

THEATRE AND STAGE

AN ENCYCLOPÆDIC GUIDE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF ALL
AMATEUR DRAMATIC, OPERATIC, AND THEATRICAL WORK

Edited by

HAROLD DOWNS

*Assisted by well-known Authorities and Celebrities
in the Theatrical World*

Foreword by

SIR BARRY JACKSON

IN TWO VOLUMES:
VOLUME II

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OPERA, GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

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OPERA, PRODUCING



DARRELL FANCOURT AS SIR RODERIC MURGATROYD IN "RIDDIGORE"

GILBERT & SULLIVAN OPERA

by D. GRAHAM DAVIS, Editor of "The Gilbert and Sullivan Journal"

INTRODUCTION

I CANNOT hope to write anything original about Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, for every square inch of the ground of survey has been covered and recovered many times since that first performance on the 15th May, 1875. I have in mind Trial by Jury. But although there is nothing new either to inspire or to exploit, much that is old can be recalled with gratifying pertinence.

Gilbert and Sullivan Opera is an inexhaustible source of keen enjoyment among theatre-goers and music lovers alike. It is true that fashions change with the passing of time, and that tastes will continue to differ. The enjoyment that is derived from Gilbert and Sullivan is, however, so many-sided that it is unlikely the Opera will ever fail to captivate.

In sundry ways the world of to-day is far different from that of the nineteenth century. Many peaceful revolutions have taken place during the past fifty years. When we think seriously of what happened during the Second Great War, we begin to realize much more clearly than we did between the two Wars not only the tremendous impact of science on industry, but also the potent effects modern industrialization has had on human life. Little imagination is required to glimpse the results of scientific revolutions. Some of them are easily overlooked because they have been woven into the daily routine of living.

I can illustrate my point and also return to the special theme of this Introduction by citing pointers that were made by D'Oyly Carte in his inaugural address delivered at the opening of the Savoy Theatre. Drawing special attention to some "most important" improvements deserving special notice, the most important being "in the lighting and decoration," he said:

DARRELL FANCOURT

"From the time, now some years since, that the first electric lights in lamps were exhibited outside the Paris Opera-House, I have been convinced that electric light in some form is the light of the future for use in theatres, not to go further. The peculiar steely blue colour and the flicker which are inevitable in all systems of 'arc' lights, however, make them unsuitable for use in any but very large buildings. The invention of the 'incandescent lamp' has now paved the way for the application of electricity to lighting houses, and consequently theatres. . . . The new light is not only used in the audience part of the theatre, but on the stage, for footlights, side and top lights, etc., and (not of the least importance for the comfort of the performers) in the dressing-rooms: -in fact, in every part of the house. This is the first time that it has been attempted to light any public building entirely by electricity. What is being done is an experiment, and may succeed or fail."

Yes, there have been peaceful revolutions -in stage and theatrical lighting, as elsewhere.

Much has happened since Gilbert and Sullivan Opera was first housed in the Savoy. How is the continuing appeal of Gilbert and Sullivan to be explained? I suggest that there are several explanations.

Both words and music were the outcome of moments of inspired creation. Re-creation unfailingly revitalizes because inherent in the material are qualities that persist. One reviewer dealing with Cosmo Hamilton's *Discord and Harmony*, "A Romance in which is dramatised something of the characters, the work and the quarrels of Gilbert and Sullivan," recalled that in Gilbert and Sullivan we have "two names" that "stand for a series of comic

operas unique in their atmosphere of light, fantastic gaiety, for their perfect union of music with light verse and for the unclinging sweetness of the taste that any good performance leaves in the mouth." There, by the way, I think is a succinct description of the perennial appeal of Gilbert and Sullivan Opera. The reviewer also states: "All the appropriate figures appear. Cellier, Grossmith, Rutland Barrington and the rest. Gilbert's tiresome jocularity and esprit cassant are illustrated on almost every page, and Sullivan is presented as a rather feminine nature, with fleshly weaknesses.

These quotations, I think, bring into relief some of the admirable qualities that impel admiration among the members of the several generations that constitute an adult modern society. It would be easy to indulge a taste for quotations by recalling numerous lines in Gilbert's text. Even when they "date" they, paradoxically, "live" because they are felicitous gems in words set in magnetic settings. Here, for example, is sentiment that finds its responsive chord:

For he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
Or perhaps I-ta-li-an!
But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman.

Another harmonizes perfectly with the modern spirit as it is reflected in human activities:

If you wish in this world to advance,
Your merits you're bound to chance,
You must stir it and stomp it,
And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a chance!

Here is a pertinent point for contemporary application:

My object all sublime,
I shall achieve in time—
To make the punishment fit the crime.

Sullivan as composer was felicitous to an inescapable degree. The classicist, the romanticist, the ready yielder to strongly-marked musical rhythm, he or she whose ears are titillated by melody, the old with a lifetime's musical experience upon which to draw for comparisons, the young ignorant of technique but susceptible to influences following its masterly application—these are among the many who respond instantly to Sullivan's musical charm. Thoughts, in some cases literary gems, which may not stimulate mental reflection, are automatically memorized because of the potency of their musical clothing.

The late Sir Henry Lytton in his Introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan Opera was at the core of truth when he wrote: ". . . no matter which of the operas you take, isn't it correct to say that we find the mirror being held up to us? In almost every one we find, if we penetrate the slightest of disguises in which the characters are wrapped, if not ourselves, then at least our national characteristics, the subject of rapier-like-wit, amusing burlesque, brilliant satire . . . Consider for a moment the music he (Sullivan) wrote—simple, melodious, soothing, and delightful; nothing pretentious about it yet undoubtedly good. Sullivan never attempted anything bombastic about his tunes. Never did he produce anything that was not lilting, charming, sparkling, joyous, buoyant, happy . . . Just as Gilbert seemed to realize that his public did not desire intricate plots, so did Sullivan appreciate that lovers of his music asked not for 'education' but for enjoyment. I know no music more essentially enjoyable than his." Theatregoers in all parts of the world have shared these views. I share them to-day and so will tens of thousands years hence.

Danell Fan

ACTING REQUIREMENTS OF OPERAS

Despite the greatly increased number of works available to amateur operatic societies, the Gilbert and Sullivan series still maintains a strong hold on the affections of the players and their audiences. The reason for this popularity may, on the face of it, appear to be obvious; the operas were written solely to charm and amuse—they contain no hidden "message." They came into being at a time when the jaded palate of the public had grown tired of the lighter musical works of the day, which, with jingling tunes and miserable books, relied for their attractiveness principally upon smart lines (not always in the best of taste), cleverly manipulated puns and plays upon words, and, last but by no means least, upon a galaxy of girls of more or less unnatural pulchritude.

On hearing and seeing such works played today, one is often amazed at the all-too-apparent futility of the lyrics, however tuneful the music may be. The Gilbert and Sullivan operas come to us always fresh and charming, though admittedly the librettos (as distinct from the lyrics) may be wearing a trifle thin in places. It is largely their freshness, melody, and wit—both in airs and lyrics—that have made them live, and he would be a rash man who would venture to prophesy the time when they will fail to maintain their hold on popular esteem. But, one might say, there have been other works possessing all these attributes that have passed into the limbo of forgotten things. Surely, then, there must be something else to account for the wonderful popularity the Gilbert and Sullivan operas continue to enjoy—for generations have passed since they were written. We shall come to that directly.

It is frequently urged, in support of these works as productions for amateur societies, that the Savoy operas are easy to present. They require, it is claimed, little in the way of elaborate settings, properties, or stage effects. Nor is superlatively good singing or acting required. The production is stereotyped, and woe betide the

producer who strays but a hair's breadth from the traditional usage.

Like most half-truths, such reasoning is dangerous. And that brings us to this mysterious "something" to which reference has just been made. What it is that has helped to maintain the popularity of the operas, undimmed by time, is the necessary—and it cannot be too strongly stressed how necessary—*atmosphere*. Gilbert and Sullivan together make a perfect weld; to make so excellent a weld some other element is required beyond the metal. And this element, this flux as it were, is supplied in Gilbert and Sullivan opera by the traditional atmosphere that has become associated with the works.

Even to the most easily satisfied member of the audience, amateur performances of the operas frequently fall flat just because the all-important attribute is missing. The vitality and team work, born of perfect understanding of what is needed, and which together make the professional rendering so sparkling, are missing. Thus, however excellent the amateur company may be, the result is good neither for the complete enjoyment of the audience nor



D. C. ASHAM DAVIS

for the reputation of the society concerned.

The Savoy operas demand a style of singing, acting, and presentation that is in a distinct class of its own; a unique art that is not to be found in any other type of musical stage work. It can never be too strongly emphasized that nothing is further from the requirements of "G. & S." than the style of the musical comedy stage. Particularly is this true of the comedy characters (which are not "funny men") and of the younger female characters. These soprano leads and soubrettes all belong to a past period; they have nothing in common, mentally and physically, with the heroines of the good old days of Daly's and the Gaiety. Their innate milk-and-watery niceness, and everything else about them, are poles asunder from the Edwardian and modern outlook.

Vocally, the mincing and "refined" accents

of musical comedy are completely out of place in any character. Any affectedness of speech (except where the part demands) is far worse than any native accent or brogue. While the ideal to be attained is that elusive "Standard English," one has heard naturally Cockney Nanki-Poos and Strephons redolent of the Yorkshire moors who have been far less offensive, and far more in keeping with Gilbert's intentions, than many a Josephine, who has imagined that a musical comedy voice and style (than which nothing can



SIR W. S. GILBERT



SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

be more attractive in the proper place) would be an asset to the part.

An honest attempt is to be made here to help members of amateur societies—principals, choirsters, and producers alike—to reach a better understanding of the vocal, acting, and staging requirements of the operas. Detailed directions of the "how" of the production are not furnished; marked scores and librettos, for what they are worth, are available to those who need them. Rather is the purpose to deal with the "why" of the collective and individual interpretations. A full appreciation of what is required from actor and producer goes a long way towards making a good performance take on just that little extra intelligence that will lift it from being one in a hundred of good renderings into something fully worthy of standing comparison with the professional prototype.

Purposely is this treatment addressed to all who may be concerned with the production of these operas, for each one must equally exert himself for the good of the presentation. The root of the operas' success can be traced to two things, and the first of these is team work, based on loyalty

to, and delight in, the works. The other is the fact that Gilbert chose, in the first place, what was practically a raw material that he could mould as he desired. The star system has been notably absent from the Savoy tradition. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company has, it is true, included (and still includes) many a famous name; but it must be remembered that these have achieved their stardom through their work in the operas. Attempts to import stellar attractions from other firmaments have proved disappointing and even displeasing. So, you successful Lurcher, about to attempt Sir Joseph Porter, and you, fair Bessie Throckmorton, now to make your Gilbert and Sullivan debut as Patience, please do not consider that your experience in these by no means easy, non-G. & S. parts exempts you from reading the advice tendered. You must come to your new parts as beginners. Believe me, a fascinating study lies before you.

And to all I would address three sentences, which should be constantly borne in mind while a Gilbert and Sullivan production is in contemplation, preparation, or being. Amateur societies have a great privilege, denied to all but one professional organization, in being allowed to perform these works. A trust is imposed on them by the terms of the acting rights—that nothing shall be altered or added, and that the model of the professional performances shall be followed. It behoves amateur societies, great or small, zealously to maintain this trust, and to present these immortal works in the manner and spirit that their creators saw to be the right ones.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHORUS

In Gilbert and Sullivan opera the chorus is as important to the general scheme as are the principals. Indeed, it frequently happens that it is of greater consequence. Quite apart from the many purely choral numbers, there are several scenes where the chorus work, both vocal and histrionic, is paramount, and of far more importance than that of the principals. Such scenes include the first act finale to *The Yeomen of the Guard*, the opening of each act of *The Gondoliers*, and the second act finale in *Princess Ida*. But the list could be prolonged indefinitely to include at least one example from each act of every one of the operas.

A musical comedy chorus, especially since the methods of Broadway have been introduced to the British stage, is an alert, lively, and homogeneous body. Precise concerted action and movement help to make a broad picture of some fifty or a hundred people actuated as though by one brain. In older musical works, the chorus had little to do with the action of the piece; it was brought on to the stage, frequently for no rhyme or reason connected with the unfolding of the plot, sang its allotted music or performed some mechanical movements, and disappeared the same way as it arrived.

To Gilbert the chorus was something more than a mechanical musical strengthening. He made it his chief asset, as it became Sullivan's principal glory. Each chorister was individually as much a part of the opera as was the leading principal. Collectively as much care was lavished on the chorus as on the effects obtained by the leading principals. The choristers, in the right place, share the limelight with the more exalted actors. The principal, too, gains much of the effect of his part from the support given him by the chorus—and from the support he, in his turn, gives to the humbler members of the company. Absolute sympathy and camaraderie, therefore, are the first essentials between chorister and principal. And, strange as it may seem, this atmosphere of friendly interest and co-operation is far more marked in the professional companies than, as one would expect, in many amateur societies. This is no reflection on the amateur; it is a simple fact born of the team-work inseparable from a company always working together.

ESSENTIAL BALANCE

The Gilbert and Sullivan chorus, unlike the musical comedy, grand opera, or revue chorus, is not a mechanical contrivance; it is a collection of individuals, each coalescing into a corate and well-balanced *ensemble*. Difficulties lie the way of obtaining the essential perfect lance. There is need, in these works, for a rious blend of alertness and spontaneity with solute restraint. But individualism can easily carried too far, to the detriment of this very cessary restraint. A cardinal sin against the nons of "G. & S." is for any young miss or in youth to indulge in any little trick, manner-

ism, or unauthorized business in order to attract attention to herself or himself. All through a dramatic or musical work there is some central incident at any particular moment. It is upon this central happening (which need not necessarily occur in the centre of the stage) that the attention of the audience must be directed. In no circumstances would Gilbert, like the true producer he was, allow attention to be distracted from the central figure of a scene, or from any incident, by by-play or other action on the part of another actor—be he principal or chorister. In any play to do so is a bad offence. In Gilbert and Sullivan opera it is little less than a crime.

INTEREST AND ALERTNESS

While on the stage, even when not actively engaged in what is going on, the chorus must preserve its interest and alertness. That is not to say that it should exhibit these attributes by allowing its eyes to search in the darkened auditorium for friends known to be there, or by indulging in whispered conversations. The interest must be confined to the action on the stage, and must be as that of onlookers at some event in which they are interested, but which does not immediately concern them.

Let us consider, as one example of many such, the scene in the first act of *Iolanthe*, where Strephon is reciting his difficulties; the troubles he encounters by reason of his immortal "upper half" and human legs. The fairies listen. Although he is actually addressing only one of their number ("My dear aunt," he says), they are all deeply interested in his dilemma. By expression and restrained gesture they show their sympathies towards his perplexities. All this has to be done naturally, and in such a way that no member of the audience will, at any time, be tempted suddenly to look from Strephon to one of the fairies who, by reason, say, of a too vigorous shake of the head, diverts the gaze (if only momentarily) from the actor to herself. Strephon must have the undivided attention of the audience, yet if the reaction of the fairies is shown in a restrained and natural manner, the audience will gently have been made aware that they (the fairies) have been listening to the story of his woes, and that they have not been standing about the stage like stuffed figures, waiting (some of

them) for the cue for their concerted remark, "Poor fellow!" On the other hand, if the fairies have not been acting during the scene, but have been so human as to indulge in private jokes between themselves, or the reprehensible habit of surveying the audience, the audience will have been made too well aware of their existence, and the effectiveness of the scene will have gone for nothing.

It will be realized, then, that the chorus in the

representing soldiers, and must assume a military bearing, not to say swagger, in keeping with the part. In *Iolanthe* the dignified condescension of the peerage must show itself, with a reminder that the gait and gestures of the young amateur must be adapted to be in keeping with the appearance of age presented by his little character sketch. And so on, throughout all the many characters represented in the choruses.

Some societies are compelled, either through



THE POTTER IN "THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE"

A small body of choristers, striving for intelligent individual work on the part

Photo by J.

operas has an existence apart from its value to the musical side. Not only does it consist of singers, but of actors. Each chorister, therefore, should put his or her best acting ability into the piece, and imagine the personage portrayed, a Japanese schoolgirl or a fierce looking pirate, to be a separate character in the opera, as much as is *Katisha* or *Major-General Stanley*. Each chorus, though fundamentally the same, is, in actual fact, a collection of different types and people. There is a world of difference between the languor of the *Rapturous Maidens* in *Patience* and the simple Tudor towns-folk of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. The men will realize that, in *Patience*, they are

lack of numbers or the smallness of their stage, to employ only a few choristers. The smaller the chorus, the more important is the necessity for encouraging individuality, within limits. Eight or ten men, acting capably and intelligently; and perhaps aided vocally by the "unemployed" principals singing in the wings, can make a far more convincing picture than a wooden chorus of thrice that number. This controlled individuality is also necessary where a section of the chorus is taken to form some small, well-defined group. As example one might mention the twelve jurymen in *Trial by Jury*, the bridesmaids in the same opera, and those in *Ruddigore*, the policemen in

The Pirates of Penzance, and, to a slightly less extent, the yeomen in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. These are all relatively small bodies of men or girls engaging, from time to time, the central attention of the audience. Apart from the constabulary and military evolutions of the last two groups, it is desirable that they should act as

Rather than allow this complete freedom, the producer should lay down his instructions to the chorus, saying that here Mr. Brown is to do so-and-so; there Messrs. Jones and Smith are to look at each other with amazed expressions, and so on. But no one member of the chorus, being a brilliant actor, should be given business or action



THE PLAINTIFF AND HER ATTENDANTS

The small chorus of Bridesmaids in "Lilal by Jury" calls for a display of "controlled individuality"
Photo by J. W. Debnar

individuals rather than as units of a group. It may be taken as a sign of slack production if they act and move as automata. On the other hand, if absolute freedom is given to the detriment of the picture as a whole, then the production could be characterized as inefficient, rather than slack. For if such absolute freedom were allowed, inevitably there would be found three or four of the choristers who would stand out from the rest, and thus by giving, quite unintentionally, a false focus to the *ensemble*, they would tend to spoil the carefully thought out picture and, with it, the spirit of the opera.

that may bring him more prominence than that achieved by his fellows. The standard of all should be the highest attainable by the least-skilled actor among them.

One way in which this happy state of "controlled individuality" is to be obtained lies in rehearsing each chorister in his work independently of the others. This may be found possible of achievement where only a small chorus is concerned, but, alas, it is a counsel of perfection; an ideal scarcely likely to be reached in the time devoted to the average amateur production. So, despite all the producer can do, much must be

left to the individual who, realizing what is needed from him, will so order his actions as to be in perfect keeping with the picture.

It is in these ways that the spontaneity of the blend previously referred to enters into the matter. The alertness is concerned more with such important factors, not peculiar to the operas, as seeing that the stage is properly dressed; that no unsightly gaps are made by members of the chorus standing at irregular distances from each other; or, when grouped together, that they are in the places allotted to them. All this is quite easy if only the choristers will keep their wits about them (and it is a point to which attention should certainly be drawn before the rise of the curtain).

Entrances and exits are important in Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and require careful rehearsing. Nothing is worse than to see a chorus straggling on and off the stage. Many of the entrances in the operas and, more especially, the exits require to be fitted in with music, so arranged that the last note coincides with the disappearance of the last chorister. Naturally, these musical accompaniments were planned to fit in with the number of choristers concerned in the original productions, but it is merely a question of arrangement to adapt them to any number, more or less than the original. When it comes to the actual performance, lack of alertness on the part of one individual may wreck the entire effect. Nor is this alertness to be dropped when a chorister has left the stage; others are following. One knows, and so does the audience, that there may not be much spare space in the wings, but the illusion of space created by an open landscape is spoiled when an exit too obviously shows signs of the actors being checked by this lack of room. The golden rule, which is not applicable to "G. & S." alone, is always to get clear of the entrance.

But this becomes doubly important where the exit is accompanied by music. It may be intended that the chorus—again taking an example from *Iolanthe*—is departing to "another fairy ring." The fairies trip across the stage and out of sight. Now, should one of them, so soon as she is hidden by the wings, stop to adjust her head-dress, those following behind are automatically checked, and as the end of the line reaches the exit, the effect is more of an undignified scramble to get out of

sight, rather than that of fairies flying up into the sky: and, be it added, to some music carefully arranged so that its end coincides with this well thought out exit. It does not fall within my province here to lay down rules for the handling of crowds in the wings, but it may be said that where a musical exit or entrance is concerned, the acting should not cease (in the one case) until the music has stopped, and (in the other) everyone should anticipate the start of the music, and be ready to enter at the exact prescribed moment.

A natural habit of amateurs is to watch the work of the principals. When this is done, one's own work must not be forgotten, nor should the observing be too obvious to the audience. In watching the principals, the chorister's attention may wander, and some important gesture or movement may be overlooked at its proper cue. Although, as stated earlier, the chorus is not required to carry out its movements with military exactness, precision—especially as to the time of beginning a movement—is necessary. Individuality, although called for in the Savoy operas more than almost every other attribute, can be overdone to such an extent as to be replaced by raggedness.

THE SAVOY TRADITION

So much is heard in connexion with Gilbert and Sullivan opera of that little word "tradition" that it is as well to devote some thought to this all-important term, and to endeavour to discover in what way it applies to these works. Even as necessary is it to have a clear perception of what the Savoy tradition is not: in fact it is permissible to wonder how many of those who habitually use the word in speaking or writing of the operas know exactly what it means. Webster defines "tradition" as "the transmission of any . . . practice . . . by oral communication, without written memorials." Let us not, however, worry about pedantic definitions in dealing with something so intangible as the traditions of these operas.

As to its particular meaning as applied to Gilbert and Sullivan opera, one may well imagine the chorus of replies from dyed-in-the-wool enthusiasts (a race by no means peculiar to this art-form) that it stands for the presentation of the works identically in the manner in which they were first produced—every movement,

every gesture, just as they were when the operas first saw the light of the stage.

It is as well to dismiss this conception from one's mind at once; if this, indeed, should be the true meaning of the Savoy tradition, what is immediately discovered? The Gilbertian situation of Gilbert himself being one of the greatest offenders against his own tradition! It has to be remembered that Gilbert's connexion with the

an entire change in the make-up of the male chorus, greatly altered business, and, on one occasion, the introduction of the words and music of "Rule, Britannia" as the climax of the second act finale. Indeed, this last interpolation, although not long lived on the professional stage, is not unknown to-day in some amateur productions, although band parts containing Sullivan's authentic finale are available.



"YOUR REVUES CEASE . . ."

Costumes, scenery, and faces may change, the SAVOY tradition remains constant

Photos by J. W. Debenham

operas was not confined to the original productions. It extended over a long period of London runs, tours (at home and overseas), and revivals. It lasted until within a year or two of his death. During this time, both in his capacity as author and as producer, Gilbert was frequently making changes, large and small, in words and business. It is on record that, in later times, Gilbert protested that he was not always given a free hand to alter his own works.

It may not be out of place, even at the risk of wearying the reader, to detail some of these changes, for without concrete evidence (such is the hold this false idea of the tradition has obtained) they are likely to be denied.

Beginning with the first of the longer operas (excluding the almost forgotten *Thespis*), we find *The Sorcerer*, originally produced in 1877, revived in 1884 with a completely new opening to the second act. *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which followed, had alterations during Gilbert's days that included

Changes in the succeeding opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*, can be found on comparing the original libretto with that now published and in use. Frederic is now given a testimonial as an efficient scuttler of Cunard and P. & O. ships. The original of the second of these steamship lines was the White Star. The German Mauser rifle has replaced the French *chassepôt* in the Major-General's patter song. Long and acrimonious has been the discussion over the policemen's "Right oh," in this opera. Originally "Very well," the interjection became "Right you are," and so, by a gentle progression, to its present form. That Gilbert approved this last change has often been questioned. It can be stated that, far from disapproving, he was so delighted with its success as to be restrained with difficulty from scattering a plentiful crop of "Right oh's" throughout the opera.

Ignoring the cut now made of a quotation from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which formerly appeared

in the second act finale of *The Pirates of Penzance*, mention might be made of one more alteration inserted by the author. The pirates are commanded to yield "in Queen Victoria's name." At one time, early in the present century, they were so charged in "Good King Edward's name," to which they replied—

"We yield at once without a sting,
Because with all our faults we love our King."

Patience, too, is well supplied with alterations



BEFORE THE CURTAIN ROSE

Shadbolt and Metvill take a rest from "tradition" by sharpening swords on Phoebe's spinning wheel

Photo by J. W. Debenham

and variants. About 1900, when the Central London Railway was opened, the "threepenny bus young man" was temporarily replaced by the "tuppenny Tube young man." As some doubt still exists as to which is the correct form, it might be noted that an official edict from the Savoy gives the verdict in favour of "threepenny bus." Most of the other changes in this opera are of small importance, but there are more than people would believe. For instance, the whole reading of the part of Grosvenor has been remodelled. In more senses than one was the first of the line a "fleshy poet." To-day we look for a slim, good looking, youth.

A major change in *Iolanthe*, the opening ballet, has been introduced since Gilbert's days. But it does not greatly concern us, for amateurs have every reason to prefer the simpler, if less effective, original opening. It is on record, however, that Gilbert was not averse to suggesting alterations to this opera, although they do not seem to have been adopted to any great extent. At one revival he had the notion that a workable clock might be installed in Act II, to indicate the actual time at which the events, from the rise to the fall of the curtain, were supposed to be taking place. On the same occasion he expressed a doubt whether Mountararat and Tolloller were correctly attired in the second act. Noblemen of their position, he argued, would probably carry a rank (such as Lord Lieutenant) which would entitle them to wear some uniform different from ordinary civilian court dress.

There is no need to prolong this list into the later operas, although there are other examples of changes at least as convincing as those quoted. These have been sufficient to show that this popular conception of the Savoy tradition is erroneous. Having, then, gone to some length in explaining what the tradition is *not*, let us take the other side of the picture, and discuss what it *is*. It may well have been imagined that my purpose was to show that the tradition does not exist save in the imagination; that it is a myth, and should be disregarded. Far from it. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the tradition is a real thing.

So are the traditions of a great regiment or school. Yet who, if asked to describe such traditions, could do so satisfactorily? The task here is less difficult, since one has not to make an immediate verbal reply. I have referred to the view that the Savoy tradition means adherence to the exact manner of the original productions. In support of this one is confronted with the legends of the copiously annotated prompt books in the archives of the Savoy. These show, to the minutest detail, the exact position of the characters at any point; they are said to contain instructions as to the delivery of every line. But how are these writings to be reconciled with the dictionary's insistence on "oral communication, without written memorials"?

We must not disregard these prompt books;

they play some part towards the understanding of the fundamentals of the tradition. Gilbert was that rare thing, a genius in stagecraft, who could be allowed to mould his company as he willed, making them, as it were, puppets interpreting his every gesture and intonation. Therefore, in laying down these explicit instructions, Gilbert was putting life into the image *he* had conceived of how *his* lines were to be spoken, how *his* situations were to be treated, and how *his* characters were

describe one aspect of the tradition. Clarity of diction, and complete absence of offence in word, dress, and gesture were other things upon which Gilbert insisted.

Yet even so we are little nearer a satisfactory definition of "tradition." It is indefinable; an elusive "something" that defies attempts at cold analysis. What, then, is it?

The late J. M. Gordon came nearest to the difficult task of giving a satisfactory meaning to



"TRIAL BY JURY"

Although posed for a photographic record, the picture helps to demonstrate how an effect can be spoiled by actors obviously not taking an interest in the scene being played.

Photos J. W. Debenham

to behave. But he was neither so blind nor so arrogant as to suppose that because he had obtained the results he required from A, he would equally gain equal effectiveness in an identical manner from B, a successor to the part.

Gilbert's appearance does not suggest the owner of a brilliant, delicate, whimsically-mordant wit. He took himself seriously, and it is this side of him that comes out in the production of his operas. He wanted them to appear to be serious, straightforward works with humorous incident and characterization. But the playing of the parts was to be, to all intents and purposes, "straight." He would never allow his actors to "improve" upon his work. "But it will get a laugh," said one, reproved at rehearsal for an unauthorized interpolation. "So it would," countered Gilbert icily, "if you sat down on a pork pie." That story, possibly apocryphal, helps to

the word in its application to Gilbert and Sullivan Opera. This gentleman lived and worked among the operas for over half a century. During that time he had risen from the position of a chorister to become stage director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. He learnt to understand and love the works and their traditions under Gilbert's own tutelage. The traditions, said this doyen of the operas, do not mean that because an actor, creating a part, moved his arm "so," the gesture was to be copied exactly by the actors later succeeding to the part. Nor did it mean denying the use of modern lighting and progress in stage costuming that had not been in existence when the operas were first produced. The great aim and tradition was, and remains, to build up the intellectual performance of the works.

And, when one considers it, this is a real aim and tradition; a noble one, too. It is because the

operas are regarded by their performers as intellectual works that they live and enchant, and stand out as the one abiding British light opera series. Here we find characters played as though they were real personages. There is no laughing up their sleeves. Not in these operas is to be found the grotesqueries of the "funny man" and the vacuous insincerity of the languid juvenile leads, of both sexes, of musical comedy. Once the players begin to be, or are allowed to be, funny, or even to show openly that they are aware of the comicality of the characters they are portraying, then—immediately—this intellectual atmosphere is lost. That is a point that cannot be too strongly impressed upon amateurs. It is not, therefore, indulging in any high-brow sentiment to employ the word "intellectual" in connexion with the tradition. One is but speaking the truth—the truth that Gilbert himself knew, and insisted upon, and handed down. To-day it is imparted to the newest recruit—be he stage beginner or experienced artist—who enters the ranks of the professional organization.

The Savoy tradition, I have tried to show, refers to the spirit in which the works are performed, rather than to the manner. Words alone will not instil this spirit; a study of the works themselves, either on the stage or in the library and music room, is essential. In this way one can come to understand and appreciate them, and realize all that is in them. There is no other way.

Let me emphasize the paramount importance of traditional renderings by quoting from a newspaper cutting that lies before me as I write. "In Blankville [let us say] our thirst for Gilbertian nights has fortunately not had to rely for its stimulation upon the comparatively rare visits of the D'Oyly Carte Company, for the Blankville Players . . . have provided us with annual efforts." This quotation shows at least one thing—that the inhabitants of this considerable provincial city regard the amateurs' productions as of almost equal importance to those of the professional company. Is it not, then, the duty of the amateurs to return this high compliment by giving performances worthy of such comparison? However efficient the production, however skilled the artists, such comparison cannot be attained without a full regard for, and perfect understanding of, the tradition.

One might call this a counsel of perfection; so, in a way, it is. Yet it is not a perfection difficult to attain. If it is realized fully what the tradition implies, if the correct atmosphere (referred to on an earlier page) is kept foremost in the minds of all associated with the production, then will it be found that a performance quite capable of holding its own against the professional favourites will easily be achieved. No one looks to amateurs to give a performance that will be technically of the standard of the professional artists. In a performance given with an intelligent regard for the tradition such defects will not be apparent. Some may think that to give an exact and photographic reproduction of the professional performance will have the effect of being "traditional." Even if this were so, would such an imitation be art? But this point must be reserved for subsequent consideration.

A TALK WITH THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

It goes without saying that the utmost sympathy, understanding, and co-operation between producer and musical director are absolutely essential. Not only are these attributes necessary to obtain the requisite balance between the musical and dramatic sides of the operas, but constant arguments between these two functionaries are scarcely conducive to good discipline within the company. These elements are best found where the producer is his own musical director. Alas, such a state of affairs is one of those much desired wishes that border on the ideal. It is true that the two functions have been, and still are, combined in one individual, but it is difficult to expect sufficient power and knowledge to be forthcoming from one person, especially if he, or she, be an amateur, so we must continue in the supposition that producer and musical director are separate—each with a brain and a will of his own.

The study of Sullivan is not so greatly evidenced as that of Gilbert's works and methods. A musical director has, thus, to be chosen solely for his musicianship, while the choice of producer can be limited to one with particular knowledge of the requirements of this art form. The musician gets but little opportunity for studying Sullivan, who is generally ignored at musical academies, and the

inaccessibility of his opera scores puts this study out of court for the private student. Therefore a musician, be he ever so highly trained and skilled in orchestral and choral conducting—one who may add all the degrees of musical scholarship to his name—may well be open to accept advice on these operas from the producer. Gilbert claimed that he was no musician, yet Sullivan was ever ready to seek, and accept, his collaborator's advice.

Sullivan's music gives little opportunity for

demand should be complied with. Similarly, the producer should be content to take a back seat, once the necessary gestures and positions are known, while a number such as "Strange Adventure" (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) or "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes" is being studied. In this and other ways musical director and producer will reach a mutual understanding of the difficulties each meets—a good augury for their success.

Some musical directors, while working hard



WHEN DARKLY LOOKS THE DAY

The Finale to the First Act of *Lohengrin* is full of action and should be subordinated to the production.

Photo by J. B. Debenham

original or individual reading. It has been found that Sullivan's *tempi* must be strictly kept. Too fast a pace tends to destroy the inherent repose of these works, while taking the music slowly makes them drag and lose their delightful rhythm. When, therefore, the score indicates an *allegro*, a musical director will be doing himself, and the opera, a disservice by allowing his fancy to substitute, on the one hand, an *andante* or, on the other, a *presto*. The phrasing, too, is well indicated in the scores and band parts, and should be strictly adhered to.

Without laying down any hard or fast rule, it might be suggested that the musical director should defer to the producer on any question where the music is subject to dramatic action. Thus if the producer feels that some such number is being taken too slowly or too quickly for the full effectiveness of the accompanying action, his

with the singers, are apt to let the orchestra look after itself until the last moment. Sometimes, in fact, the company does not meet the orchestra until the dress rehearsal. Sometimes this same occasion is the first time at which the instrumental players have had a full rehearsal together. One knows the difficulty of getting an orchestra together, especially when, as is so often the case, it numbers professional or semi-professional artists. But, with such people, a minimum of rehearsals will work wonders. The dress rehearsal should be entirely the producer's affair; the musical director, naturally, enters into it in the event of bad singing, or mistakes. It must certainly not be regarded as an orchestral rehearsal. This is the first time the artists have put on their costumes; probably it is the first time they have rehearsed on the stage itself. The producer and company will have quite enough to worry over without

(through no fault of their own) frequently having to stop because something is not right in the orchestra well. If the company and orchestra have had even one rehearsal together, then the inevitable strangeness of leaving the piano for the many instruments will have gone, and those on both sides of the curtain will pull together as they should.

A small orchestra is better than a large one. Sullivan used a medium-sized orchestra of some

for the conductor's use. This is copiously annotated, including snatches here and there of the more prominent pieces of orchestration which are not clear from the vocal score. With the aid of this conductor's copy and the actual band parts, the musical director should have no difficulty in making as good a study of Sullivan's orchestration as he would have were the actual full score by his side. This method may take more time and space than would the study of the more compact score;



"IT IS SUNG WITH A SIGH AND A TEAR IN THE EYE"

Here, although there is plenty of action, it is the singing that counts. As soon as the positions, gestures, etc. are fixed, the producer should be content to leave matters to the musical director.

Photo by J. H. Debnham

thirty instrumentalists, of whom all but seven were string or wood-wind players. It is, therefore, spoiling the balance to employ too great a proportion of brass. In many of the operas a good string orchestra with one or two wind instruments and a piano will be found to be as adequate, if not entirely so convincing, as a full Sullivan orchestra. At all events, this compromise is better than going to the other extreme, and drowning the voices with an orchestra which, for size and power, would do credit to a Wagnerian production in an immense opera house.

Musical directors are apt to complain that the full orchestral scores of the operas are not available for their study. This is a legitimate grievance, but neither insuperable nor so important as some would believe. With every set of band parts hired to an amateur society there is a vocal score

yet it is all that is possible and quite adequate for the purpose in view.

A subject upon which musical directors often ask for guidance is that of those songs which, although still printed in the scores, are omitted from the actual performances of the professional company. Should this lead be followed, it is asked, or should the missing numbers be reinstated?

There is a good deal to be said on both sides of the question. If the omitted number is needed for the development or dramatic continuity of the opera it should not, in any circumstances, be cut—for one way in which Gilbert and Sullivan opera differs from musical comedy is that it does not contain detached songs; that is, all musical numbers should have a direct bearing on the plot. For the same reason, no song should dis-

appear for the purpose of ending the performance a few minutes earlier than would be the case otherwise. On considering several of the numbers omitted from the professional renderings, one must admit that there seem to be sufficient reasons for advising the amateur musical director to leave them out of his performance.

The duet in *Ruddigore*, "The Battle's Roar," comes at a point where it is manifestly unsuitable. When it is sung there remains the feeling that the play is being unnecessarily held up to allow the two principal vocalists a chance to display their powers, and the main object of the situation—that Dick is supposed to be pleading for Robin—is lost. This detracts from the fun of the next scene. Also, the words put into Dick's mouth are scarcely consonant with his "rough, common-sailor fashion."

That this duet has beauty and melody cannot be denied, and it is a pity that it should be lost. In all trepidation, I once advanced a plea that it might be restored—but to the second act. Rather than lose it altogether, it was urged, the "sacrilege" might be permitted of having it sung after the entrance of Richard and Rose, just before Sir Ruthven comes on with his "So-ho, pretty one!" At such a point the duet would be quite in the picture. I am not suggesting that amateurs should take the law into their own hands, and make this change—although I have learned that it has been done successfully by a professional company in Australia. As matters stand, all that is open to amateur societies is to keep the duet where it occurs in the score, or to omit it altogether.

Another instance of a musical number which is frankly out of place is that of "Rapture, Rapture," in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. At the best it is a make-shift; little more than a pleasant jingle, inserted when it was found that Elsie and Fairfax required more time than was then allotted to change into their wedding garments. The duet comes at an inappropriate time. The short comedy scene between Dame Carruthers and Meryll, which precedes it, is far more fitting to the tragic *dénoûment* towards which the opera is so steadily working than a comic duet with a sprightly rhythm. Facilities for a fairly quick change must indeed be sadly lacking if this extra padding really becomes necessary.

A very difficult piece of music occurs soon after this duet; Elsie's appeal (sung kneeling), "Leonard, My Loved One." This number may well prove a stumbling block to the most talented amateur soprano, as it has taxed even professional artists. There is precedent, for this reason, for its omission, though it should be sung if it be humanly possible to do so—for it has some bearing on the story.

Lady Blanche's solo in *Princess Ida*, "Come Mighty Must," owes what excellence it possesses as a lyric less to its philosophy than to some ingenious plays upon words, such as "Whate'er your tense, ye are imperfect all." The air, too, is dull, although there is a pleasant echo of the music through which Dr. Daly speaks his felicitations to Alexis in *The Sorcerer*. The full effectiveness of the song depends on the audience hearing every word, and it is a very difficult number to sing so that each syllable is distinct. So, besides holding up the gay development of the act after an already sufficiently slow opening, it becomes little better than a dirge-like, polysyllabic chant.

Two other instances of "musical editing" may be examined out of those that remain. One at least of these must depend for a final decision on the vocal talent of the actor. The Major-General's ballad in the second act of *The Pirates of Penzance*, "Softly sighing to the River," is usually sung with only one verse, but with the words and music of the second refrain. The reason for this may lie in the vocal deficiencies of the actor at the time at which the song was cut down. A better reason seems to be that the audience does not expect a straight song of this nature from a purely comedy character. On reflection, this objection is unreasonable, for what is more probable than that this conscience-stricken General might find solace from such a song, rendered by, and to, himself? But one cannot expect an audience to apply logical reflection towards the end of a performance of a comic opera. The audience, too, is in a state of expectancy; there is the excitement of the coming conflict (eagerly anticipated, and now imminent) between the police and the pirates. This alone would justify the disappearance of the second verse.

No satisfactory explanation has ever been given for the deletion of Sir Ruthven's recitative and solo from the second act of *Ruddigore*, "Away,

Remorse!". This was never popular, and was not inserted in the opera when it was first revived, in 1920. With its omission the baronet has certainly a better, if rather precipitous, exit. Having dispatched his faithful retainer to carry out the bidding of his ghostly ancestors, Ruthven rushes from the scene of his mental and physical tortures. In such a plight, not even the most light-hearted of Gilbert's comedy parts would wish to sing the customary patter song!

Reflection seems to point to the advisability of the amateur musical director following the example of his professional colleague, for in all the instances I have given sufficiently good reasons for the omission exist. Certainly they are sufficient to outweigh any repugnance for deleting a bar of Sullivan or a line of Gilbert. Sullivan himself deleted numbers before production (one of his most popular songs almost met this fate); is it not reasonable to suppose that he would equally welcome the omission of other songs to which such objections as those here stated can be made—songs which he himself would doubtless hold as marring the whole-hearted attractiveness of his and his collaborator's work?

PERSONALITY, INDIVIDUALITY, AND INTERPOLATIONS

There is an often-expressed argument that playing in Gilbert and Sullivan opera gives no scope for personality. This sentiment is absurd; individuality, perhaps, may get but little chance, but personality—if it be worth the name—cannot be smothered.

Those who advance this first theory complain when, on the professional or amateur stage, the parts are not performed just as they were in the original productions. Such critics allow themselves to overlook the great advantage the original artists possessed in playing parts which, in most instances, were specially written for them. In allowing newcomers to play the parts in a manner which, though dissimilar to that of the original artist, is more fitted to the style and personality of the actor, the authorities are themselves giving the lie to this criticism. One wonders how the vitality of the operas would have survived so long if this "rule of thumb" method had, in fact, been enforced.

