "the marvellous versatility and range of Miss Rehan—a range not reached by any living actress"—and he pointed out also "her womanliness in all." And this was before she had revealed the deeper and broader gifts in impersonations of Rosalind and Viola, Portia and Lady Teazle. She grew in stature with the years and she ripened as the seasons rolled around, until at the end there was no

rival who had essayed so many and so diverse parts and who had done them all so well.

Charles Lamb thought it a consolation for growing old that he had seen the "School for Scandal" in all the glory of its original cast; and we who were witnesses of the splendid days of Daly's Theatre may have a similar solace. To the "Portfolio of Players," Bunner contributed an epilogue addressed "To a Reader of the XXist Century":

"A Daly private print"—a chaste  
Example of our fathers' taste.  
They made books *then*—who can, in our  
Degenerate days of magnet-power?  
See—Ada Rehan, Fisher, Drew,  
Dame Gilbert, Lewis—through and through  
The sharp cut plates are clear as new.  
Then comes the old, the tardy praise—  
"Those were the drama's palmy days."

But We?—You'll see the shadow—now  
To us these living creatures bow,  
For us they smile—for us they feign  
Or love or hatred, scorn or pain;  
For us this white breast heaves—this voice  
Makes hearts too young too much rejoice;  
For us those splendid eyes are lit;  
For us awakes embodied wit;  
For us the music and the light—  
The listening faces, flushed and bright—  
The glow, the passion and the dream—  
To you—how far it all must seem!

## V

THE company which Daly managed in each of his theatres was a stock company, remaining substantially the same year after year. It stood ready to play comedy or tragedy, melodrama or farce, social drama or comic opera. Sometimes it lent its support to stars, Mrs. Scott-Siddons, Charles J. Mathews, Edwin Booth; but for the most part it was able to do without these expensive interlopers. It was so numerous in its early seasons that it could give the "School for Scandal" in New York while its unemployed members went to Newark to present "London Assurance." This was sheer extravagance, as Daly found to his cost; and when he opened Daly's Theatre at Broadway and 30th Street, he was more cautious, and he relied mainly on the famous "Daly quartet"—Ada Rehan and John Drew, Mrs. G. H. Gilbert and James Lewis, who played into each other's hands with unfailing loyalty and who profited

by Daly's extraordinary skill in stage management.

He loved the theatre; he lived in it; he was never so happy as when he was directing a rehearsal; he was intensely interested in his work and untiring in his devotion to it. He delighted in his control of what was really a training school for actors; and he was a strict disciplinarian, exacting complete compliance with his will. He had a marvellous understanding of the stage; and he knew how to perceive the special gifts of his actors and how to develop these gifts. It is noteworthy that those who submitted to his guidance improved while they were subject to his control and that they often ceased to advance in their art when they left him. His judgment was sometimes at fault and his taste was not always impeccable. But he abides as one of the significant figures in the history of the American theatre.

No member of his company had been with him longer than Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, who had appeared in the opening performance of Daly's first season, in 1869, and who remained with him till his death in 1899. She was ready to play any kind of part in any kind of play, from Mrs. Candour, in the "School for Scandal," to the Infant Phenomenon, in a little sketch taken from an episode in "Nicholas Nickleby." She did not like to be out of the bill; and, therefore, she was willing to accept the most insignificant characters—for example, Curtis, one of the servants in the "Taming of the Shrew," a character which appeared only in one scene and which had little to say in that solitary appearance. She knew that Daly was always doing his best for her and he knew that she would always do her best for him.

Although she was most favorably known by her impersonation of comic characters, she had a dramatic power unknown to those who saw her only in the later years of the company. It is half a century now since the first night of "Man and Wife," and yet I can visualize again the thrill which ran through me when I beheld the sinister figure of Hester Dethridge silently gliding down the stage for some evil purpose that I can no longer remember. I recall that in "Froufrou"

only a few months earlier she had been miscast as a woman of the world; but although this character was out of her line, she was at least adequate.

I have mentioned her Mrs. Candour, and I regret to have to say that it was not one of her most satisfactory efforts; it was a little too dry, perhaps even a little too intellectual; it lacked the unction and the broad humor which ought to characterize the gossip-monger and mischief-maker of Sheridan's comedy. Yet she looked the part to perfection; and she danced in the minuet with the perfect grace which was always hers. She had been a professional dancer in her youth; and this early experience stood her in good stead when she appeared as Mme. Pierrot in that ever delightful pantomime, "L'Enfant Prodigue." Thanks to her youthful training in the ballet, pantomime was an art of which she was a past mistress. Here she had the advantage over Ada Rehan, who played Pierrot and who always seemed to be wanting to talk and to employ gesture only because she could not speak, whereas, Mrs. Gilbert used gesture as speech.