A character that frequently comes in for much

adverse criticism in this respect is the name part in *The Mikado*. Because Richard Temple, who created it, played the part just "so," his interpretation must have been the right one, and all others wrong—contrary to tradition—and so on. Temple's performance was magnificent, and it will not detract from its excellence once more to emphasize the great advantage this actor had over those who followed him, in that he and his personality were in the author's mind when the part was written. In making comparisons, the personalities of his successors must be borne in mind. For this reason one cannot imagine, say, Mr. Darrell Fancourt playing the part in the same manner as did Temple (in a quiet, suave way) without losing the effectiveness of his vivid presentment. In the same way Temple would have failed had the positions been reversed, and he had tried to play the part in a manner foreign to his style. It is so with all the many Mikados who have appeared since the opera was first produced.

The present-day rendering of the Duke of Plaza-Toro receives much of the same sort of criticism. Here, admittedly, the case is somewhat different, for, when the opera was written, the composition of the Savoy company had undergone several changes. Grossmith, the comedy lead, was no longer of their number, and the Duke was played by a tall, well-graced actor, the late Frank Wyatt. His interpretation received much praise, but it was quite unlike the Lord Chancellor, Ko-Ko, and others of this "family."

In course of time the role came to be played by the artist responsible for the "Grossmith parts," and became associated, in the public's mind, with those parts. Consequently, the audience looks for it to be played in the same vein; as an engaging and whimsical rogue, rather than as a grave and courtly senor. Here, again, the personality of the actor enters into the matter, although there is no doubt that, if he had been allowed to do so, Sir Henry Lytton could have played the Duke of Plaza-Toro in quite as dignified and stately a fashion as did Mr. Wyatt. Similarly, there have been marked differences in the style and methods of those who have followed Lytton, both in comparison with him and each other.

It is largely due to this mistaken connexion between individuality and personality that so many amateur actors and producers fail to bring

out the most effective work that is in them. The actor, cast for a leading part, endeavours to visit the D'Oyly Carte Company, and instead of taking valuable hints as to how to play his part, tries to work up a slavish imitation—as he has been taught to believe to be the correct thing—of the contemporary artist playing the part in

This photographic imitation is not art; nor is it pleasing. Amateur actors should temper their imitative powers with a realization of their own drawbacks and advantages. The producer, equally, must make full allowances for his material. As one man's meat is another's poison, so may an effective intonation or gesture as used by Sir Henry



PROBIE WHILDEN TELLS THE KEYS FROM SPADBOLE

This Shadbolt's performance was most satisfactory. Taking into account his personality and build,

Pho.

if he did not attempt to imitate the professional "star" imitation would have ruined a very capable presentation.

question. The producer, and especially those who have worked in the D'Oyly Carte organization, will try, further, to model the conscientious amateur's characterization to the individual mannerisms of whoever may have been playing the part when he (the producer) was with the company. The result is that one gets the genius of the producer and the amateur actor merged in an unnatural combination of, say, Fred Billington and Sydney Granville.

Lytton in, say, *Princess Ida* go for nothing in the mouth or hands of an amateur King Gama.

The matter of interpolations to the text is not so far removed from this question of personality as might appear at first sight. Many interpolations were inserted with full authority because they fitted in with the personality of the actor, but were properly discontinued when another artist succeeded to the part. Although there are several interpolations (they cannot properly be

called "gags") which do not appear in the libretto, which can be used by amateurs with absolute propriety, there are others, often heard in amateur productions, which were permitted as the personal "perquisites" of individual actors. In addition to those which had Gilbert's approval there were others which found their way into the performances against his strict edict. In the days when there were six, or more, companies on tour it was impossible to apply as strict a supervision as might have been desirable. Thus many a word or sentence—introduced as a murmured aside—gradually became louder and louder until it was plainly audible.

Every actor knows how the illusion of intelligent listening is helped by the *appearance* of interjecting an occasional "yes" or "oh?" during another's speech without actually saying a word aloud. No one would suggest that such aids to realism should be exalted to the status of "lines"; had this been the intention, the author would have indicated it. Unfortunately, many who produce the operas to-day seem to have heard most of these unauthorized interpolations, and do their best to perpetuate them as authentic additions.

We might now consider the points at which some little addition or comment is permitted. The catalogue may not be complete, but it is at least exhaustive, and it can be taken, if any major interpolation of words is ever suggested which is not mentioned in this article, that such an addition is illegitimate.

Taking the operas in chronological order, we find that there are three interpolations in *Trial by Jury*. The first occurs in the judge's song, when the lines are reached—

"The rich attorney my character high
Tried vainly to disparage."

Here those in court interject an incredulous "No," to which the judge replies, more in sorrow than in anger, "Yes!" The whole incident is over in less time than it takes to read this description. Later, the jury rise, and loudly cry, "Come, substantial damages, dam . . .", to be quelled by the usher's "Silence in court." The business here is that one juror remains standing; the usher tells him to "sit down." These two words, accompanying the gesture, may be just audible. Towards the end of the opera, when the Plaintiff and Defendant have been struggling (in the duet

"I love him"), and the first-named has collapsed in her counsel's arms, the usher endeavours to revive her. Over his shoulder he mutters to the Defendant "You brute!" This, too, is heard by the audience, but neither remark, it must be stressed, is to be given the value of a line; they are really semi-audible asides.

In *H.M.S. Pinafore* we get a small vocal interpolation. Replying to Sir Joseph Porter, Ralph says that he "can hum a little, your honour." "Then hum this at your leisure," remarks Sir Joseph—"this" being the trio, "A British Tar is a Soaring Soul." Before he actually hands the manuscript to Ralph, Sir Joseph unfolds the music, strikes an attitude, and attempts to sing. But a high pitched "A Brit . . ." is as far as he gets. One has heard amateur Sir Josephs who have carried this business so far as to sing the complete first verse in a high falsetto, thereby spoiling the song when it should be first heard a few minutes later.

Major-General Stanley gets stuck for rhymes when he is singing "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Under his breath, he is heard trying over possible words, ejaculating "Ah, I've got it" when the right word occurs to him. If an encore is taken, the music stops, as in the first rendering, for this business, but the General goes straight on with "You'll say a better Major-General has never rode a horse." This brings forth general laughter from the stage, and Edith whispers to him his mistake. "Ah," says the General, "I've got it again," and the music and song continue. This, too, occupies less time than it takes to write of it. The General also alters a line in the encore verse of "When the foeman bares his steel." "Yes, but you don't go," he has sung, but the last time he reaches this line he substitutes "Damme, you don't go," to the distress of the scandalized girls.

The next three operas seem to be free from any such additions, but they crop up again in *The Mikado*. "Gentlemen," says Ko-Ko after his first entrance, "I am much touched by this reception." The nobles kow-tow to him, at the same time uttering a word that may best be transliterated as "M'yah-h." Ko-Ko acknowledges this with a bow and a "M'yah-h." He reaches the end of the speech, and gives the cue for the

"Little List" song. Through the music the chorus say this mysterious word twice. Each time, after its utterance, Ko-Ko repeats the word, bowing first to one side and then to the other. Thus between the start of the music and the beginning of the singing "M'yah-h" is heard four times.

In the second act of this opera there are a few permissible vocal additions. Yum-Yum is comforting Nanki-Poo in the speech beginning "Darling—I don't want to appear selfish . . ." Ko-Ko is lying prostrate, on his face, at the other side of the stage. As each endearment is uttered he is heard to give a little groan, as of agony that these "dears" and "my owns" are being addressed to another. Each groan might vary from the others, and the last one might be given more as an admonitory "Ah!" Later, in the scene in which it is discovered that Nanki-Poo has apparently been beheaded, the Mikado offers solace by observing "I've no doubt he thoroughly deserved all he got." As he rises, Ko-Ko has been known to say "And he got it," but this has tended to fall out of use in recent years.

It is in this same scene that the one authorized "gag" in the whole of the operas occurs. When the Mikado asks for Nanki-Poo's address, the libretto gives "Knightsbridge" as the answer. When the opera was first produced there was, in fact, an exhibition Japanese village near Knightsbridge. The appropriateness of this address did not hold good in later days, nor was it certain that it would be fully appreciated outside London. Consequently, Gilbert laid down that the printed word should be replaced by one of local significance. This decree has tended to become widened in scope, and one frequently hears the use of some place that may be in the news; e.g., Lake Success during a conference of the United Nations; Downing Street or Chequers in a political crisis. As a rule some local place, such as a housing estate, football ground, or greyhound track, will be found more in keeping with the original intention, and the amateur Ko-Ko would be well advised to use such an address in his reply.

In *Ruddigore* Dick Dauntless has two interjections while Robin is singing "My boy, you may take it from me." In the second verse the last line but one is: "I fail in—and why, sir?"

There is a pause in the music, during which Dick replies "I don't know." At the same time in the last verse, to the question "You ask me the reason?" Dick replies "No, I didn't." The further remark "I thought you did," is the personal perquisite of a famous Robin of modern times, and should not be used. In their next scene (with Rose) Robin remarks "That's only a



"GENTLEMEN, I AM MUCH TOUCHED BY THIS RECEPTION"

There is no indication in the libretto of the interjections which occur during this speech in *The Mikado*

Photo by J. W. Debenham

bit of it" when Dick displays his skill in dancing a hornpipe.

During the quartet, "A Regular Royal Queen" (*The Gondoliers*), Tessa makes remarks to her companions that appear to bring forth replies. Actually no recognizable word should be heard, whatever may be murmured *sotto voce*. "Very well, Duchess" and other abominations frequently uttered aloud in amateur performances are entirely wrong, and should not be countenanced.

But towards the end of the second act of this

opera there is a large addition that is not covered by the libretto. The Duke of Plaza-Toro has a speech immediately before the gavotte. In three places this speech is broken by the note (*business*). That following “. . . a good deal of this sort of thing” is limited to some elegant bowing. “A little of this sort of thing” is succeeded by a remark, addressed to some imaginary person “Delighted to see you; delighted. Any time you’re passing—pass!” When the Duke says “And possibly just a *souçon* . . .,” Giuseppe interjects “What song?” The Duke repeats “*Souçon*,” adding, by way of explanation, “French word.” It is then permissible for the Duke gently to illustrate his remark by saying (again to an imaginary person) “Ah, I see you, you little heart killer,” at the same time digging the two kings in the ribs.

THE SAVOY FAMILY TREE

The principal characters in Gilbert and Sullivan opera have come to be connected, in the public’s mind, with the actors who portray them. Thus we are apt to speak of a “Lytton part” or a “Jessie Bond part,” phrases that help one to visualize the type of part referred to more graphically and clearly than any long, detailed description. This grouping is not accidental, for the principal parts do, in fact, fall into well-defined groups. Not only that, but it will also be found that there is a distinct family likeness between parts of widely divergent types. The small parts, choruses, and even to some degree the supers, are marked as part of this happy Savoy family.

Dealing first with the grouping of the parts, we find that it is not difficult to account for their resemblance. After the initial successes of the series, there developed what was practically a “stock” company. Thus, in evolving the later operas, the author and composer knew the tried material at their disposal, and shaped the parts according to the personalities and capabilities of the individual members of the company. This tradition has been continued; the actors are not so much engaged for their fitness to play *parts* as to portray *groups* of parts. Such a practice is, of course, common to any company that presents a repertory of works, but it is doubtful if it has ever been found in so complete a state as in the D’Oyly

Carte Companies. It must be admitted that there has been less rigidity in this respect in recent times, but, fundamentally, the system remains.

One must not be carried away into the belief that the characters falling into any one group are exactly similar. When we think of the characters (and especially the male parts) as being so grouped, we must also remember that, although fundamentally the same, each part in a group has clearly defined individual characteristics. Although Frederic and Colonel Fairfax are in one group, and Ko-Ko and the Lord Chancellor in another, four, not two, entirely different persons and mentalities are represented.

With the women this difference is not so marked; the less so since we can divide the soprano roles into “lyric” and “dramatic” respectively. Gilbert’s women folk are far more vaguely drawn than his men—as though he did not think it worth the trouble to give them such vividly marked characterization as he applied to the men. There is far less individuality to distinguish, say, Patience from Phyllis than there is between Alexis and Frederic. Oddly enough, it is those female characters that are drawn to an almost similar pattern that possess most traits to distinguish the one from the other. These are the contralto roles, most of which serve to emphasize one purpose—that of holding up an unattractive, elderly (and frequently husband-hunting) woman to ridicule. This trait in Gilbert’s writing has often been subjected to adverse criticism, but this is neither the place nor the time to enter into an argument on that theme. It is sufficient to say that these “elderly, ugly” women possess a fund of common-sense and personality that is denied to their more attractive, younger sisters in these operas, and each of these parts is a “gem” from the point of view of the actress lucky enough to be selected to play one of them. Not only do they give ample acting opportunities, but, musically, they can be reckoned among the best (if not the best) of the operatic roles.

Coming now to the actual groups, it will be found that the principal male parts fall into five easily defined categories—

- (1) The light comedy leads;
- (2) The heavy comedy parts;
- (3) The tenor leads (replaced in two operas by light baritone);

(4) The bass character parts; and (in certain operas)

(5) A subsidiary, but important, baritone part. In the examples that follow we will take the operas chronologically in order to save repetition. The order is *Trial by Jury*, *The Sorcerer*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and *The Gondoliers*.

Group (1)—which is sometimes erroneously called the “comedian parts”—is unrepresented in *Trial by Jury*. Its exponents, in the remaining ten operas, are John Wellington Wells, Sir Joseph Porter, Major-General Stanley, Reginald Bunthorne, the Lord Chancellor, King Gama, Ko-Ko, Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, Jack Point, and, by traditional acceptance, the Duke of Plaza-Toro: ten parts with, indeed, vastly different characteristics.

Group (2) does not appear in *Patience*, and usually can be held to comprise The Judge, Dr. Daly, Captain Corcoran, the Sergeant of Police, Private Willis, King Hildebrand, Poo-Bah, Sir Despard Murgatroyd, Wilfred Shadbolt, and Don Alhambra. At the present time there is a tendency for Dr. Daly, Captain Corcoran, Private Willis, and King Hildebrand to be found as slightly broadened examples of the fifth group, but, of course, not as “subsidiary” parts.

The tenor lead group, (3), is found in all the operas, but in *Patience* and *Iolanthe* the tenor loses his status of “lead,” being replaced in that capacity by the baritone part shown in brackets, after the tenor. In *The Gondoliers*, there is a joint tenor-baritone lead. Group (3), then, is made up by The Defendant, Alexis, Ralph Rackstraw, Frederic, the Duke of Dunstable (Archibald Grosvenor), Earl Tolloller (Strephon), Hilarion, Nanki-Poo, Dick Dauntless, Colonel Fairfax, and Marco Palmieri (with Giuseppe). There is another tenor, Cyril, in *Princess Ida* who is but little below Hilarion in importance. As it is Hilarion upon whom the romantic interest depends, it is usual to regard him as the “tenor lead.”

We do not find anyone from *Trial by Jury* or *The Gondoliers* in the fourth, bass character, group. These glorious parts, giving great scope both for singing and acting, are Sir Marmaduke

Pointdextre, Dick Deadeye, the Pirate King, Colonel Calverley, Earl of Mountararat (a comparatively “straight” part), Arac, the Mikado, Sir Roderic Murgatroyd, and Sergeant Meryll.

The last group, (5), comprises Counsel (*Trial by Jury*), Samuel (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Pish-Tush (*The Mikado*), and Sir Richard Cholmondeley (*The Yeomen of the Guard*), together



MR. MARTYN GREEN IN A DRAMATIC MOMENT
IN “RUDDIGORE”

Contrast this part with the rollicking fun of
Ko-Ko in the same group.

with the three possible inclusions from the “heavy comedy” (second) group.

The feminine parts are more easily and compactly grouped into—

- (1) The soprano leads,
 - (a) Lyric, (b) Dramatic;
- (2) The contralto parts; and
- (3) The soubrette parts.

There is a certain amount of interchangeability between the sub-divisions of the soprano group. For example, I include *Patience* and *Phyllis* in the

“lyric” division, and Mabel among the “dramatics.” But a lot of really good acting is called for from the first two, while a Mabel without a voice of the finest quality would be a failure. With such a proviso, which must be dictated by individual circumstances, one would place the soprano roles (still keeping the same sequence of operas as when dealing with the men) as follows:



“MY FACE IS UNATTRACTIVE”

Miss Dorothy Gill in a part in which an ugly make-up is compensated by unrivalled acting and vocal opportunities

Photo by Kathleen Tiddon

The Plaintiff (*a*), Aline (*a*), Josephine (*b*), Mabel (*b*), Patience (*a*), Phyllis (*a*), Princess Ida (*b*), Yum-Yum (*a*), Rose Maybud (*a*), and Flsie Mavnard (*b*). In *The Gondoliers*, Gianetta should be the lyric soprano, and Casilda the dramatic, but, with amateurs, it is sometimes desirable, or necessary, to reverse the classification. To avoid complications, certain other principal soprano roles (such as Lady Psyche in *Princess Ida*) must, for the moment, be allowed to remain with the small parts.

The contralto group is straightforward, beginning with Lady Sangazure in *The Sorcerer*. Thence it goes on to Little Buttercup, Ruth, Lady Jane, the Queen of the Fairies, Lady Blanche, Katisha, Dame Hannah, Dame Caruthers, and the Duchess of Plaza-Toro.

The soubrettes range from the light-heartedness of Pitti-Sing to the drama and pathos of Iolanthe. It is a pity that this name persists, for it is all that there is to connect them with the pert, sprightly, soubrette of musical comedy. They are all charming girls, neither hoydens nor tom-boys. *Trial by Jury* is missed by this group, which is made up of Constance, Hebe, Edith, Lady Angela, Iolanthe, Melissa, Pitti-Sing, Mad Margaret, Phoebe Meryll, and Tessa.

Purposely I have ignored the parts from the first, and the last two, Gilbert and Sullivan operas. It is safe to say that *Thespis* is never likely to receive the attention of amateur societies. Quite apart from the shortcomings of its book, no one knows where the music is to be found! It is difficult to fit the parts from *The Grand Duke* and *Utopia Limited* with any satisfaction into the groups. These two operas are to be treated separately at a later stage. Before that treatment, each of the better-known characters from the other works will have been dealt with individually in a more detailed consideration of the groups than is now possible.

The grouping, excellent though it may be for a professional company, offers certain difficulties to amateurs, and one cannot therefore advise too rigid an adherence to it. Indeed, as I have hinted, there has been some departure from it in professional circles, but as this is largely a question of the personalities of the members of the company, it must not be taken as indicating, in any way, a definite dropping of the accepted practice.

Where the amateur is concerned there are even more things than the question of the personality of the actor to be considered. The membership of the society, for instance, is constantly changing; fresh blood comes in with good claims for parts, while there may be no reason for passing over the “old hands” in its favour. Most committees wish to give everyone a chance, and this can sometimes be effected by transferring the old member to a different type of part, while putting the newcomer in the group thus vacated, and in which he will

shine better than in the group to which his fellow-member has been relegated. That brings us to the question of adaptability—an asset that the professional actor usually possesses in a greater degree than does his amateur brother. An amateur may give an outstandingly brilliant performance of the Grand Inquisitor in one season's production of *The Gondoliers*. For the next presentation *The Yeomen of the Guard* may be chosen. Following the grouping system, the previous year's Inquisitor would naturally be considered fit to play Wilfred Shadbolt. Yet there may be all manner of considerations against casting him for this part (of course I refer solely to artistic considerations). He may be well endowed by nature for delivering the Inquisitor's lines with all their due ponderous unction, and he may be aided in his stiff, unbending mien by a magnificent carriage. But this same actor may be utterly unable to realize the rough, uncouth tones of the jailor, while his military bearing, such an asset in the previous part, would be out of keeping with the slouching figure one expects Wilfred to be.

I myself have dealt with many amateurs who, in different productions of the same society, have played many varying parts. My finest Shadbolt was an excellent Mountararat and a satisfactory Luiz. For the same society, he also played Pooh-Bah and, some years ago, Frederic—a fine example of versatility. Many amateur contraltos have, to my knowledge, begun in the soubrette parts, and one of the finest amateur Karishas of recent years surprised and confounded her colleagues (and the critics) by a most successful interpretation of the soprano lead in a subsequent, non-G. & S. production by the same society. This digression will serve to show that the grouping system is certainly far from being infallible where amateurs are concerned. Nevertheless, a full knowledge of its composition is essential for a complete appreciation of the requirements of the operas. Also, the indications of its shortcomings may help to stress the point that only fundamentally do the parts within each group resemble the others placed with them.

I have referred to the family likeness that is noticeable in all Gilbert's characters—whether principal, subsidiary, or even supernumerary. This resemblance is at once more obscure and more obvious than that between individuals in the

groups. Obscure, because one might well ask in what way can the stately Lady Sangazure be related to the cut-throat, yet humane, pirates of Penzance, yet obvious when one realizes that they are all products of one man's brain, and brought to life, not by any independent, and possibly unsympathetic producer, but by their creator's own individual direction. Gestures are duplicated, so are movements, and, in a surprising number of cases, even the lines recur in a totally dissimilar type of character. On the more technical side, one finds them all instilled with that elusive Savoy tradition. Apart, therefore, from what they may do and think as characters in the particular opera, one can see the imprint of all Gilbert's benevolently-autocratic dictatorship stamped indelibly on his creations as they have come down to us.

One can see this relationship, in another way, in many of the small parts. Many of them are undeveloped so far as characterization is concerned in comparison with the greater roles, but they all show unmistakable signs of their kinship to the grouped parts. Whether (like the Notary in *The Sorcerer*) they are in evidence throughout the opera or (like Isobel in *The Pirates of Penzance*) they are forgotten after their one scene or number, they are clearly recognizable. What is the Major in *Patience* but the "light comedy lead" in miniature? Who is Leila in *Iolanthe* but an undeveloped soubrette? The pomposity of Sir Joseph Porter and the engaging roguishness of Ko-Ko both peep out in the unconventional Peets shown us in *Iolanthe*.

It would be interesting, to help appreciation of the fact that the resemblance between parts in a group is more fundamental than apparent in the playing, if one were to draw up a family tree of one of these groups, finding one character as the head of the family, and tracing the relationship of the others in the same group from their resemblance to the common ancestor and each other. If such a chart were to be drawn up it would be devoid neither of interest nor of instruction. Such a treatment of the light comedy group would show the close relationship between John Wellington Wells and Ko-Ko, who clearly prove to be thorns in the side of their dignified cousin, Sir Joseph Porter. Sir Joseph's brothers, the Lord Chancellor, and Major-General Stanley, being

more kindly souls, would not frown so much on these upstarts, but the sole representative of another side of the family, Reginald Bunthorne, would profess ignorance of their existence, and so on throughout the group. There is the idea; it is left to the reader to work it out in more detail.

THE LIGHT COMEDY LEADS

In the separate consideration of the groups, the "light comedy leads" should be taken first, not only because they comprise the most important of Gilbert's creations, but because they are the parts that are most frequently seen, on the amateur stage, without due regard for, or knowledge of, the right manner of interpretation. Where many amateurs make a grave mistake is in regarding these parts as comic characters. They are not, and never have been, comic in the sense of calling for a George Robey, a W. H. Berry, or a Leslie Henson—the type represented by the "funny man" of musical comedy. The humour is to be found inwardly rather than outwardly; that is, in the words and situations, and not mainly in the actions of the player. Gilbert gives us, in these characters, a set of people, all of whom display the idiosyncrasies of the Englishman. Whether these characters be garbed as Spanish grandees, in Japanese dress, or as high legal luminaries, they are all folk such as you or I might meet in the street. When we laugh, we are not laughing at the absurdities of the actor who is playing the part. The wit and humour of the lines and situations (as interpreted by the actor) draw our laughter.

This does not mean that the parts should be played exactly as though they were found in a straight, modern comedy. We must make all allowances for the absurdities and unrealities of the comic opera world. To show a British general, in full uniform, coming to a picnic on a rocky Cornish shore would be ludicrous were it not leavened with a touch of whimsicality—a merry twinkle in the eye. The actor knows full well that his part is amusing; that on it much of the comedy depends—but to be a true Gilbert and Sullivan comedian, he must hide this from the audience. The realization of the humour must be kept to himself, and not communicated to the audience by any conscious exaggeration

on the part of the actor. The audience will soon discover it.

One might give a good example of this from experience. A few years ago a member of one of the D'Oyly Carte companies played Bunthorne, in *Patience*, in a manner which, although strictly traditional, was unlike the usual reading. This actor, although a born comedian, preferred to play Bunthorne as a somewhat introspective study of the sham aesthete. Yet, despite his almost straight reading of the part, not one jot of humour was lost; not a single humorous point was missed. About the same time I saw an amateur Bunthorne, who, through ignorance of what was required of the part (an ignorance shared, apparently, by the producer), stopped only just short of playing it as a red-nosed comedian would act it. Was it to be wondered at if the audience at the amateur production called *Patience* a silly work, and failed to understand it owing to the way in which the reading of the principal role was mutilated, while the professional's traditional, if unorthodox, rendering received the praise of discriminating critics and his audiences, which were no more intelligent or intellectual than those that watched the clowning and vapouring of the amateur? The moral to be drawn from this is that, in these parts, it is better to be too serious than too funny.

Here one might reiterate the well-known story of Gilbert's reply to the comedian who wished to introduce a piece of business because, he said, it would get a laugh. "So it would if you were to sit down on a pork pie," was Gilbert's sole comment. That represents Gilbert's attitude towards extraneous aids to laughter. The humour was in the words he had placed in the character's mouth, the situations in which the character found himself, and such moderate and restrained business as Gilbert had decided would be necessary. Certainly, as with additions to the libretto, he sanctioned additional business—much of which arose as the result of accidents (Ko-Ko's business with his big toe is one of such cases)—but he would never allow his humour to be helped out by supposedly funny antics, such as would be more fitted to the music-hall stage than to that of the Savoy.

Frequently these characters speak the most outrageously mirth-provoking lines. But the lines are spoken seriously. Take the scene in *Iolanthe*

between the Lord Chancellor and Strephon. His Lordship is greatly incensed at Strephon's flouting of his decree. Almost exploding with wrath, he rounds on the youth. "Now, sir," he eventually utters, "what excuse have you to offer for having disobeyed an order of the Court of Chancery?" Strephon explains that he knows no Courts of Chancery; he is governed by "Nature's Acts of Parliament." He asks the Lord Chancellor if he is "Chancellor of birds and trees, King of the winds, and Prince of the thunderclouds." The Chancellor ponders. "No," he replies as though he had never thought of this. He goes on to explain that there is no evidence that Nature has interested herself on Strephon's behalf. "No evidence," exclaims the astonished shepherd, "I tell you she bade me take my love." "Ah," admonishes the Chancellor, "you mustn't tell us what she told you—it's not evidence." He goes on to explain that "an affidavit from a thunderstorm or a few words on oath from a heavy shower would meet with all the attention they deserve."

What is this but arrant nonsense? The scene is always accompanied by a crescendo of laughter. This is in no way helped by any antics on the part of the actor—any comic business to help to get the lines over. The Lord Chancellor is in deadly earnest; he shows no realization that he is talking nonsense, and the audience must be left unaware of the fact that he, the actor, is probably chuckling inwardly at these lines, which he has repeated many times at rehearsals. The only glimpse of this that is allowed is that little touch of twinkling eye, or whimsicality, which every good Gilbert and Sullivan light comedy player must bring to his parts.

No one would claim that an actor devoid of a sense of humour would be ideally suited to these parts. Yet such a player would be superior to, and probably more successful than, one who tried to show the audience what a funny fellow he is.

Summed up, the ideal "light comedy lead" is a man who possesses a marked aptitude for character acting, a well-developed sense of humour (which he can keep to himself), and a whimsical and pleasing personality. His diction (as with any other Gilbert and Sullivan player) must be faultless, to enable him to get the full value out of the many patter-songs. He should be nimble footed

and graceful in his actions, and, above all, he should be utterly devoid of any of the vocal tricks and accents so dear to the musical comedy "funny man." I am afraid that his ability as a singer does not greatly matter. Naturally, he must have a singing voice, but even Sullivan never expected great singing from the light comedy parts. This is evidenced by his treatment of these parts in concerted numbers; sometimes they will be instructed to sing with the tenors, sometimes with



THE AUTHOR AS
SIR JOSEPH PORTER, K.C.B.

It should be noticed that any indication of this being a "comic character" are avoided in the make-up for this part.

the basses. Also, as many of these parts are mature, even elderly, men, a pure, beautifully modulated voice would be out of keeping. Physically, the ideal light comedy man is one of medium height and build.

Having thus considered these parts collectively, now take them as individuals, for no two of them are exactly alike. Once more, and all through the reviews of the parts, we will take the operas in chronological order.

JOHN WELLINGTON WELLS (*The Sorcerer*) dates from before the true development of this group. With Kō-Kō, he shares the distinction of being one of the two parts in which a certain amount of restrained low comedy is permitted. He should be played on the lines of an impish creature of fantasy. Combining satanic dealings

with the gentlest disposition, one would not expect him to behave as an ordinary mortal—still less as a mere buffoon. In his frock-coat, top hat, and ginger whiskers, he is a picture of genteel respectability, and his voice should be in accordance with this trait—not that of a vulgar little bouncer. Obviously “trade,” he might well feel out of place among the “county” folk he meets. But he is always sure of himself, with a pleasant self-confidence that never gives way to bumptious-



“AND I, MY LORDS, EMBODY
THE LAW”

Although a comedy part, the dignity of the Lord Chancellor has to be represented in the appearance of the actor

ness; that, he feels, would never uphold the dignity of a family magician.

In the incantation scene in the first act the actor may let himself go; the more amusingly supernatural—even grotesque—he makes his actions, the better. But he must control such antics to his own share of the proceedings. Never must he divert attention to himself while Aline and Alexis are singing their duets in this scene. His moments of depression can be made amusing if, even then, the actor does not drop the air of mischievous whimsicality with which the character is endowed.

THE RT. HON. SIR JOSEPH PORTER, K.C.B. (*H.M.S. Pinafore*), the extremely civilian First Lord of the Admiralty, is one of those pompous, self-opinionated egoists whom Gilbert could draw

so well. Of humble origin (as he explains in his famous “autobiographical” song), he has none the less adopted the overbearing condescension of the snob who would pose as a patrician. This little figure of officialdom struts his way through the opera in a ridiculous manner, of which he remains supremely unconscious. He takes himself, and his “official utterances,” seriously; there is nothing amusing to him in the pompous speeches and actions that draw such bursts of laughter from the audience. In this part, even more than in many, is there that need for inward, rather than apparent, humour.

The only time, in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, when the pose of dignified condescension may be dropped is in the second act trio with Josephine and the Captain. Here, it will be obvious, a certain amount of unbending, amounting almost to abandon, is essential. Apart from this, the air of pomposity must never be lost. Once that happens, the whole effect of the part is lost. Even this one lapse into abandon must be kept clear of buffoonery. The character should speak with a tired drawl, as though it were too great an effort to speak to mere humans. The sailors vociferously echo Ralph’s remark that “a better captain don’t walk the deck.” “Good,” replies Sir Joseph, languidly and without enthusiasm. His movements and gestures should follow this lead. Anything in the nature of jerkiness (as is sometimes seen among amateurs) should be avoided.

MAJOR-GENERAL STANLEY (*The Pirates of Penzance*) resembles Sir Joseph in many ways, but on a more human plane, with none of the First Lord’s aloofness and self-importance. One does not want too photographic a representation of the middle-aged military commander, for the general himself admits that he is a little more than the “chocolate soldier,” later borrowed from Bernard Shaw by musical comedy. He is a likeable old man, but inclined to be peppery. This side of the character is only occasionally in evidence, but the actor should suggest that it is there, just below the surface, ready to burst out into testy petulance at a moment’s notice. This part is especially well suited to a dapper actor with a good bearing and, of course, a whimsical manner, but offers little difficulty in any other way.

REGINALD BUNTHORNE (*Patience*) is a much younger character than his predecessors, but is

equally effective in the hands of an older man. He is a humbug of the first water, and must be shown as such, clearly and convincingly, yet free from conscious exaggeration in the acting. This last remark must be qualified by adding that the pose adopted by the poet is itself extreme; but this lies in the part itself rather than in the way in which it is played. When on rare occasions he unbends, it is Bunthorne who is doing so, not the actor who is trying for more laughs. In fact, it is a part that would be convincing and amusing however "straightly" it might be played. The two poems, nonsense though they be, must be declaimed in dead seriousness. The more the actor is in earnest during the recitals, the more richly humorous is the effect. It is essential that any temptation to "guy" the poems, or any other aspect of the part, be firmly resisted. No effort should be spared to make the part convincing. Although we still have our Bunthornes, the particular brand as presented by Gilbert, and the period, will be unfamiliar to the majority of the audience, and therefore one now wants more reality in the part than may have been necessary when the opera first appeared. His voice, of course, is that of the "highbrow" as represented on the stage.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (*Iolanthe*) is a quaintly dignified figure. His is not the dignity of the upstart Sir Joseph Porter, but the innate dignity of one who has risen to the heights of legal eminence. As befits one who has gone to fairyland for his wife, the whimsical side of the character is marked, and should be brought out in many places where the more starchy dignity would be out of place, as, for example, during his caperings with the two Earls towards the end of the second act. Now and again, during these relaxations, he must give a sign of realization that such conduct is not quite suited to the occupant of the Woolsack.

In the scene where *Iolanthe* reveals herself, all idea of comedy must be suppressed. The Chancellor is now a figure in one of the most poignant scenes in comic opera. Both actor and actress have here a fine chance for pathos—which must be real pathos, not bathos. It is only when the Chancellor steps forward to suggest an amendment to the fairy law that the comedy again returns. When *Iolanthe* is recognized, it is

usual, and indeed desirable, that the words "*Iolanthe, thou livest?*" should be spoken, not sung, in a half-broken, awed, and wondering voice.

Consideration of the rest of the characters in this group must wait. In general, the descriptions already given, and particularly the first two pages of this study, will convey what must be aimed at in attempting successful and convincing portrayals of the later characters.

ON THE SOPRANO ROLES

Gilbert's heroines fall in love with the heroes. There is no biological significance in that remark; it is explained by the fact that theatrical convention had to be observed, and in the seventies and eighties (if not to-day) this demanded a happy ending with the young people united. I have already written that these characters have little in common with their counterparts in musical comedy, or, for that matter, with the twentieth century outlook. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more in evidence than in the love-making of these characters. Not one of them surrenders herself to a passionate embrace; their kisses are those of a sister. One characteristic of the present day leading lady will be sought in vain in the Savoy heroines. "Sex appeal" is an ingredient entirely absent from the make-up of the Gilbertian damsel. These characters, with few exceptions, are milk-and-water. All belong to another age. This makes it all the more important that they should be fully understood by the actress if they are to be convincing. A realization of these difficulties is half the battle.

But there is one thing that these sopranos must have, and that is charm. Vivacity is not so much called for; this can be left to the soubrettes. Far too much reliance seems to be placed on the voice alone in many amateur societies. All these parts need to be acted—great skill in this direction is not called for outside Princess *Ida* and *Elsie Maynard*—and the acting remains in evidence all the time. Too often does one see gesture, facial expression, and, in fact, the whole sense of character, dropped when the music cue is given. Many, if not all, of the soprano songs are suitable for the concert hall, but while, say, *Yum-Yum* is on the stage, she must remain *Yum-Yum*. These words are not the "grouse" of a producer; they

represent, almost verbatim, what a gifted musical director said while this article was actually being prepared.

The soprano parts have a real disadvantage in that they are so sketchily drawn. Gilbert's girls have been described, not without reason, as lifeless puppets. It is difficult to seize upon any out-



"THE LASS THAT LOVED A SAILOR"

Josephine (with Ralph Raekstraw), the first of the dramatic sopranos

Photo by J. W. Debenham

standing disposition to help the characterization. Here and there they are more boldly drawn, but then efforts to read anything into the part are pulled up by the glaring inconsistencies that stare one in the face. The soprano leads simply defy cold analysis. For all that, one can give some broad outlines (sometimes of a negative nature) to assist the actress in the portrayal of these parts, and indicate what special characteristics should be sought after, and brought out, in each.

THE PLAINTIFF (*Trial by Jury*) falls into the category of the "lyric soprano." This is natural,

since the part is sung throughout. Strictly, the Plaintiff should not be presented as a shy, demure, or retiring damsel; ladies who bring breach of promise suits seldom possess these attributes, though they may endeavour to give themselves such an appearance before the court. The Plaintiff's tears, and they are many, should be of the crocodile variety, as will be confirmed by her quick recovery to display the charms of her trousseau to the bewitched jurors. Then we find this lady, seeking substantial solace for her broken heart, ready to accept, at a moment's notice, the proposal of the judge. There are no tears or swooning then. The accepted rendering should be followed—that of "the broken flower . . . the cheated maid"—provided it is realized that this attitude is really a pose, and is conveyed as such to the audience.

ALINE (*The Sorcerer*), also a lyric soprano, is one of the more consistent of the heroines, and offers more material than do most of them on which to build up one's characterization. She should be shown as at once proud and gracious, fair to look upon, gentle, and utterly unspoilt. She is deeply in love with Alexis, but must show (although not to him) the high-spirited girl's dislike of his air of proprietorship towards her. Of Mr. Wells she is afraid; a magician outside a story is not reckoned with in her philosophy. Towards the villagers her attitude is kind and natural with neither her mother's frigidity nor her lover's unwitting condescension. In consequence these villagers adore her. The actress should strive for the happy medium between an air of rural simplicity and an appearance of sophistication, always remembering that she, alone of her sex, represents the younger generation of the "county" folk in this opera.

JOSEPHINE (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) is the first of the "dramatic sopranos." This means that greater powers of acting are called for than in the "lyric" roles, but in all other ways the characteristics of the two categories are similar. From reading the libretto, Josephine may appear to be cold and proud. These are clearly the result of the surroundings in which she has been brought up. She is quite out of place on a man-of-war, so a rather subdued note, in direct contrast to the rollicking nature of the crew, is an asset. Coupled with the air of haughtiness there must be a trace

of simplicity—or, rather, ingenuousness would be a better word. Josephine is not either hard or coy. And, despite some florid or coloratura singing, she is unrelated to any *prima donna* of grand opera. So, although we accept a mature or buxom Mimi or Marguerite, Josephine must realize, in figure and appearance, the descriptions applied to her—such as “the fairest bud,” “your most attractive daughter,” etc.

MABEL (*The Pirates of Penzance*) has been classed, perhaps unconventionally, as a dramatic soprano. One may ask, why? Certainly she relies more on her ability to sing than to speak dialogue; she has but six speeches, of which the longest has fewer than forty words. It is when we come to the second act, with its long and affecting scene with Fredric, that one realizes how important a really good actress is to the part. The burlesque spirit of the opera is not openly visible in Mabel, though actually it is most evident in her part. The aria, “Poor Wand’ring One,” although calling for no little vocal skill, was written by Sullivan with his tongue in his cheek. “Farmyard noises” was the phrase he applied to the trills and cadenzas of this “take-off” of the grand opera manner. Mabel must have a strong personality, so that the part (but not the actress) stands out above her sisters. That remark needs the qualification that the leading lady must, to some extent, shine above the chorus.

PATIENCE, who gives her name to the next opera, is only too frequently spoiled by being played on wrong lines. This is not altogether surprising when one considers how difficult a part it is to render convincingly, and how unlike anything in the world of the theatre or in real life this girl is. The only really satisfactory way to play Patience is as a simple, artless maiden, free from coquetry or guile. Her air of innocence should be suggested as real, and not assumed. At heart Patience is of a sunny disposition, but occasionally she is brought to tears, as on learning that love is a duty. She assiduously believes all she is told on this subject, and gets mixed up in some pretty problems in consequence. When this happens, her distress and perplexity should be suggested as being real and pressing.

PHYLLIS (*Iolanthe*) is in much the same mould among the lyric sopranos as is Patience, except that she lacks the milk-maid’s naïveté and sim-

licity. She is intensely human in her jealousy, and when she turns to the peers after rejecting Strephon the audience must feel that she is doing so in momentary pique rather than in any vindictive spirit. There is little in the character on which to base one’s study, and the best results will be attained by becoming familiar with the scenes in which Phyllis appears, and then playing them in a perfectly natural manner with no more use of feminine wiles than the libretto will disclose as necessary.

PRINCESS IDA, the dramatic soprano who names this opera, is the best drawn of all Gilbert’s heroines. Of course, the creation is Tennyson’s, but the characterization is Gilbert’s. Although, until the last act, she appears to be cold and unbending, this aspect of the character must be shown in such a way that it never becomes hard or unsympathetic. Ida may be imperious, but this is set off by charm and graciousness. This calls for a strong and pleasing personality as much as for acting and vocal talent of a high order.

Although a born organizer and leader, Ida’s schemes have the disadvantage of being, often, impracticable. To the Princess they are real and feasible, and for this reason one cannot insist too strongly on the need for absolute sincerity in speaking the lines of the part, many of which abound in humour. Her pity for her father brings a glimpse of her gentler side; her song, following her warriors’ excuses, displays her as quite human. Thence, to her acceptance of Hilarion, the progress from her early attitude towards mankind and her final surrender can be shown easily and naturally.

One thing that is absolutely essential in the part is correct and graceful diction, free from any tricks or mannerisms of speech. Immediately after her first entry Ida has a speech of forty-four lines of blank verse, which sets the keynote to the part. But how often is this speech spoiled by mannerisms or faulty diction? No princess who is also head of a university should describe the “foolish giant of the woods” as an “ellyfant,” as I heard recently. And this word “elephant” occurs four times in as many lines.

YUM-YUM (*The Mikado*) takes us back to the lyric soprano. Here is a part full of glaring inconsistencies. Yum-Yum, quite seriously, expresses her simplicity, yet the next moment makes

it abundantly clear that she knows her way about. Some people try to take this as the manner in which the part should be played, but these contradictions are unintentional, and must be ignored if the most pleasing results are to be obtained. What is wanted, then, is not an arch manner, but a demure, slightly pert, air, quite devoid of any



PHYLLIS, THE WARD IN CHANCERY
Daintiness and charm will go a long way in this
vaguely drawn part

Photo by J. W. Debenham

suspicion of skittishness. The slightest touch of sophistication is a help (for schoolgirls in early Japan were probably quite as human as those of 1885). There can be something almost repugnant in Ko-Ko's advances, which can best be avoided by Yum-Yum suggesting the attitude, "Well, I don't want to kiss him, but I suppose I must. What a bore!" When she refers to herself as "a child of nature," as being "indeed beautiful," and as "the happiest girl in Japan," one should feel that she really believes what she is saying.

ROSE MAYBUD (*Ruddigore*), another lyric role, offers an almost thankless task to the actress who conscientiously tries to get into the skin of the part. What character Rose does possess is not of sweetness, as she imagines, but of a coldly-calculating sort, hidden under a mask of sweet simplicity and charity. To disclose these not very pleasing attributes would be to lose the sympathy of the audience, and this must be preserved for the heroine. Perhaps the best way to present this unenviable characteristic is to ignore it; it is there without any insistence being placed on it. In this way the audience will not at once be aware what a nasty little girl "sweet Rose Maybud" really is, though they may arrive at this conclusion later. Remembering this, and that the spirit of the opera is burlesque, the best advice one can offer is to disregard the characterization (such as it is), and to strive after the suggestion of a worldly actress endeavouring, not too successfully, to portray the sweet village maiden of melodramatic tradition.

ELSIE MAYNARD (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) calls for a flexible voice and strong dramatic powers, with plenty of light and shade in the acting. One important point to be remembered is that the *part* of Elsie is that of a young, inexperienced strolling player, and not that of some great *prima donna*. In most other respects the part is a mass of contradictions. In the opera, trouble and perplexities fall fast on Elsie's head, leaving her in a continuous state of bewilderment. The presentation of this attitude is not only helpful but essential, and it will help to obtain (and keep) the sympathy of the audience for the character. For, examined in cold blood, there is room to doubt if Elsie really deserves sympathy. To some extent this is a "showy" part, but that is inherent, and requires no help from the actress, who should aim at quiet simplicity, bringing out the character of the bewildered girl, and that alone, and leaving the more flamboyant side to fend for itself.

CASILDA (*The Gondoliers*) is a girl of strong will and dignity, both of which she inherits from her mother, the Duchess. She does not so much despise her rogue of a father, as treat him with a certain resigned air of semi-contempt. She has her pride; what raises her indignation is not so much that she was married in infancy, but that

she was not consulted. There is also needed the *appearance* of coldness in her manner towards Luiz in the presence of her parents. This must be shown so subtly that the audience is unaware of the position between Casilda and Luiz until they rush into each other's arms. Preventing the revelation from being too great a surprise makes it all the more important that her attitude should not seem too real. In the second act Casilda is bored with the whole proceedings while she is on the stage with her parents. When it is decided which of these preposterous monarchs is really king, she seems to be thinking, then will be the time to worry. One has seen too many Casildas adopt this air of ennui without such philosophical reasoning—in other words, young ladies taking absolutely no interest of any kind in what is going on during these scenes with which, although prominently on the stage, the actress is not directly concerned. The attitude of Casilda towards Tessa and Gianetta also frequently needs revision. This is sisterly, as she says, not haughty and condescending.

GIANETTA (*The Gondoliers*) is a lyric part that does not call for, or give, much descriptive scope. She is certainly a young lady who knows her own mind. She should also be somewhat high-spirited, although not so as to detract from the lighter-hearted soubrette, Tessa, with whom she shares every scene. It is necessary that these two parts be evenly matched in ability and personality. Beyond the classification as soprano and soubrette there is nothing to distinguish the two sisters. One feels, perhaps, that Gianetta is more ruled by her head than her heart, and that, as a character, she is less well drawn than Tessa. Consequently, it is important to see that the actress is not overshadowed by the better-formed character of Tessa, or by the player of the part.

THE HEAVY COMEDY PARTS

There is a world of fun to be drawn from the stage figure of a large, stolid man finding himself in situations of a humorous nature. How much funnier do these situations become (outside of farce) when the actor appears blissfully unconscious of the comicality of the part. That is the keynote for these Gilbertian roles. These heavy comedy parts, although cast on somewhat broader lines than the light comedy leads, call for a

display of unconscious humour, requiring little, or no, emphasis from the actor to achieve the desired effects and laughs. Like the light comedy parts, no two members of this group are more than fundamentally similar. Each calls for a style which, while to some extent identical, has largely to be adapted to the part presented. It was not really until the middle of the series that the heavy comedy parts settled down to become a well-defined group.

Enough will be stated in the following brief survey of these characters to make it plain that they cannot be regarded as comic parts. They are the creations of a humorous brain, which transferred to them a generous allowance of humour; but their creator never called upon his interpreters to add any extraneous comic aid. They represent, for the most part, that type of person met with in real life who is so intensely funny because he takes himself so seriously. One can point again and again to actions in which these characters indulge that would seem to give the lie to my statement. Yet, on reflection, it will be seen that it is the actions themselves that are funny, far more than the manner in which they are performed. Take, for example, Wilfred's lumbering attempts to dance during the "Cock and Bull" duet, the comic terror of the Sergeant of Police when the approach of the pirates is heard, and Poo-Bah's efforts to raise himself from a sitting to a standing position. Is there anything in any one of these, or similar, examples, which would be any the funnier in the hands of a comic musical comedy (or music hall) actor than in the more restrained hands of the true Gilbert and Sullivan comedy artist? Again the analogy of the pork pie applies.

THE LEARNED JUDGE (*Trial by Jury*) should be represented as a pompous, elderly man fully aware of the importance of his position, and, in his own mind, yielding to none in admiration of his capabilities. A certain dignity and judicial bearing are required as assets to the judge's status. There must be an inkling that, despite his honoured position, he is rather a rogue (albeit a most lovable one). The humour of the part should be aimed at in a quiet and unctuous manner, and, as in real life, the judge should tend to dominate the stage (or rather the court) to some degree. Beyond that, all that is called for in the acting is a good

character sketch of the more human type of high court judge, who can be severe yet have a merry twinkle in his eye. Alternatively, the part may



"I WAS BORN SNEERING"

Mr. Edward Robey (son of the famous comedian)
as Poo-h-Bah in an amateur production

Photo by J. W. Debenham

be played on the lines of the light comedy leads, as a rather snuffy little gentleman, but the characterization of the judge lends itself more to the accepted practice of including the part in the heavy comedy group.

THE USHER (*Trial by Jury*) might be con-

sidered in this group. He is not properly a heavy comedy character, nor does he properly fit into any other category of the family tree. It is a part offering scope to the actor who can realize just where comedy ends and farce begins. But if it is likely to overstep this narrow barrier, it is best if the part be gently removed to the fifth group, and regarded as a "subsidiary, but very important, baritone part."

The usher should be represented as a fussy, shabby man, running here and there with curious, rheumy steps. A study of the real-life usher will be rewarded. There is much that is humorous to the lay observer in the manner in which these functionaries go about their tasks. All this should be conveyed by the stage usher, with just that little touch of exaggeration that needs such careful handling.

DOCTOR DALY (*The Sovereign*) is a part that is frequently misunderstood by amateurs. For this reason, the alternative of placing the part in the baritone category is one that can be commended. The part is really a straightforward, sympathetic, study of a kindly, gentle, country clergyman, to whose even existence the startling events of this opera come as a disturbing and perplexing storm to hitherto unruffled waters. His prototype can be found in many a parish. No conventional stage curate is wanted, and any attempt to introduce such a reading, with the "de-arly beloved" type of voice, is, to say the least, to be deplored. It is not without interest that two recent professional Dr. Dalys had youthful experience in cathedral choirs, and both modelled their readings on clerics with whom they had come in contact in those days.

CAPTAIN CORCORAN (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) brings a return to the true heavy comedy part, although of a different style from, say, Poo-h-Bah or Wilfred Shadbolt. Any conscious recognition of the absurdities of the part should be avoided, while the bearing and appearance of a bluff naval officer must be realized. But the rendering must not be too straight, and a comedy touch is decidedly necessary. This touch is needed to help the ending. Otherwise the comedy acting required to carry off the change of uniform and condition might appear to indicate a change of personality. Whether Captain or A.B., Corcoran remains the same person.

Slightly different treatment is required in the

scene with Josephine in the first act. Here the captain has to show himself as a kind and fond parent, and treated with just the right touch of seriousness the scene can become most effective. Then, in the scene with Little Buttercup, at the beginning of the second act, the captain should play up to the air of mystery created by Buttercup and the semi-dark stage. This not only helps the scene, but gives it the requisite air of mystery, which will make the revelation of Buttercup's secret all the more convincing later in the opera. It is one of those incidents that leave a sub-conscious impression in the minds of the audience, so that when the surprise comes, it is sudden and startling without being so unexpected as to detract from the following of the story on the stage.

THE SERGEANT OF POLICE (*The Pirates of Penzance*). Candidly, this richly humorous part is funniest when played by an actor who does not realize how funny he is going to be! It is far better to be too stolid in this part than too humorous. The character itself is too exaggerated in the writing to need this fact to be pointed by the player, and the absence of any conscious drollery from the acting is all to the good. I once persuaded a committee to cast as the sergeant a droll fellow who was sublimely ignorant of the fact. He was, in private life, such a one as the policeman, and played the part as himself. He was an enormous success, but it would not have done if the opera had run for more than three nights, for, at the end, he was beginning to see how funny he was, and started to play up to this discovery, with the result that he lost a lot of his effect on the last night. The part should be played as our old friend and protector, the London "bobby" of the old school. An expressive face is a great asset to the part, as a restrained use of facial by-play helps to set off the stolidity of the man's bearing.

PRIVATE WILLIS (*Iolanthe*) is placed in this group largely on account of traditional usage. It neither started therein nor is it to be found at the present time, professionally, in the group. The part can be taken by any good baritone who can sing and look the character. It can easily be marred, and put out of focus, by too much by-play and fooling at the wrong moment. Certainly the part is rich in humour, but humour of

the inward kind. The song at the beginning of the second act should be given, as befits a soliloquizing philosopher, in a half-ruminating manner—neither as a straight concert item nor as a comic ditty. His part in the quartet, "In Friendship's Name," gets its humour from the musical setting, with its *coloure* in the sentry's solo line.



THE GRAND INQUISITOR

Although a more elderly make-up would have been an improvement, this photograph shows that the Don need not rely on bulk for his impressiveness.

Photo by J. W. DeLorham

A certain amount of restrained comedy business should be introduced by the exchange of glances with the Queen between the verses of her song "O, Foolish Fay," but as a foil, and not a lead, to her. For the long period during which the sentry is on the stage, but not concerned with the action, an attitude of mild interest should be assumed. It is neither desirable nor necessary for the sentry to draw, on the one hand, any attention to himself or, on the other, to appear to be taking no interest at all in the proceedings.

KING HILDEBRAND (*Princess Ida*) should be

represented as an imposing, rather choleric, potentate. Hildebrand is not a typical heavy comedy part, and he is not the most important character in the opera. But as a king should dominate his court, so does Hildebrand call for an actor with a strong personality so that the part may stand out in such a fashion. This is another part that can easily be transferred to the baritone group without loss of effect.

POOH-BAH (*The Mikado*) is the heavy comedy part *par excellence*, yet it is often spoiled by mere buffoonery. A heavy, unyielding mountain of a man is called for. He must not be so grossly fat as to be repulsive, and the padding must be done with discretion, for no amount of it will make a thin-faced man appear genuinely rotund. It is the pompous, oily, dignity of the man, coupled with his deliberate and heavy movements and (frequently) outraged sense of fitness, which bring most of the fun to the part. These attributes, and these alone, call for emphasis. In all other respects the acting must consciously convey nothing but the man's puffed up self-importance. Speech, movement, and gesture must be slow and unctuous, as befits one of such lengthy pedigree. Experience has shown how necessary it is to insist that Pooh-Bah himself is not funny. It is the *part* that is, perhaps, the most richly humorous ever seen in comic opera. The actor, to all outward appearances, should be truculently serious from beginning to end.

SIR DESPARD MURGATROYD (*Ruddigore*) is a complex character; really two personalities in the same part. In the first act he is the traditional wicked squire of melodrama, in the second, an unctuous church worker and schoolmaster. Cadaverous of visage, he makes his first entrance with melodramatic gait, but he sings in a more plaintive strain than his appearance would suggest. In his succeeding soliloquy, although still with the tones of his kind (lengthening "child" into "chee-ild," etc.) the manner must be that of the villain despite himself. Then comes Dick Dauntless. At once the sinister manner returns, but when he learns that Ruthven is alive, a change gradually appears. As the narration proceeds, so Despard's face clears, and when he finds himself free to disclose the truth, and exclaims, "Free at last; free to live a blameless life, and to die beloved and regretted by all who

knew me," there is a note of genuine relief in his voice.

In the second act Despard appears in black clothes of sober cut. His whole manner and appearance have changed. Gone is the sallow face with its scowl. In its place is an expression of almost cherubic innocence. From every pore is exuded platitudinous unctiousness. This character, being burlesque of two extreme stage types, calls for a little conscious exaggeration in both its aspects.

WILFRED SHADBOLT (*The Yeomen of the Guard*), like Pooh-Bah, is not too well understood by many amateurs, both actors and producers, who will either try to be funny or encourage clowning in the part. That elusive, "unconscious humour" is here needed to the full. Wilfred is a clumsy, miserable-looking individual more uncouth than repulsive. For all the mirth-provoking lines there is nothing in the part to suggest that the man possesses the slightest grain of humour or sense of the ludicrous. It is the serious way in which he growls out the absurd remarks (which are far from absurd to him) that makes the part so richly humorous. There must be no conscious striving after comic effects. It is, in fact, a part that a skilled actor, unused to broad comedy, would make far more convincing than the most accomplished comedian (playing the part in his accepted manner) could possibly do. And, again, the opera itself is more serious than the others in the series, and calls for acting still more related to real life.

DON ATRIAMBRA DEL BOLERO (*The Gondoliers*) is a personage of great importance. He is not, as frequently represented, akin to that rascal Pooh-Bah, and, unlike that character, must show that his dignity sits him like a well-tailored coat. He can unbend to a slight extent without losing his dignity, but he can never permit a liberty to be taken with his exalted person. In manner and speech, there should be a certain oily smoothness, and although condescending, his condescension is never of the patronizing kind. One thing, in this connexion, which should not be overlooked by the actor, is that the Don, in every sense of that much misused word, was a gentleman (even the prisoners awaiting torture were provided with "all the illustrated papers"), and this, with that calm dignity of his, make the often seen mouth-ing, strutting figure, with over-drawn beetling

(or worse, "George Robey") eyebrows quite out of keeping with the drawing and conception of the character.

This telling role is somewhat lacking in the inner humour of the other parts. It cannot be played on straight lines so easily as can Wilfred, or even Pooh-Bah. He would become a dull dog (I almost wrote "don") if so presented. But a dry, rather sardonic, humour is better than broad effects, with ever so slight an emphasis on the pompous and ponderous side of the man. Until the opera was re-dressed by the late Charles Ricketts, R.A., in 1930, the don was not dressed as a grand inquisitor should be, that is, as an ecclesiastic. For the part there is wanted a man of striking appearance, not necessarily fat, but of an imposing figure—a well-preserved man, and a good liver. The fact that this group of parts, with the exception of Pooh-Bah, is usually presented by men who are, let us say, well covered, is more fortuitous than intentional. But the larger the light comedy lead may be, the more important it is to have a bulky, heavy comedy player, for much depends on the contrast between these two men.

CONCERNING THE SOUBRETTES

Amateur Gilbert and Sullivan soubrettes are like the little girl with the curl. When they are good, they are very good. But you remember what the little girl was like when she was bad. As I have mentioned previously, the very name "soubrette" as applied to this group is a misnomer, for the parts do not bear any resemblance to the sprightly, saucy soubrettes found in musical comedy and "period" plays. Perhaps it is that this is not always realized, so giving us the horrid soubrette the Gilbert and Sullivan lover (and the ordinary audience) has to suffer. In the "Dictionary of Stage Terms," given in *THEATRE AND STAGE*, Mr. Edward W. Betts defines the word as meaning a "maid servant or other character, especially with implications of pertness, coquetry, intrigue, etc., in comedy." One can accept this definition implicitly—but not with regard to the Savoy operas. "Pertness": yes, they have that in moderation. "Coquetry": no, for that implies sex, and that is never more than faintly suggested in the characters. "Intrigue": emphatically no. Innocent scheming, as in Pitti-

Sing and Melissa, is seen, but never what could be called intrigue, or anything approaching it. Still, there it is; the name "soubrette" survives in connexion with these parts and it would be difficult to suggest an acceptable alternative.

As with the sopranos, it is difficult to attune the mentality and characteristics of the soubrettes to any present-day standards. The only essential difference between the two groups is that the soubrettes are less serious characters and, if only for that reason, more human. In them there is fun and jollity, but in many instances with intense pathos and drama as well. They are more light-hearted than their soprano sisters. They all possess an endearing charm and personality, while their disposition, for the most part, is sunny. In many instances they are the female counterparts of the comedy characters, to whom, often, they act as foils. For this reason what has been written about the "unconscious humour" of the comedy characters would not be out of place for serious consideration by the soubrettes.

The ideal soubrette is young and winsome with an engaging personality. Although one has seen sterling work put into these parts by the more senior members of amateur societies, one has to be so ungallant as to suggest that the soubrette roles, even more than those in the soprano group, should be regarded as the prerogative of the younger folk. Where demanded, high spirits should be present, but without boisterousness, and there must be no coyness. It is in those respects, I feel, that the more mature soubrettes fail to satisfy. Then, again, the general tone of the parts is that of artlessness, rather than sophistication, and there is never archness in the characterization. One could almost subdivide the soubrettes into as many categories as there are parts, for there is little resemblance, other than the most superficial, between them. *Iolanthe*, *Phoebe Meryll*, *Mad Margaret*, and *Melissa* are the more serious among them, *Tessa* and *Pitti-Sing* the lightest. The others fall within these extremes. It is interesting to recall that, with the exception of *Constance*, all these parts were created by the late Miss *Jessie Bond*.

CONSTANCE (*The Sorcerer*) is rather colourless compared with the later members of the group. Indeed, the real Savoy soubrette, as immortalized by Miss *Jessie Bond*, had not arrived when this

opera was produced. It is by no means an easy part, yet the effort to make it really convincing is well worth while. Throughout the first act Constance must be played in a restrained, rather lack-lustre, manner as befits a young girl in love with her elderly, though charming, vicar, whom she finds to be entirely unresponsive. Later, when



MAD MARGARET'S ENTRANCE

A dramatic incident from the first act of *Kuddigore*. The present-day reading and dressing of this part differ materially from the original.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

the working of the magic spell has led to her attachment to the decrepit old notary, the part can be broadened out somewhat. But Constance should all the time be shown as a demure, and slightly gawky, country girl. Especially is this required to set off the more elegant grace and charm of Aline. But the difference in disposition and station of the two girls must not be shown in any way by the speech. The dialect of the villagers, as we see at the opening of the second act, is "Mummerset," while Constance's mother has not the letter "h" in her alphabet—except

where it is not required. Constance herself speaks as good English as the, supposedly, better educated folk.

HEBE (*H.M.S. Pinafore*), having a part that was frittered away to next-to-nothing during the original rehearsals, calls for little more from the player than an attractive personality. The part was originally written for one who was far from realizing one's conception of the soubrette, but was later allotted to an "unknown," who was so scared of the dialogue that eventually the part was cut down to one with singing only. That "unknown" was Miss Jessie Bond. Hebe's moods are sunny, vivacious, and sympathetic. Unimportant though the part may appear, it must not be allowed to be subdued by the greater prominence given to the other principals. At the same time, as with all the other soubrettes, the actress must refrain from any attempt to force attention upon herself.

EDITH (*The Pirates of Penzance*) brings this type of part a step nearer to its full development, for the soubrette has now become more of that sprightly (but never exuberant) creature that we shall know better later. Edith should bubble over with restrained high spirits, and, like Mabel, must be possessed of a strong personality. Not only is this necessary in a principal who (like Hebe) is little more than leader of the chorus, but it is required to bring out the fact that, undoubtedly, Edith is the ringleader in the adventures which culminate in the discovery of the pirate lair.

THE LADY ANGELA (*Patience*) is an entirely different type of soubrette in relation to all the others. Indeed, it is only the traditional identification of the part with the player of the soubrette roles that justifies its inclusion in this group. The vivacity associated with the group is essentially lacking in the cold and reserved outward demeanour of the "rapturous maiden." This attitude, but with passionate inward yearning, is preserved until Grosvenor appears. Then all repose is cast to the winds for rapturous abandon. The second act sees a return to the languorous attitude of the earlier period, but without its coldness. At the very end of the opera, when Angela drops the pose of aestheticism (and it must have been suggested as a pose), something of the real soubrette is to be seen. In this part, as with the preceding two, sufficient personality is required to indicate

Angela as, at once, a principal and the leader of the band of love-sick maidens; one of them—but, at the same time, standing out above them.

IOLANTHE, the name part of that opera, is again an individual soubrette type. There is something about the part which calls for it to be played by the soubrette rather than by a dramatic mezzo-soprano, or even by a contralto. The lighter timbre of voice required may have something to do with this undoubted fact. It is undeniable that when attempts have been made to have the part played by someone not grounded in the soubrette roles (and obviously it is no character to be entrusted to a novice) they have usually ended in comparative, if not total, failure.

Although a good, and not too deep, singing voice is important, Iolanthe is a part for which an actress is far more needed than a singer, as a large range of emotions has to be traversed. From start to finish the part needs to be played on a subdued note, which, however, should not be in a minor key. There are two places where the traditional brightness of the soubrette is seen: in the scene, where Strephon first meets the fairies, and in the second act finale, when the Lord Chancellor's ingenuity has made all well for ever. It may not be the easiest thing for a youthful amateur actress to evince maternal care for a son who, in actual fact, may be many years her senior (I have heard of father and daughter playing the two roles—frequently husband and wife do so). But this characteristic must be shown in the reading of the part, for, coupled with tenderness, it is the outstanding attribute of Iolanthe.

MELISSA (*Princess Ida*) is, perhaps alone of this group, as much of to-day as of the year of the opera's production (1884). She is a charming, merry, unspoiled girl, free from acquired or natural guile—although she knows how to wheedle her strong-minded mother. Of the world outside the walls of Castle Adamant she knows nothing but what she has been told. When, eventually, she sees men for the first time, and is attracted towards Florian, it must be felt that her choice is instinctive and well-founded rather than that she has turned to him as the best looking of the three intruders. And she remains a loyal comrade and ally to the men, helping them as best she can; not as a designing mixx, but because such an action would be natural to this vital and lovable

girl. She indulges in little subterfuges to help Hilarion and his two companions, but so innocently as to disarm reprobation. Yet, in the hands of some amateurs, Melissa becomes little more than a rampageous, arch, designing, little hoyden, which is certainly what Gilbert never intended.

PITTI-SING (*The Mikado*), too, is often played



PHOEBE MERYLL IN PENSIVE MOOD

Here, in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, is a part which calls for the display of many emotions, grave and gay. It is by no means an easy part, but is fun and away the "plum" of the soubrette group.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

on the lines that have just been characterized as wrong for Melissa. But in this case there is more justification. Pitti-Sing bubbles over with high spirits and vivacity, and is decidedly not so free from guile as Melissa. At the same time, the high spirits of the part should not be carried to excess, as this will spoil the *ensemble* of the "three little maids," whose other representatives, Yum-Yum and Peep-Bo, are so much more sedate. The vivacity and contrast to these two are largely provided for in the part, and although nothing of too subdued a nature is required, no really

conscious effort is needed to give Pitti-Sing her sparkling attributes. And the display of high spirits does not require incessant movement. Even in professional performances one has been irritated by a Pitti-Sing who has been so full of life that she has entirely forgotten the importance of repose. These Pitti-Sings jump about, squirm, and wriggle to such an extent that one itches to tie them to a convenient piece of scenery. One way in which this occurs is the exaggerated Japanese walk indulged in. Why Pitti-Sing should walk in a manner at variance with the other characters and chorus (who, one hopes, have been drilled in the correct manner) is inexplicable; yet many amateurs spoil their portrayal in this way.

MAD MARGARET (*Ruddigore*) ought to be played in the first act somewhat on the lines of Ophelia (but, of course, without the introspective study necessary for that part). There are some who profess to find this rendering distasteful and alien to the spirit of comic opera. The only argument put forward to support this view is the claim that Gilbert never intended the part to be played in such a manner. These opponents of the modern rendering ask us to believe that the author intended Margaret to be a character on a par with Pitti-Sing—that laughs were meant to be got from the part. But is one to imagine that a modern audience, even at a comic opera, would find anything comic in the spectacle of insanity on the stage? One has no hesitation in recommending the amateur to follow the modern tradition, and to play Margaret as suggested in the opening of this study. It must be remembered that *Ruddigore* was never revived between its original run, in 1887, and 1920, and it had no deeply rooted traditions. But in the space of years that have passed since its first revival it has become one of the favourite operas, and can certainly be said to have attained a traditional style, strictly in keeping with the older traditions. At the same time, one cautions the actress against too realistic a portrait, if only for the reason that Ophelias, amateur or professional, are not seen every day. It will be found that there will be plenty of laughs during Margaret's scenes in the first act, but they will not come from the girl's wild, inconsequent, words and similes but from Rose Maybud's bewildered efforts at reply.

In the second act there comes a reversion to the

true type. Margaret is still rather mad, but with her demure appearance and timid utterances she becomes a capital foil to the more vivid and robust comedy of Sir Despard.

PHOEBE MERYLL (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) is at once one of the most engaging of Gilbert's female characters and, in the opinion of many who have played her, one of the most difficult. She has to run the whole gamut of varying emotions. She must be played, not as a romping, tomboyish flapper, but as a level-headed, competent, and vivacious girl of great charm and strength of character. The sentimental side of the character should not be stressed. Phoebe appears to be in love with Fairfax, but it is not made clear whether this is genuine affection or the natural pity any girl would feel for an attractive man in his position. Certainly in the second act there is evidence to lead one to suppose the first alternative, but it is, in many ways, desirable that the part should be played on the lines of the second conjecture. The point of the sentimental story, that Fairfax and Elsie are the lovers, makes it undesirable to introduce the complication of Phoebe. And so, in the scene in which Fairfax is made guardian of his "sister," amid numerous embraces, the impression should be given that Phoebe is not averse to the kisses of this attractive personage, rather than that (at last) she is able to embrace the man she loves.

In the second act Phoebe has one of the "high spots" of any of the operas. Wilfred has discovered the secret of her supposed brother. "It is this accursed Fairfax," says the Jailor in effect. Ideas of vengeance are clearly but slowly forming in his dull brain, but Phoebe shatters them with her quick interruption, "Whom thou hast just shot, and who lies at the bottom of the river!" This incident, slight as it may seem, requires careful timing for its full effect. In the ensuing proposal Phoebe, by tempering her high spirits with a wistful air of resignation, can help the comedy of what, otherwise, might be an almost repulsive scene.

TESSA (*The Gondoliers*) is a more forceful character than her sister, Gianetta. It has to be remembered that both are equal units of what is a well-balanced quartet (the two gondoliers and their wives). Tessa has the more developed personality of the pair, but such predominating

influence must be left to the part. The actress must not encourage it, and should studiously avoid any temptation towards overshadowing Gianetta. Tessa, too, is more high spirited, but if the actress gives too much prominence to this, poor Gianetta will fade right out of the picture. Gilbert, in *The Gondoliers*, professed to have made all the parts of equal importance. How far he succeeded in this must be a matter of opinion. The players, by matching themselves to each other, can help the author's intentions. In no case is this truer than in that of Tessa. Too much exuberance is the usual fault.

THE LIGHT COMEDY LEADS AGAIN

Before beginning our study of the more serious masculine G. & S. characters, it would be as well for us to return to the consideration of the light comedy leads. For with these complicated parts behind one, the student of the production of the operas will have crossed the most treacherous part of the difficult road to full technical knowledge of the Savoy characters. Let us, therefore, proceed to look at the characters in this group which followed the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*. We shall notice, incidentally, how this group has developed. There is far more difference between individuals in the later operas than in earlier ones.

KING GAMA (*Princess Ida*), although always associated with the players of the light comedy lead, does not in many ways sit easily in this group, and is most effective if played on the lines of a strictly high-comedy or dramatic character part. The man to be portrayed is a misshapen, malignant spit-fire, who is never happier than when he is making rude remarks about, or even to, other people. Judged solely by its length, this is not a big part (Gama is absent from the stage throughout the second act), but any deficiencies in that respect are, surely, more than compensated for by the effectiveness of the role. While Gama is on the stage he holds it and dominates the scene—so long as the actor does not attempt to stress the humours of the part.

Two of Gama's most effective speeches can lose all their dramatic power if that last warning is not remembered. He gives his definition of a snob, following this up with a recital of his daughter's many virtues. This is worked up to a dramatic climax with the words "Oh, no, King

Hildebrand, I am no snob!" A laugh at this point is intended, and will always be obtained. But the true effect of this laugh does not depend on the manner in which the speech has been said. What convulses the audience is the way in which Gama has made his point to the discomfort of Hildebrand and the court. The dramatic intensity that a skilled actor brings to this speech thrills one; but a moment later the thrill is turned to spontaneous laughter. When Gama is brought in, a captive, in the last act, he speaks of the way in which his life has been made a misery. The joke, if such it can be called, lies not in how he says this, but in the fact that the tyrant captor has left his prisoner with nothing to grumble at. But to Gama this has indeed had the effect of making his life a curse, and the full force of this conviction is given by the actor implying that his treatment has been in the nature of deadly torture. Even a decided touch of pathos will not come amiss. Taken on these lines, the ensuing remark of Princess Ida, "My tortured father!" will sound all the more convincing, while the audience will duly laugh, as to them this will sound a curious sort of torture indeed. An intensive study of Tennyson's *The Princess* is not recommended; Gama owes little more to his prototype than his name.

Ko-Ko (*The Mikado*), an engaging little upstart, is another of Gilbert's delicious humbugs. This part, like that of John Wellington Wells in *The Sorcerer*, is given a little latitude, and provided the actor can be relied upon not to be carried away by himself, a certain amount of low-comedy—but not "music-hallism"—is permissible. At the same time, nothing is lost, and the part still remains a very telling one if it be played on the more sedate lines of many of the other light comedy leads. That is, to play Ko-Ko as a harassed, rather fidgety, and self-important little man; sunny when things go well, humorously miserable when they do not.

Ko-Ko is nimble-witted as well as nimble-footed, and never at a loss for a way out of any dilemma. His attitude to the other characters varies. Pooh-Bah he treats as a nuisance almost beneath contempt (an attitude that is reciprocal), but he realizes the importance of keeping in the good books of this all-important individual. The other nobles overwhelm him a little, so he has

learned a touching little speech, which he delivers on his first entrance. The impression should then be given that all the remarks following "Gentlemen, I'm much touched by this reception," have been carefully rehearsed, and that Ko-Ko, at any rate, is not uttering them aloud for the first time.

Katisha he regards as a great joke—until he



KING GAMA

A study by the author for the misshapen, malignant monarch in *Princess Ida*

sees that the only way of preventing his elaborate house of cards from tumbling about his ears is to marry her. He is mortally afraid of the Mikado, but feels surer of himself during that monarch's more expansive moments. As Ko-Ko's parcel of lies and deception gets more involved, so does he become more enraptured with it. There is a tendency to regard the famous "Fit-Willow" song as a comic ditty. This is not so; the humorous effect is gained by the impression that Ko-Ko is giving it all the seriousness of a tender ballad. This whimsical fellow should seem to be singing a plaintive song in a perfectly straightforward manner. Therein lies the humour, to which the words and sentiment of the song lend

their aid. But, between the verses, comedy creeps out in sundry little sly glances towards Katisha (which she avoids) in order to see if the song is having its effect. Only in the encore verse should any liberties be taken, vocally or otherwise, and these might well be dispensed with.

Ko-Ko should never be played, as is sometimes done, in the manner of a cockney (or similar) comedian. He may have been a cheap tailor, but that is not to say that members of his craft would speak with any local twang or accent. All that the actor should aim for in the voice is a whimsical, possibly slightly squeaky, voice.

The one vocal "gag" permitted to Ko-Ko (or, for that matter, to any of the characters) has been mentioned. Here it is not out of place to refer to some authorized changes in business. It was Gilbert's intention that, in the encore of the "Little List" song, the "apologetic statesmen" should be indicated by business suggesting contemporary politicians—such as a suggestion of Gladstone's collars, or Lord Randolph Churchill's moustaches. This business has moved with the times, and so were featured in their day, Sir Austen Chamberlain's monocle and top hat, and Mr. Baldwin's pipe (the clenched fist forming the bowl and the thumb the stem). A suggestion of the Highland fling, following a carefully prepared golf stroke, indicated, of course, Mr. MacDonald. Amateur players of Ko-Ko, then, are perfectly in order in introducing any contemporary political figure.

SIR RUTHVEN MURGATROYD (*Ruddigore*) really comprises two distinct characters; the bashful farmer (Robin Oakapple) of the first act, and the curse-ridden baronet of the second. Both these are well-defined types of Victorian melodrama. The humour, once again, lies in the writing of the part rather than with the actor. Therefore comparatively straight portrayals of these two types should be given. Yet they must not be made so distinct as to suggest different people—the same personality remains under two widely different conditions. Ruthven, like the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, is provided with one incident calling for the best of dramatic acting. It is the speech beginning "For a week I have fulfilled my accursed doom!" and culminating with his collapse on the now dark stage as the ghosts faintly appear. Every word in this speech

counts—Gilbert said that the speech, as originally written, ran to several pages—and it must be taken seriously, as the cry of a soul in torment, with no trace of hurrying and with full value given to every syllable. Not for one single fraction of a second must the slightest hint of comedy be allowed to creep in, for the speech sets the keynote for the eeriness of the ghost scene that follows—a scene certainly far removed from ordinary comic opera. Both author and composer give of their best to aid this scene, and it is their due to receive the backing of the actor in getting the right atmosphere. But as soon as Sir Roderic's solo is over and Ruthven comes from the obscurity of the wings to which he has retreated, then, and then alone, is a return to comedy permitted.

Although the Robin of the first act is convincing in his bashfulness (but only before the fair sex), the wickedness of Sir Ruthven is less so. He has been a wicked baronet for a week, and the impression the audience should receive is that, after so many years of a blameless existence, he is trying hard to fit in with his new surroundings and, to the best of his ability, endeavouring to model himself on his younger brother, of whose villainies the audience have been witnesses. Ruthven has, in short, acquired a veneer of wickedness, but, as yet, it has not had time to become deeper than that.

A most effective touch, which all amateurs seem to miss, is the showing of the change from simple farmer to wicked baronet. Robin has been unmasked, and sings—

As pure and blameless peasant,
I cannot, I regret,
Deny a truth unpleasant,
I am that Baronet!

These lines are sung simply; Robin is stating a simple fact. But there comes a change during the next couplets—

But when completely rated
Bad Baronet am I,
That I am what he's stated
I'll recklessly deny!

When the last line is reached all restraint has been thrown to the winds. The soul and personality of the bad baronet have entered his body, and the acting manner employed until the end of the act is that of Act II. Ruthven leaves the stage before the merry jig that comes in the finale;

right at the end he re-enters, shrouded in his cloak and cracking a whip. The villagers and officers rush off in terror, leaving Old Adam appealing to his master, who stands pointing off stage—presumably towards Ruddigore Castle and the life of crime that awaits them there. Sometimes Ruthven is shown in this scene to have



THE TRAGIC JESTER

"A private buttoon is a light-hearted local," sings the Point. But the comic hides a far from light heart.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

changed Robin's fair wig for the more sombre hue of that worn in the second act. Frankly one suggests the omission of this little touch, which is not now used in the professional production. There is really insufficient time for the wig to be properly adjusted, and this is got over by putting on a black wig of flowing locks—quite unlike the one that has been worn or that which is used in Act II. Rather, then, let it be supposed that the change in appearance takes place gradually, and let Ruthven finish the first act, physically, as he began it.

At the end of the opera, naturally, there is a return to the manner of the prosperous farmer of

the first act. It might be mentioned, incidentally, that the correct pronunciation of the name is "Rith'n" and not, as once, "Rooth-ven."

JACK POINT (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) offers a part that will repay any amount of technical study. In this character are found at least four different aspects: (1) the jester plying his craft, (2) the man anxious for success and favour, (3) the clumsy, egotistical lover, and (4) the broken-hearted, jilted man. These different sides have a habit of succeeding one another in the twinkling of an eye. In his first scene with Elsie and the Lieutenant, we get the second and third sides of the character mixed up. When Elsie is led away, blindfold, Jack's spirits are at their lowest. Suddenly the Lieutenant asks him for his qualifications as a jester. At once the down-at-heel, unfortunate air is thrown aside, and a transformed Jack bubbles over with an exhibition of his craft.

Jack Point, the man, is a tragic part. The comedy, and it is ample, comes from Jack Point, the jester. Therefore the actor must keep his whimsicalities and antics for those moments when Jack is, in fact, playing a part. And therein lies the greatest difficulty in the role, for this play acting has to be suggested more than actually portrayed, or else the part becomes unconvincing, lacking in spontaneity and as near to lifelessness as so vital a part can be. How the happy medium is to be achieved cannot well be described in print. The writing of the part helps very much, and the manner must, and safely can, be left to the intelligence and common sense of the actor, aided, if needs be, by the producer.

THE DUKE OF PLAZO-TORO (*The Gondoliers*) is a grandee with a brain of fertile inventiveness, which he uses for his own advancement. He is an engaging rogue who, clearly, would be as much at home amid court ceremonial as at a suburban dance. For all his drollery, egoism, and looking out for the main chance, there must be shown an air of polish—a quizzical refinement and dignity. He may be a mountebank, but he is never a cheap-jack. In demeanour there should be an air of elegance—even grace. This is especially necessary in the second act, where one wants the many gestures and posings to set off the ungainliness of the two "kings." There is frequently a tendency to "guy" and exaggerate this second act scene

—especially during the gavotte. When the cue is taken from later professional exponents of the part, this may be right—up to a point. But the duke must behave, so far as his bearing and movements are concerned, in a graceful and dignified manner, and this fact is never to be forgotten in the interpretation of this part.

Throughout in dealing with the comedy parts I have stressed the necessity for inward or unconscious humour. And if I have given the impression that the manner in which they are played does not call for any humorous acting, the amateur will have learned a useful lesson. But one progresses by degrees in learning. Having tried to instil the truth that these are not comic parts, by insisting on their being played as the reverse, I go a step further, and amplify that theory by analogy. The actor who assumes one of these parts is in the position of the driver of a car. As one humours a car (no pun is intended) and learns its idiosyncrasies so must one drive these comedy parts. One must attune oneself to them, give them one's sympathy, as it were. In this way the actor will come to think and act like the part he is playing, and so, without effort, will be able to bring to them just that slight humorous touch which must, in actuality, come from the interpreter.

GILBERT'S AUNT SALLIES

If Gilbert is accused for not having made his younger women characters bear any resemblance to real life, he is often criticized for too much naturalness in his elderly females. He has been pilloried for his habit of holding up to derision women who are growing old and losing their beauty. The critics profess disgust at Gilbert's insistence on the physical odiousness of a woman growing old. While admitting that this is not a pleasant trait from which to attempt to draw laughter, are we not overlooking the manner in which the theme is handled? Analysed in the cold light of reasoned afterthoughts, it is by no means creditable for Gilbert so persistently to have "guyed" the lady of uncertain age and charms. But this has been piloted successfully through all the operas (it is true that in *Trial by Jury* the theme is only introduced, not actually depicted), and this must mean either that the idea is acceptable to the audience or that it is treated

so delicately that the cruelty is masked, when we actually hear it, by the underlying satire. And, surely, it is at such a time that one must judge a situation intended primarily for the stage.

Nevertheless, one would strongly advise that this aspect of these magnificent contralto roles be not stressed or treated too seriously. We do not want this unpleasant trait, this frustrated femininity, to be either too comic or too tragic. Nor will it avail the actress to try to present these parts on sympathetic lines; to do so would be to spoil both the effectiveness and the intention. Sullivan supplies the sympathy by giving these characters some lovely music as though to make up for the mordant wit of his collaborator.

None of these parts should be played without a realization of the underlying humour, whether this be of the savage kind or of a gentler nature—Lady Jane's matrimonial ambitions or the Queen of the Fairies' "reactions" to Private Willis. The humour is akin to that of the male comedy parts, and should be treated in the same unforced manner. But there is this difference: the male parts are in themselves humorous, the conception of the contralto roles is that of serious parts that become humorous in realization. The comedy, which is abundant, rarely comes to the surface in the characterization. A useful asset to the amateur contralto is an imposing presence and forceful personality. Even more important is the possession of a keen sense of humour, so that the actress can realize, without openly displaying, the wealth of "fun" that the author intended to be got from the parts. The audience must never get an inkling that the actress is other than in dead earnest. This advice should be remembered during the usual brief study of the contralto parts that follows. Particularly does it apply in the parts of Lady Jane, Dame Caruthers, and the Duchess of Plaza-Toro. There must be no tendency to make the audience laugh *at* the character. What is needed is that the audience should laugh *with* her.

LADY SANGAZURE (*The Sorcerer*) remains the grandest of *grandes dames*, even when, to the audience, her behaviour is the most outrageous. Throughout the opera there must be the impression of the aristocratic matron and dragon of the proprieties. This last aspect does not even disappear when she is flinging herself at the reluctant

Mr. Wells, for her actions are unconsciously inspired by the potion. There is, in the last-mentioned and many other scenes, plenty of humour within the part that will require no assistance from any outward tricks of the comedienne's art. The part should not be made too domineering; undoubtedly Lady Sangazure does, by her personality, tower above the villagers, but this should not be too naturally overwhelming a dominance. Lady Sangazure is one of those tactless dowagers whose greatest asset is the power of saying the wrong thing in the wrong place—as witness her remarks to Aline when she makes her first appearance.