Mrs. Gilbert was held in affectionate regard by all the members of the Daly company. She was always gracious and encouraging to the newcomers. From her varied experience she was able to be helpful to the young folks who were trying their wings; and she often guarded them from the pitfalls into which they might tumble from ignorance of the traditions of the art. She was as cheerful as she was helpful. She appeared to best advantage when she was playing over against James Lewis, whose humor was akin to hers, dry, restrained, and clear-cut. She survived this partner of her toils, as she survived Daly. Thereafter, her occupation was gone; and although Clyde Fitch adapted "Granny" especially for her and not unsuccessfully, she did not linger long on the stage. As I "squeeze the sponge of the memory" (to borrow a phrase from Henry James) and as I try to call the list of the countless parts in which she appeared, I am inclined to the opinion that she was the most varied and the most accomplished impersonator of "old women" that it has been my good fortune to observe. She had her

limitations, no doubt; but in her own field she was unexcelled.

## VI

It has always been a puzzle to me that there are so few notable performers of "old women." I can name half a dozen brilliant actresses as Lady Teazle, while I should be hard put to it to cite more than one or two fairly satisfactory renditions of Mrs. Malaprop and Mrs. Candour. Every season there appear young actresses of real promise; and some of these persevere and fulfill expectation. But very few of them, even after the lapse of two score years on the stage, are able to confirm their earlier reputation by developing from leading ladies into old women. I suppose that they prefer to retire rather than to linger superfluous on the stage or to play mothers instead of daughters. Mostly they shrink from facing the fact of old age.

It is true that Ellen Terry, once triumphantly acclaimed as Juliet, has since been willing to express the rich and oily humor of Juliet's Nurse. More often than not the actress who has continued to appear as the youthful heroine, year after year and even decade after decade, refuses to acknowledge the march of time and insists on believing herself to be as young as she feels.

It is to Legouv  —at least, I think it was in the pages of this charming chronicler of the French stage in the middle of the nineteenth century that I found the story—it is to Legouv   that I owe a characteristic tale of Mlle. Mars, whose advancing years did not prevent her from conveying the impression of youth by sheer force of art and far more convincingly than could be done by actresses thirty years younger than she. After she was fifty she refused to relinquish the girls of twenty to the girls who were twenty. She was held in such high esteem by her comrades of the Com  die Fran  aise that no one of them was willing to hint to her that she ought thereafter to content herself with more mature characters. When that most ingenious of playwrights, Eugene Scribe, was appealed to, he volunteered to help them out. He wrote a little piece about

a young grandmother who was so charming that she was the successful rival of her own granddaughter. But when he read the comedy to Mlle. Mars, she said that she would be glad to act in it—"but who is there to play the grandmother?"

Forty years ago there were two actresses, one in Great Britain and the other in the United States, who brought to the performance of old women the mastery of effect which they had acquired in the impersonation of leading ladies. Mrs. Sterling had been the original Peg Woffington in "Masks and Faces"; and Mrs. John Drew had been accepted as one of the best of Lady Teazles. At almost the same time they appeared, one in London and one in New York, as Mrs. Malaprop. Both of them won the plaudits of the public, but by totally different methods. Both had authority; both were popular favorites, assured of a welcome in whatever they undertook; both knew all the traditions of old comedy; and there the resemblance ended.

Mrs. Sterling was a mistress of all the bolder devices for arousing laughter; she sought broad effects; she splashed on her color with an unsparing hand, as though she could not trust the intelligence of the spectators. I do not dare to be rude enough to hint that she clowned the part; yet I cannot find any other term fit to describe her method. In her hands Mrs. Malaprop was not a lady and not a finely drawn character; rather was she a caricature. She was intensely self-conscious of her verbal blunders. As the time came for one of them to be delivered, she visibly braced herself for effort, as though saying to the audience: "I'm Mrs. Malaprop and here is another malapropism. It's a good one, I assure you. You really can't help laughing at it. Are you ready for it?" Then she hurled it at the spectators, waiting for the outburst of laughter and smiling in comic complicity with them, as if assuring them that it was a good one, wasn't it?