LITTLE BUTTERCUP (*H.M.S. Pinafore*)—how many would recognize her by the name of Mrs. Cripps?—is best described in the Boatswain's words as "the rosiest, the roundest, and the reddest beauty in all Spithead." A hail-fellow-well-met attitude towards all is the dominant key-note of the first act. This is coupled with a determination to stand no nonsense from anybody. In the second act, particularly in the opening scene, an inkling must be given that there is something mysterious in Buttercup's mind. This must not be shown to such an extent as to lessen the effect of the revelation at the end of the opera. Here Buttercup's attitude towards Sir Joseph, incidentally, is no less hearty than it is to the sailors; a fact which in no way upsets that pompous bureaucrat's equanimity: a tribute, this, to Buttercup's personality.

There is a strange paradox about this part. The dominance of many of the contralto parts comes from the physique of the player. In the case of Buttercup it is due more to her manner. Yet this part, more than any other in the group, calls for a "plump and pleasing person." This sometimes presents difficulties, as it is not the easiest task to make a *petite* contralto, even when aided by the mysteries of make-up, realize that description. A small Katisha, Ruth, or even a slim Lady Jane, may "get away with it" through sheer force of personality. Rarely will a portrayal of Buttercup, in similar circumstances, be successful. The golden rule is that as the physique may shrink from the ideal, so must the force of character and personality increase to give a convincing portrayal of this rollicking, yet mysterious, woman.

RUTH (*The Pirates of Penzance*) ushers in that long, and pathetic, line of middle-aged or elderly women whose plainness, increasing years, and matrimonial ambitions are held up to ridicule.



THE PIRATE MAID-OF-ALL-WORK
Ruth, the first of Gilbert's "faded amorists"
Photo by J. W. Debenham

Ruth is a rather flamboyant, gipsy type, not unlike Little Buttercup, though she lacks the bum-boat woman's cheeriness. Traditionally, Ruth should be a big woman, but, in this case, the reverse will not really detract from the part's effectiveness. A straight, emphatic style is more

desirable than any play upon the emotions. The part is not without humour; here again no emphasis from the stage will help in the slightest. When we first see her, Ruth is in penitent mood. It is only towards Frederic that she is at all gentle. To the pirates she is masterful and a match for any one of them. There is little doubt that they are in mortal dread of this "bossing" maid-of-all-work.

THE LADY JANE (*Patience*), perhaps the cruellest of Gilbert's satires, is drawn as a caricature, which the actress should transform into a finished picture. Jane is put on the stage, majestic and statuesque, to be laughed at. In its effect, her devotion to Bunthorne is more comic than touching. She will never desert him, she swears, yet when the chance of becoming Duchess of Dunstable appears, Jane seizes it (and the Duke) with both hands. Examples such as this, though mirth-provoking in the extreme, must be played without any conscious showing of the comic effect. It is here that that sense of humour, to which I referred earlier, will be so useful. Even the preposterous self-accompanied recitative at the opening of the second act will be the funnier for absolutely serious handling. The duet, later in this act, with Bunthorne does, of course, call to some extent for broader treatment.

THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES (*Iolanthe*) is another majestic person of, if possible, Junoesque proportions. The very words put into her mouth make it important that these qualifications go with the necessary vocal and dramatic talents. If the contraltos in a society tend towards slimness, then, all else being equal, the Queen should go to the tallest, for her position picks her out as one who should (in all senses) dominate the fairies. Charm and graciousness should be added to the characterization, which otherwise would tend to be too severe. This will also help in the comedy scenes in which the Queen takes part. But where there is severity, tending to frigidity, is in the Queen's attitude towards the peers, whom, until the finale, she regards as beneath contempt. It is as well to remember that the fairies regard her as their mother as well as their queen.

LADY BLANCHE (*Princess Ida*), although on quieter lines than Lady Jane and others, is yet another schemer. In this case it is power, not matrimony, which is the ambition. The part is

made most convincing when no emphasis is laid on the coldly-calculating side of her nature. As Blanche conceals this from the students, so should the actress hide it from the audience. The lines of the part will say all that is needful. Blanche shows that she is convinced that her dreams will come true, and the audience realizes that she will be well qualified to assume power when the opportunity occurs. There is a hint, too, as in her acceptance of Melissa's "harmless scheme," that Blanche is entirely human beneath her cold and stoical exterior. The actress should endeavour to give a picture of a commanding, masterful personality rather than one of hope deferred.

KATISHA (*The Mikado*) gives us at once the most repulsive and most human of the contralto roles. This is a character giving scope for dramatic acting of the highest order. There is plenty of pathos, too, in the part, both apparent, as in the second act solo, "Alone and yet Alive," and concealed, as in the remarks of the other characters about her appearance. But the actress must be warned against using these opportunities for enlisting the sympathy of the audience. All that comes to her, one has to feel, is richly deserved. Unlike so many of Gilbert's women characters, Katisha repays a close study of the character depicted. Here is a dominating personality; by sheer force of character, and against her unattractive appearance, she has obtained a station high in the Imperial Court. She has colossal courage and self-assurance, and can even divert, openly, homage from the Mikado to herself. She feels Nanki-Poo's desertion as an affront; it is her *amour propre*, not her ambition, which suffers most. For, when she upbraids him, it is in the words "this *insult* you shall rue." And this is the woman who is won over by Ko-Ko's artless tale of the broken hearted tom-tit! So we see that she is quite human after all. Many of the observations I have just given are based on a fascinating study of Katisha that was published in *The Gilbert and Sullivan Journal* during 1932. I am grateful to the writer, Miss Audrey Williamson, for permission to make use of her sound analysis (the only satisfactory one I have read) of this wonderful woman character.

The uglier Katisha appears to be, the better is the effect. It is not everyone who cares to don an unattractive make-up, and there is endless

precedent to support such an objection. In an opera where, with this one exception, all the women-folk are young and attractive, the contrast and general appearance of severity and old age make a picture the further ugliness of which may, to some extent, be left to the imagination.

DAME HANNAH (*Ruddigore*) is a more pleasant



DAME HANNAH

Ador'd by the villagers of Ruddigore, the scheming contraltos of the other operas.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

character than the others in this group. To her falls much of the sympathy that is denied to the other contralto roles. Hannah is a kindly old soul, gentle, strong-willed, and strong-minded. These last two traits override the first when she is roused. Then, indeed, she merits the description, "a tiger cat," that is applied to her. But it is her solicitude for Rose and her devotion to her dead lover that endear her to us. The burlesque spirit of the opera is not noticeable in the part, which should be played on quite straight lines. For that reason alone one would deprecate the practice, not altogether unsupported by professional precedent, for amateur Hannahs to play for a laugh on the name "Roddy-Doddy" when confronted by

Sir Roderic in Act II. To do so seems to strike a false note, and a spontaneous exclamation of wondering awe and affection is far preferable.

DAME CARRUTHERS (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) gives us the incarnation of the level-headed sentimentalist who takes herself and her job seriously. She, too, is a husband hunter, but she does not pursue Meryll in the open manner that Lady Jane uses to run after Bunthorne. In conception and execution, the Dame's scheme is more subtle. As with most of the other contralto roles, the Dame needs to be played with an air of authority. She is, above all, a domineering sort of person, despite that strain of sentimentality, and more than a bit of a busybody.

The proposal scene in the second act must be played on rather broader lines than the rest of the part. Although the advice to Meryll is to appear to be in grim earnest, Dame Carruthers should bring a slight emphasis to the melodramatic quality of the scene—which is different from any other aspect of the role. During the old soldier's halting proposal, the exultant attitude of the discovery of the "plot" turns to one of coyness, almost, but not quite, verging on the "kitten-ish." If taken on these lines the whole scene is intensely amusing, and not out of keeping with the dramatic development of the tragic climax towards which the opera is leading. One is assuming that the duet, "Rapture, Rapture," is to be omitted, as is now usual. Should, however, this number be retained (a course that I cannot too strongly condemn), then it is suggested that the preceding scene be taken as a little cameo of straightforward acting.

THE DUCHESS OF PLAZA-TORO (*The Gondoliers*) is a dignified matron, who keeps a tight hand upon her husband and makes it quite clear that she not only is, but intends to remain, the predominant partner. The humour is rather more obvious than in several of the previous parts, but is of a somewhat sardonic nature—that of the overbearing woman who, while not actually a nagging wife, has at least a hen-pecked husband. In the outward appearance of the character there is not a little wistfulness. Especially in the first act, one feels that the Duchess is making a gallant struggle against difficulties to preserve appearances and to keep up the dignity of the title. In

the second act, when the success of the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Limited, has brought prosperity to the impoverished couple, she becomes more gracious, but even then cannot resist the temptation of getting in a few digs at the expense of her volatile husband. There is nothing flamboyant or comic required in the acting; her masterfulness is subtle. Grace and dignity are needed both in speech and movement. Above all, the Duchess should be a good "feeder," with a sound knowledge of team work, for much of the humour of the ducal party depends on a well-matched Duke and Duchess who will play up to one another in a capable and understanding manner. The Duchess is not hard or cynical; there is a smile hovering not far away, even when she is scoring an effect at the expense of her spouse.

TENORS WHO MUST ACT

One would not expect a singer who is expert in the *bel canto* or florid styles called for in French and Italian opera to be the ideal exponent of the *Heldentenor* of Wagner's works. The types belong to separate art forms, each individual and distinct, and each calling for widely different technique. So it must be with the Sullivan tenor. He, too, must bring to his work something that is not found in other operatic tenor types. Essentially the true Sullivan tenor is a lyric singer, free from any vocal mannerisms, and one who can give all due regard to vocalism without sacrifice of clarity of diction. However beautifully a Sullivan air may be sung, as a piece of music, it will go for nothing if every word—more, every syllable—be not crystal clear. By now, possibly, the reader will have grown tired of this reiteration about diction. Yet it is so important that it cannot be too strongly stressed, and it is frequently the case that a tenor, striving for vocal effect and purity of tone, will tend to lose this all-important quality. Our tenor, too, must forget the existence of the juvenile lead of musical comedy; that sometimes romantic, sometimes back-boneless, figure with (all too often) an affected style (or should it be "staile"?) of speech and a penchant for singing songs of "lurv to yew." Not to put too fine a point on it, the amateur tenor to whose "vocal villainies" the Mikado so pointedly refers cannot hope for success in Gilbert and Sullivan opera. These tenor heroes are flesh-and-blood; a few tend

towards priggishness but none is effeminate and all must be depicted as humans.

That brings us to the popular theory that no tenor can act—a theory with which Gilbert is supposed to have expressed his agreement with some vehemence. There may be some slight substratum of truth to this statement, as there usually is to all generalizations. But, on the whole, this is little less than a libel. Tenors are not so many as are baritones, but they number in their ranks excellent actors. Gilbert, for all his bad opinion of tenors, wrote parts that need good acting, and, what is more, he liberally endowed the parts with humour. This is not often noticeable in the writing of the parts; yet it will be seen that a light, humorous touch is needed far more than the sighing and yearning of so many operatic tenors. These parts are all vital and sincere; there is nothing soulful about the types portrayed.

THE DEFENDANT (*Trial by Jury*) serves as a good illustration of the type covered by the Sullivan tenor. This is the part of a gay young spark, a bit of a bounder, but never a cad. For all his Don Juan-like propensities, the audience must feel sympathy towards the character. After his first apprehensive entrance, the Defendant is quite at his ease, and by no means overawed by the majesty of the law. All this will be helped if the player combines ease of bearing with a pleasant personality, while a decided sense of comedy will also aid in giving a convincing and satisfactory picture. Yet one might think, as there is no spoken dialogue, that an excellent singer would suffice. That is by no means the case; the Defendant must, first and foremost, be a singing actor. The Defendant originally carried a guitar, on which he accompanied himself during his first song. This might be left to the imagination.

ALEXIS POINTDENTRE (*The Sorcerer*) is so devoid of humour that it is not important for the actor to possess this useful adjunct. Even a naturally stiff, rather stilted attitude will not detract from the part. Alexis believes himself to be a keen social reformer; actually he is a snob of the first water. He has just that amount of charm which stops him from being a most unpleasant young man. He is sincere enough; it is the way in which he goes about his self-appointed reforming,

and his condescension, which makes him so ridiculous. There should be no attempt to stress the priggish side of the character. Towards Aline his attitude is gently domineering; with Mr. Wells he adopts a pose of condescending superiority, yet with a realization of the awful doom that Aline suggests may be their fate should they



RICHARD DAUNTLESS

A tenor who must sing, act, and dance a hornpipe

Photo by J. W. Debenham

cross the magician. Alexis is not an easy part, nor a pleasant one. The many laughs in the part, it will be found, will look after themselves.

RALPH RACKSTRAW (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) pronounces his name "Rafe," not "Ralf." Despite the fact that the second does not rhyme with "waif," it is surprising how it persists in some productions. This is essentially a singing part,

for there is little that presents any difficulty on the acting side beyond the high-sounding, polysyllabic speech with which Ralph proposes to Josephine. This gains its full effect from absolute sincerity, and must be rendered convincingly and surely. It should be learnt, practised, and rehearsed carefully, so that there is no risk of the slightest stumbling or hesitation over the words of this absurdly diverting utterance. Another point to which, both as actor and singer, Ralph must pay heed is that, although consumed with an apparently hopeless and unrequited love, he is a sailor, and must be manly withal. Sentiment he may show, but never sentimentality.

FREDERIC (*The Pirates of Penzance*) presents us to the tenor lead who is also something of a comedian. Although Frederic must be a convincing lover, a keen sense of humour is a more desirable attribute than the ability for romance. Up to the revelation, in the second act, that he must turn against Mabel's father, the part should be taken in a light, whimsical, almost impish, manner. When the fact that he is really "a little boy of five" is disclosed, his amusement is unbounded. In the ensuing "Paradox" trio Frederic is far more the comedian than the tenor of operatic tradition. One must candidly admit that it is difficult to find a tenor who can combine this attitude with absolute sincerity and first class vocalism, but it is well worth while to take considerable pains with the most "sticky" amateur to inculcate this light and joyous touch into his rendering.

THE DUKE OF DUNSTABLE (*Patience*) is not, it will be remembered, the "lead" in this opera. Grosvenor (the baritone) ousts the tenor from that position. Here is another of the semi-comic tenor rôles. The Duke possesses neither the romantic bearing of Alexis or Ralph, nor the good natured high spirits of Frederic. He should be shown as a pleasant, rather empty-headed fop. His bored and blasé manner carries with it a certain charm and undoubted good breeding. The amusing side of the character is like that of the comedy leads, for it does not come from any conscious comedy playing. The Duke's outlook on life is not humorous, although he is quite a happy-go-lucky fellow, but he naturally cannot help being a source of amusement to others. It is a part to be played without any apparent effort. He has a

drawing voice, but the actor must be careful not to turn the part into a typical musical comedy dude, with an irritating laugh and exaggerated Oxford accent.

EARL TOLLOLLER (*Iolanthe*) is not unlike the Duke in *Patience*, and should be played on much the same lines, except that Tolloller shows the possession of a greater amount of brain. In direct contrast to the clear decisiveness of his *vis-à-vis*, the Earl of Mountararat, Tolloller should be played with a bored drawl and a smooth manner, though stopping short of being lackadaisical. He is an easy-going man about town, yet superbly proud of the nobility and tradition of the House of Lords. The most difficult scene is that in the second act with Phyllis and Mountararat. Here the two men, in their declarations of undying regard for each other, and the unwillingness they express to do anything that would cause pain to the other (i.e. to be killed by him) must be taken in dead seriousness. The more in earnest the two men appear in this scene, the more comic will be the effect.

HILARION (*Princess Ida*), as befits the hero of a medieval romance, is a graceful and charming figure, sufficiently restrained to set off his more flamboyant companions. At the same time, he must suggest that he is the leader of the adventure that leads to so much trouble and fun. To Hilarion this is a serious means to an end; to Cyril and Florian it develops into a glorious "rag." Hilarion enters into this spirit, but never loses sight of the object of his coming to Castle Adamant. To Hilarion falls much of the opera's romance and poetry. For all this, the part is quite devoid of any femininity, save that necessary to make the masquerade in female attire convincing up to a point.

CYRIL (*Princess Ida*) takes second place to Hilarion to the extent that a courtier would naturally do before a prince. He is not, one should feel, a courtier by choice, although he carries this position with entire success. He feels, and shows, that he would be happier away from the restraint of the court. Cyril has certain traits in common with the Defendant in *Trial by Jury*, and falls into the same class of tenor lead as does Frederic—the tenor-comedian. The high spirits of the part are not boisterous or exuberant. In the "kissing song" Cyril should be shown as merrily

tipsy rather than drunk. He shocks the Princess and her students, not through the fact of having drunk more than is good for him, but because his behaviour is something unknown in their experience. He is an impulsive youth rather than a bouncer, and there is nothing in the part to suggest, as at least one writer has done, that Cyril is a cad.

NANKI-POO (*The Mikado*) must show signs of his court upbringing. Although he has fled from the palace in a state of panic, by the time he appears in the opera he has become fond of his roving life. He is now worrying about nothing (or nobody), except Yum-Yum, and when he finds that he has lost her, his efforts to end his existence must be shown as though he were absolutely in earnest. This is another of those scenes the comedy of which is enhanced by serious playing. But when, at last, he is married, and officially dead, a light flippancy comes to the surface. This flippancy has also been noticed at the beginning of his first scene with Yum-Yum. Nanki-Poo regards Ko-Ko, his rival, with some amusement; it is only Katisha whom he fears.

RICHARD DATSIFESS (*Ruddigore*) emphatically belongs to the tenor-comedian class. In addition he must be a capable dancer. Dick is, of course, the jolly Jack Tar of *Black Ey'd Susan* and similar plays, a care-free, happy-go-lucky individual, on excellent terms with himself (and his heart). Dick is a rollicking part, but care is needed to see that he does not become exuberant. The stage sailor of melodrama was never that. He was breezy, and had a knack of turning up at the right moment. But he was taken very seriously, and had no time or inclination for exuberance. Dick should be modelled on the same lines. He proposes to Rose on Robin's behalf, not because he thinks it would be fun, but out of genuine kindness and the desire to help his bashful foster-brother. Then there is no malice behind his disclosure of Robin's secret. He believes it to be his duty to tell Sir Despard the truth, and acts accordingly.

COLONEL FAIRFAX (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) has no quarrel with the world. In the shadow of the scaffold he bears himself with dignity, uncomplaining. To circumvent his rascally kinsman, he enters light-heartedly into matrimony. His escape accomplished, he forgets all about his marriage for the rest of the first act, and goes merrily into

his assumed guise. But, later, he refers to his "conjugal fetters" and how to free himself from them. Yet when Elsie's identity is known to him, instead of disclosing himself at once, he woos her in the guise of Leonard, and has to convey the idea that he is doing so in fun, and that he means to reveal himself as a prodigious leg-puller



"THE SON OF THE MIKADO"

Nanki-Poo, after many trials and tribulations, is united to Yum-Yum.

Photo: J. W. Debonham

when he sees that his joke has gone far enough. But his self-revelation is prevented by the sudden shot. His attitude towards Jack Point is that all's fair in love. After all, he must know that Jack cannot win Elsie, whose husband (Fairfax) lives, but instead of announcing this fact, so sure is he of himself, the Colonel must have his little joke of wooing and winning his own wife under the jester's eyes. At the end, beneath his

triumph, Fairfax shows genuine pity for his defeated rival.

Thus it will be seen that many varied, and even contradictory, emotions fall to the player of this role. They range from debonair trifling, through the philosophy of the grave student, to ardent love-making. One meets in Fairfax the contradiction of one who has given deep thought to the subject of life and death, yet who combines with this attitude the irresponsibility of a school-boy. The key-note to the more serious side of Fairfax is set by his first entrance. This should be played in a simple, unforced manner, with no high-falutin heroics. The actor should suggest the philosophic attitude of one who goes to meet death unafraid, who looks upon it as an experiment—"a great adventure." Summed up, Fairfax is a gallant man, somewhat selfish, but thoroughly engaging; a romantic figure, calling for a strong and sympathetic personality, and, above all, an easy, manly, singing voice.

MARCO PALMIERI (*The Gondoliers*) is an engaging fellow, and should be played on light, good humoured lines. The contrast between him and his brother, Giuseppe, is shown mainly in the vocal difference, but there should be a suggestion that Marco is the more serious of the two—as far as that word can be applied to these merry, care-free fellows, whose brief spell of authority causes them some embarrassment and not a little fun. Of course Marco must see that he preserves the balance of the quartet with Giuseppe, Gianetta, and Tessa.

Every tenor, I suppose, has sung Marco's famous "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes." It must be remembered that it is a different proposition to sing this song on the stage, as a necessary development of the story, instead of as a straight ballad in the drawing room or concert hall. Unless the action is suited to the words, this number will lose most of its effect on the stage. In these circumstances it is not a detached number, and must fit gently and unforced into its proper setting. Marco is giving his "recipe for perfect happiness" to the attentive Giuseppe alone. In effect, the song is not being sung to the audience at all. This picture may be relaxed for the second verse to some slight extent—Marco can move to the centre of the stage, and sing part to the audience, part to Giuseppe. But the song is invariably

encored, and as Giuseppe has received his advice, it is quite permissible for the encored verse to be sung straight out to the audience. Indeed, for this occasion, it is a graceful action to withdraw Giuseppe, quietly, into the wings, giving the soloist the whole stage.

THE BASS CHARACTER PARTS

The group designated the "bass character parts" is made up of roles which vary in importance between the different operas, but which are of uniform effectiveness. All of them afford ample scope for fine, virile singing, and, with few exceptions, offer splendid acting opportunities. The characterization of these parts is crisp and definite, and the interpretation calls for these qualities, with the addition of incisiveness. They are also parts that stand out because they are more naturalistic than the comedy and romantic roles. The very nature of most of the bass parts calls for a commanding presence and forceful personality. And herein lies a danger that must be carefully watched, since these are not leading parts, and the manner in which the stage is dominated by them should not be that of the personality or accomplishments of the player standing out above those of his colleagues, but the natural domination of, say, a pirate chief over his band, an emperor towering above his subjects, or a colonel overshadowing his junior officers.

The bass group is not so clearly defined a type as are the other categories. For instance, there is less affinity between Dick Deadeye and Sergeant Meryll than there is between Bunthorne and Ko-Ko. There is accordingly less that one can give in the nature of general hints, covering the complete group, in dealing with these characters. Each must be treated far more as a separate entity than is the case with the comedy or female parts. One can only refer once more to the clear-cut incisiveness mentioned earlier, and, above all, to the necessity of perfect clarity of diction. This group, it is repeated, is not represented in the first and last of the operas at present under review—*Trial by Fury* and *The Gondoliers*.

Several of these parts make the nearest approach to "real life" to be found in any of the characters in the operas. Herein lies a danger; if the playing is made too realistically true to life, the balance of the work as a whole will be thrown sadly out of gear.

SIR MARMADUKE POINTDENTRE (*The Sorcerer*) is a middle-aged, well preserved baronet of grave and dignified bearing. He is a forceful, aristocratic man, suave and urbane in manner. Although there is a little stiffness in his demeanour, any touch of pomposity must be carefully avoided. It may seem a delicate distinction, but there is actually a vast difference between pompousness and pomposity. Sir Marmaduke may possess the first innately, but he has never acquired the second. The part, then, should be played on straight lines with this characterization well marked. There is plenty of humour to be extracted from the part; as in so many other Gilbertian roles, this comes from the words and situations—never from the acting. The scene, for example, where Sir Marmaduke introduces Mrs. Partlet as his future wife would be ruined were the actor to show any signs of the humour in the incident. What he must convey is that Sir Marmaduke's attitude would be no different if, as he probably believes under the influence of the potion, he were announcing his betrothal to the greatest lady in the land.

DICK DEAD EYE (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) can rightly be regarded as one of the "plums" of this group. At the price of some slight physical discomfort (which is not so bad as it looks), the actor has one of the most effective parts written by Gilbert, and he is almost as well served by the composer. It is strange how the impression persists in amateur circles that Dick Deadeye is a comic part, to be played as a clown in a grotesque red wig and whiskers such as glorified George Robey's famous prehistoric man.

Dick is anything but this; he is essentially a real and vital character, the one person in the opera who talks downright sense, and who appears to bear some relation to real life (if one can overlook that no man in his physical condition would be likely to be borne on the books of a warship). There are plenty of laughs in the character. These should always be obtained by making the audience laugh *with* the character, not *at* him. He is not a pleasant person, either in appearance or behaviour—he admits as much—yet the audience's sympathy must not be entirely estranged from this misshapen, rather pathetic, but wholly conscientious, being. This is impossible so long as the grotesque clown, which so many producers

(to their shame) encourage and tolerate, is portrayed. No; there is far more than that to be got from this magnificently conceived part. Dick should be shown as a rather venomous and spiteful man, yet entirely human and not without some pathos. He should also be depicted as of a forceful character, for one feels that he has obtained some



DICK DEAD EYE

One of the finest parts written by Gilbert—and
that is least understood by amateurs.

Photo by J. W. Desobam

ascendancy over the crew who profess to hate him. Were it otherwise, he would probably have been flung overboard long before the opera starts.

THE PIRATE KING (*The Pirates of Penzance*) gives us a double burlesque. It has already been mentioned that the opera is a burlesque of the Italian grand opera style and spirit. The Pirate King is not only a parody of the Italian *basso-profundo*, but also of the wicked pirate of the *Black Ey'd Susan* school of melodrama. He is a magnificently swaggering figure of a man, representing in pose and gesture many of the attitudes

of the "penny plain, twopence coloured" toy theatre. The bearing of the actor goes a long way towards the effectiveness of the part, and it is a great help to have the part played by a tall man who will tower above the other characters—in the physical sense only, be it added. A blustering, authoritative manner, and a resonant



THE MIKADO OF JAPAN

A complex character which is by no means "actor proof" It merits, and repays, careful study

Photo by J. W. Debenham

and vigorous voice should be added to an extravagance of clear-cut gesture. But this extravagance of gesture must be kept within the bounds imposed by the size of the stage.

COLONEL CALVERLEY (*Patience*) should be represented as a dynamic, forceful, and commanding person; a Victorian "he-man" of more or less mature years. He is one who relies entirely upon his military bearing, his uniform and gold lace, to capture the heart of the fair sex. A philistine through and through, he finds no place for poets in his philosophy, and he must show

blank amazement at the hold Bunthorne, and later Grosvenor, exercise over the rapturous maidens. Even when the Colonel and his companions adopt aestheticism as the only means to regain the affections of their former betrothed, it must be clearly indicated that the men do not understand what is meant by the rigid posturings. 'They do it, they exclaim, but they don't like it. This scene is another of those which are all the funnier if apparently treated in dead seriousness. As befits a military commander, every gesture and action must be emphatic and precise, and the spoken dialogue must show the effects of parade-ground training and practice. But the actor must avoid turning the Colonel into a blustering martinet.

THE EARL OF MOUNTARARAT (*Iolanthe*) differs somewhat from the other characters in the group in that it is far less of a "character" part and rather more subdued in treatment. This is a person of considerable haughtiness and dignity, with an easy, well-bred, and authoritative manner. It is a far more incisive character than Tolloffer, with whom the part should effectively contrast in every way, save that the two men should be of about the same age. The points that call for special mention include the second act song, "When Britain really ruled the waves." For all its burlesque of the ultra-patriotic song of its day, this number should be sung as though it were a stirring ballad, towards which the musical setting helps. The best part of Gilbert's pseudo-Jingo songs is that they all sound so like the real thing, yet, by a slight twist, are actually so different. When dealing with the tenor parts I mentioned the necessity for all seriousness in the scene where Tolloffer and Mountararat are quarrelling over Phyllis. A most effective touch can be added to the description of the musical judgments of the Lord Chancellor if Mountararat gives a slight questioning hesitancy on each term employed, as though he were adding the words in brackets: ". . . His series of judgments in F sharp minor (is that it?), given *andante* (is that right?) in six-eight time (correct?) . . . etc." Then in the ensuing trio, "If you go in," Mountararat will probably find that the Lord Chancellor enters into the dancing with a certain amount of unjudicial abandon. The earl, dignified himself, likes others to maintain their dignity, and he

should show himself as slightly shocked at the Chancellor's proceedings.

ARAC (*Princess Ida*) is so small a part from the acting point of view (although an important singing role) that little is called for beyond a capital bass voice and an imposing appearance. He must also be able to carry off the big black beard and the cumbersome armour. He is an uncouth boor, and revels in this fact, yet there is a certain rough nobility in his make-up. As his sister, Ida, is masterful, clever, and gracious, and his father, Gama, mean and spiteful, so should Arac aim at striking a note half-way between these extremes. And if the player be possessed of a strong personality, he must be careful not to overshadow his apparently less important brothers.

THE MIKADO OF JAPAN (*The Mikado*) is a part that arouses much discussion as to the manner in which it should be played. It is more than probable that Gilbert intended it to be a subsidiary character, and we know that the famous song so closely associated with the part was nearly cut out before the opera was produced. Indeed, it was only at the combined pleading of the entire company that it was retained—to become one of the outstanding successes of the opera. Nor has it always been the practice for the part to be played by a leading member of the professional company. But be that as it may, the part has now become in every way a most important one, and should be treated as such by amateurs.

The Mikado should be represented as a grim, sardonic man. At once he is an autocrat, a philosopher, a father to his people, a despotic humorist, and a good-natured sadist. The character appears late in the opera, but he has opportunities for bringing out all these aspects. His attitude at his first entrance sets the picture for what follows, and might be described in this way: "Here I am," says the Mikado in effect as he follows his guards on to the stage, "Bow before me, you puny mortals. Do me homage, for am I not the supreme being of this land?" It is all so good-natured; the Mikado seems to exude *bon-homie* from every pore. Then he sings that he expects obedience from every man (and his tone suggests that not only does he expect, but demands it). Despite sundry interruptions from Katisha, he is able to add that all cheerfully own his sway.

These interruptions, incidentally, have a cumulative effect. At the first, he pauses politely, but as they go on he becomes more and more annoyed, until, with the last, one can almost (but not quite) hear him using most un-royal language.

After he has thus introduced himself, he unbends, and sings of how his great humaneness is achieved, and how he contrives that each punishment shall fit the crime. It is a great joke to him, and before singing the refrain, he breaks into a throaty chuckle at the thought of it. Suddenly, realizing that he is making himself too pleasant, he draws himself up, the laugh changes to a snarl, and then, quite urbanely, he proceeds with the song. Although he asks with unction for a description of the execution that he believes to have taken place, he is politely bored with the narrative, but becomes grimly in earnest as to the whereabouts of his son. Still, he appears to remain affability itself while he is inquiring about Nanki-Poo. Although he has been gilding the pill in this manner, by framing, as it were, a request—"Would it be troubling you *too* much if I *asked* you to . . ."—he suddenly raps out, as a command, the concluding words, "Produce him!" That Nanki-Poo has been beheaded, and that the three plotters are to meet a nasty fate, troubles him not a bit. In fact, the second of these facts delights him exceedingly. As to Nanki-Poo, he studies the death certificate and remarks, "Dear, dear, dear. This is very tiresome." But he says these words with no more behind them than if he held a laundry list in his hand and the remark were evoked by the fact that one of his collars had gone astray.

There should be a smooth oiliness about the Mikado's speech, which, however, takes on a staccato imperiousness when, as in "Produce him!" his suavity changes to tones of command.

SIR RODERIC MURGATROYD (*Ruddigore*) may be cast primarily in regard to the vocal powers of the player. The famous ghost song in the second act, with its marvellous orchestration, fully deserves the best of voices. At the same time, considerable acting ability is required to create the eerie, other-worldliness of this ghostly character. Sir Roderic should speak all his lines in more or less of a monotone, giving every word practically the same stress and emphasis, with a slightly rising cadence at the end of the sentences,

thus making the words "most musical, most melancholy." This will not become monotonous, especially if the words are intoned, rather than spoken, with something of an organ-note quality behind them. A romantic strain enters into the part at the end, when, still preserving all the ghostly qualities of voice and bearing, he meets his old love. This is a tender and touching scene, which can be ruined all too easily by the least suspicion of mawkishness on the part of either player. Sir Roderic's last line, "I see—I understand! Then I'm practically alive," is spoken as though the ghost had, in fact, returned to life.

SERGEANT MERYLL (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) is a rugged old soldier. This, and the fact that he is a personage of some importance in the Tower, calls for an authoritative style of playing. But the easy-going side of the man must not be lost sight of. Another aspect of the character that must be shown convincingly and without mawkishness is his devotion to Fairfax, to whom he owes his life. The sergeant is a brave man who counts not the danger of his act in engineering the colonel's escape. He is a man of action, too, for once the scheme is formulated, he sees it through to the bitter end.

The character also calls for a strong sense of comedy, for many little humorous touches are introduced, and these have to be skilfully handled if the effect is not to be marred. For example, the scene where he proposes to Dame Carruthers can be most amusing—and should be, even though the most dramatic element of the opera has been reached—but to gain the full effect Meryll should here appear to be in grim earnest. The humour, so far as he is concerned, lies in the fumbling way in which the unfortunate old soldier pours out the ardent words that so ill become his rugged appearance, and also in the general discomfiture of the man. Above all else, the part is emphatically a sympathetic one, both in conception and interpretation.

THE INDIVIDUAL BARITONES

The characters in the last male group (which has previously been described as consisting of "subsidiary, but important baritone parts") might also be named the "miscellaneous male principals." In practice, it has to be extended to take in parts that do not readily fall into any of the

earlier categories, and also to allow for the possible inclusion of up to three "heavy comedy" roles, which, as I have explained, can slip into this final group easily and without loss of effect.

Then, in addition to the parts specifically mentioned as being in this group, consideration must be given to five others. There is Bill Bobstay, the Boatswain's Mate, in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, who is closely allied to the "heavy comedy" roles, but without their importance. The baritone counterparts of the tenor lead in *Patience* and *Iolanthe*, together with the joint baritone lead in *The Gondoliers*, will be found in their chronological sequence. Finally, also from *The Gondoliers*, there is Luiz, a part which is suited either to a light baritone or tenor, but which is included in this group for convenience. The parts vary greatly, both in importance to the plot of the opera and from the point of view of "importance" to the player. But each is effective whether considered as being a full-scale principal or ranked as a secondary character. It is left to the reader to decide which falls in which class.

Unlike the bass parts already dealt with, these baritone characters are not so closely allied to reality. At the same time, they are far more matter-of-fact than the whimsical comedy roles. Some of them, it is true, are fanciful characters, but others are almost recognizable as everyday characters. Nor are they so closely related in temperament or personality—less likely to be associated, as with the other groups, with a particular player. In practice one will not invariably find that the actor playing, say, Grosvenor is likely to prove a satisfactory Samuel, and so on with the other parts.

This may be the very reason that makes it impossible to lay down any hard and fast rule as to the characterization—a rule that would be equally applicable to all the parts here discussed. Both the nature of the part and of the particular opera have a decided bearing upon this point. So let us proceed to examine each character individually, again with the reminder that (whatever the characteristics peculiar to the part may be) each is typical of the traditional Gilbert and Sullivan role, and must be played in the traditional manner.

COUNSEL FOR THE PLAINTIFF (*Trial by Jury*) is one of those parts that are so often played in

that manner which some critics are fond of describing as "adequate." Sometimes it is not considered a part of sufficient importance to merit even this questionable description. Really the part is most effective—possibly the most effective in the opera—and well repays close study and attention. The part should be played as a youngish man, with ease of voice and manner, incisive, and quite devoid of any touches of that great lawyer, Sergeant Buzfuz. But, in restrained moderation, the player should make full use of the many little touches of facial expression and emphatic gesture beloved of the pleading advocate. In the advice on another court figure from this opera, the Usher, the actor was advised to study the real life prototype. Such advice is even more applicable in the case of Counsel. One important point for the actor to realize is that he is actually playing a double part. Not only is the actor representing a certain character, but that character is himself indulging in histrionic skill on behalf of his fair client. This part is the only really "straight" one in this amusing, but somewhat exaggerated, opera, and one of the few characters depicted in the work that feel quite at home in a court of law.

BILL BOBSTAY (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) is far more a comedy character than the others in this group; in fact he is one of the few Gilbert and Sullivan characters to whom the word "comic" might be applied. Yet it is not a robustly comic character, one needs constantly to apply the soft pedal. The Bo'sun (as he is invariably addressed) is a cheery, sympathetic soul with a philosophical frame of mind. He appears to be the natural link between the captain and crew. The player gets his big chance in the second act with the song "He is an Englishman." Although this has to be sung in an amusing way, it is not a comic song, and the impression has to be given that, to the Bo'sun and his fellow-sailors, it is a serious, soul-stirring, and patriotic melody. The audience, too, is frequently so carried away that the song, momentarily, is seen by them in the same light, and they cheer it to the echo. Thus the singer gets his encore, into which a certain amount of low comedy business (still pressing heavily on that soft pedal) is permissible. But for the song to be rendered as though it were either "Land of Hope and Glory" or "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road" is

entirely contrary to the author's intentions, and should firmly be avoided.

SAMUEL (*The Pirates of Penzance*) takes after his chief—the Pirate King—doubtless as a result of their long association. Samuel lacks the commanding presence of the King, and is a more bluff



THE MORTAL FAIRY

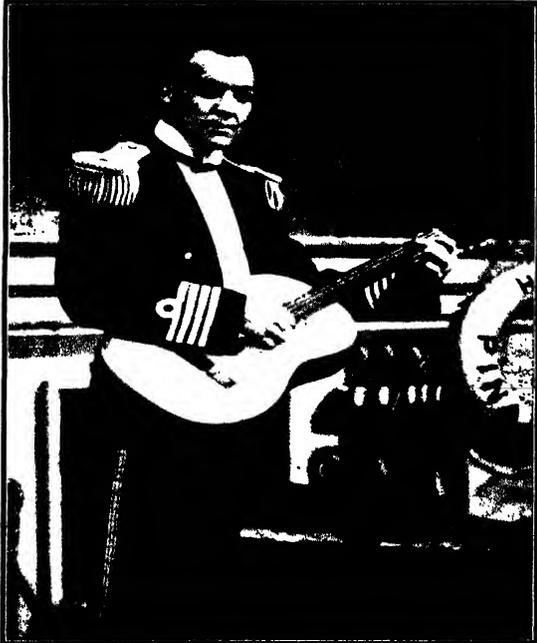
STEPHEN means that he is a fairy down to the waist, while his legs are mortal

Photo by J. W. Debonham

and human figure. He is deep voiced and gruff, ruddy faced and red bearded. Towards his fellow-pirates Samuel adopts a hearty manner, while a good-humoured yet menacing attitude is shown towards the other characters. There is a good deal of burlesque in the character, but little that

can be added to this bare description, which should at least indicate the characteristics for which the player should strive.

ARCHIBALD GROSVENOR (*Patience*) brings us to the first of the juvenile leads which was cast as a baritone and not as a tenor. The part was conceived, and for some years played, in a manner



THE CAPTAIN OF THE "PINAFORI"

captain of the team, Dr. Daly, and Private Willie be transferred from "Heavy Comedy" to the "Baritone" group without loss of their effect. The build and personality of the actor must be the governing factor.

Photo by J. W. Daly

far more like that of the heavy comedy roles than that with which we have now become familiar. There is, for instance, a line in the original libretto, "I am much taller and much stouter than I was," which nowadays is usually rendered (with full authority) as, "I am much taller and a little stouter than I was." But with the first Grosvenor and some of his successors the point of the original line was by no means lost, and

there was far more comic significance behind the many references to his fatal beauty and perfection. To-day the part is played as a more or less graceful youth, certainly good-looking (in a somewhat effeminate way), and rather serious. Such a type is in itself so amusing and far-fetched that it proves far more acceptable, and no less effective, to present-day audiences than would the preposterous figure and appearance of the former Grosvenors. Such a presentation should be regarded as the traditional rendering.

Like his rival poet, Bunthorne, Grosvenor is a difficult person to portray; both are extreme examples of a type that is, actually, as much in evidence to-day as in the time of the aesthetic craze, which the opera pillories so unmercifully. But if the pose of these weird poets is still to be found in some of our pseudo-highbrow *poseurs*, the mentality and bearing have altered. The twentieth-century actor playing Grosvenor can scarcely be expected to have any actual acquaintance with the type depicted, nor is it likely to be familiar to the majority of the audience. It is best, in this difficult part, to make Grosvenor convincing by showing the airs and manners of an outwardly languid, inwardly ardent, youth; one of a melancholy and serious turn of mind, who is blessed (or, in his opinion, cursed) with perfection of face and figure. However absurd it may be, every word of the part must be delivered in an unforced manner, calm or fervent as the occasion demands. The posing and gestures, too, must be graceful and natural. Like Bunthorne, Grosvenor reads aloud two of his poems. The difference between the works of the two is that the comic effect in Bunthorne's case comes from the use of high-sounding, but perfectly meaningless, words. Grosvenor's laughs come from the subject and manner of his fables. But, equally with Bunthorne's preposterous lines, the poems must be read in all seriousness.

The gentleness and quiet of the character form the requisite contrast to the more flamboyant Bunthorne. Grosvenor's speech, like his bearing, suggests a poet. The voice should not be an affected, or lisping, drawl, but one with a musical and rhythmic quality.

STREPHON (*Iolanthe*), the second of the baritone leads, should be shown as a pleasant, charming, and rather serious young man. This last attribute

will help to set off against each other the many changes from elation to the depths of despair that mark this character. A touch of other-worldliness is necessary to suggest the half-fairy, half-human, composition of Strepthon. This, also, is of assistance to the interpretation of the part, as it gives most effective help to the scene in which Strepthon relates the disadvantages of his fairy-mortal state. This is achieved by subtle changes of voice; the advantages of fairyhood are related in a romantic, far-away voice, while perfectly matter-of-fact tones accompany the recital of the human disadvantages that follow.

FLORIAN (*Princess Ida*), while more buoyant than Hilarion, lacks the mercurial high spirits of Cyril. The part thus acts as a natural step between the two tenors, and strikes a happy mean in this otherwise evenly matched trio. Although there is nothing in the opera to suggest that the three men are other than all of an age, there is something in Florian's bearing that indicates him as a somewhat older, more responsible, man. Florian is also a polished courtier, and is treated as such by Hildebrand. It should also be suggested in the playing that he is a true and loyal friend. Although he thoroughly enjoys the invasion of Castle Adamant and the accompanying masquerade, the audience has to feel that he looks upon the adventure in the same light as does Hilarion—as a serious means to a definite end—rather than (as in the case of Cyril) an excuse for a splendid "rag." The romantic glamour of Hilarion and Cyril may not shine on Florian as it does on the others, but his is in many ways the more attractive character and personality.

PISH-TUSH (*The Mikado*), as a part, is what the flyer makes of it. In the first act it has some importance; in the second, the part is almost forgotten. In many ways this part, small though it may be, calls for an outstanding personality. Without this, there is a danger of Pish-Tush being overshadowed by the more important players. It is particularly important that this should not occur; especially in the scene of the reading of the Mikado's letter. There an insignificant Pish-Tush would be swamped by Ko-Ko and Pooh-Bah.

The attitude for Pish-Tush to adopt during this scene should be one of concern over the possible fate of his town, and of ill-concealed,

rather contemptuous, amusement at the fix into which the other two, especially Ko-Ko, have got themselves. As a foil to the upstart Ko-Ko and the assumed pomposity of Pooh-Bah, Pish-Tush should be played with a quiet, genuine dignity. His well-bred, unassuming attitude makes it clear why the great officers of state have resigned rather than serve under Ko-Ko, and why Pooh-Bah stepped into the breach. Pish-Tush, for all we know, may well have been one of these officials. This should not be lost sight of throughout the opera, and the possession of an easy and pleasant personality will allow Pish-Tush to be remembered at all necessary times, even though he be not on the stage.

SIR RICHARD CHOLMONDELFY (*The Women of the Guard*), it is interesting to recall, is the only actual personage to appear (although only by name) in the operas. The real Sir Richard was Lieutenant of the Tower during the second or third decade of the sixteenth century. As represented in this opera, he is an authoritative man of fine presence—in early middle-age. His personality is such that he should dominate the stage in the sense of being the presiding genius of the place in which the events of the story occur. There is a serious, even severe, note about the part, but behind this there lies a warm heart. He is a kindly man, and one who (it should be made clear to the audience) would be a good friend. Sir Richard pities Fairfax, not as a prisoner, but as a fellow-soldier, whom he is proud to regard and treat as an honoured friend. The Lieutenant's dealings with Jack Point and Elsie are kindly without being condescending.

An effective touch can be introduced into the finale of the second act. The Lieutenant stands beside Fairfax while Elsie is appealing to the latter. Neither man wishes to keep her in suspense, and the more impetuous Fairfax is all for revealing himself. Gently the Lieutenant touches him on the arm, as though to restrain him. Eventually, at the end of the appeal, Sir Richard makes a gesture, as though to say, "Now tell her." This may seem unimportant. So it is, to the extent that unobtrusive treatment is needed, so that attention is not drawn from the central figure of the pleading girl. But so introduced, this little touch may be subconsciously noted, and will thus go far to disarm a usual criticism of this finale:

that Fairfax should at once have revealed himself as "Leonard," rather than have left Elsie in a state of torment and suspense.

GIUSEPPE PALMIERI (*The Gondoliers*) ranks equally in importance with the tenor lead, Marco. All that has been written of Marco applies to Giuseppe—an engaging, light-hearted, and good-humoured fellow. Giuseppe is, perhaps, the more volatile of the pair, and he takes the "troubles of a king" even less seriously than does his brother. Both these parts should be well matched physically, and neither should have a more outstanding personality than the other. Perfect team work and understanding between the two is absolutely essential.

LUIZ (*The Gondoliers*) offers what is best described as a "sticky" part. Musically it is suited either to a tenor or a light baritone. It is an effective role, which suffers from the disadvantage that its scenes come between two comedy scenes without apparent rhyme or reason. In describing how the part should be played, a little introspective reasoning might be allowed. Despite his upbringing, Luiz is of royal descent. Therefore the actor should represent an air of calm dignity to suggest, rather than portray, his origin. Luiz is a manly lover, and his scene with Casilda, for all its absurdity of words and situation, must be sincere and convincing. Taken all in all, Luiz is a pleasant part, on the lines of a romantic juvenile lead, and it is a great pity that it is so often marred by the impression that it is an incidental, unimportant part.

SOME MINOR PARTS

Besides the principal parts that have already been considered individually, there are many smaller roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan series. Some of these are actually minor principal roles, with some bearing on the plot. Others are small parts that share in scenes with the more important characters, while there are several names appearing in the dramatis personae of various operas that are allotted to members of the chorus by virtue of a few solo lines of music or some spoken dialogue. In whichever category the part falls it has an essential place in the main structure of the opera. It must not be allowed to be treated as of so little importance as to receive less attention than is given to the more spectacular principal roles.

Exactly the same general lines of treatment—the traditional usage—apply to these parts as to the more exalted roles with which we have dealt. It will be remembered that, dealing with the duties and responsibilities of the chorus, I stated that "the chorus is as important to the general scheme (of these operas) as are the principals." So it is with these small parts; principals, minor principals, choristers, and even supers, all fit into a well-balanced whole, each pulling his or her proper weight—no more, no less—for the general good of the production. Therefore, quite as careful a study is called for in respect of the small parts as is the case with the various "grouped" principals. Indeed, in some respects, more; because the less important parts lack the opportunities for attracting attention. A prominent, important part cannot help attracting attention to itself. The lesser roles, however ably they be played and sung, cannot do this. Thus, in any production, they will be taken for granted to some extent, whereas it is safe to say that the amateur will take up a part like Ko-Ko with some recollection (based on previous witnessing of *The Mikado*) as to how it should be played, which, it is to be hoped, has been added to by advice that has been given. So we must, in certain cases, devote more space than might, at first sight, appear necessary to the consideration of the small parts, still preserving the chronological sequence with which the reader is now familiar.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY (*Trial by Jury*), although he has a little solo singing, is of no greater importance to the opera than are his eleven colleagues. What prominence the part gains is that which a real foreman would attain, and the player must not, by over-acting or in any other way, allow his performance to get out of focus with that of the rest of the jury. Here and there, as will become apparent from reading the opera, he must lead the jury by little pieces of by-play, but in no other manner must there be the slightest indication of the fact that, because his name is in the body of the programme instead of among those of the chorus, the Foreman is considered to be a "part" rather than an integral part of the chorus.

THE ASSOCIATE, being purely local colour, must also heed the warnings given in the

preceding paragraph. What little he has to do is entirely for the sake of the accuracy of the stage picture (as when Counsel hands him a law book, which he passes up to the Judge). Accordingly, the Associate's actions, when they occur, must be exact and unobtrusive. In singing the Associate joins with the male chorus (there is no solo work

sent it?" The Usher indicates the Judge as the writer. The First Bridesmaid then reads the note, turns round, and joyfully indicates her acceptance of whatever invitation the letter contains. She then folds the note and tucks it in her bodice. This fills in the time until the Plaintiff makes her entrance. The Usher is sent to the



MAJOR-GENERAL STANLEY AND HIS DAUGHTERS

Mabel and Edith (right) rank as principals. Isobel and Kate (left) are minor parts, but all four should be evenly matched in personality.

Photo by J. W. Debenham.

given to the part), and for this reason it is immaterial whether he be tenor, bass, or baritone. In fact it is best to take acting ability solely into account in casting this tiny part.

THE FIRST BRIDESMAID is also a "choir part." Again, there is no solo singing, and the acting of the part is entirely in dumb show. The Usher brings her a note, which she takes in some surprise. "For me?" she seems to ask, "Who

First Bridesmaid to retrieve the note and pass it on to the Plaintiff. The Bridesmaid expresses indignation; she frowns at the Judge, who avoids her gaze, pulls out the letter, throws it on the ground, and stamps on it. Thence, until the finale, there is nothing to distinguish her from the rest of the bridesmaids. In the finale she partners the Defendant.

THE NOTARY (*The Sorcerer*) is one of those

many thankless parts which actors are so often called upon to play; parts in which there is so little on which to get a grip. It is easy to succumb to the temptation to caricature a part of this nature. But this would never do so far as the Notary is concerned. The part has to be kept on the level of the straightforward playing of the

in the hands of a character actor with a good bass voice.

MRS. PARTLET, the motherly old pew-opener in the same opera, calls for capable acting; it requires an actress who can make her points without in any way having to force them. She must possess a facility for slipping aitches off the



THE PEERS AND THE FAIRIES

Leila (right) and Celia appeal to Lords Mountararat and Tolloller. Well-defined personalities are called for in these small parts, so that the faeries will fit in well with the peers

Photo by J. W. Debenham

other parts, and in keeping with the spirit of the opera, from which caricature is entirely missing. Overlooking the fact that such a character would be unlikely to burst into song, one should play the part on the lines of the conventional old-fashioned family lawyer of high comedy. Played on such lines, as a deaf, doddering, snuffily-shabby man, the Notary can be made an effective little study

beginning of aspirated words (both in singing and speaking), and for tacking them as easily on to others usually devoid of this letter. She fusses about full of concern for her daughter (irresistibly reminding one of a hen shepherding her one chick). As befits one connected with the church she adopts, as best she may, an unctuous expression and voice. A pleasant smile and

personality will go a long way to help in a part that is fundamentally artificial.

BOB BECKET (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) exists, as a part, only to sing the bass line in certain concerted numbers—notably in the trio, “A British Tar is a Soaring Soul.” In this number, especially, a stolid, deadly serious demeanour is all that is required so far as the acting is concerned. This is a marvellous and by no means easy piece of part singing. The impression given is that the three sailors are absolutely ignorant of *tempo*, phrasing, or keeping together. This unfortunate carpenter’s mate struggles gallantly with his part, growling out his words, and suiting the action to them. But his partners run on ahead of him, leaving him perplexed as they finish, a bar or more in front of him. For the full effect of this number, the singer should give it all the seriousness at his command, yet taking care that the laughter does not get so loud and continuous as to drown the music. Becket partners Hebe in the dance that ends the first act, but for the second act finale, he unobtrusively slips into the position of the first bass chorister.

KATE (*The Pirates of Penzance*) might be termed the second soubrette of this opera. She shares something of Edith’s vivacity, but on a slightly lower note. She must possess a fair share of personality, not so much to make the part stand out above the chorus, but because, like Edith, she is one of the leading spirits of this large family of sisters.

ISOBEL, on the other hand, is to all intents and purposes a chorister. All that is required from the part is the ability to speak a few lines of particularly stilted dialogue convincingly, yet to give the impression of being absolutely brainless. She, one feels, is as much the fool of the family as Edith and Kate are its moving forces. Both Kate and Isobel are typical Gilbertian maidens, in that they are practically nothing but puppets.

MAJOR MURGATROYD (*Patience*) is a “light comedy lead” in miniature. He should be depicted as a peppery little man of military caste, greatly resembling, in physique and appearance, Major-General Stanley. Apart from the vocal side of the performance, there is little for the Major to do in the first act except to fit in with

the military atmosphere of the scenes in which he mainly appears. In the second act there devolves upon him much of the humour of the scene in which the three officers appear transformed into aesthetes. Here his anguished mutterings and squirmings must win laughs, not sympathetic smiles. But this is a scene that can be seriously marred by over-acting.

The Major’s part in this scene can be accounted for in the following way: The girls, Angela and Saphir, although perfectly serious in all they say, speak in a manner that is funny—up to a point. Too much of their flowery, pseudo-poetic language would tend to loss of effect, and to become nothing but rather pointless, boring gush. How, then, is this prevented? By the simple expedient of leavening the speeches by the Major’s agonized interjections. These laments and wriggings take the audience’s minds from the patent artificialities of the girls’ dialogue to such an extent that their stilted words retain the power to amuse without becoming boring or jarring to the ear of the listeners. It will be seen, then, that the Major is brought into prominence during this episode for a decided reason, and that any attempt on the part of the player to attract too much attention to himself by buffoonery or over-acting would be at the expense of the scene and of the more important characters.

MR. BUSHORNE’S SOLICITOR, although a minor part, without a word to say or a note to sing, repays trouble and study. Of late there has been a tendency (inspired by professional precedent) to regard this part as being in the category of a super—or, at least, of calling for no acting higher than that which the stage carpenter or property master could bring to it. It would be a pity if this precedent were followed in amateur circles, because actually this is a delightful little cameo, calling for as good an actor as does any other part in the opera. The solicitor should be depicted as a dapper little man, with grey hair and well-trimmed moustache and side-whiskers. He is usually seen dressed in the black tail coat and silk hat of the professional man of the day. The more pleasing, and more correct, effect of a grey frock coat and top hat is recommended. He is, when he first appears, a perky little cock-sparrow of a man (although the distinguished solicitor on whom the appearance of the part is said to have

been modelled would not have answered to this description). His manner alternates from suave politeness, when he is first introduced, to bland smiles, when he is hailed with blessings by the Rapturous Maidens. But this quickly changes to extreme annoyance, and then terror, as the Dragons heap curses upon his head. Finally, confused and indignant, he makes a flustered, but dignified, exit. Although it is not indicated in the libretto, the solicitor returns during the angry scenes after Patience has intervened in the drawing for the lottery. He removes the table that he brought in on his first appearance.

THE LADY SAPHIR and THE LADY ELLA are similar in conception to Angela, though less important. Ella, for instance, is only of account vocally—very much of account, be it added. Saphir is more in evidence during the later stages of the opera, and in this way the two parts are paralleled by Kate and Isobel in *The Pirates of Penzance*. They stand in the same relationship to Angela as do these last-mentioned parts to Edith. The style of acting is identical with that required for Angela—a languid, affected one in the first act, turning to that of “every-day young girls” at the end of the second.

CONCERNING THE CHORISTERS

Let us turn again to the chorus. “Responsibilities of the Chorus” gave many pointers as to the interpretation of the parts (for each chorister does, in fact, play a part as much as does the most prominent principal). What is required now is more to extend the brief note in the librettos, “Chorus of This, That, and the Other,” by giving certain facts and hints as to what is required from the choristers in many things that may not be apparent from reading the operas.

One thing to be suggested is that the choruses should not be too large. There is the temptation, from the box office point of view, to recruit as many acting members as possible, and this may lead to a large chorus being used. Gilbert’s chorus consisted, at most, of twenty-four girls and the same number of men. The chorus employed in the touring company is less, and it is remarkable how effective can be a dozen or so men or girls coached into a state of “controlled individuality.” A big chorus, which may be most effective for an amateur production of a Drury

Lane piece, would be unwieldy for the more intimate, and delicate, atmosphere of one of the Savoy operas. Even on the largest stage, it is advisable not to exceed the maximum number just mentioned; good grouping will overcome what might appear to be numerical defects.

THE JURY (*Trial by Jury*) number, of course, exactly twelve, including the Foreman. Each of the remaining eleven should be represented as a distinct type; a farmer, a clerk, a prosperous tradesman, a Scotsman, and so on. The individuality in appearance and acting must be acquired without allowing any one man to obtrude, or attract attention to, himself at the expense of the jury as a whole.

THE BRIDESMAIDS, not more than eight or ten in all, call for little comment. Naturally, one would select the best looking of the chorus for this duty, and, in view of their small number, the best singers would be chosen. THE PUBLIC IN COURT consist, principally, of the remaining female choristers. They, too, should be a collection of individual types, who are attending the trial out of curiosity or interest. If any more men are required to be on the stage, one or two may be discreetly grouped among the spectators, while others, in legal robes, can sit in the body of the court. They will sing the music allotted to the jury. The degree of exactness—whether these men sing “they” when the jury sing “we”—is a matter for discretion.

THE VILLAGERS (*The Sorcerer*) should be redolent of the countryside. Rosy-checked damsels in poke bonnets and Kate Greenaway dresses; older women with shawls; strapping young farmers in velvet coats; yokels in smocks; and an old “gaffer” or two. All these types should be represented to assist the rural atmosphere of the setting. There is a certain amount of individual business for some of the villagers, for example, offering congratulations to Aline and Alexis in the betrothal scene.

THE SAILORS (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) must, naturally, have a breezy, sailor-like bearing and precision about their actions. The saluting should be well rehearsed, so that the action is carried out simultaneously by all. The producer should see that the naval salute is given, and not the more familiar military form of respect. Moustaches offer a problem in this chorus; the men should

be clean shaven. If, therefore, the owner of such an adornment will not remove it, or cannot hide it, a beard should be worn. An effective touch from the professional production, not usually adopted by amateurs, is to have two of the choristers dressed as officers. They appear in attendance upon the captain when Sir Joseph

that the aunts, at least, would probably be some years senior to Sir Joseph. It should be added that the ladies do not wear their hats in the second act. I recollect a long and acrimonious discussion on this point with a producer under whom I once played Sir Joseph.

THE PIRATES (*The Pirates of Penzance*) must



THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

This group does not represent any incident in the opera, but is included to show the effectiveness of an individual make-up for each chorister, in place of the usual "mass production" methods.

Photo by F. W. Debonnam

arrives on board. There is plenty of time for the change to be made after the captain's entrance and song, "I am the Captain of the Pinafore," and the men change back into their lower deck uniform before the first act finale.

THE SISTERS, COUSINS, AND AUNTS usually appear to be more or less of an age. No efforts should be made to differentiate between one generation and another. Each chorister should be made-up to look herself. Probably, in an amateur chorus, there will be some who will be less young than others, but no extraneous aid from the make-up box is called for to indicate

look properly villainous. It is advisable to give each member of the chorus an individual make-up, though many costumiers send out wigs and beards all of the same pattern. For the second act the male chorus is divided, the basses appearing as POLICEMEN. These should not be too modern in appearance. Small side whiskers have usually been added to the otherwise straight make-up, but big moustaches, long whiskers, and even beards, such as policemen of 1880 wore, have now been added. It must be remembered that 1940 (a critical year in this opera) is now behind us, and apparently it is thought that

the atmosphere of the original period must be preserved.

MAJOR-GENERAL STANLEY'S DAUGHTERS have not a great deal to do beyond looking charming. Their first entrance, with its intricate threading dance and grouping, repays a lot of hard work, while it is not as easy as might appear to give the impression of balancing precariously on one foot, at the same time preserving one's position in the line and singing.

THE DRAGOON GUARDS (*Patience*), in addition to the usual rehearsing for vocal work and stage movement, require careful drilling to acquire the necessary military bearing and precision. Nothing can upset the stage picture more than an ill-timed salute, or ragged manipulation of the sword scabbards. It is not so difficult as might appear for a civilian to acquire this unanimity of motion. The music is so written that a definite note exists for each of these actions. An unmounted cavalry man does not march with the same swing as do the infantry. A longer stride is taken, and there is not the same uniform swing of the body; in fact, there is a tendency to lean forward and to swing the arms and shoulders. All this should be put into the marching of these officers.

THE RAPTUREOUS MAIDENS have to show an air of effortless languor, with a few moments of wild abandon (as when they first see Grosvenor). It is somewhat difficult to adopt this pose when, all the time, one has to be on the alert for cues, and it certainly cannot be taken to mean that the opera can be "walked through" in a languorous way. The sighing and yearning must be treated in absolute seriousness. The gestures must be flowing and easy, while the various poses in which the girls stand must be effortless and graceful. For the second act finale, where the girls throw off aestheticism, they become bright, natural girls of the period.

THE PEERS (*Iolanthe*) are represented as a collection of bald-headed old fogeys of dignified appearance. As it is necessary that the robes and coronets be carried in a natural way, as though to the manner born, it is suggested that some substitute for the heavy cloaks be used at rehearsals, so that the choristers can become accustomed to their manipulation. For the same reason, hats might be worn to represent the coronets.

THE FAIRIES, too, may well be rehearsed with

some substitute for their wands. It should be impressed upon the girls that their movements must be carried out daintily and quietly. The fairy atmosphere will not be helped if they "clump" around the stage with heavy tread. Shoes, therefore, should not be worn; either use light dancing slippers or, better still, stocking feet.

THE COURTIER and SOLDIERS (*Princess Ida*). In the first act appear the courtiers, some of whom should be dressed to represent such characters as a bearded chamberlain, court musicians, and, possibly, an Oriental ambassador. The chorus, in the second and third acts, represent King Hildebrand's army, a collection of picturesque desperadoes of all nationalities. Why this army should represent a nondescript rabble is uncertain, but, as a stage picture, this is certainly to be preferred to the original dressing, when all appeared in a similar uniform. One or two of the men should be dressed throughout the opera in a more military style, as a personal bodyguard to the King. To these men will fall the task of arresting Gama and his sons in the first act.

THE GIRL GRADUATES (who, of course, are grouped with the courtiers in the first act) appear in the academic robes of Castle Adamant in Act II. In the third act they are attired in the full panoply of war, accoutred with gleaming battle-axes. Their movements in this act should have a certain, but obviously not too exact, military precision.

THE NOBLES and SCHOOLGIRLS (*The Mikado*) need careful drilling in the "Japanese" walk, which is not a waddle or semi-run, but rather a shuffling gait, with the knees pressed together, and the shoulders slightly hunched. The heels should be lifted from the ground, but the whole sole of the foot, not just the toes, should touch. This, aided by short steps, will give the desired effect. The fan work, too, requires much practice. The flicking open or shut of the fan indicates various emotions. Sometimes the fan is not used by the girls, the reason being that the costumes now used professionally are of a period in which the fans would be an anachronism. As these costumes are not generally available for amateurs, the use of fans should be continued. Further, without fans, the hands have to fulfil many actions otherwise done with fans—and

hands still remain a problem with the average amateur chorister.

THE BUCKS AND BLADES (*Ruddigore*) are British officers of the Waterloo period. One must stress the word British, as some costumiers, unless otherwise instructed, include uniforms of various continental armies. During the second act the men appear as the ghostly ANCESTORS, in costumes ranging from the time of the Stuarts to the late eighteenth century. It is essential that some of the costumes exactly resemble the painted pictures through which certain of the ghosts appear. For the sake of fixing positions, this point should be settled as early as possible. The choristers who will step out of the frames must also see the scenery so that they can assume poses exactly resembling those of the picture they represent. The dialogue given to the ghosts should be rendered in exactly the same way as that laid down for Sir Roderic—evenly stressed syllables, intoned rather than spoken, with an upward cadence at the end of each sentence. After the ghost scene the men change back to their uniforms for the finale. Two of the chorus make a momentary entrance as fishermen at the start of the opera, crossing the stage and greeting the girls as they go down to their boat. One of the two snatches a letter, which a bridesmaid is reading, thus causing a slight commotion before the opening chorus is sung.

THE BRIDESMAIDS and VILLAGERS may be evenly divided, or the first group made the larger. This is preferable as the bridesmaids are more in evidence. The bridesmaids, naturally, are all dressed alike and carry little posies, while the villagers wear appropriate dresses of the period.

THE CITIZENS and YEOMEN (*The Yeoman of the Guard*) might well be in the proportion of one male citizen to three yeomen, with a minimum of four in this first group. The men playing the yeomen should be selected not only on account of their voices, but for their size and bearing. Substitutes for the halberds should be used at rehearsals. Broomsticks serve admirably, and if cardboard heads are fastened to them the men will become accustomed to seeing that the halberds are always held in a uniform position—instead of some of the axe-shaped sides of the head pointing in one direction and others directly

opposite. The female citizens do not call for any particular comment. They are dressed in Tudor costumes, and consequently should not wear wrist watches. Beyond that the censorship of jewellery need not be as strict as in, say, *Iolanthe* or *The Mikado*.

THE GONDOLIERS (*The Gondoliers*) should



A LOWER WARDER

A good example of the type to be portrayed. The facial make-up is as important as the beard and wig. G. & S. choruses have to look the part convincingly.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

have a swarthy complexion, in which the hands and arms should not be overlooked. The swarthy-ness must be applied with discretion, as the complexion does not change when the gondoliers blossom out as magnificently attired courtiers in

the second act; too deep a skin would not go well with powdered wigs. In this act, a few of the men should be dressed as soldiers. It should be arranged in advance which shall be so dressed, as there are specific duties attached to the soldiers, such as leading the procession that greets the ducal party, and escorting Inez. In fact, if the wardrobe permits, others might also change into uniform for the first of these two entrances, while there should be two heralds, who sound a fanfare (actually played in the orchestra) when Casilda is crowned.

THE CONTADINE should also show their southern origin by a somewhat darker make-up than that used in the other operas. The first number should be rehearsed with some substitute for the roses and baskets that will be used in the performance

MORE MINOR PARTS

AS I have still to deal with the small, but important, roles beyond the fifth opera—*Patience*—I proceed straight to the individual parts without further preamble.

CELIA, LEILA, and FLETA (*Iolanthe*) may be considered together, in that order of importance. The main requirements, other than ability to speak the lines and sing the music allotted to them, are attractive personalities and, for the first two at least, the ability to stand up to the actors playing the two Earls without being swamped by even stronger personalities. They should, of course, have their share of good looks, and, as far as is possible, be all three of a size. One can trace in Celia the rudiments of a lyric soprano lead; Leila is even more closely related to the soubrette group. None of these three is referred to by name during the opera, and there is much discussion as to whether the second should be called "Leela" or "Lyla." As the name of the character will often be used at rehearsals in place of, say, Miss Robertson, one might mention that "Lyla" appears to be the favourite in knowledgeable circles. Fleeta has no solo singing and should be cast from the point of view of appearance and ability to speak the lines allotted to the part.

GURON and SCYNTHIUS (*Princess Ida*) have only to echo their more important brother, Arac. This must be done, however, so that these two

men are not overshadowed by the greater prominence given to Arac by virtue of the fact that his is a solo part, and, usually, played by a member of the society who has achieved more fame in its productions than have the two choristers who accompany him on all his entrances. From the point of view of the balance of the cast all three should be regarded as equal. While Arac should be depicted as a swarthy man, with black wig and beard, the others are more blonde. One (it matters not which) is ruddy, with red hair and whiskers; the other fairer, though with a decided touch of red about his hair. Apart from this difference, the physical appearance of all three is the same, so that an exact similarity of build and height is an enormous help to the trio.

LADY PSYCHE has as much "character" as some of the soprano leads in other operas. This means that the part is vaguely drawn, and offers little upon which one can base any advice as to the manner in which it should be played. Professorial and human, possibly, best describe Psyche's characteristics, and it is on such lines that the best results will be obtained. Psyche has neither the dignity of Lady Blanche nor the graciousness of Princess Ida—the only other members of the faculty at Castle Adamant whom we meet. In addition to a sufficiently good voice and knowledge of singing to tackle some difficult music, the actress requires a strong personality. This is necessary, not only so that she may gently dominate the chorus (her students), but on account of the fact that the part is pitted against the most important principals, by whom she must not be overshadowed. Her seriousness is a foil to the high spirits of Melissa and to the gaiety of the three men; it should not be over-drawn.

SACHARISSA, CHLOE, and ADA are taken from the chorus. The first has one line of solo singing, and all three have a certain amount of dialogue. None calls for any special remark, save that the players must not strive for, or receive, any undue prominence. In no way are they distinguished from the rest of the students, except that, at the end, they are "paired off" with Arac and his brothers. These three girls are, in fact, better described as "chorus leaders" than as "parts."

GO-TO (*The Mikado*) is an optional character. He appears in some performances where the Pish-Tush has not a sufficiently heavy voice for

the bass line in "Brightly Dawns our Wedding Day." But there seems to be a tendency nowadays to have a Go-To whether this consideration applies or not. When so introduced, Go-To takes over the second act entrance and dialogue assigned to Pish-Tush in the libretto immediately before the madrigal. Usually Go-To is the "No. 1" bass chorister, by whom the line, "Why, who are you who ask this question?" is sung in the opening of the first act. Alternatively, the name is sometimes applied, in amateurs' programmes, to that chorister when Pish-Tush does, in fact, sing in the madrigal. But such a course is without authority and should rightly be discouraged.

PEEP-BO is, frankly, a difficult part. There is nothing into which the player can "get her teeth," and, of course, there is the disadvantage that the part is a typical Gilbertian feminine role in so far as character (or the lack of it) is concerned. No sooner has Peep-Bo started than she has finished. Then, again, Peep-Bo scarcely opens her mouth but to make the most idiotic or obvious remarks. For all that, the part needs careful study and capable playing. It is not one to be thrown at any one who, let us say, deserves a part but has not shown promise of being able to sustain one. For Peep-Bo is one of that all important trio of the "three little maids," and must keep in the picture with her more important and prominent sisters. The part should be modelled more on the lines of the soubrette group, rather than on those of the sopranos. Incidentally, three girls of similar build and height should be chosen for these three parts.

OLD ADAM GOODHEART (*Ruddigore*), the conventional good old man of melodrama in the first act, does not so successfully assume the villainy of the wicked steward of the second. It is not a part that calls for more than average singing or acting ability, although there is nothing

to be lost by regarding it in the light of one of the fifth group ("subsidiary but important") male parts. Nevertheless, the part must be regarded as incidental to the story rather than as a principal role. A straightforward character of benevolence in the first act, Adam, as has been hinted, becomes more complicated in the second act



LEONARD MERYLL TAKES LEAVE OF HIS FATHER

This small role in *The Yeomen of the Guard* is an important one to the development of the plot. A mainly, self-effacing cameo.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

Here, despite the appearance, bearing, and manner of the evil servant, there remains more than a trace of the kindly old man. This can best be achieved by avoiding any subtlety in the portrayal of the wicked steward; rather let there be the appearance that a part is being acted. Sometimes the metamorphosis is indicated merely by a change of costume. It is better that Adam should change his physical appearance, as does his master. In place of the white-haired, rosy-checked, old man of the first act, there should be represented a cadaverous, hollow-checked, man with black hair. The make-up should not be changed so much, or so heavily applied, that there would be any difficulty in recognizing the same man. To this end, one should see that the wigs worn are identical in style, although vastly different as regards colour, the one being white and the other black.

RUTH and ZORAH, the leaders of the professional bridesmaids, do not call for any particular comment. They stand in exactly the same relation to the general scheme of *Ruddigore* as do Sacharissa, Chloe, and Ada to *Princess Ida*.

LEONARD MERYLL (*The Yeomen of the Guard*) is almost negligible from the actor's point of view, although what little he has to do is not only worth doing well, but demands being done well. Limited though it be to one trio, the part is of more account vocally. Leonard is on the stage for so short a time that there is little chance for formulating a well-defined characterization. But we have ample chance to observe his father and sister; both engagingly human people, full of character and pluck. It is not unreasonable to expect that Leonard would be cast in the same mould. The part calls for an easy, boyish, portrayal, free from any swagger or bombast. When he says "I am no braggart," the audience must feel that not only is he speaking the truth, but that he is stating (to him) a trivial fact. At his second act entrance, Leonard is, of course, brimming over with excitement at the good news he brings, and takes but little notice of Wilfred, nor does he pay much heed to the jailor's air of proprietorship towards Phoebe. Leonard's final entrance is not indicated in the libretto. After Fairfax has declared himself in the finale, Leonard slips in unobtrusively from the wings. He joins Kate with an air of inquiry—"Hullo, what's going on here?"—and Kate explains. This is done so unobtrusively that it is scarcely noticed (if at all), but it helps to fill in, and give a reason for, an otherwise false entrance.

THE FIRST YEOMAN is the tenor soloist; that is, the second one actually to sing. As originally designed, the solo, "This the Autumn of our Life," was to be sung by Sergeant Meryll, but was subsequently taken over, and has ever since been sung, by the SECOND YEOMAN (baritone). The Yeomen soloists—of whom there were once four—sang the couplets, "Did'st thou not, oh Leonard Meryll" in the first act finale. The first of these being set for tenor, the soloist was rightly designated "First Yeoman." This apparent misnomer is further complicated because the Second Yeoman has always spoken before the First Yeoman has sung; for Dame Carruthers passes a few remarks with him on her first entrance.

Although the casting of these two little parts is primarily the musical director's prerogative, it is necessary to get men who will move easily and naturally. In the finale, for instance, they have to leave the semi-circle of yeomen, move across to Fairfax, and sing their couplets. They then shake hands with him and with Meryll, and return to their places. Here one wants no awkwardness, no suggestion of the soloists coming to the centre of the stage to sing their little piece of music and then returning to their original places.

THE FIRST and SECOND CITIZENS are also selected from the chorus, but, in this case, solely on account of their acting ability. Apart from their one scene with Elsie and Jack Point, they are in no more prominence than the rest of the male citizens, except for a small piece of business during the number "Like a Ghost his Vigil Keeping." The male citizens should be standing in a group behind Jack Point and Wilfred. The First Citizen takes the arquebus from Wilfred, who snatches it away at the line "Arquebus from sentry snatching . . ." This finds the Citizen unprepared, and he exhibits mild surprise at Shadbolt's sudden action. If there be any difference in age between these two parts, it is usual for the first citizen to be the younger of the two in appearance.

THE HEADSMAN is sometimes regarded as being a "part"; more properly he comes among the "supers," and although there are decided responsibilities falling to the Headsman, I prefer to place him in the second of these categories.

KATE is overshadowed in importance by the three principals concerned in her scene. The vocal side of the character is the more important in casting this character, as the unaccompanied quartet, "Strange Adventure," can stand or fall by the singing of the soprano. But the advice already stressed applies equally to Kate; the part must be cast so that the personality of the player will stand up to the more prominent characters with whom she is, for so short a space, brought into contact. In the first act Kate should appear with the chorus (unless there are so many choristers that her assistance is not needed). She also enters with the chorus for the second act finale, partnering the real Leonard, as already mentioned, at the end.

ANTONIO (*The Gondoliers*) needs a pleasant personality coupled with a capable baritone voice. And equally, if not more, important, he should be a really good dancer. After singing "The Merriest Fellows Are We," Antonio returns to the line of the chorus and does not come into an especial prominence again during the first act. The character is non-existent in the second act, but it is usual to find the actor who has played Antonio (usually partnered by Fiametta) in one of the principal couples to dance the cachuca.

FRANCESCO, as a part, is microscopic, consisting of one line of none-too-easy music. But, as the first of the tenor choristers, he might also appear prominently in the cachuca, with Vittoria as his partner.

GIORGIO, too, is confined to one sung line, shorter even than Francesco's, but he reappears in the second act with the interjection, "Exactly!" and one speech, which should be rendered in a most off-hand and lackadaisical manner.

ANNIBALE, a speaking part in the second act of *The Gondoliers*, calls for a commanding presence with an authoritative style of speaking. Both part and actor must be quite capable of holding their own in the duel of words in which Annibale engages the dual King. There is nothing to single the part out from the chorus in the first act, nor does he figure again prominently in the second. Annibale, being a dignified court official, should not be called upon to take part in the cachuca.

FIAMETTA, although she very largely plays with the chorus, is more than one of their number. In importance, the part falls somewhere between Psyche, in *Princess Ida*, and Isobel, in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Much of the effectiveness of the opening of the first act and the entrance of the contadine in the second depend upon a good Fiametta.

VITTORIA is the "opposite number" to Fiametta, but has less work to do. She, too, should be bright, tending in some respects towards the soubrette type. GIULIA ranks with Francesco: a small amount of solo work in the first act opening, subsequently fading into the chorus.

INEZ may be given the full dignity of a principal, or, as is most usual, appear with the

chorus (though naturally not in her character) during the first act. Indeed, the player can conveniently defer her change until after the cachuca, thus helping (and usually helping considerably) with the musical *ensemble* of this number and the preceding entrance of the girls. Inez's one little scene is effective, and is not to be slurred over by regarding the part as of little importance. It is nothing of the kind, for it leads to the dramatic climax of the opera. Inez is, for these few moments, the centre of interest. Such being the case, care should be taken that her appearance is in every way convincing. Some people seem to consider that the costume and a white wig are sufficient. Inez is getting on in years, and must show this in her face and bearing. Also, it must not be forgotten that she has spent some time in the torture chamber just before her entrance, and despite the kindly attention and distraction afforded by a supply of illustrated papers, she would be expected to show some signs of her ordeal. It is little points like this that require as much attention in these minor roles as they do in the case of the most important principals.

THE SMALL BOY AND THE SUPERS

Finally, in the survey of the parts that make up the Savoy operas, we come to those humble members of the cast—the "supers." In this respect an amateur society is usually better off than a professional company. Professional supers are engaged as and when required, and go through their parts in what is often a none too convincing manner after a hurried rehearsal at the hands of the stage-manager or his assistant. But amateur supers can receive as much instruction as that given to any other member of the cast. There are always to be found certain members or friends whose acting abilities may be most pronounced, but whose lack of vocal powers precludes them from active participation in the chorus or in principal parts. Such is the appeal of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas that people join as honorary members merely for the pleasure of being allowed to attend the rehearsals. Such people are not loth to make themselves useful; one way in which this is done is by walking-on as supers.

In addition to supers, Gilbert made use of a

small boy in some of his operas, and let it be said once and for all *he must be a small boy*. To allow a girl to play, say, the midshipman in *H.M.S. Pinafore* completely demolishes, not only the stage picture, but the ship-board atmosphere of



THE GILBERTIAN SMALL BOY

As he appears in *The Yeomen of the Guard*—self-possessed yet self-effacing

Photo by J. W. DeLanham

the opera. It also has the effect of reducing the opera (or, for that matter, any similar work) to the level of a revue. The ideal Gilbertian small boy is really small in stature; his age, say, about twelve years. He must be keen, unself-conscious, and, above all, self-effacing.

One must guard against the deplorable tendency, in amateur circles, to give undue prominence to child players. Naturally there is a certain interest in the work of a clever child, but this must never be forced at the expense of the general ensemble. The Gilbert boy is a small part of the whole—usually a bit of local colour, as it were—and he must be kept within the true focus and perspective of the opera. This, too, might be taken into account in the case of honorary members acting as supers. However important such members may be in the economic or social scheme of the society, they are, by “walking-on,” joining the humblest grade of stage players.

Both supers and the boy appear in *The Sorcerer*, the boy, Hercules by name, actually having a line to speak. He is dressed in page’s uniform, and comes on at Alexis’s call, obviously interrupted in a raid on a jam pot. In view of the name (which should not appear on the programme), the smaller the boy the richer is the effect. There is also a stately family butler, who is seen to open the front door of the mansion whenever a character makes an entrance or exit from that direction in the first act. This butler, assisted by a younger footman and Hercules, hands round the mugs of tea with which the villagers are regaled at the close of the first act. These three servants should be dressed in a distinctive modern, but not ornate, livery.

For *H.M.S. Pinafore* we need a larger, and better trained, body of supers; the Sergeant of Marines and his squad—its number varying from two to four, according to the size of the stage. The man to whom the sergeant is given should have a good carrying voice, so that the few commands that fall to him—“Present Arms,” “Left Turn,” “Halt,” etc.—can be given efficiently and correctly. There is no reason why the amateur super should not be able to do this; one recalls professional instances where the commands have been most realistically uttered—but the voice has been that of one of the stage officials, and, heard from the front rows of the theatre, this voice has too obviously come from the wings. The marines should be carefully drilled in the necessary rifle exercises. The “Shoulder Arms” of the ’70’s must be used, rather than the modern “Slope Arms.” Quite apart from any other

consideration, this is far more easy to achieve on a crowded stage. Plenty of time spent in the drilling of this small body of men will be amply repaid by the effect of an efficient squad of marines that will be obtained.

Then there is the small Midshipman who receives one of Little Buttercup's sticks of peppermint rock, and who is prominent during Sir Joseph's inspection of the crew and after the arrest of Ralph in the second act. It is largely on account of these little incidents that one so rarely sees a satisfactory portrayal of this part on the amateur stage. The error of introducing a girl in the part may have been made, or else it has been allowed to get out of focus. As has been shown, there are one or two occasions on which the midshipman is a prominent figure in the stage picture, but no more importance attaches to these incidents than would be the case in real life. And a midshipman, despite the tender years at which he assumes responsibility, is very small fry indeed. Once the names of the midshipman and of the sergeant of marines were included in the cast. This has long since been discontinued. The proper place for the names of the players (and indeed of all the supers) is with the chorus.

One super is required in *Iolanthe* to represent the Lord Chancellor's train-bearer. This character accompanies his principal on the latter's first entrance. He holds the train of the Chancellor's cloak during the song, "The Law is the true embodiment." Consequently this super is, for a few moments, very much in the eye of the audience. The ability to keep an absolutely straight face, to be able to move easily, and to bring some dignity to this tiny cameo are important. The train-bearer has to make a gliding step to the left or right as the Chancellor makes his little leaps in each verse. At the end of the song, the Chancellor will turn to the train-bearer, who will loop the robe over his lordship's arm, and retire gracefully, backwards, into the wings. The train-bearer should not be represented as a page-boy. He is one who has grown old in the Lord Chancellor's service.