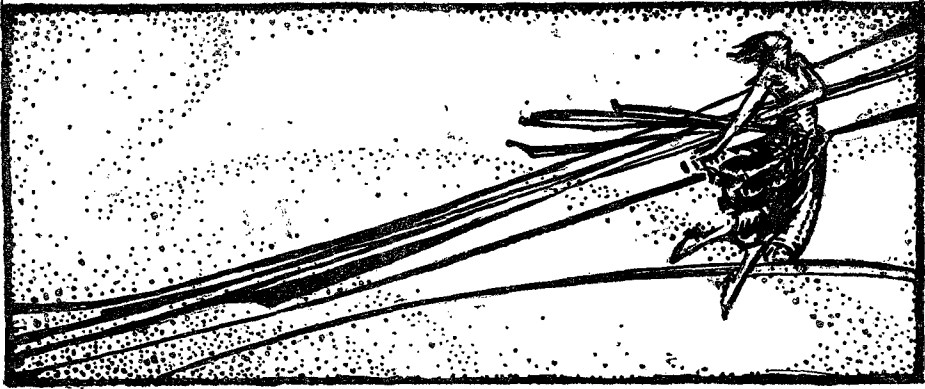
When Mrs. Drew played Mrs. Malaprop she lifted her from low comedy to high comedy. Sheridan's figure of fun ceased to be a caricature and became a deftly etched character, more human and more humorous. Mrs. Drew's Mrs. Malaprop was a woman educated beyond

her intelligence and puffed with pride in her little learning. She was serenely unconscious that there were any such things as malapropisms, and she delivered each of them with evident delight in her "nice derangement of epitaphs," letting us share in her joy that she had hit upon exactly the right word, the only word, the word that she alone could provide. Every malapropism was a fresh invention of hers; she made us feel that it had just occurred to her; and thus she produced the illusion of spontaneity. She exhibited the perfected art which seemed like nature, because it was able to conceal its processes. As a result of this subtler reading of the lines and of this more accurate conception of the part, Mrs. Drew's Mrs. Malaprop was really more effective than Mrs. Sterling's. If I may trust my memory after two score years, the laughter it evoked was both heartier and more abundant.

In his autobiography, worthy to stand by the side of Colley Cibber's incomparable "Apology," Joseph Jefferson makes us share the pleasure he had in acting with Mrs. Drew in the "Rivals," and he records that she was the inventor of a novel piece of business. Mrs. Malaprop is deeply disgusted with the persistence of her niece, Lydia Languish, in loving "Ensign Beverley." She says: "Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree! I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow; I believe I have it in my pocket." Then Mrs. Drew used to search in her voluminous pocket for the missive and by mistake to take out the letter of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Then, discovering her error and in great confusion, she pulled forth the epistle which Captain Absolute recognizes, to his immediate embarrassment. The ingenuity of this is as evident as its propriety is indisputable. It is a happy suggestion, which Sheridan, we may be sure, would have adopted with a gratitude equal to that of the younger Dumas when he accepted a similar improvement due to Eleonora Duse's fine dramatic instinct.

"Those were the drama's palmy days"; and no doubt our grandchildren will say the same of ours.



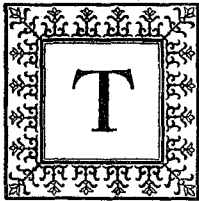


# Heartbreak Dance

BY MARY ALICE BARROWS

Chief Supervisor of Public Dance Halls of San Francisco

DECORATIONS BY MARGARET FREEMAN



O-NIGHT he came and talked to me. I met him here last night. I stop in often to watch the dancing, and he had been pointed out to me at several previous dances here

at Heartbreak Hall. They said he is a remarkable dancing-master, one who teaches the teachers. He has a class here.

Heartbreak Dance runs every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday night from 8 to 12 o'clock; admission: ladies 25 cents, gents 50 cents. There can be no afternoon dance, because all the patrons are then at work over the city—at work for other people. From getting home at 6 P. M. to up for work at 6 A. M. they call their time their own; they do their own living then.

Heartbreak Hall, right in the business section, rises on a spot where the milk of human kindness seems curdled by greed. All day it watches passers-by, itself retired and quiescent. Deep within it this hall knows what passers-by do not see in each other in their trot.

When night comes down the street, things change. A fancy ticket-seller arrives, goes up into her coop, and begins. A special police officer comes and takes

his stand to keep an outward semblance of peace. Out from the open night into the human-heated hall move the ticket-buyers. Past the blazing electric sign outside into the confidentially lighted inside, from the gazers on the street outside to the fellow hunters inside, they come.

A bank of people stand milling about beyond the hat-check room. They are waiting for the music, observing, selecting, discarding, noting, sensing, enjoying. In the list of unfortunates, begin anywhere and go anywhere, up or down, they are here. There will be a little time left for some sleep after the close before one must plod through again. A little sleep!

As he came smiling up to-night, his figure was tall and looked distinguished. His face was made by eyes set in like a Turk's, back under a good forehead and above cheeks that sagged and ended in a lip. Always he smiled, yet his smile was one of self-control. It carried one up to a contemplation of the good and high forehead. His dancing was calm. His face showed a fineness of culture, but his features were gross. He was both unpleasant and attractive. Last night he fell immediately to discussing dancing as a racial need and music as a response to creative existence. Here, in Heartbreak