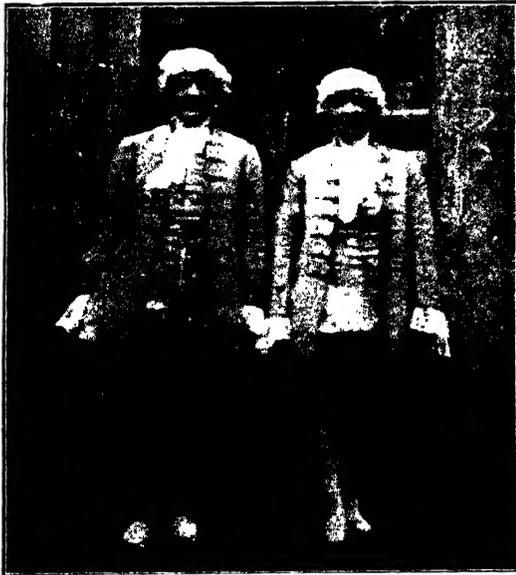
Gilbert laid down that none of his actors was to appear in woman's clothes, and vice-versa. This tradition, apparently, was not intended to apply to the supers, since we always find that the professional "Daughters of the Plough" in

Princess Ida are played, not convincingly, by male supers. Provided the material is available, these picturesquely titled fetchers and carriers of Castle Adamant might well be taken in amateur performances by players of the right sex. There should be three or four of these women, who are best described as hefty (rather than buxom) Amazons. In appearance, bearing, and by virtue of their barbaric attire, they should present a direct contrast to the more dainty femininity of the girl graduates. Their duties are to bring on the food and drink for the luncheon in Act II, and to arrest and hold in custody the three princes when the masquerade of these young men is discovered.

A minimum of two supers, in addition to the boy, is needed for *The Mikado*; a larger number is a distinct advantage. These men form the fearsome looking body-guard that precedes the Mikado. According to their number, so they enter in one or two groups. Having marched on the stage, they turn with military precision to face the audience, march down to the footlights, turn, and take up positions near the bench on which the Mikado and Katisha eventually sit. This must be fitted in to the music, so that the stage is left clear for the actual entrance of the emperor and Katisha. The guards stand, immobile, all through the Mikado's song and the following trio. After this number, when the chorus exits, so do the guards leave the stage independently, by the nearest wing. The guards reappear, after the chorus has entered, for the finale, during which they stand in line across the back of the stage.

These men can also be usefully employed in the first act as coolies. They appear through the double doors at the back, and stand to either side of it, before Ko-Ko makes his first entrance, disappearing through the doors when the chorus exit is made after the "Little List" song. After Katisha has made her dramatic appearance—as soon as she has advanced to the front of the stage—these coolies again come on and take up the same positions as on the earlier entrance, remaining in position, with arms folded and impassive faces, until the curtain has fallen. With the present dresses, there were introduced two female attendants on the Mikado. These will scarcely concern amateurs, since the costumes in

question are not generally available. Two girls from the chorus take these parts. They follow closely behind the Mikado and Katisha in the processional entrance, and stand in the background, in the centre of the stage, while the



THE PAGERS IN "THE GONDOLIERS"

These girls, as recommended in this article, are two choristers who appeared as confidante in the earlier

monarch is singing. At the end of this song, he makes a gesture of dismissal, and the attendants move round to, and take up positions behind, the bench. This is an effective touch, if nothing more is introduced, but it is impossible with the costumes usually supplied to amateurs.

The small boy reappears in *The Mikado* as Ko-Ko's sword bearer. He comes on behind Ko-Ko when the Lord High Executioner first appears. The boy comes down stage, and kneels, with his forehead on the ground, during the song, "Taken from a County Jail." At the end of the chorus, Ko-Ko places the point of the sword (or the axe with the new costumes) on the ground in front of the boy, who rises, takes the sword in

both hands, runs up to the door, turns, and stands in front of the door until the general exit after the "Little List" song. He is not seen again. The sword-bearer's business has been described at length because so many producers allow the boy undue prominence, and one has seen unauthorized, supposedly comic, business introduced for him.

Most important of the supers in *The Yeomen of the Guard* is the Headsman. It is essential that this part be not allowed to look after itself, or filled in at the last minute, as much depends on careful rehearsing. The entry has to be timed exactly to the music; indeed there is a particular note on which the axe is brought down with a thud on the block as the Headsman takes up his position. This is the chord at the start of the sixteenth bar after letter "N" in the finale—the last bar on page 94 of the current vocal score. Hum this passage, and see how exactly it is fitted to coincide with the fall of the axe. From this point until the curtain has fallen the Headsman has to stand rigid, pervading the stage with his motionless, sinister, presence. One deprecates the occasional practice of allowing a spot light to shine on the Headsman at the end of the act. The final picture is not that of the Headsman standing by himself, but of Elsie lying, fainting, in Fairfax's arms, and Jack Point rushing from the stage, appalled by the appearance of the Headsman, who still stands, like a rock, unmoved by all the commotion.

The other supers in this opera vary according to circumstances. Two are essential—the Headsman's assistants. They have to carry on the block and, later, to seize Wilfred at a sign from the Lieutenant. Struggling and protesting, the jailor is half dragged, half pushed, from the stage by these two men. A telling piece of atmosphere can be achieved by the introduction of a chaplain, in white cassock and cowl. He follows the executioner's assistants, and, when the block has been placed in position, makes the sign of the cross above it. He then retires to the background, where he remains, as if in prayer, until the hubbub at the news of Fairfax's escape. The chaplain slips off the stage unobtrusively during this commotion. The part of the chaplain, incidentally, can be recommended as a useful, though unofficial, occupation for Leonard Meryll. It beguiles the

monotony of this actor's long wait, and there is little chance of recognition. The lowered lights and the shadow cast by the cowl make the removal of Leonard's moustache sufficient safeguard, although it is better that the pallor of a priest's face be assumed in place of Leonard's more robust complexion.

Four or five men, dressed as soldiers, should accompany the Lieutenant and disperse the crowd after Jack Point's and Elsie's scene with the citizens. These supers might also appear just within the archway in the first act finale, and thus help the yeomen to line the way from the tower to the scaffold. These soldiers, however, are rarely seen in amateur performances, the dispersal of the crowd being undertaken by a few of the yeomen.

When Fairfax appears in the second act finale, he should be attended by two richly dressed gentlemen. These may either be supers or, as is more usual, be taken by two of the citizens. The first and second citizens, who would probably be recognized, should not be given these parts. Among the citizens in the first act is a boy. When the crowd is dispersed, after the number, "I have a song to sing, O!" the boy breaks through the ring of soldiers (or yeomen) and rushes towards Jack Point. Putting his fingers to his nose, he shouts "Yah!" at Jack and beats a precipitous retreat.

The boy makes one more appearance in *The Gondoliers*. Here he is a cheeky little drummer boy in the second act. Like all the other small boys in the operas, he should be kept well in the background. He is seen at the opening of the act, and is on the stage during the dancing of the cachuca. He is full of beans during this number, standing on the steps of the throne, waving his arms and swaying his body to the music. At the end of the dance he sinks exhausted on one of the thrones, fanning himself with his handkerchief. Here he is found by Don Alhambra, who takes him by the ear, and leads him to the wings. Scarcely has the Don relaxed his grip when the boy returns, makes a long nose at him, ejaculates "Yah!" (just like his brother in the previous opera), and flees before the Grand Inquisitor's anger and foot.

There are two pages in this opera, in attendance as train-bearers to the Duchess and Casilda in the second act. One sometimes sees quite small

children used for this purpose, but this is not without its dangers, nor is it traditionally correct. Not only may too much attention be drawn to these mites, but they are apt to look about them and, by slight movements, detract from the picture. These parts do not fall within the "small boy" category, and it is quite in order for them to be taken by girls, but they should be of such an age as not to be excited at the idea of a stage appearance, and therefore able to carry out their small but important task in a neat and unobtrusive manner. Best of all is it to follow present professional precedent, and to take two evenly matched girls from the chorus for the pages. This is feasible even with the smallest chorus, as these two can be on the stage, as contadine, until after the cachuca, having ample time to change during the scenes and two musical numbers that ensue before the ducal party appears.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE PARTS

Taking the characters as a whole, very few make-ups in the operas call for more than average skill. This being so, it is surprising that more amateur societies do not encourage their members to rely on their own efforts. The trouble would be well repaid in the interest the performers would take, for, as Mr. Alfred Hartop clearly shows in *THEATRE AND STAGE*, there are few sides of the actor's craft more fascinating than to see a character taking shape upon one's face (to say nothing of the hands and other features) under one's own guidance. Economically, too, the plan of making the company responsible for their own make-up has much to commend it to societies, as the not inconsiderable expense of hired assistance is avoided.

Against this it may be said, with some degree of truth, that individual action may lead to a strange collection. Some principals will look well made-up, others less so, while with the chorus the range of effect may be even more marked. But the less expert will not lack willing help from their more skilled comrades, while, naturally, each make-up would have to be approved (and if needs be finished off) by the stage-manager. Apart from any other consideration, there is everything to be said for having the make-up under the direct supervision of the producer—a desideratum not always attained

where outside professional help is engaged. He will usually find, in the company, enthusiastic helpers who have taken the trouble to study theatrical make-up, and who will assist their less expert colleagues.

The professional *perruquiers*, whether working as free-lances or employed by firms of costumiers, are all trained to their work, and, for the most part, are artists with stage experience. But few of them seem to be attuned to the modern, soft, stage lighting, and are apt to ply their craft with memories of the period when a heavy, exaggerated make-up was the rule. Two other factors which weigh heavily against the employment of outside help are that the *perruquiers* cannot be expected to know the important considerations of the size of the theatre or hall, and the nature of its stage lighting. And I have rarely met one who has taken the trouble to make any inquiry, or pay any attention to, these all-important facts. The second factor is that they have no time or opportunity to make a careful study of the individual faces, with the result that they tend to develop a stock make-up for each type of character, irrespective of whether it be suitable for the particular face "under treatment" or not. And to this last criticism I would add what is really the crux of the matter where the Savoy operas are concerned. The Gilbert and Sullivan characters are not recognizable as such by the nature of their faces or expressions. There is a subtle difference between the make-up required for, say, a George Graves part and a Lytton part.

The manner of achieving the appearance of a character could not be entered into here without trespassing on another writer's preserves, so in discussing make-up as applicable to Gilbert and Sullivan characters, the reader must supplement my remarks with the excellent technical guidance and advice given by Mr. Hartop. But, in explaining what effects are needed, I shall have occasion to say something, though not in full detail, about how they are to be achieved.

In these operas, the characters calling for the more elaborate make-ups are Dick Deadeye, King Gama, Wilfred Shadbolt, the male choruses in *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe*, and the Japanese disguises required in *The Mikado*. Taking the first of these, there has to be assumed

as Dick Deadeye (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) the shape and bearing of a grotesque, twisted figure of almost horrific appearance. In fact the greatest care has to be taken to avoid the appearance of the character being repulsive to the eyes of the audience. The bent body is obtained by the actor assuming, and holding, the necessary wry crouch. In this he is aided by a pad, supplied with the costume, to represent the humped shoulder. Care should be taken to see that this pad is well secured so that it cannot slip down. Deadeye's face is distorted and screwed up towards the blind left eye. After a not too deep groundwork has been put on, the effect of this twisted face is obtained through judicious shading rather than by the application of nose-paste or other built-up aids.

The twisted nose is simply a question of properly applied highlights. Start with a line of white (or some colour much lighter than the ground-work) at the root of the nose. Keep this line to the right of the natural highlight of the nose, bringing it down in a slightly crooked diagonal direction to finish above the left nostril. The effect is, of course, accentuated by darkening the nose from the edges of the white line, taking care that the shades are toned into each other. This will be found to give a most satisfactory impression of a nose that has, apparently, been pushed over to the left.

The rest of the face must conform to this distortion. Therefore, place a line, or shadow, in a downward direction at the right-hand corner of the mouth, with a corresponding, but upward, twist at the left-hand corner. It should be noted that the left-hand shading should be rather wide of the actual corner of the mouth, but the right-hand one should coincide with the join of the lips. A furrow should run down from each nostril to beside the mouth. Here, again, a lop-sided effect must be obtained by placing the right-hand line rather inside the natural furrow, while the left-hand one should be kept slightly above. Finally, mark the cleft between the nose and upper lip with a decided cant towards the left, and the finished result will give both the sneering expression and distorted effect of the twisted face. As the left eye is closed, that brow will be lower than the other, and this is achieved by rubbing a reddish mixture of colour—approximating to that of the wig—into the left eyebrow, but

bringing the colour rather below the level of the real hair. On the other side the operation is reversed.

The effect of the closed eye is best obtained by cutting a piece of gauze to fit the hollow above the eye socket. When this is firmly in position, fixed with spirit gum or whatever adherent the actor prefers, it should be carefully trimmed in order to fit neatly below the eye. Then it should be gummed round its remaining edges and held in position until it fits comfortably and without creasing. It is advisable to keep the eye slightly closed during the attachment of this patch. When it is dry, the eye may be opened, the muscular expansion helping to smooth out any incipient creases. But if the eye has been closed tightly during the attachment of the patch, opening it will have the result that the gauze will be pulled away, a painful operation involving a tedious repetition of the work. The grease paint must be removed from that portion of the skin to which the patch is to be affixed. When the patch is quite dry, the face ground colour should be worked up over it, so that it appears as a natural part of the skin. The eye itself might be indicated by a thin line, thus giving the effect of a tightly closed eyelid. Any impression of either an empty socket or a staring dead eye (despite the character's name) should be avoided. Although described last, in practice it will usually be found desirable to adjust the eye-shield before the shading of the face is carried out.

The whiskers supplied for Dick Deadeye are usually unsatisfactory, being nothing but a hideous, unnaturally bright red fringe, although there are signs that several costumiers are now sending out a more natural adornment of a lighter, sandy hue. But, in any case, it is preferable to spend the little extra time and trouble involved in fashioning side-whiskers out of crêpe-hair, bearing in mind that, although thickest on the jaw and cheeks, Deadeye's whiskers actually pass under, and meet below, the chin.

Reference to the other beards worn in *H.M.S. Pinafore* can usefully be made here. For Bill Bobstay and Bob Becker, grey wigs with pointed beards and moustaches are usually supplied. These two characters are more traditionally correct if they are depicted with the shaven upper lip, which really belongs to an earlier period than



DICK DEADEYE

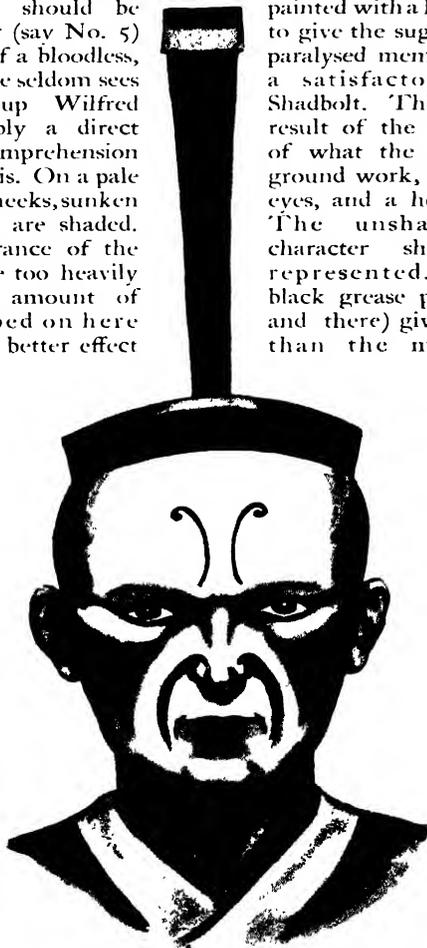
The sketch shows the lopsided character of the face. Note how the shading is taken round the edges of the eye patch. See also the photograph on page 677.

that of the opera. This effect is easily obtained by not using the moustaches and combing out the beards until they are less pointed.

The twisted effect of King Gama's face in *Princess Ida* is obtained in the same manner as is Deadeye's, except that it is an additional effect if the tip of the nose be given a rather one-sided, bulbous appearance by the aid of nose paste. Again a shoulder pad is supplied to help the bodily distortion, while the twisted foot and crooked leg are effected by means of pads, worn under the tights. These, with careful adjustment, are as effective as it is possible to make such an illusion.

Both Deadeye and Gama should pay particular attention to the hands. Deadeye, in particular, should appear to have lost the use of his left hand, which should be painted with a light colour (say No. 5) to give the suggestion of a bloodless, paralysed member.

One seldom sees a satisfactory Shadbolt. This is result of the lack of what the part ground work, hollow eyes, and a heavy frown are shaded. The unshaven character should be represented. A black grease paint (dabbed on here and there) gives a much better effect



THE MIKADO

To bring out the lines and shadows required for this character, the face is shown much lighter than would actually be the case. Compare with the photograph on page 648

usual (amateur) application of blue over and under the chin and on the cheeks. And do not forget to see that the hands and neck are in keeping with the

unkempt appearance of face and head. The nose should be slightly, but not comically, crooked.

In *The Pirates of Penzance* each member of the chorus should have an individual make-up. These pirates should be a ruffianly-looking gang, of all ages; most of them should be unkempt. The basses should have the heavier make-up, but this should be of such a nature that it can quickly be removed in order to allow ample time for the change to the policemen of the second act. The police make-up is usually "straight" with the addition of small side whiskers, but early in 1934 D'Oyly Carte audiences were treated to the sight of beards and moustaches, both of which are entirely in keeping with the character of a policeman of the period of the opera.

The peers in *Iolanthe* are a collection of bald-headed, largely be-whiskered, mid-Victorian old gentlemen. If individual faces allow, there is a tradition that a more or less recognizable Beaconsfield should be of their number, while a full-bearded suggestion of Lord Salisbury is another familiar member of this noble gathering. The rule, one chorister one make-up, applies to this opera. Apart from such special portraits as have just been mentioned, each man should become an elderly and ugly version of himself, with the addition of whiskers appropriate to the period. The coronets are twice removed (although for only a few moments) during the first act. Great care, therefore, must be taken to see that the wigs are convincingly joined to the foreheads, and that the bald pates are unwrinkled.

The make-up for *The Mikado* is easier than might be imagined. It is the suggestion that is called for more than precise verisimilitude, both in principals and chorus. The tilted eyebrows are easily obtained, while the slanting eyes of the Oriental are suggested by a thin black line taken across the upper eyelid and beyond the eye in an upward direction, with another line, pointing downwards, in the inner corner of the eye. Both these lines must have suitable highlights. It is unnecessary to go to any further trouble than this; indeed, for the girls, the first of these lines will be sufficient. As regards Katisha, the make-up should be ugly without being grotesque. A pallid, rather haggard, face and severe expression, aided by the costume and wig, should present no difficulty.

There is one other point. When *The Mikado* was re-dressed, the make-up of the men's chorus was somewhat altered. The faces were made to appear more convincingly Oriental, and long drooping side whiskers were added in some cases. It is possible that these costumes may gradually become available for amateurs' use, and when this occurs, it is suggested that the more convincing make-up be used.

For the Mikado himself a more elaborate make-up is needed. High cheek bones should be shaded on a brownish-yellow foundation of a darker shade than that used by the other characters. A cynical expression is given by deep, well-defined, and somewhat sneering furrows, running from the nostrils to below the mouth. The lips should be bloodless and thin, and shadowed with a downward line at each corner. The neck, too, should be shaded and hollowed, while the back of the hands and fingers should be given a talon-like appearance by shading as described on page 461. The slant of the eyes will repay more care and detail than is called for in the other parts, since more individual attention is attracted to this imposing figure.

The natural eyebrows should be painted out, and replaced by "caste-marks"—two almost perpendicular lines running from the real eyebrows to about the join of the wig. At the top these lines should be thickened and turned out to a rounded point, giving the appearance of an exaggerated pair of eyebrows. One sometimes sees ordinary "Japanese" eyebrows painted in addition to these marks. This is really a mistake, though technically it may be correct. To an audience unacquainted with the niceties of caste-marks (as most people would be) the question would arise: "Why has the Mikado two pairs of eyebrows?" The new dress discounts the value of these lines, and ordinary, oblique, eyebrows should be given to this character.

For the rest of the characters, large and small, in these operas nothing out of the ordinary line of "straight" or "character" make-up is needed. Nor is it at all necessary, as so many *perruquiers* would have us believe, that a comedy part should always be recognized as such by a fixed smile painted upon its countenance in no hesitating manner. A glance at photographs of this type of character will show that in no case does the

face—by itself—give any clue to the fact that a comedy character is depicted. The natural expression may do so to some extent, but never the constant mask of the make-up. Besides, several excellent Gilbert and Sullivan comedians have not a face that will adapt itself to this painted-smile type of make-up, and it is an elementary axiom of the art that no line should be put on a face that Nature cannot place there. A smile, when it is needed, is better real than synthetic.

THE OPERAS AND THEIR ATMOSPHERE

One necessary and important attribute of the Savoy tradition is that of "atmosphere." Apart from that atmosphere which is generated by attention to team work, serious acting with a twinkle in the eye, clear diction in dialogue and singing, and all the other traditional aspects, there is a further atmosphere which is derived from a realization that each opera has its own particular key-note (in fact its own atmosphere). Both this particular, and the general, atmosphere will cover up many short-comings in the vocal and histrionic powers of a society. One frequently sees performances which, in these last two respects, fall well below the average amateur standard, but which are far more convincing and pleasing than productions by some tip-top organizations. The reason for this is that the company has become inculcated with this atmosphere, and thus achieves a performance which, in spirit, successfully reproduces the effects for which author and composer sought. And this may be—nay, is—a far happier result than to give a performance which is technically at a high acting and singing level yet lacks this essential atmosphere.

The Savoy series does not consist of so many operas all cast in a common mould. Rather are they as the members of a family; each with its individualism, yet all stamped with unmistakable signs of close relationship. Therefore one must regard each opera separately in trying to find the atmosphere peculiar to it. This has been explained to some extent by the survey of the characters. There we saw the characteristics of the men and women who go to make up the lovable people who inhabit this whimsical, Gilbertian world. But such a survey would be

incomplete without the extension of its manner to the operas themselves. So, briefly, let us run through the characteristics of each of the eleven operas so dealt with in much the same way as we looked at the characters.

Described as a "dramatic cantata," *Trial by*



THE PIRATE KING

This delightful burlesque character in one of his many "penny plain, twopence coloured" attitudes
Photo by J. W. Debonham

Jury is not only the shortest of the series (it plays, on an average, but thirty-five minutes) but it is also the only one in which there is no spoken dialogue. It is a merry little satire, and should be played in a light-hearted, almost irresponsible, spirit. The fun, though, must never be allowed to become boisterous. This sentence will not be

repeated, although it applies equally to all the later works. The whole position as described in the piece is itself so absurd that a certain amount of exaggeration in the playing is excusable—indeed almost unavoidable. Despite this, it must be borne in mind that the music and words are of the first importance; the business is secondary, and must never be allowed to obscure them. Thus, although the exaggerated nature of the characters—with which they are endowed by the author—may be pointed to some extent by the players, these actors must never show, for one single instant, that they are in any way aware of the absurdity of the piece and its situations.

In the next opera, *The Sorcerer*, was to be found the nucleus of the stock company, and hence the genesis of the grouped parts, although these parts had to be much developed before they reached their full maturity. Despite the profession of its central character the atmosphere of the opera is not that of the black arts and the supernatural, but of rural England—bright, fresh, and joyous. Even the undoubtedly "Gilbertian" plot is immature, as are characterization, lyrics, and music. These reasons account for the fact that the opera is not in the run of first favourites. It does not "play itself" to the extent that some of the later works do, and it is not an easy work to "get over" convincingly. Yet it is well worth doing if it is done well. This proviso will be helped, then, if the atmosphere is developed, and the production made redolent of the village green and summer-time revels.

The main thing that characterizes *H.M.S. Pinafore* is, of course, the naval atmosphere, which pervades the opera from start to finish. The stage-setting and dressing alone will neither give nor preserve this atmosphere. There must be a naval slickness and precision pervading the whole production. The characters are well drawn and clearly defined types—the bluff, hearty captain; the inevitable "grouser," Dick Deadeye; the honest, open, sailor-man, Ralph; and so on. In themselves the characters are real; it is what they do and say, and how they do and say it, that makes them comic opera characters. So we must look for this reality—this exact naval picture—to be extended to the chorus and production. These sailors, who sing and dance and appear to be on such excellent terms with their

captain and the First Lord's relatives, must make the audience feel that they are real sailors. Herein lies one fundamental difference between Gilbert and Sullivan opera and musical comedy. In the first case we look on *real* sailors, as it were, in the other nothing more than the illusion of good-looking young men dressed as sailors. This is a distinction with a difference, and is applicable to all the operas.

In *The Pirates of Penzance*, with all its improbabilities and inconsistencies, we have what is intended to be a musical burlesque of the various "tricks of the trade" of Italian grand opera. We have to overlook that, in doing this, Sullivan has achieved something that is almost, if not quite, the real thing! There is Mabel's aria, "Poor Wandering One." This is by no means an easy piece of music, and it would probably never occur to any singer to regard it as a burlesque of *Ah, fors è lui* (which undoubtedly must have inspired Sullivan in his "guying" of Verdi), and certainly no audience would ever accept this delightful song as a parody. In fact, the musical side of the burlesque does not really enter into the atmosphere of the opera. So we look elsewhere for this burlesque—and find it in the characters. The gestures and posturing of the Pirate King provide it; it is to be found in the qualifications of the Major-General, which are more academic than martial. And, like all burlesque, it is all the more amusing if rendered in dead seriousness.

Although much of the original sting of *Patience* is lost on present-day audiences the opera remains one of the wittiest and most popular of the series, as well as being one of the most melodious. Though the actual movement that excited Gilbert's mordant satire is long past we still have our Bunthornes—and our rapturous maidens to hang upon their every word. Without

making the characterization of the two main characters too modern (Grosvenor with a lisping, effeminate voice, and Bunthorne with an ultra-Oxford accent would be unbearable), these two parts should be based more on their present-day counterparts than on the almost forgotten



A DRAMATIC INCIDENT

When E. Shadforth, held responsible for ELLIOT'S escape, is seized by the executioner's assistants.

Photo by J. W. DeBorham.

originals. If the satiric intention of ridiculing a "precious" cult is realized by the actors, *Patience* will be made to live and prove most diverting to an audience to which these fore-runners of our "super-highbrows" mean nothing.

Iolanthe presents a whimsical mixture of fairyland and political satire. The first of these attributes is the more pronounced in the opera's atmosphere, for even the mortal politicians are whimsical despite their air of solemnity. The whole opera requires a light, delicate touch. The heaviness and pomposity of the peers, for example, are depicted in a humorous way, such emphasis as is required being provided by the blare and crash of brass that accompanies this noble

assembly's first appearance. Indeed, in this opera, more than in any other, Sullivan provides his characters with descriptive music. That fussy little fugal figure (it could almost be called a *leit motif*) which heralds the Lord Chancellor; Private Willis's rough philosophy finds its musical counterpart; the reed-pipe melody for Strephon and Phyllis; all these tell us all there is to know of the characters without the need for verbal explanation (although this is also given). The fairies have their appropriate music, which helps to gloss over the frequently far from fairy-like appearance of the chorus.

Two points of difference separate *Princess Ida* from all the other works in the series. In the first place, it is the only one in three acts instead of the usual two. That, however, does not affect the atmosphere as does the other difference. The dialogue is in blank verse, and the lack of the whimsicality and topsy-turveydom that play so large a part in the other operas places *Princess Ida* in a totally different category. Perhaps this accounts for the lack of success that often attends amateur productions of the opera; it is regarded, from the point of view of atmosphere, as being like *Patience* or *The Mikado*. An entirely different style of treatment is called for. The atmosphere is that of medieval romance rather than of comic opera, yet spiced with the real Gilbert wit, and with typical Sullivanesque music—music which, in the second act if nowhere else, reaches as high a pitch of tunefulness as any of his opera scores.

On the other hand, *The Mikado* is essentially an opera in which high spirits abound; it is, in fact, a comic opera above all the others in the series. It has its moments of sentiment and drama, but these—though of great beauty—are overshadowed by the brilliant wit and comedy, and the sparkling music, which run through the opera. One must not misunderstand or emphasize the word "comic" as applied to *The Mikado*; neither the opera nor any one of the parts ever descends to farce, and any inclination towards clowning or over-exuberance in playing or production must be strictly discouraged.

The key-note of *Ruddigore* is burlesque. Not, as in *The Pirates of Penzance*, a burlesque so well executed that it becomes what it sets out to parody, but an easily recognizable burlesque of

the old Adelphi and transpontine melodramas. The opera, then, must be played with all the force of the old-time melodramatic school of acting; all the characters of this type of play are there—the wicked squire, the faithful servant, the rollicking sailor-hero, and the bashful village maiden among them. But these types must be presented seriously. Burlesque, may I repeat, is ever the more amusing the more convincing and serious the acting. This is all the more important in *Ruddigore*, since modern audiences will be, to a great extent, unfamiliar with the dramatic form burlesqued. So, too, will be many of the players. While advising, then, the society that is about to attempt *Ruddigore* to acquire the necessary manner by hook or by crook, one would not discourage them; for the opera is both captivating and amusing if played in a more modern style. But it cannot be disguised that, for its fullest success and attractiveness, the spirit of melodrama is necessary.

With one set of scenery, a large cast of principal and minor characters, and few changes of costume, *The Yeomen of the Guard* is one of the most popular of the operas among amateurs. Other considerations account for its equal popularity with their audiences. This opera is also set in a different style—the change is in many ways even more marked than is the case with *Princess Ida*. Although all the traditional requirements and attributes are present the work is far more serious, both in theme and treatment, than any of the other Savoy operas. There is an absence of topsy-turveydom and the Gilbertian situation in the telling of this tale of Tudor London, although Gilbert has been unable to keep an inkling of both these from his libretto.

The Yeomen of the Guard is not, as is so often stated, grand opera. It is without any doubt comic opera in the narrowest and truest sense of that term—an opera of the nature of *Carmen* or *Die Meistersinger* (which, although it occupies a proud position among the grand operas of international fame is really comic opera). But if "comic opera" is given its accepted meaning in this country then it is open to doubt if *The Yeomen of the Guard* is comic opera. This does not mean that comedy is lacking from the work. Jack Point, the comedy lead, obtains his comedy form the character's plying of his trade—that

of a jester. Wilfred Shadbolt, whom some amateurs regard as a gloriously humorous character, is, in the playing, one of the most serious and well-thought-out of Gilbert's creations. Yet this creature's lines receive their full measure of laughs. Dramatically, the work is of a higher standard than the others.

For the most part the characterization is better defined than is usual in the Savoy series, although there are some lamentable discrepancies and inconsistencies, notably in the drawing of Colonel Fairfax and Elsie Maynard. Played as a serious but not solemn work, and allowing the plentiful comedy to look after itself, amateurs will find little difficulty in presenting this opera in a convincing and successful way. But if either the comedy or the tragedy is allowed to over-top the other, then disaster lies ahead, for the two aspects dovetail so well into each other that neither requires any emphasis. Above all, the romantic touch of the Middle Ages should be allowed full scope.

Another sparkling work is *The Gondoliers*. An important point for all connected with a production of this opera is that, like the officers at the Baratarian court, all principal parts rank equally. Gilbert had his own reasons why "all shall equal be" which do not apply to an amateur production (or should not). But there must be this equal balance. The main theme is twice broken into, for long periods, to deal with the fortunes of the Duke of Plaza-Toro. These, in the main, have nothing to do with the story. While the ducal party occupies the stage one must not forget the gondoliers and their brides. Nor, during the long absence of the Spanish visitors between their first and second act scene, must their existence pass out of the mind of the audience. And this can only be achieved if there be two evenly matched sets of principals.

In *The Gondoliers* there comes a return to the type of the earlier operas, rather than a following of the new note struck by its immediate predecessor. Jollity and brightness are absolute essentials. Those are the visible attributes towards the atmosphere of the opera. The curtain rises to a cheerful note, which, despite many predicaments, is sustained throughout the performance. Therefore the work should be produced to go with a swing right through.

COSTUME PROBLEMS AND EFFECTS

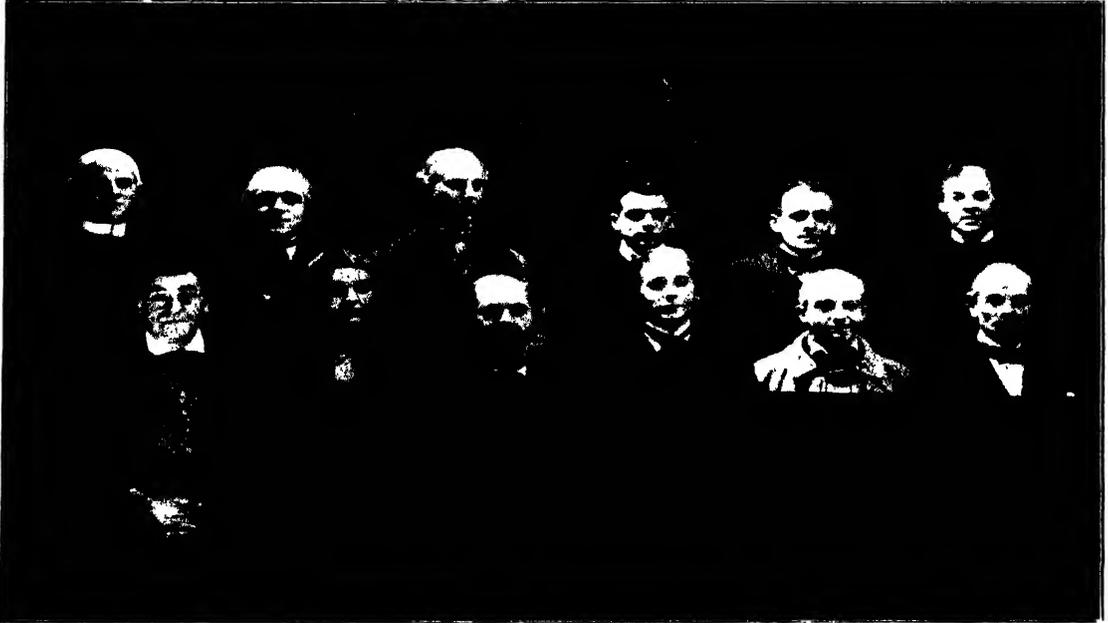
There should not be many dress problems to worry the amateur. In the main, dresses of a specified period or country are plainly indicated, but there are exceptions. One such is *Trial by Jury*. For the full effect of this opera period costumes must be used. It is, however, possible to present this work in modern dress, and there is always a strong temptation to do so for the sake of economy; the opera will, most likely, be presented with another work, and the cost of hiring or making a double set of costumes is not one that a society likes to incur. Candidly, one cannot recommend modern dress; this may have been all right nearer the date of the original production, but the piece has now become a "period piece" in every sense of the word. In fact, with *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*, this little opera is now dressed in an earlier period than that of its birth—a vastly improved stage picture is the result. The plaintiff and her bridesmaids wear crinolined dresses; there are shawls and poke-bonnets for the other ladies, while the jury appear in peg-top trousers, frock coats, artisans' and farmers' clothes of the 'Sixties, with contemporary hair dressing styles and whiskers. To obtain this stage picture, therefore, special costumes will be required with, as has been said, added expense (which must be the deciding factor).

An effective compromise, whereby neither the society's funds nor the atmosphere suffer, can be reached by hiring costumes for the plaintiff, bridesmaids, and legal characters (although, for these last, dark suits worn under the gowns are sufficient). A convincing picture of the jury can be managed by single, stand-up, collars with cravats suitable to the period. Modern clothes, if of a nondescript and rather comical nature, will complete the attire. A dark jacket with light trousers or a light coat with a double-breasted waistcoat and evening dress trousers make a good representation of mid-Victorian masculine fashions. The hair should be dressed in the period, or wigs worn, while long whiskers, chin beards, and other facial hair should be added. The female spectators can do wonders with similar nondescript clothes, with shawls and bonnets or large "floppy" hats.

Some societies have been known to go even

further than modern dress for *Trial by Jury*. Owing to a shortage of male choristers, one has seen the opera so modernized as to include women jurors! The introduction of this anachronism (to say nothing of the breach of the acting rights and traditions) is distasteful and unpardonable. Play the opera in modern dress if absolutely necessary,

eighteen-eighties *must* be worn, but a hint may be given which, if adopted, will prevent the intrusion of modern frocks being too startling. The officers should have long, drooping "cavalry" moustaches; if the girls wear modern dresses for the finale, then these moustaches should be trimmed to a more modern pattern—but the



" TRIAL BY JURY "

With the exception of the wigs, nothing was bought or hired for the dressing of this jury, yet the jurors look convincingly mid-Victorian.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

but never, *never*, NEVER fall into this error. If twelve men are not forthcoming, there is nothing else but to shelve the production of this opera.

A similar dress problem occurs in *Patience*. At the end of the second act the girls throw off their aesthetic pose and appear in the garb of "every-day young girls." The usual quotation for the hire of costumes does not include period dresses for this change, and it is a usual practice in amateur productions for this final entrance to be made in the girls' own dresses. One cannot lay down any hard and fast dictum that dresses of the

"tooth-brush" variety should be avoided. Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the desirability of dressing Mr. Bunthorne's Solicitor (*Patience*) in the grey frock-coat of the period.

So much, then, for costume difficulties. Let us turn to noises off, in which might be included "voices off." There is the chorus, "Over the bright blue sea," sung off stage in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The choristers are invisible to the conductor, and he to them. So it is necessary to have some reliable deputy available behind the scenes. The producer or stage-manager will

usually be at hand to superintend the actual entrance, and he (or she) should be quite capable of helping the musical director at this point. A similar unseen chorus occurs at the start of the second act of *Patience*, and there are also the fairies' "Forbear" and their wailing towards the end of *Iolanthe*. The second of these is complicated by the fact that the fairies cannot be grouped together; they are standing at the entrances ready to enter. The chorus heard behind the scenes in *The Pirates of Penzance* is on a different footing. Here there is no accompaniment to the singing, nor does it form an integral part of the score.

The most important noises off occur in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. In the second act is the sudden shot from the wharf. This, for effect, should slightly anticipate the actual spoken cue—"Nay, Elsie, I did but jest. I spake but to try thee——." That is how the line is printed; not as a completed sentence, but to suggest an interruption. But it cannot be spoken in any way but as a complete phrase; it is not as though Fairfax says "I spake but to try thee——," and there will inevitably be that slight drop of the voice to suggest a full stop. Therefore, if the actual shot be fired on the word "try," the unexpected interruption will be far better realized. It is essential that the shot be heard to come from the left-hand side of the stage (left of the actors facing the audience).

Similarly, the position of the tolling bell in the first act of this opera is of importance. One has heard it sound in the orchestra well and from all positions behind the scenes. Actually, it should appear to be situated in the chapel—the right-hand side of the stage (again facing the audience). Its tolling, too, must not be haphazard. The first stroke coincides with the last word ("boon") sung by the chorus as the music changes from the *Allegro non troppo* of "From morn to afternoon" to the *andante* leading up to the funeral march. The bell is repeated every eight beats, i.e. on the first beat of alternate bars. It continues through the chorus, "The pris'ner comes," through Elsie's solo, and the following chorus. It ceases after the stroke which sounds on the first beat of the *Allegro agitato* that brings so sudden a change to the music.

Theatrical licence allows the bell to be modu-

lated so that it may be accommodated to the circumstances. It will be loud during the music that is unaccompanied by singing, moderately loud during the choruses, and soft while Elsie is singing. The bell must not be discordant, but it should ring out as a tolling church bell, and not as an addition to the orchestra.



"WHEN HAPPY DAYLIGHT IS DEAD"

Although the second act of *The Pirates of Penzance* takes place at night, the light should not be so subdued as to hide the faces or make the stage gloomy.

Photo by F. W. DeBonnin.

Two other bells come to mind. In *Trial by Jury* there is the clock that sounds the "hour of ten" as the opera begins. This is a musical, rather than a stage, effect, and should be regarded as an orchestral adjunct rather than a distinct ingredient in the opera. The luncheon bell in the second act of *Princess Ida* is first heard with the first note of the music, Florian's question and Melissa's reply being spoken through the music. The intervals for this bell are clearly indicated in the first four bars of the introductory music in the vocal score. It ends with the three chords marking the words "lun-cheon-bell" before Lady Blanche's solo.

The breaking down of the castle gates in the finale of this act is short and sharp. One hears a terrible shattering immediately after the Princess's

line, "Deny them! We will defy them!" yet the noise has all but ceased, and the invaders are already appearing, when the girls reply "Too late, too late!"

A scene demanding the closest co-operation between the stage and orchestra is the entry of the ghosts in *Ruddigoë*. This scene was most effectively rendered long before modern stage dimmers and such aids to changing lights were thought of. Therefore the scene will not lose any of its eerie effectiveness if one has to reduce the lights by the simple method of switching them off in batches. The stage has been in semi-darkness since the curtain rose on the second act. Further dimming begins, very gradually, as Ruthven starts his speech, "For a week I have fulfilled my accursed doom." The music starts even more softly than the *piano* indicated in the score, when the word "psalm" is reached—"Let the sweet psalm of that repentant hour. . . ." At the end of the speech the stage is so dark that only the lightest of objects—such as Ruthven's white breeches—are visible as he collapses on the step below Sir Roderic's frame.

Then comes a complete black-out and a roll from the tympani. This starts softly, is worked up to a *fortissimo*, and then dies away. When the roll is at its loudest, the frames are opened, and as soon as this has been done, the lights are imperceptibly brought up until they have reached practically the same strength as before the dimming began. As Roderic steps from his frame, a green spot light should be focused on his face, to remain there until he moves from the centre of the stage at the start of the music of "The Ghosts' High Noon."

The picture frames may work on two systems: either the panels move bodily sideways in grooves, or the pictures are on the principle of roller blinds. However well made, and however skilfully they may be operated, a slight noise often occurs as the pictures are moved, and the drum roll is purposely there to mask such a possibility. As the lights come up, the pictures are seen to have become animated. The return of the ghosts is similarly arranged, except that there is less time for the dimming, which must therefore be speeded up. Another drum roll covers the closing of the frames. The most satisfactory manner of opening and closing the frames is to

delegate the task to those choristers who will enter otherwise than through the pictures—for barely half the ghosts are actually seen as pictures. One is thus entrusting important work to men who can be relied upon to carry it out at the exact moment. This might not be the case if the work were left to stage hands. After the ghosts have returned to their frames, the black out is followed by full lighting.

The co-operation of the musical director is called for in another aspect of this scene. It is essential that no light penetrates to the stage while the frames are being opened or closed. With the ordinary orchestra well and its lights there is a risk that some illumination may be reflected on to the stage. Not a lot, perhaps, but sufficient to allow people near the stage to see the movement of the panels. Behind the scenes, of course, it will be ensured that the black out is complete—that no light is shining anywhere where it might penetrate through a join in the scenery or be reflected over the top of the flats. The musical director should see that his players are provided with blue tissue paper with which to cover the lights on their stands during the ghost scene. The chorus, "Painted emblems of our race," will be begun in almost pitch darkness, and will similarly conclude its repetition at the end of the scene. Accordingly, the conductor will be well advised to lay his baton aside for the opening and closing of the ghost scene, and use instead an electric torch in which the bulb should be blue, or covered with blue paper.

As stage lighting was not very advanced when the operas first appeared, elaborate effects are not used. In the incantation scene in *The Sorcerer* magnesium flashes, coloured "fire," and the thunder sheet are all that will be needed. Red "fire" accompanies Wells's descent to Ahrimanes at the end of the opera. The second act is played as though at night. The second act of *H.M.S. Pinfore* starts by moonlight. The lights are brought up to full when the captain discloses himself during the attempted elopement. "Hold," he cries, and the lights are brought up to full. This used to be done instantaneously; raising the dimmers gradually, but not too slowly, is more effective. The second acts of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe* are night scenes throughout. In the first of these the lights may be

brought up a little when the girls enter with their nightlights.

In the first act of *The Mikado*, the lights should be checked down during the finale, starting from some minutes after Katisha's entrance, but not sufficiently to become apparent until after Pitti-Sing has sung "For he's going to marry Yum-Yum." As Katisha turns in the doorway as the curtain falls, a spot should be thrown on her. In the first act finale of *The Yeomen of the Guard* the lights are brought down, almost unnoticed, during the concluding stages of "From morn to afternoon," so that "night" has fallen when the block is brought on. This persists through the remainder of the act (with no spotlight at curtain fall) and through the second act until after the number following the firing of the shot. Day then breaks, and the stage is fully lighted again by the time the trio, "A man who would woo a fair maid," is reached. A similar effect marks the end of the first act of *The Gondoliers*. Dimming begins when Marco and Giuseppe sing "Come, let's away—our island crown awaits me." The stage grows dim—more a twilight effect than a night one, but when the curtain is raised on the concluding tableau, a moonlight effect is required.

MUSICAL POINTS AND DANCING

The musical requirements are, perhaps, less complex than those of the acting. There are not those many differences of style and atmosphere that require so much consideration when one is dealing with the acting. The musical director will realize that Sullivan, as much as Gilbert, has laid down how he meant his music to be sung; his directions as to *tempo*, phrasing, etc., show what is needed to give full effectiveness to the music. And Sullivan insisted on being obeyed. As Gilbert was autocratic on the stage, so did Sullivan's will dominate the musical side of the operas. The musical director, then, will firmly put down any tendency on the part of the singers to go their own way. The singers will realize that they cannot take liberties with Sullivan. If a word is set to a crochet, followed by a crochet rest, there is a reason for this, and the singer is committing a solecism by singing as though a minim were written. One must insist that Sullivan's music be sung as it is

intended to be sung—in the exact manner that Sullivan wrote it. Famous singers, we know, take liberties; they love to hang on to some note that displays the best in their voices. This fault is frequent in the concert hall and even in the opera house. Is it not, then, making a mountain out of a molehill in setting one's face so sternly against the practice in such things as light opera? No; even the most prominent artist, engaged to sing a Gilbert and Sullivan role, would be as little allowed to interpret his or her own ideas into the singing as into the acting. "Charming," said Sullivan blandly on hearing an artist rehearse one of his numbers, "Now let's hear it to my music." Although Sullivan is no longer here to administer such gentle, though sarcastic, rebukes to those who take liberties with his music, the vital tradition remains. Musical directors, as much as producers, must see that the traditions are carried on, and through their efforts the singers must realize that Sullivan's requirements are observed. Even stronger than the claim of tradition is the undoubted fact that both composer and librettist had the best of reasons for insisting that their work be performed in the way which they dictated. For they realized how much their respective arts were inter-dependent, and to what an extent perfect sympathy and understanding in method was essential. It was this realization that led to the perfect blend of literary and musical art of which these operas are so marked an example.

It has been emphasized earlier in these articles that Gilbert and Sullivan opera is a distinctly individual art-form. It is not subject to rules governing greater and lesser operatic forms. Subjectively, it has to be studied as a specialized subject and not considered merely as light opera.

To the players I have frequently stressed the importance of clarity of diction. There is no stronger element in the Savoy tradition, and it applies with equal force to the singing. Gilbert's words, whether spoken or sung, must be crystal clear. The most glorious voice will avail nothing in these operas if the diction be not distinct. Even when the setting is of the most florid, every syllable—nay every *letter sound*—must be clearly heard. An example may be given: "Poor Wandering One" gives Mabel a passage in which the word "heart" is prolonged, staccato, for thirteen bars. More often than not one hears this word

made into "ha-ah-ah-ah. . ." What should be heard is "Take hear-ah-ah-ah. . . t." That final "t" must be sounded distinctly.

But one must point out that there are a few places in the score where it appears that a phrase should be sung which is, in fact, spoken. Examples occur in *Patience* and *Iolanthe*. In the first act finale, *Patience* has interrupted the drawing of the lottery. Bunthorne philosophizes: "How strong is love," etc. The final words are shown as sung (true, three of the four notes are the same). Actually Bunthorne works up to a climax on the words ". . . has burst the bonds of Art——" The four chords in the accompaniment are played, and Bunthorne remarks, in a matter-of-fact voice, "And here we are!"

Similarly, in the finale to Act I of *Iolanthe*, the peers, it seems, sing their laughter at the joke of *Iolanthe* being Strephon's mother. But the Lord Chancellor's question, "What means this mirth unseemly?" would lose its point if the peers followed the score, and gave their laughter, to music, in the precise form "Ha, ha, HA: ha, ha, HA: ha, ha, HA." Actually they burst into real laughter at this point, the laughter dying away as the music runs into the Chancellor's music. The most important piece of music replaced by speech is the line "*Iolanthe!* thou livest!" I referred to this in the study of the part of the Lord Chancellor, and need only repeat that the line is spoken in a tone of awe-struck wonderment.

I beg all amateur Savoy opera singers to avoid "vocalization." Where, as in these works, the songs are part and parcel of the telling of the story, and where singing follows dialogue as the natural sequence of day and night, nothing strikes a false note more than a sudden change in the manner in which the words are produced. It is a Gilbertian anomaly that what vocalization occurs is found in the spoken, rather than in the sung, word. That is if full regard is paid to that traditional, and very pleasing, cadence that is heard in so much of the dialogue. Some of the songs can be regarded as separate numbers, in that they can be sung as concert items. But in a performance of the opera the songs are as much a part of the whole as are the words. Colonel Fairfax, unlike the concert hall tenor, does not sing "Is Life a Boon?" as though it were distinct and different from the preceding scene. It is just

a continuation of the gentle philosophy which has marked the dialogue that leads up to the song. It is perhaps too much to say that Sullivan's music consists more of speaking to music than actual singing. Yet it is certainly nearer to that than to render the songs as though they were concert items or grand opera arias.

The analogy of speaking to music is, however, true of the light comedy parts; indeed I would rather have these roles played by anybody but a man with a really good singing voice. Great artist though he was, George Grossmith was not a wonderful singer, and it must be remembered that Sullivan had him in mind in composing the comedy roles. Consequently the composer knew that he could not make too great demands on the comedian's vocal powers. Then the rapid patter songs with which these parts abound demand, for their all-important clarity, far more a *parlando* style than excellent singing. It will be noticed that I use the term "speaking *to* music"; this is by no means the same thing as speaking *through* music.

Players of character parts must be careful to maintain the character while singing. All the characteristics of the parts must be as clearly defined during the singing as in the acting. Bill Bobstay, in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, speaks in a "rough, common-sailor fashion." He must not, therefore, sing in the tones of a possessor of faultless King's English.

Now for some particular words to the chorus. You have been told that your part in the operas is at least as important as that of the most exalted principal. Gilbert, I wrote, made the chorus his chief asset, as it became Sullivan's principal glory. Do not be afraid to open your mouths, but do not, in so doing, produce just a large volume of sound. Your words, equally with those of the principals, must be clearly heard. Do not slur them into each other, and so produce such awful effects as "Bow, bow, to his daughter-rin-lor-relect." Believe me, that is no flight of imagination. It is to be heard time and time again in amateur productions of *The Mikado*.

Remember that these operas are, in the main, bright and joyous. So do not be afraid to smile, but do not let the smile become a simper. Keep vivacious, and do not allow the beauty of the music, with its more than occasional hint of the

church, overwhelm you by its solemnity. Above all, do not in your endeavour to carry out the producer's instructions convincingly, forget to follow the musical director's beat. If a principal becomes unruly and starts to run away from the orchestra, or the musicians suddenly spurt ahead of the soloist, the conductor can soon pull things

type as is the Italian or German opera singer, or the musical comedy artist. Each of these types is ideally suited to its particular sphere; each an intrusion in another. One thing which, more than any other, must be missing from the Gilbert and Sullivan singer is any tendency towards vocal affectation or mannerisms.



THE END OF "THE GONDOLIERS"

This is not the cachuca, but the repetition of some of the steps in the finale. The photograph clearly illustrates the difficulty of avoiding crowding if the dance were performed by everybody.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

together. But if each chorister suddenly fails to follow the beat and starts going ahead at his or her own idea of the *tempo*, chaos will soon be complete. And do not drag.

It is not suggested that the choristers should obviously keep their eyes glued on the conductor. It is easy to watch his directions out of the corner of your eye while seemingly paying no attention to anything but the action on the stage. But if ever in doubt for one moment whether you are right or wrong, then look fairly and squarely at the baton and obey its signs implicitly.

Summed up, clear, fresh, and pleasing voices are far more desirable than voices of supreme excellence. What must be remembered is that the ideal Gilbert and Sullivan singer is as much a

One would ask musical directors to make a study of the band parts (in the absence of ability to refer to the full score). Sullivan's orchestrations and accompaniments are masterly, and they are as important as are the vocal harmonies. Many a point, it will be found, is given additional humour by some little orchestral touch.

With regard to dancing, one can say that taken as a whole, it is not difficult, either to demonstrate or to execute. Even such set dances as the minuet and jig in *Ruddigore*, and the gavotte and cachuca in *The Gondoliers* can be acquired without the aid of a qualified dancing instructor. But there is much to be said for obtaining the help of such an individual, especially for the jig and cachuca. Each of these has to go with such verve and

swing that a good knowledge of the technique of dancing instruction (apart from any other consideration) is a great asset and time-saver to the producer.

Experience has shown that it does not work if one engages an instructor and says, "We want a gavotte or a cachuca." For none of the dances, as performed in the operas, is exactly what would be seen in a ballet or at a dance. Considerations of grouping and business during the dances have to be taken into account, and the producer should remain in supreme command even over the dancing instruction. The producer's knowledge of the stage picture, coupled with the instructor's skill, should make a perfect blend for getting the ideal results.

The opening ballet now performed in *Iolanthe* is sometimes adopted by amateurs, but many prefer the simpler opening previously employed. Even this ballet does not present much difficulty in the dancing. The usual "Savoy steps," as one might call them, are not elaborate, consisting chiefly of waltz and polka steps, glides, and similar easy effects. What counts towards making the dancing appear convincing are grace of movement, poise, and balance. None of the set dances calls for any particular comment, other than the gavotte and cachuca in *The Gondoliers*. In the gavotte, it must be realized, Marco and Giuseppe are being given a lesson in deportment, and their awkwardness must be apparent in every step. It is only in the encore that the two kings should be as graceful and at their ease as are their partners. The clowning with which amateur Dukes sometimes mar this number is to be deplored.

Many producers make a great mistake in spoiling the effectiveness of the cachuca by having it a dance for the whole company. The *élan* and abandon of this dance make a large amount of elbow room necessary (both figuratively and literally), and this is impossible if the stage is crowded with dancers. In normal circumstances it is sufficient to leave the actual dancing to six or eight couples, having the rest of the company in the role of interested and excited spectators. In the later part of the number, where there is dancing without singing, the chorus and dancers should interject an occasional, seemingly spontaneous, exclamation—such as "*olé!*"—

appropriate to the dance's southern origin. All through the number, those not actually dancing follow the music and movements with waving arms and swaying bodies. Marco and Gianetta, and Giuseppe and Tessa should, naturally, be numbered among the dancers, while Antonio with Fiametta, and Francesco with Vittoria, might also be prominent.

The dance is certain to be encored, and for many reasons one suggests that the four principals should not re-appear for this, their places being taken by the two groups of minor principals just mentioned, and the other gaps filled by fresh couples from the chorus. Or the entire *personnel* of the dance might be changed. This means that additional people have to be taught the steps, but it serves to give Marco and, particularly, Giuseppe, a well-needed rest. Both have to remain on the stage for some time after the cachuca, and after the bustle and whirl of the dance both may be in dire need of the attention of the powder puff. The brief respite during the encore allows them not only to repair the ravages made on their make-up but to have a few moments in which to recover their breath before re-entering at the end of the repeated dance. If these two actors are compelled to dance the encore, then the ensuing scene with the Grand Inquisitor will probably lose some of its effect owing to the surreptitious mopping of streaming brows by two thoroughly uncomfortable young men.

In recent years the professional cachuca has been much changed. It is now danced, first, by one or two couples with others joining in later, and is a much wilder affair than previously. It is an attractive dance to watch in its new form, but a real criticism has been made; is it entirely suited to its surroundings? What was previously a gay frolic has become a sophisticated affair—and sophistication and *The Gondoliers* do not go well together.

SOME "PROPS"

Gilbert was a real friend to the property master; whether hand properties or larger adjuncts to the scenery and costumes are concerned, they will be found to be few and simple. In most cases everything will be supplied with the hired costumes and scenery, but some societies will wish to make their own. This course is particularly

recommended for certain documents, which, if home-made, are far more convincing than many of the hired counterparts.

The prospectuses of "The Duke of Plaza-Toro, Limited" should be real printed documents. For this purpose one should obtain genuine company prospectuses, and cover the title of the real company with strips of paper on which are written neatly—or better still printed—the name "The Duke of Plaza-Toro, Limited." It is important that this alteration be made, as the name of a company is always printed in heavy type and quite readable from the auditorium. It would never do for the name of a genuine company to appear instead of that of the Duke's flotation. In this connexion it is as well to have a phrase, such as "Stage Property Only," lightly written or stamped on the prospectuses. This disposes of any objection (should one of these properties fall into the hands of a person not connected with the production) to the use of particulars of a real share issue under a fictitious name. It is a trivial point, but it is as well to take all precautions. It is suggested that sufficient copies of this prospectus be prepared to enable the Duke to produce new copies at each performance.

In *H.M.S. Pinafore* the property master must supply three sheets of manuscript music paper, on which Sir Joseph Porter has written the parts of the song he has "composed for the use of the Royal Navy." One has seen blank sheets of paper used for this, and the other extreme—paper covered with huge musical symbols. Possibly this is funny, but it is not Gilbert and Sullivan. It is unnecessary to go to the lengths of one amateur property master, and actually copy the three parts of the song, but the sheets should appear to have real vocal parts written, and on both sides.

Three small properties in *The Mikado* are seldom supplied to amateurs in a form at all resembling the real thing. These are Nanki-Poo's roll of songs, the Mikado's letter, and the coroner's certificate relating to the supposed execution. For the songs, cover a few sheets of foolscap paper with vertical columns of pseudo-Japanese characters. The sheets are pasted together at the top edges, and the whole thing is made into a roll. If it is held by the pasted top edge with one hand, and the pages turned over with the other, it will look quite convincing.

The letter requires fewer and more elaborate characters. For, after reading it, Ko-Ko shows the letter to his companions in such a manner that the attention of the audience is focused upon the writing—especially the symbol representing "a village." As befits an imperial edict, the letter should be imposing, and the paper on which it is written stuck to some material that will give the effect of a purple velvet backing. In size, the letter should be slightly larger than a page of THEATRE AND STAGE. The coroner's certificate is merely a sheet of paper, about 10 by 5 inches, with further vertical rows of "Japanese" lettering. Very important properties in *The Mikado* are the fans, for which a reserve supply should be available to replace casualties at rehearsal or performance.

Major-General Stanley, Captain Corcoran, Colonel Calverley, and Major Murgatroyd should wear medals, and care should be taken to avoid any anachronism. It is easy to borrow real British war medals for the purpose, but frequently these will be supplied with the costumes. None of the medals should be of a period later than that of the opera. To be on the safe side of accuracy, nothing earlier than the Crimea and Indian Mutiny should be worn. This point of accuracy in a comic opera may seem a small one; it is only stressing Gilbert's endeavour that every detail of costuming should be exact. None of the first three officers mentioned should wear more than four medals; the Major only one. The star of a K.C.B. is a useful addition to the costumes of Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre and Sir Joseph Porter (particularly the second). If one is fortunate enough to be able to borrow or hire this decoration (or a copy), it should certainly be used. King Paramount, in the second act of *Utopia Limited*, is freely decorated. There is much to be said against the use of British orders and medals for this monarch, especially the Garter. Indeed, the use of this order in the original production is said to have given offence to the then Prince of Wales (the late King Edward VII), for which reason its use was discontinued. But it usually crops up in the infrequent amateur performances of this opera. Sir Edward Corcoran, in the same opera, would wear similar medals to those of his *alter ego* in *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

The peers in *Iolanthe* wear orders; these in

amateur productions seldom have the accuracy of the professional dressing, where robes, collars, stars, and badges of such orders as the Garter, Bath, Thistle, and Star of India are worn. Mountarat has the Garter, Tollooler the Bath. Imaginary decorations are worn by such charac-

small exceptions that will be noticed, the traditional style applies.

But the truest description that one can apply to *Utopia Limited* is that it is something between a light opera and musical comedy. If presented in that light, it will have far more chance of



"UTOPIA LIMITED"

A posed group which shows the appearance of the characters in the first act

Photo by J. W. Debenham

ters as Kings Gama and Hildebrand, and by the Duke, Luiz, Marco, and Guiseppa in the second act of *The Gondoliers*. No other military or naval character, chorister, or super is entitled to any medals. In amateur productions it has been common for Private Willis, the dragoons, and the marines to wear medals awarded, presumably, to the actual players in war. Obviously this is an anachronism.

THE FINAL OPERAS

Although the last two operas written by Gilbert and Sullivan are seldom performed, this treatment would be incomplete without some remarks on *The Grand Duke* and *Utopia Limited*. Neither calls for such detailed description as its predecessors, especially as neither has acquired any "traditional" aspects in the production, as have the older works. Both, however, were produced under Gilbert's regime, and with the

success than if it were treated with the greater seriousness due to an opera. The parts do not fall easily into the previously defined groups, and, if only for this reason, no hard and fast rules can be laid down, or even suggested, for the lines on which they should be played. King Paramount, for instance, might easily be regarded as a "heavy comedy part," on the lines of Don Alhambra, or it might equally suit the light comedy player, who, as a rule, would be found in the part of Tarara, the Public Exploder. Captain Fitzbattleaxe is truer to type, being the tenor lead with leanings towards comedy. It is a fairly straightforward part on the lines of Frederic, but of a more worldly and sophisticated nature. The part has this in common with the light comedy leads; it is most humorous when the player is most serious, as in the opening of the second act, when he sings of the difficulties and worries of a tenor.

Scaphio and Phantis are mixtures of the light

and heavy comedy parts. They should be nicely contrasted, but with certain similarities to suggest men in the same profession. The Flowers of Progress indicate clearly the calling and nature of the men represented. Mr. Goldbury, the company promoter, should not too markedly suggest his Semitic origin. Sir Edward Corcoran is, one presumes, the breezy captain of H.M.S. *Pinafore*, whose changed condition appears to have been set aside for this opera. The others are of less importance, but all show their calling by their bearing and costumes. Sir Bailey Barre, for example, wears wig and gown.

Calynx, the Utopian Vice-Chamberlain, appears in the first act in raiment befitting a dignitary in an exotic Royal household. In the second act he wears the garb of a similar British official. So it is with the King and the judges; they are attired as a British Field-Marshal and as High Court judges respectively when the country is anglicized.

Princess Zara might suggest a mixture of Princess Ida and Casilda. Actually she is more akin to those Ruritmanian princesses of former Daly's and Adelphi musical comedy. Nekaya and Kalyba, on the other hand, are complete reversions to the Gilbertian damsel. They are both rather snimper misses, but should not be shown either as too knowing or too "goody-goody." Lady Sophy is at once recognizable as a representative of the contralto group. She is Lady Jane and the Duchess of Plaza-Toro in a somewhat broader mould. In the case of this part we do not find the same insistence on the unpleasant traits of the elderly spinster, although Lady Sophy is shown as possessing a shrewd eye for the main chance.

Salata, Melene, and Phylla are three more of those little parts the real functions of which are to lead the chorus. The chorus itself consists of Utopians, in costumes of a barbaric nature in the

first act, and in late-Victorian court fashions in the second. And there is that stalwart bodyguard of Life Guards who burst into song at every provocation.

The chief drawback to this opera is undoubtedly the expensive mounting and dressing, especially of the second act. Here every effort should be made to see that the actual court presentation scene is a faithful picture of one of these functions as carried out in late Victorian days. Dramatically it suffers from the slow



"A JOB-LOT OF SECOND HAND NOBLES"

The theatrical supers, hired at eightpence a day, who attend the Prince of Monte Carlo in *The Grand Duke*

Photo by J. W. Debenham

development of its brilliant theme, which is also long-drawn-out in its exposition. But speeded up in the playing (as was *Ruddigore*) its faults in this direction would not be glaring ones. Musically, it is tuneful and attractive, despite the reminiscent quality of much of the score.

The Grand Duke, on the other hand, might well be left in oblivion. Its production, of course, makes for novelty, but there is such a falling off from the wit and spontaneity of the earlier works that its success is problematic. Relying largely on the humours of a legal quibble, sausage rolls, and indigestion (the last two are separate themes, despite their apparent relation), the opera peters

away to nothing. There are one or two good numbers, but the wit is missing from the lyrics, and with that the composer's inspiration is gone.

The parts are not well drawn, and for once have to rely on the humour of the actor rather than on that of the author. None of the parts falls into any of the individual groups. Rudolph, the Grand Duke, contains but a ghost of the "light comedy lead," which has now fallen to the status and antics of the musical comedy "funny man." Dr. Tannhauser is a preposterous lawyer, owing nothing to those great legal figures, the Lord Chancellor and the Notary (in *The Sorcerer*). Ernest Dummkopf is a better part, somewhat on the lines of Strephon or Grosvenor, and Ludwig, who succeeds to the Grand-duchy as a result of the statutory duel that forms the work's sub-title, is a poorly provided comedian. The remaining male characters are negligible, except that a telling little number (with some terribly forced rhymes) lifts the Herald out of the rut, and a patter song (which does not appear in the original libretto) does the same for the Prince of Monte Carlo, who otherwise is a feeble shadow of the Duke of Plaza-Toro.

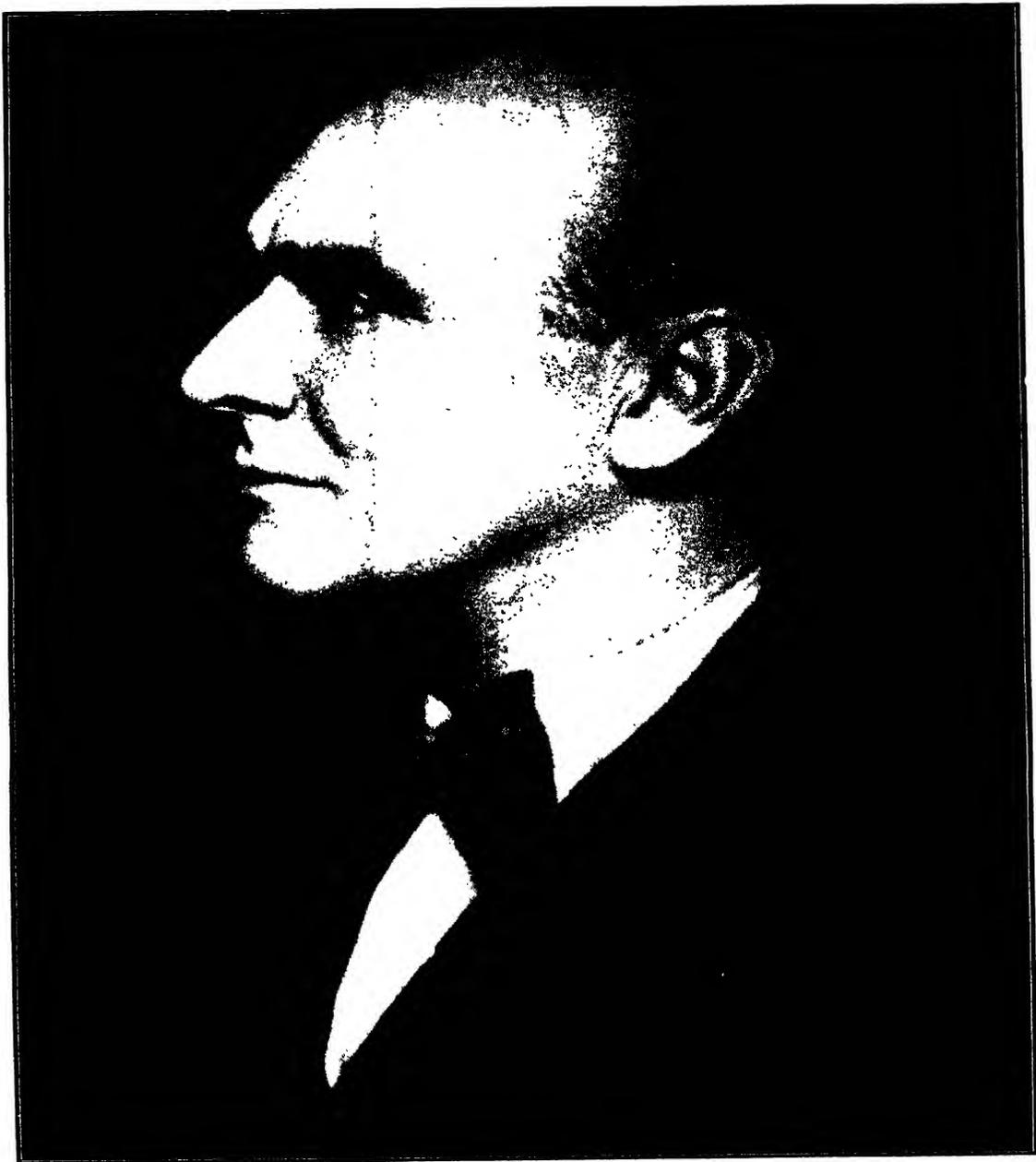
In the Baroness von Krakenfeldt, the contralto of former days has grown preposterous and out of all knowledge. Julia Jellicoe, the dramatic soprano lead, is an interesting though difficult part to play. She is the English comedienne of the theatrical company concerned in the plot. While all the characters are supposed to be speaking German, Julia does so with a strong English accent. This illusion was contrived by giving the part originally to a Hungarian singer, and so, while the "German" speaking characters used pure English, she, the "English" girl, had a marked, and delightful central-European accent. This artifice has been used since in other plays to convey the same impression. Lisa, the soubrette

of the company, is the only remaining female part of any importance, and she has some effective moments, both of acting and singing.

The chorus are members of the theatrical company, but some eight or so of the men form a separate group. In the first act they appear as chamberlains attending the Grand Duke, with whom they have some tedious, but supposedly comic, business. Rudolph asks for certain articles. The junior chamberlain passes them to the next senior, and so on, until the most senior chamberlain hands them to Rudolph. In the second act these men appear as an awkward squad of "nobles" (actually hired theatrical supers) who form the Prince of Monte Carlo's suite. One of these, "Viscount Mentone," has a line to speak in broad Cockney.

These sketchy notes will serve to give some indication of the last two operas. One cannot disguise the fact that these two works fail utterly to approach closely the standard of those that preceded them, either musically or in the wit and humour of the libretto.

The end of this study of the Savoy operas has been reached. The reader who has followed patiently through the complexities of these seemingly simple works will now realize that, as I wrote at first, there is a "something" beside the combination of the arts of Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan which has a bearing on the continued success and freshness of the works. Other librettos as good as Gilbert's have been written; other composers of light opera have made scores as masterly as Sullivan's. It is the unique manner in which the work of the two men blend that is mostly responsible for much of their lasting quality. The traditional style and atmosphere, at which many profess to scoff, greatly help the works to retain their immortality.



CLIVE CAREY

PRODUCING OPERA

CLIVE CAREY, B.A., Mus. Bac., Former Director of the Sadler's Wells Opera Company; Professor of the Royal College of Music

IT is only of comparatively late years that opera in this country (as opposed to Comic Opera) has freed itself from the handicap of unintelligent production. For far too long we were accustomed either to a company of distinguished artists appearing on the stage with rehearsal insufficient to produce really good team-work or to stock companies relying on traditions, which are usually an accretion of irrelevant matter that has gradually grown up and eventually nearly obscured the original work.

As a matter of fact, the production of an opera needs as much thought as that of a play, and in it good team-work is of extreme importance. The producer must be musical enough to be sensitive to every mood of the music. Given this quality, he will set about his work much as a play-producer does, with the difference that he must realize that purely naturalistic acting is out of the question. Opera is, by its nature, in the realm of fantasy. It presents a world in which singing is the natural means of expression, if not continuously, as in *La Bohème*, then at the moments of emotional crisis, as in *The Marriage of Figaro* when the opera is done, as it frequently is, with dialogue in the place of recitative. These operas approach realism, yet the fact that they are sung carries them into the region of unreality. An opera, then, must be presented in such a way that the audience feels that it is inevitable for the characters to express themselves in song—in fact, we must create a world in which not only is music the natural language, but gesture and movement are suggestive and symbolic rather than realistic.

As the time taken to sing a phrase is usually much longer than that taken to speak it, this question of gesture and movement must be carefully studied. It is generally said that the action must rise out of the music, but if we imagine the converse, namely, that the action *creates* the music, we have an even better working basis. The music and the action must be inseparable, and particularly during the passages where the

actor is not singing, either his movements, or, if he is not moving, his thoughts and feelings must be at one with the music. If, therefore, he gives the impression that he *produces* the musical phrase by his movement, gesture, or emotion, the audience is made to feel more deeply that music is the inevitable vehicle for the expression of the drama.

The *tempo* of the action naturally depends upon the type of opera presented. For example, Wagner's music-dramas deal with grandiose slow-moving subjects, in which the characters are mostly heroic rather than ordinary human beings. *Décor*, costume, and movement must therefore be on heroic lines, the *décor* obviously relying more upon suggestion than realism, the stage-action being for the most part slow-moving, or often nearly static. The argument that Wagner himself used realistic scenery is negligible. Scenic realism was in vogue in his day, and no one would have accepted so readily as he the development of the stage towards simplicity of colour, form, and design, and the deepening of mystery and atmosphere that came with it and with the improvement in stage lighting. These qualities, and not realism, are what Wagner achieved in his music. The need for a *tempo* far slower than that demanded by the action of any play is well exemplified by the first act of *The Valkyrie*, where Sieglinde's actions in particular must be controlled to an incredibly slow pace throughout. *Carmen*, on the other hand, is nearly akin to realism. Built on a realistic story, the pace of both drama and music is much quicker, and the stage movement is, therefore, correspondingly quicker also.

The works of Mozart are frequently classed together as being all of one style. Actually, they call for extreme differentiation of treatment, and exemplify perhaps more than those of any other composer the need for individual consideration. If we review in some detail his best-known operas, we shall get a fair idea of what our manner of approach to opera-production in general should be.

The Marriage of Figaro, adapted from Beaumarchais's play of the same name, which played a striking part in the beginnings of the French Revolution, is a human comedy, and as such requires a treatment entirely free from that artificiality which stage performances have led us to believe is the real eighteenth century.

Così fan tutte, on the other hand, is purely artificial. It might be described as a burlesque "of manners," that is a burlesque of the type of the comedy of manners exemplified by Congreve. Its extreme unreality can best be brought out by formality in *décor*, grouping, and action; certain scenes, indeed, such as that in which the two men feign death by poisoning, lend themselves to patterns of grouping as formal as one finds in classical ballet, and the artificial effect is enormously enhanced by a precise timing of gesture and movement, which, indeed, brings it almost into the realm of ballet. Its difficulty lies in maintaining a delicacy of style that will prevent much of it from sinking to the buffoonery of present-day farce, without falling into dullness by avoiding the humours of those situations that are definitely farcical.

The Magic Flute is a fantasy that combines an almost childish *navetè* with a nobility that at moments touches the sublime. The scenic directions are grandiose and complicated in the extreme, but the work gains a thousandfold by the most complete simplification of the *décor*. It can, indeed, consist of one structure, diversified and relieved by various combinations of curtains and wings. The simple dignity thus achieved helps to unify the conflicting elements that the producer must at all costs succeed in co-ordinating. It also enables the opera to be played with but a single act-break—an invaluable aid in preserving the continuity of a work in which the scenes are held together by only the slightest thread.

Don Giovanni is more difficult to define. It is described by its author, Da Ponte, as a *Dramma*

Giocosa, or Comic Drama, but, in performance, particularly in Germany, its humours are generally kept well in the background in order to bring the work into the scope of tragedy, which the death scene suggests that it must be. However, though the opera is rich in dramatic situations, the drama is seldom allowed to dominate, but is continually brought back into the realm of comedy by the frankly satirical treatment. For instance, even at the tensest moment of the play, when the statue arrives to dine with Giovanni, his approach is heralded in burlesque by Leporello, who proceeds to intersperse the highly dramatic scene that follows with ridiculous comments from under the table. At the same time the work has a definite lyrical quality (the numerous arias form emotional high-lights of great beauty), which, as the play is neither fantasy nor pure comedy, suggests for the *décor* warmth of colour and poetry rather than realism or formality. Like *The Magic Flute* (and, indeed, *Così fan tutte* also), it will gain immensely in continuity if there is only one act-break.

The cost of the production of an opera being considerable, it is always well to attempt to simplify the scenery to the utmost. This is easy in works of a formal kind, such as *Così fan tutte*, and, as has been suggested, in fantasies such as *The Magic Flute*, but even in more realistic works much may be done in this direction.

In conclusion, let me impress upon the would-be producer of opera the following points—

(1) He must realize that every opera has its individual avenue of approach.

(2) He should be courageous enough to ignore traditions, and give as much real thought to each work as he would to the production of a new play, or of a play by Shakespeare.

(3) He must be musical, for the pace of the action and, consequently, the unity of the production will depend entirely upon the fineness of his musical perceptions.

Oliver Carey

PAGEANTS

PAGEANTS AS DRAMATIC ART
THE BOOK
PRODUCTION
THE ORGANIZATION

THE STAGE AND THE AUDITORIUM
THE CAST
COSTUME, MAKE-UP, MUSIC
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, ETC.

PLAYERS OF THE PAST, FAMOUS

PLAYMAKING AND IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION

PLAYS IN VERSE

PLAY'S THE THING, THE

PRODUCER, THE WORK OF THE

PRODUCING NATURALISTIC DRAMA
PRODUCING FARCE
PRODUCING COMEDY

PRODUCING TRAGEDY
PRODUCING ROMANTIC DRAMA

PRODUCTION PRINCIPLES

THE PRODUCER'S RESPONSIBILITY
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THE PRODUCER'S STATUS
SUCCESS IN ARTISTRY
BASIC NEEDS
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"THE PLACE"—SIGHT LINES
TRIANGULATION AND STAGE PROPERTIES
TRIANGULATION AND SCENERY
PLAY SELECTION AND THE PRODUCER
REHEARSALS TIME-TABLE
RHYTHM
BODY RHYTHM

PROPERTIES, COSTUMES, AND DETAILS
SPONTANEOUSLY IN ACTING
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THE PLAY AND ITS METHOD
SUGGEST, CRITICIZE, CO-ORDINATE
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CASTS
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SEASONAL AND SPECIALIST PLAYS
A SOCIETY AND ITS POLICY

PUPPETRY

PAGEANTS

MARY KELLY, Author of the Pageants of Selbourne, Rillington, Bradstone, and Launceston, and "The Pitifull Queene," Exeter, etc.

PAGEANTS are increasingly popular all over the country—in spite of the uncertainty of the climate—and a great deal of time, trouble, money, and enthusiasm goes towards their production. The two main reasons for their inception are, generally, local patriotism and the desire to make a large sum of money for a hospital or some other local charity; the reasons for their popularity are that they are great levellers of class, that they bring out talents in people who would never appear on a stage, and that they are great fun for all the performers. Occasionally a pageant is undertaken as a work of art, but this idea of them is still so rare that it is little realized, and they therefore rank low in the opinion of those who regard the drama as an art.

PAGEANTS AS DRAMATIC ART

It is not necessary to go into the origins of pageants now. We will look at the form as it exists, and try to discover whether it may or may not be regarded as a form of dramatic art, and what are its dangers and its possibilities. It means to us a large scale historical play in a number of unconnected episodes, real crowds, mass movement and colour, processions and horses, music and dancing, on a beautiful outdoor stage: first of all an appeal to the eye, and then an attempt to reconstruct history in a romantic form. The players are entirely amateur, and most of them are not even regular amateur players. Its audience is large, uncontrolled, and ignorant: it is there to see something pretty on a fine day, to pick out its friends in unfamiliar clothes, to laugh at them or to admire them, and to enjoy to the full any incongruity—not to experience any emotion or to make any effort of understanding or imagination. It expects little from a pageant, and is easily satisfied.

The majority of pageants resemble each other as closely as peas. There is the Spirit of the Ages dressed in grey-blue, or Father Time, or some character, who "narrates" (usually in rather halting blank verse) between the episodes, to explain

what they are about. There are the Episodes: The Romans occupying Britain, the Founding of an Abbey, an Olde Englyshe Fayre, the Visit of Good Queen Bess, the Arrival of Charles I on the Eve of a Battle, and so on; ending with a great round-up of Spirits, of Peace, of Harmony, of the District Nursing Association, the Boy Scouts, the Women's Institutes, the British Legion, and a number of other organizations, followed by all the performers, all singing "Land of Hope and Glory." The "County" has walked on as principals in every scene—crowds, dressed brightly in casement cloth, have covered the acting area; everyone has enjoyed himself or herself enormously, and it has been "a great success."

The whole thing is by now thoroughly conventionalized, and will never have any real life until we get new and original minds working on it, making of it a definite form of dramatic art, differing in conception and technique from any other form. When we do, the whole attitude of players and audience will change; the pageant will no longer be a social affair, but a tremendous effort of imagination and presentation. The audience will no longer sit as apathetically as is possible on a wooden seat, but will form part of the play as an audience should, and will quite definitely be made to experience something that is disturbing.

First of all the presentation of history: what can be done about that?

You have in your pageant a unique opportunity for showing the real drama of history; the conflict between the individual and the mass, the force of strong ideas driving men forward, the reaction from them that pulls them back, the dominance or the defeat of character and intellect; the growing-pains of humanity. You are concerned with something that is far bigger than a realistic reconstruction of a picturesque event. Your work is not only to represent history but also to interpret it. It does not matter that your audience is ignorant of history. If you can show them the drama of human life that flows

throughout time, they will respond, since they themselves are part of this unceasing flow. It does not matter if your players are untrained, for the raw material that composes pageant crowds is full of a concealed love of the town or village that is ready to burst out into expression if it is given something to express.

Your protagonists are three, the place, the



PAGEANT OF LAUNCESTON, CORNWALL
The Peasant Widows of the Cornish Rebellion, 1519

individual, and the multitude. A unity already exists between the place and the people who have lived there, as one may say, for centuries, and the place is to them a living personality. The place must be a part of the pageant, and not a mere background.

I intend to deal later with the practicalities of the site; here I only want to emphasize the point that the place is a character, and that the site must, therefore, be chosen before the pageant is written. The background of a castle will bring in at once a suggestion of force, of battle and

defence, of the turbulence of the world, and the power of arms; that of an abbey will remind the audience of the quietness, the learning, the charity, and the holiness that the monasteries brought into a stormy life. An old stone or tree will link your history with the time before history; a bridge, an old cross road, a wayside chapel, all will give themes that can be used throughout. The author must learn all he can from his ground before he writes his pageant. Again, the land is never far away from the subjects of the scenes—there is the struggle for its possession, the pride that came from it, the cultivation of the wild places, and its gradual conquest and taming.

Your second protagonist is the individual. The farther back you go in history, the stronger is the influence of the individual on the mass, and therefore your principal characters must be drawn in high relief, with a concentration of strength and simplicity. The pageant ground is no place for subtleties of mood or a delicate interplay of character. Your principals have to bring with them a definite idea so strongly expressed that it is almost symbolized. Often, it is the single person who represents the forward movement, who has, perhaps, a greater conception of the moment than the mass, and the drama will lie in the conflict between his moving idea and the conservatism of the crowd. The new idea has to force its way from the individual to the crowd, and his force of mind is able to conquer all the united minds of the people. A clear instance of this is shown in the Forum Scene in *Julius Caesar*, and we find it again and again in history: the reaction of Wat Tyler's following to the courage of the young King, the stirring of the Peasants' Rebellions, the preaching of crusades, and so on. Or you may find the reverse, the conquest of an idea by the brute force of a mob, the murder of King Edward of East Anglia by the drunken Danes, the Chartist Riots, and so on.

The drama of one man against another, unless backed by partisan crowds, is not enough on so large a stage, but the drama of the individual as man against the mass has a tremendous opportunity in pageant work. The individual, then, must be drawn so clearly and strongly that he can be made to balance against a big force; in a sense

he must be a little super-human, emphasized and underlined.

The third protagonist, the crowd, represents, of course, humanity in general. Through this you can show the gradual growth of the human mind, and it is necessary to understand what this growth has meant to realize as far as possible the attitude of each succeeding generation to life. When we read history—the cruelty of man to man, the fear and suspicion with which men regarded each other, the lack of pity and consideration—the tragedy that it shows seems to us more than human nature can stand. It is difficult to lighten a pageant enough with comedy, if one realizes what the “good old days” were. But, of course, there was comedy in plenty—rough humour and horseplay, and a great power of rejoicing. Perhaps this was all the greater because of the constant presence of tragedy, for people could enjoy themselves to the utmost when its shadow was lifted. Your crowd may be the principal actor in a scene, united, full of purpose, and intent on action, or it may be a background in contrast to the action of the principals—a fair broken into by a piece of strong tragedy, an atmosphere of sullen rebellion behind a piece of gorgeous pomp. There is a great field for experiment with the crowd in the use of some of the modern methods of production—the concerning of movement, stylization, method of speech, and so on. These are becoming increasingly familiar in the theatre, but have not yet been taken out of doors. The strong methods of physical expression created by the Laban School of Movement in Germany, and taught in this country by Rudolf Laban and Kurt Jooss, are essentially suited to pageant work.

Now none of these opportunities can be seized upon unless the author is a dramatist of wide experience, and many pageants fail because of the quality of the writing. The Committee often induce the best historian in the county, a man who has never thought of writing any play at all, to write the book, without paying him a fee. The book, some promoters apparently think, is the thing that matters least of all. The whole form, of course, is new, and only a dramatist of experience can successfully attempt a new form, and know how it can be achieved. Historical facts are “without form and void” unless they are

in the hands of a dramatist, and for the writing of pageants a special kind of dramatist is needed, a writer of new and original mind, who is able to handle all kinds of dramatic methods and make them alive, and who is always ready to experiment. Experiments made in group-playmaking, which often discard all sorts of conventions, and make, almost unconsciously, new forms, may lead the way to a more original, truer, and more artistic form for outdoor composition.

The author of the pageant, therefore, must be a dramatist, and the pageant must be drama. Otherwise the producer cannot make anything of it, the players cannot act, and all the energy required for organization is spent on something of little value. It is true that the necessary study of history and of social life is educative, however dull the pageant may be, but the booklearning thus acquired does not compare with the comprehension of the subject gained by a pageant that is drama. In such a pageant the performers and the audience live, in each episode, through a piece of concentrated experience, intense and vivid in feeling and alive to the farthest corners of the stage. It is a sudden illumination on some event that is part of the general life of the world.

As we know, the present form of the pageant is episodic—a form that presents many difficulties. So does the Pageant Committee, for it is eager to see represented in the pageant everything that ever happened in the town, and every famous person that was even remotely connected with it! The author has first of all to get the Committee to trust his experience and accept his idea. But the keenness of the Committee will help him, and, before he begins to construct, he should hear patiently what the Fathers of the City, or the lovers of the County, have to say to him. He will learn from them something of the relationship between the place and its people, and probably of many interesting things that have never been written down. But round all old places a mass of journalistic history has grown up—fictitious tradition, accepted by the country people because “’tis printed upon the paper.”

It has been dished up for the tourists so long that the people of the place have come to believe it, and they will often be most eager in demanding that it shall be included. In his preliminary study for the pageant the author has to pick his way

among all this, to discover what is really true, and then to make his selection, from the general mass of information, of those events that will make drama. A knowledge of the place and its people is essential, if the pageant is to belong to them and mean something to them—it is almost impossible to get the inward life of the pageant when the author writes entirely from outside. If he does not live on the spot, and cannot spend much time there, he should have a collaborator who is really soaked in the history and atmosphere of the place. But at the same time, he must be a little firm with the City Fathers, and must make his own limit as to the number of episodes. It is extremely hard to establish any fact or idea in less than half an hour, and, as a rule, one is expected to make the episodes no longer than a quarter of an hour. Many writers make them last only five minutes, in order to crowd everything in, but when they do this it is impossible to represent the event. An audience does not like a long pageant, and I think that two to two and a half hours should be the limit. This will give time for four or five episodes, which is quite enough for any audience to take in. The fewer the episodes, the more interested it will be in each, and a pageant of three episodes would probably have a greater success than one of five.

Your pageant bears some resemblance to a symphony, in that it is a unity composed of differing parts. Each episode should contrast with those which precede and which follow it, and the audience should be led from one mood to another. Both tragedy and comedy are necessary, and both should be strong. The decorative element is also a necessary part of the plan, and the rhythm and pattern of the whole have a strong effect on the audience. (The appeal of the Tattoo was probably almost entirely that of strongly marked rhythm and patterning and movement, since the emotional and dramatic side was little developed.) It is, perhaps, best to end on a note of joy or of hope, since that is the mood that the audience will carry away with them, and a finale that is mere mass and uplift is not the best finish to a strongly dramatic performance.

The linking of the episodes is not easy, since history is intractable stuff, and will give the lie to most theories; but if some definite idea runs through the whole it helps to make a unity of

these separate events, and to interpret them to the audience. It is naturally better to space the episodes through time at pretty wide intervals, though the more obvious dramatic interest always tempts one to the days of strong action, the Middle Ages, Civil Wars, and so on.

Before the Second Great War, pageant writers were faced by a kind of anticlimax for their last act, because the events of history seemed to lose all their excitement, glamour, and romance; all the appeal to eye and ear; and to peter out into journalists' "stories." Their difficulty now, however, is how to treat adequately the vast drama through which we are passing, a drama which seems to act everything else off the stage. We have a last act now which is certainly "full of sound and fury," but is far from "signifying nothing"; is, in fact, so charged with significance that it takes place beside the cosmic drama of Greece.

I am not concerned here with war plays in general, but merely with the treatment of this inescapable last act from the pageant point of view. I was commissioned to write a pageant of Plymouth before 1939, and found myself building it almost entirely on the greatness of the Elizabethan age, finding it difficult to move beyond it. Taking it up now, I see that not only is the last act missing, but something that should have been inherent in it from the beginning, if I had known it—or if Plymouth had known it either. This last act brings that ageless universal quality which alone makes true drama, brings moderns into line with the Past by experience and suffering; pageant writers must now, more than ever before, be *dramatists*.

The best method, undoubtedly, would be to work backwards, to see the past in the light of the present, to know one's own time really well, first of all, and to clear one's mind about the experiences through which we passed during 1939-45 and are passing through now. Inevitably, some sort of philosophy of history must come into the shaping of the whole, and the subsequent study of history have a new interest. Analogies with the past are fascinating, of course, but one must be careful not to overdo them. They made a great part of the appeal of *Richard of Bordeaux*, but in it they were pushed far beyond history,

and the young King and Queen belonged entirely to the 1918-39 era. The study of one's own time is not easy. There is so much of it; it is so close to one, and nothing has, as yet, dropped into limbo. One has to examine it in detail, to go beyond one's own experience, and to try to understand many different facets; to look at it, to feel it, to turn it over and over in one's mind in order to be able to distinguish what really matters as distinct from what is ephemeral excitement. Only thus can one gain that kind of balance and perspective that the dramatist-historian must have; that kind of linking up of human experience, and seeing of the general through the particular.

Having lived through the searing experience of "making history," the dramatist, his players, and his audience are better able than they were to realize history—or rather life, as a continuous process, and to get inside the skin of the past. Pageants composed in these days demand that interpretation which is an essential of good drama.

I am sure that, in this necessary last act, no one will wish to hear sirens, bombs, or gun-fire; to see or hear realistic reproduction of explosions and falling buildings. We had enough. The tendency increasingly will probably be towards stylization and symbolism, and the use of music to convey the right kind of idea. This, in itself, demands originality of treatment and experimental work, and I hope that we may see some of our younger producers, who have had experience both of life and of the theatre, called in to produce the pageants of the future.

There is already a tendency to return to this type of performance, and also a vague feeling, even among organization committees, that pageants should really say something. There is a great deal to say, and this form of drama is not inappropriate for its saying.

THE BOOK

It has been made apparent that the unusual opportunity given by the pageant of using mass movement and emotion brings with it the need for a technique in writing that differs in many ways from that of theatre-drama. Inside the theatre the mass may be suggested, and even felt, quite strongly, but it can never be there. On the pageant stage it is there, and pageant

writers and producers have to learn its use and control.

Most of the elements of pageants are to be found in Greek Drama—the speech that springs from movement, the strongly-marked and stylized individual, the emotional reaction of the chorus, the large outdoor stage, the great size of the audience, and so on. Pageant writers should always make a careful study of the Greek Theatre before writing, since so many of their problems were solved by the Greek dramatists thousands of years ago. But at the same time they should be able to deal with the same problems otherwise, if necessary, and to use different methods of getting their drama over where the conditions are different.

Two of the main problems are *how to drive the meaning of the scene home*, and *how to link one scene with the next*.

In Greek Drama the method is simple, the action of the play is in the hands of the protagonists, and the comment is made by the chorus. The individual and the crowd were separate, and the Greek audience was satisfied.

Many pageant writers have attempted to reproduce this, but with little success. The Chorus of Spirits, Father Time, or the Narrator are apt to bore the modern audience, which, being cinema-fed, can see but cannot listen. I remember a sigh behind me, "Oh, here come those dreadful people again!" as the lovely ladies of the chorus floated on, and it cured me of choruses.

As to the comment on the scene I have no doubt left in my mind about it. It should be conveyed by the scene itself in unmistakable terms, and the audience should be made to feel about it just what the author wishes it to feel. If it is real drama, the comment will be implicit; if it is not, a spate of blank verse won't help it. The scene should leave the audience caught up in the experience of a definite emotion.

I think that the best link between the episodes is music, possibly with the addition of choric dance. By music the feelings of the audience at the end of the scene are echoed, and by music they are modulated into the mood of the next. Music can make a greater, profounder, and more emotional comment than words, and it affords a greater contrast with the acted scene.

Each episode should contain one dominant idea, and should convey it forcibly. The facts as they stand are often lifeless and uninteresting, and lack this force; they must then be "cooked" in order to make drama, and to convey the real truth of the event. Sometimes the events of some months are brought together, sometimes imaginary characters are introduced to give a necessary contrast, and sometimes fiction is blended with fact to get a dramatic issue. But the writer must be sure of his history first, for if he cooks it he must do so with judgment and not in ignorance.

The technique of pageant writing has been little explored as yet, but with experience certain things emerge.

The main expression lies in action, and the dialogue is, as it were, forced out by the action, coming when it is absolutely necessary to make the action clear. For example, the rush of an angry crowd will carry words with it, shouts, oaths, and short exclamations, which, though they appear confused, will yet bring out the cause of the anger and heighten the effect of the rush. It may be stemmed by a man of strong courage, and he, too, will need words. He must speak, and speak with strength and vigour, with economy and intensity—but the rush and the check will convey the drama first. Many pageants are acted in dumb show, but unless the players are thoroughly trained in physical expression they will find themselves hampered by the lack of words, and the scenes will be ineffective. Naturally, a good deal of the acting may be done in silence, or to music, such as a funeral procession, or a scene of homage, but as a general rule *the action will require dialogue* of a specialized kind. It should consist only of the most necessary speech; it should be definite, emphatic, and should convey strong and simple emotion. The speech of the crowd should be planned—"rhubarb and potatoes" are of no use here, for the mood of the scene is lost if the crowd does not understand the direction of its ideas. A number of short,

forcible sentences should be given them, and balanced by the producer in rehearsal, though they need not appear in the written book. The dialogue of the principals contrasts with that of the crowd in being more explicit and concentrated. Their speeches must be short, and even when a sermon or political address is used it should only seem to be long. On the other hand,



HELMINGHAM PAGEANT—THE VALUE OF TREES AND WATER

quick, chippy dialogue is also dangerous, because thought travels slowly over a distance, and a large audience is slower to respond than a small one. For the same reason one must remember that it takes longer to establish a fact or introduce a character, and it is necessary to vary one's methods of doing so. A herald is, of course, an easy means of announcing a king—his coat-of-arms, his trumpeter, his proclamation, and the ceremony that surrounds him, all speak at once; but less spectacular characters need more subtle introductions. The entry of a messenger at full gallop, shouting his message to a quiet group, the questioning of the group, the shattering of the quiet and the rousing of expectancy will help to build up an entrance—or the fleeing away of a number of people, in obvious fear of a pursuer. In the first, the dialogue may be loud and quick, the questions only variants of the same theme, the answers always the same; in the second, the fugitives may cry the names of their pursuers, "The Norsemen! The Norsemen! The Black Danes!" and so on.

The language to be used is a controversial point.

"Tushery" is the worst of crimes; only a real poet can make verse dramatic, and the dramatist must have an unusual mastery over modern English if he is to use it for the expression of ancient thought. I myself think that the best method of dealing with language is to use the idiom of the period very much simplified and without archaisms. It should be the colloquial

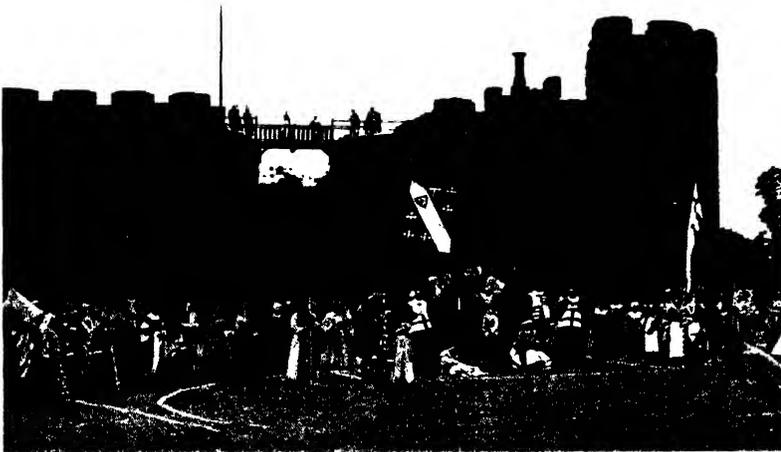
in a rush of horsemen at full gallop, but there is always a danger of stopping the drama, and the long entrance should not be used too often. The author must be sure of shorter entrances, since they will certainly be needed. A background of dark trees can give some mystery to an entrance, and the audience may be allowed to see lurking there figures who will soon rush in upon the drama; or fairies may be stored up in the trees, to drop down unexpectedly at the right moment. Special surroundings will give special entrances and exits, but if the ground is quite lacking in near entrances it may be necessary to use scenery in the form of a doorway or part of a house. But I shall deal with scenery later.

When the book is ready for the producer it will be found to consist very largely of *stage directions*, and great care must be given to these. It is essential that the author should have a working knowledge of production, that he should know what is possible out of doors and

what is not, and how effects are got. Stage directions should not be wordy, but they should give enough description for the crowd to understand what it is doing and feeling. The dramatist must test the timing of his action in order to know where the focus of interest will be at any moment, and shape his scene accordingly. Briefly, the stage directions should be explicit, definite, and descriptive.

The producer will, of course, modify them, but the dramatist must understand that a great part of his work is in the stage directions, and that they are as important as, if not more than, the dialogue.

Pageant technique makes little progress, and the majority of modern pageants do not compare in dramatic merit with those of Mr. Louis Parker. The reason probably is that few dramatists write more than one pageant, and so there is a lack of cumulative experience. The Pageants



A CASTLE BACKGROUND. FRAMLINGHAM.
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speech of the time, and special care is needed over oaths and slang expressions. "Thou" and "thee" are difficult for the actors, and even these may be left out, since anything that hinders the actors is bad. But each succeeding time has its own rhythm of speech; and a great deal of atmosphere, and even of humour, is lost if this is ignored.

Entrances and exits also differ from those of the theatre, and they are by no means easy. The public admires long distance entries: "It was so lovely to see them coming for half a mile through the trees!" But while they were coming, what was happening on the stage? The attention of the audience is directed to the moving figures, and the drama on the stage disappears. There is decoration to be got from the long-distance entry, such as a royal procession with banners and heraldry and splendid robes; there is excitement

of Guildford and of Chiddingfold, by Mr. Graham Robertson, are perhaps the best that have been written, and the Pageant of Mount Grace, by Lady Bell, is an interesting attempt to make a protagonist of a building. The Play and Pageant Union of Hampstead have developed a style of their own, a little akin to the treatment of history by Kipling in "Puck of Pook's Hill." But, apart from these examples, there is still a tendency to be content with the conventional subjects and the conventional treatment, and to shirk the rousing of any real emotion. If the pageant is only a publicity stunt or a snob parade, these subjects and this treatment are enough, but where a real pride in the town or village prompts the desire for a pageant the dramatist has a cast and an audience worthy of the full exercise of his imagination and powers. He can rely on an infection of emotion in his crowds, a kind of friendly competition between the episodes, and real hard work from everyone to make the pageant live.

There is one factor that is always forgotten by pageanteers, and that is Time. They decide in March to hold their pageant in June, and descend upon their unfortunate dramatist with a demand for a five-episode pageant in a month! He has to get himself soaked in the atmosphere of five different centuries, know all his facts and traditions, and hammer them into shape in four weeks! The dramatist needs six months if he is already an historian and knows his district—a year otherwise. When the book is ready, then let the trumpets sound and the organization begin, but not before.

I have been treating the historical pageant only, since that is the best known form, but there are, of course, many avenues for experimental work in the large-scale outdoor play which might well be explored. Pageants of Industry, for example, could be organized in some co-operative way by the leading firms in each industry, and thus organized would have considerable value in several ways. They would bring before the workers in that industry the romance and larger interest that they can hardly realize in their own "daily round," and they would also present "Industry" to the public as something greater and more dignified than "Business." To do this, it must, of course, keep out the advertising

slogan, for the sympathy of the public may be gained by a presentation of the industry as a whole, but not by an advertisement of anyone's Particular Brand. How delightful a Pageant of Shoemakers would be! No dramatist would feel it beneath him to celebrate the Gentle Craft whose heart had once been won by *Sim Evre*, and shoemakers do give plenty of opportunity, since they are so often men of humour, originality, and character, who have a considerable influence on their time. A Pageant of Silk-Weavers would give a riot of colour and Orientalism, and a Pageant of Miners suggests the dark, mysterious power that lies in the earth, and the life and death struggle between it and man. These all offer fine themes, worthy of good writing and production.

Again, this form is suited to the expression of religious and political ideas. The *Tattoo* was a childlike attempt to present the qualities of courage, discipline, and patriotism that belong to war, as well as its glitter, rhythm, and blare. It appealed to a primitive instinct, and got a remarkable response. Equally, however, other ideas might be brought home very forcibly to large, unthinking multitudes, and Peace might get a hearing in the same way. Those who produce in community centres could do fine things if they thought hard enough, for there are many ideas that are seething in men's minds now which do not need old castles, or costly dresses, for their presentation. For these a disused mineshaft or a background of chimneys may well be the protagonist required for the ground, and men and women in their working clothes, filled with the spirit of what they wish to express, will learn to make their meaning pretty clear in the hands of a capable producer.

From the *Tattoo*, crude as it was, useful lessons could be learnt, and not least the value of waiting till dark for performance, involving the use of artificial lighting. The dramatist would find himself much freer if he had this inspiring medium, and many of his difficulties would disappear. With blackouts he would not be troubled with the tedium of long exits, when the drama of his scene was over, and with good lighting he would have the desired emphasis, and the chance of conveying mystery which the cold light of day denies him. It is not easy to arrange for transport for the cast, etc., but vast audiences

managed to get to the Tattoo every night, and the difficulties seemed to be overcome, though the cast were all soldiers and under discipline.

In such a pageant there would be a certain resemblance to film technique, and there would be a kind of non-realism that would be interesting to use. The imagination of the audience would probably be more flexible, and the passage of time more easily conveyed. The dramatist could indulge in a ghost or two, from the vast ghost-population of these islands, and there could be real beauty in the story of an ancient house, played in "moon-light" by a company of ghosts, with the windows palely lighted, and the faint music of harpsichord and viols coming from the house, like its own voice dimly remembered.

Watteau's paintings of the *Fêtes Champêtres* and of the *Commedia* players would yield suggestions for scenes or smaller plays, and Molière might well be played in such a setting in any lovely English garden. The dramatist who knew he might be allowed darkness and modern lighting would feel at once that he had a fine opportunity.

I am concerned with outdoor pageants, because they need a technique of their own that has not been fully discussed. There is much more to be learnt about them, and the last word has not been said. There are, however, indoor pageants which vary in size and importance, from *Huicvatha* in the Royal Albert Hall to "Fruit-Botling through the Ages" in the village school-room. I do not feel convinced that a pageant is a pageant in a theatre. We should really have another name for this type of big-scale episodic play, but both theatre and outdoor pageants have certain elements in common—crowds as an integral part of the play and episodic history. In a theatre many things make the author's job easier. The audience is more controlled and responsive, so that it is easier to put an idea over, exits and entrances are quicker and more manageable, and sound effects are more reliable, the author, in fact, just as an ordinary dramatist of the theatre, knowing what effects in production he will or will not get. He has, too, better chances for individual characterization, but his crowds will be smaller and less impressive. All that I have stated about the study of history and its treatment applies equally, and possibly the theatre

audience, better able to see, may be more critical than an outdoor audience.

Improvements in both film and radio technique affect the outlook of the pageant-writer. He will constantly find invaluable suggestions in the handling of "spectacle" in the film; the radio will suggest a musical idea, sound effects, etc., which can be used with discretion in pageants. He should not, however, be led into too close imitation. His medium is neither film nor air, but the living actor—and the actor makes the technique.

PRODUCTION

A great deal hangs on the choice of a Pageant-Master, and those Committees are ill-advised who economize on the fee, and get an inexperienced amateur to do the work for nothing. In the first place, it is heavy, and takes up the whole time of the Pageant-Master for several months, so that no Committee is justified in asking for so much without payment. In the second place, pageant production needs all the technical skill, knowledge of period and of crowd work that the professional can give, and more besides. There have been too many pageants in which inept production has followed on feeble writing and conception, and district after district has thrown away its history thus. The professional knows by instinct what are the essentials of the drama, and how to make them appear, how to make bricks with little straw, and how to save an antiquarian's pageant. He or she knows, too, how to get the utmost from the hordes of untrained players, and the players feel that confidence that comes only from working with someone who knows his or her job.

It is not every professional producer, however, who can, or who will, undertake this work. Special qualities and a special kind of personality are needed: he must have a considerable gift of organization, the power to inspire people with enthusiasm, and a tactfully autocratic manner.

The crowds are large and untrained, of course—but it must be remembered that they are also free agents, bound only by a promise, often exceedingly busy people, and that they are already sacrificing a great deal for their pageant. The producer, therefore, cannot afford to "throw his

weight about," since that will lead only to a gradual evaporation of the crowd; but he can rely on an underlying local patriotism as the mainspring of the pageant. However big a name he has in the theatre, he will always matter less to the players than the home that they celebrate—and it is a fact that big names grow smaller

crowd work will be delegated to him. To begin with, he will know each member of his crowd, and recognize individual capabilities, so that he can use them in the right place. He will divide the crowd into groups, each under a *section-leader*, who will be responsible to him for the general movement of the group, as a collie to the shepherd.



SCENE FROM "HENRY VIII," NASH COURT, MARNHULL, DORSET

By kind permission of the Editor of "Drama"

and smaller as they recede from London! Generally speaking, the influence of the producer makes itself felt quite soon, and the result is a quickening interest and enthusiasm that grow in impetus to the final performance.

The Pageant-Master will want to work with big effects, and should not be hampered by having to train every unit of his crowd. He will, therefore, have under him a *sub-producer in every episode*. For this post the best possible people are local experienced amateur producers, who work voluntarily. They are, of course, entirely under his command, and they gain a great deal from working under an experienced man or woman of the theatre. The sub-producer can do much to help the Pageant-Master in the preparation of the scenes, and a proportion of the

This method is by far the best, since the producer is closely in touch with one person, on whom he can rely for the working of the group, and in pageants for which only one rehearsal on the real stage is possible it prevents disintegration. These section-leaders must be reliable people and good actors—they have to work up the emotion in their groups, start a shout or a laugh, close or open or turn the group as required, and generally keep its tone up or down as the Pageant-Master wishes. If they are irregular or inattentive, they should be changed at once, for only reliable people are of any use at this job. They must always keep an eye on the producer, since through them he "conducts" his crowd. Without them, he has to run from end to end of the large stage and a lot of time and energy is wasted.

The sub-producer takes his whole crowd, or sections of it, frequently, and works at *the timing of all reaction*. This inevitably comes more slowly out of doors; the idea takes longer to reach the minds (especially at the edges of the crowd), sound travels more slowly, the players are often inattentive and miss the moment, and so on. It

exit, and all movements about the acting area, timed, when he has had instructions from the Pageant-Master as to the pace required. He must know how long it will take for a funeral procession to go 300 yards, or a cavalier charge at full gallop half a mile, and the time any character will want to get from point to point on the stage



STAGE FOR 'THE TEMPEST,' POPEL CORNO, CORNWALL
by the permission of the Cornwall Drama'

is not easy to turn a number of half-interested, conversational, social acquaintances into a unit that has force and character. The sub-producer, therefore, has to get his crowd thoroughly to understand the scene first, and then to mould it into something that the Pageant-Master can use effectively when he rehearses. He can interest them with little difficulty if they feel that he expects real acting from them; what bores crowds is being treated as lay figures to fill up spaces and wear fancy dress. The local amateur producer will be far better as sub-producer than a professional who is quite outside the place; he knows his people and their capabilities, and they know him and are not afraid of him.

The sub-producer will have *every entrance and*

False calculations on these points cause serious trouble, for a character or a procession that is started late can never arrive at the dramatic moment, and thus the scene can easily be spoiled. Anything may happen—the crowd may miss its signal and be standing about chattering; the audience may have strayed across their way, and be obstructing them; the horses may be restive, and either jib or bolt; corpses may not be ready, and so on—the producer is never wholly free from anxiety about entrances on an outdoor stage. But if the sub-producer has had all these worked out, and has marked the moment in the prompt book when the signal should be given, the Pageant-Master will feel less nervous about them, and have a basis on which to work to his climaxes.

There is a good deal of timing that never comes into theatre production, but on which many of the effects of outdoor work depend. There is the important point of *timing the passage of an idea or emotion* through the crowd. Now if the whole enormous crowd were to respond instantly to an idea sent out from the focus point, the audience would at once feel that they had been drilled; and, though the most careful drill is needed for everything that the crowd does, the audience must never guess it. Suppose that the idea emanates from a focal point, as in the Forum Scene in *Julius Cæsar*: the emotion will spread outwards gradually. It has to pass out towards the edges of the crowd, and will, inevitably, in a large crowd, weaken as it goes. The fire of emotion is in the middle, which must be kept alive and moving, but the distant parts of the crowd will only have a reflection of the fire at first. The Pageant-Master has to get this passing out of the idea carefully worked, and much time has to be spent on it at rehearsal.

An idea may come gradually from outside, and move slowly and almost imperceptibly round the crowd, as in the scene in *Elizabeth of England*, when the news of the defeat of the Armada was brought to Philip of Spain. The King was at Mass, kneeling before the high altar: a messenger entered down stage, and whispered to a kneeling figure close to him—this figure turned with a face of consternation to hear more, and then passed on the message. The news crept like a snake round among the figures until the audience was keyed up to know the effect on the King when it reached him. The size of the crowd will regulate the timing to some extent.

The growth of an idea will be slower in a large crowd than in a small, since it has farther to go and is more dispersed. On the other hand, a large crowd that has once grasped an idea will act more swiftly, the decision flaring up amongst them like fire in straw, whereas a small crowd has to gather courage and confidence before it does anything. The audience has the whole crowd in view; there can be no suggestion of an army by a few men passing a window or any such device. There they all are, and everyone can see them! A feeble producer will not be able to keep his crowd properly keyed up and entirely in the scene; there will be many dead spots, and

many inattentive people who can damage the scene very badly indeed. The Pageant-Master must be able to inspire his whole crowd so strongly with the idea that each individual becomes caught up in it.

The rhythm of emotion, too, has much greater chance than it can ever get in a theatre—the movement towards or away from the compelling idea, the breaking, the uniting, scattering, change of *tempo*, and so on. All this rhythm is so strong on the big acting area and with a large number of people that it inevitably has some relation to dance-drama on a big scale, and it is in this side of pageant work that the Laban Movement would prove a valuable asset. It would be extremely interesting to see real experimental work in this direction, and, indeed, in the whole matter of crowd production on a large scale, since the crowd is a magnificent instrument in the hands of a good producer.

What I have said about *the principals* in the book applies equally to the production. They must be emphasized in every possible way and great stress laid upon them. Thus will be done in many ways—the character may be mounted; his dress will be strongly contrasted with that of the rest; his make-up will be clearly defined; and his gesture and movement will be strong and well characterized. It will be necessary, too, for him to have a good carrying voice, and if he is mounted to have his horse in perfect control. Principal speaking parts should never be numerous, but in every scene there will always be a number of Important Personages that are not principals in the dramatic sense, but that satisfy those who want a prominent position and a smart dress, and who act so badly that they cannot be used in the crowd. As the principals will usually be historical characters, both producer and actor should read about them to discover the characteristics and habits that the well-informed part of the audience will recognize. Such people as Charles II, Dr. Johnson, or Lord Beaconsfield should be unmistakable directly they appear.

Unlike babies and some of the domestic animals on whose actions no one can rely, *horses* are a real asset to the producer. A character that is mounted is raised to a different level from the crowd, and gains emphasis at once; if he is a good horseman, he and his horse are one, and you get a larger unit.

The horse is so sensitive to his rider that he appears to act with him, and, after several rehearsals, is actually ready for his movements. The man gains dignity, and no good rider is ever ungraceful on his horse. One hand is occupied with the reins, of course, but he need never feel the embarrassment of not knowing what to do with his hands. Again, he has greater variety of pace in movement than if he were on foot. When a number of characters are mounted, you get an underlying rhythm from the horses themselves, and from the sway of the riders' bodies; the audience will always be thrilled by the sweep of a gallop or the measured movement of a triumphant army—whether the humans get their drama over or not, the horses always will. One essential thing about scenes played on horseback is that *they should always be rehearsed on horseback*, and, if possible, on the same horses. The Committee does not always realize this, but the Pageant-Master should insist.

Dancing and music have to be floated into the mixture with a light hand. It is a real bore to see amateur dancers plodding painstakingly through a period dance, wobbling down on curtsies and almost counting aloud, and folk dancing can easily be overdone. Dancing is a precious bit of pattern, but it is seldom that the whole of any dance is needed, and it is necessary to adapt the actual period dances for stage use. They should be taught by someone who really knows them, and understands their stage value, and even then the Pageant-Master must feel free to cut them off when he wishes, to fade them out, and to do anything he likes with them. It is exactly the same with songs and instrumental music. Great care should be taken in the study and choice of them, and then they should come in little snatches: bursts of music that suddenly disappear, bawled out by a crowd, and so on. It must not be museum music, nor concert music, nor musical comedy music, but the kind of music that comes in and out of ordinary life. Many present-day composers working for the films have developed a special and an effective technique—highly descriptive, expressive both of the emotion seen and of the comic effects desired. The heightening of these in the film *Henry V* was illuminating. Any pageant writer would value the chance of getting special music rightly conceived. It "melts" in

and out of the dialogue, bridges gaps, and, generally, seems to knit everything together. It quickens, too, the emotional response of the audience. The producer, however, must be careful. Nothing is, perhaps, more exasperating to the audience than a blaring amplifier when they want to talk about the scene. Regular B.B.C. listeners are familiar with the irritation of too many musical and sound effects that interfere with the drama.

THE ORGANIZATION

The organization of any pageant, however small, is half, or even two-thirds, of the battle, and it is well to consider carefully how this should be done. There will be the Central Committee, with its sub-committees, and there will be the separate organization of each episode: both must work in harmony if success is to be attained. The whole responsibility for the pageant, both artistic and financial, rests on the Central Committee, and its work must be taken in hand very seriously, and by the right people. A pageant is a big financial venture, and entails a good deal of risk; it is going to ask for a large amount of work and enthusiasm from hundreds of people, and it caters for the entertainment of an even larger number. The Central Committee should, therefore, consist not of the social climbers and persons of quality who so often stand at the back of pageants, but of a just proportion of artists and of sound business men. The Quality and the climbers should be patrons and guarantors, or even actors, and their names have a real publicity value, but if the Committee is made of these the undertaking will be of as much value as a Society *matinée*, and an exasperation which may take many years to soothe may be left among the humbler workers who have given freely of their time and brains.

The most important person of all is the Secretary, and he, or she, must be an exceptional person! He will get all the kicks, and hear all the grievances; his work will be both endless and exasperating; he will be expected to deal with every emergency, and all the bouquets will go to the Author, the Producer, and the Principals. Yet, unquestionably, the final success of the pageant will be due to his unflinching tact and ingenuity. Without him the Producer would have no

material to work on, the various parts of the organization would be at sixes and sevens, and the morale of the cast would go to pieces. Everyone must feel that the Secretary is confident of success, that he can fend off all depressions, that nothing is a worry, and that all things are possible to him. He has to recruit players and workers of all kinds from a large district, to put the right person in the right place, and to replace those who fall out—in short, to keep all the wheels oiled, and the machine running smoothly. Everyone should realize at the outset that he has the biggest job in the whole thing, and be ready to help him with goodwill and efficiency.

Assuming that each episode is to have its own complete organization it should not be necessary to set up a number of central sub-committees, but the following are necessary: Finance, Production, and Grounds.

The Finance Committee should be small and entirely competent, containing at least one mind that can think on a large scale. It has to receive and consider estimates from all the departments, to point out wise methods of economy, and decide on a right expenditure. A pageant may be spoiled by a meanness that destroys the artistic effect, but quite often money is spent on unnecessary things, and a financial failure results.

It has at first to raise a fund to carry on the initial work, either as a Guarantee Fund or in the form of subscriptions or donations, and this is undoubtedly far easier when the names of the Finance Committee are those of sound business people. It will, after considering estimates, allot a certain amount to each episode, which should not be exceeded. The major costs of a pageant are—

Author's Fee.	The Stand.
Pageant-Master's Fee.	Transport of Players.
Secretary's Salary.	Music.
Printing and Publicity.	Fencing, Tents, and
Costumes and Properties.	Screening.

Individual Pageant-Committees may effect considerable economies on some of these, from their local conditions, but for most these expenses must be considered first, and on some economy is unwise.

An adequate fee should be paid to the Author for his work; and it should be realized that this

must be paid when the book is complete, whether the pageant is ever performed or not. He may ask a percentage royalty on performances as well, but the time and work that he has spent on research and the study of local history must be paid for, and since he has written a play that must be, in its very nature, purely local, it can never be performed elsewhere, and he can look for no further royalties on it.

I have said enough on the technical side of production to make it clear that only experienced producers ought to tackle pageants, and therefore the Committee must be prepared to pay a just fee to the Pageant-Master. No good producer will abandon the chance of a professional engagement to produce a pageant in the country with an amateur cast unless the fee is adequate; the kudos that he gets from it is negligible in the profession, and the experience of handling large crowds of untrained players is valuable only to those who specialize in pageant work. A wise choice of Producer is all-important, and advice on this subject may be had from the British Drama League (9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.C. 1), which has a panel of producers, pageant-writers, and organizers.

A third essential salary is that of the Secretary. The Committee needs his whole time and his whole personality, and a small car will also be necessary if the episode groups are widely scattered. Other office salaries may also be needed if the undertaking is a big one.

It is also an economy to employ a skilled Publicity Agent, since this part of the work may be wastefully done by those who do not understand it, and since it should certainly repay itself if conducted by an expert.

The Production Committee consists of the staff of the Pageant-Master, and is under his control. The following officers are needed—

Stage Manager.
Mistress of the Robes.
Property-Master.
Master of the Music.
Master of the Horse.

The Pageant-Master will discuss each episode with these; and lists of requirements and general ideas will be written down. Each will then get into touch with the similar officers of each

episode, and go into the detail of the work and the best methods of carrying it out. They will give the individual workers as much scope for originality as possible, but must be ready to advise in any emergency, and supply information that these cannot get. They will visit the staff of each episode early, and give them a talk on the costume, music, properties, etc., of the period; they

designs if required; if the costumes are to be hired she will get estimates from the different firms, and see the costumes before booking.

The Master of the Music will choose the music to be performed, and will instruct the episode musician as to its performance; he will also be responsible for supplying the incidental music.

The Master of the Horse will get into touch



"QUEEN ELIZABETH" AT SYDENHAM, DEVON

will discuss estimates and advise on methods of economy, and generally start them off. Later on they will come round again to see how the work is going, and to explain the methods of organization that will be used behind the scenes. Time is of the utmost importance in all this work, and last-minute rushes are invariably costly.

The Mistress of the Robes will get out the general designs for the scene, will order material and dyes in bulk, and will supply patterns and

with the Grounds Committee about the stabling of the horses during the pageant, will be responsible for finding horses, and for their care during performances.

It is unnecessary to detail all the functions of each officer, but I have indicated the general method of carrying out the work.

The Grounds Committee is responsible for the stand, the fencing and screening, tents and car parks. It has to keep the acting area in good

condition, to provide a rehearsal stage, and house the orchestra or the wireless.

EPISODE ORGANIZATION

Each episode will have the same officers as the Central Production Committee, and a Secretary as well. The Secretary will recruit for the cast in his scene, and will keep a careful record of it; he will issue as early as possible a schedule of rehearsals, and bring all his influence to bear on the cast to make them understand that it is necessary for all of them to attend every rehearsal, that substitutes are useless, and that subsequent engagements must not interfere with rehearsal nights. That is no mean task in itself! He will arrange for the transport of the players, getting as many as possible taken free, and he has to be able to hand over his whole scene, in perfect condition and good order, at the end.

The duties of the Sub-Producer have been described under "Production," and those of the Stage Manager are too well known to need enumeration.

The Master of the Music has to get the music allotted to him performed, and that is often a difficult thing in a village. In these days, recorder players are easily obtainable and will be invaluable where pipes are needed. He has to train the singers, and find the best means of making horn or trumpet sounds, etc.

The Master of the Horse should find all the horses necessary for his episode, and look after them. He should remember that for all early periods cart-horses should be used rather than hunters, though the latter will be wanted for swift movements, as in cavalier charges. Pageants are held in the summer, when horses are out to grass and therefore quiet, but it is important that they should rehearse every time to get used to the players, and that they should wear strange trappings early.

The Property-Master will get his instructions from the Head "Props," and will then collect workers and a workshop. He will want a carpenter's bench and some trestle tables, and he will want someone to teach papier-mâché work, as well as carpenters. His material should not be costly—three-ply wood, beaverboard, paper and paste, some poles, string and rope, size, glue, nails, and paint should make most of what is needed,

provided that he has a good supply of "ingenuity and artifice." Substitute props, as near as possible in size to the real ones, should be supplied to the players quite early, and the real ones kept until the end. The period should be carefully studied, and good, simple, big designs made for all props, finicky things being almost invisible on a large stage. Real antiques may be borrowed, but they must be insured, and they need so much care that everyone will be much happier with fakes; besides, fakes often look more real than the real. The Property-Master must be prepared for carelessness on the part of the players; he should keep all props in his shop, give them out when needed, and take them back afterwards, both at rehearsals and at performances.

The Wardrobe Mistress, like the Property-Master, has an interesting job, and one that gives scope for real artistry and originality. If costumes are to be made she will need a staff of dress-makers, cutters, dyers, stencillers, dressers, and makers-up; if they are to be hired, she will need the last two only, but everyone concerned must study the period in detail, and know just how the clothes of the time were made, and how they were worn. She will want a good workroom, one or two machines, and some trestle tables; also a wash-house for dyeing in, some large zinc baths or a copper, and a shady place to dry the dyed goods. In the workroom she will stretch a clothes-line along each wall, on which the costumes will hang, each on its separate hanger. The hanger will be marked with the name of the character, and a bag for spare parts will hang from it; when the costume is complete it will be ready to go, with the hanger, to the dressing-rooms.

Having submitted her designs to the Mistress of the Robes, she will then send forth her workers to beg or to borrow old curtains, sheets, bedspreads, uniforms, etc., from their friends, and, having studied their period well, they will go out with a searching eye and a persuasive tongue. The Wardrobe Mistress will make a list of all the characters directly they are cast, and will at once take all their measurements in detail. She will then start a book, in which each character is noted, with measurements, details of costume, wig, weapons, etc., and will check off each item as she completes it or is given it. She, like the Property-Master, must keep a lynx eye on the

players, checking each costume as she gives it out and as she gets it back; she must urge on all of them, with the utmost stringency, the *need for taking care of the costumes*. The oftener the costumes are worn before the dress rehearsal the better; even if all the spare parts are not ready, the costumes lose the dreadful new look, and the players get used to putting them on and off, and to moving in them. If all this is done early, everything will go astonishingly smoothly on the day, and the clothes will seem to belong to the people, but still the Wardrobe Mistress and her staff must be prepared to act as dressers during the performances.

It may rain on the performers during the pageant, and provision for drying costumes should be made, as the materials, the dyes, and the paints used on them may be spoiled if the drying is not done carefully. Costumes waterproofed when they are made save a good deal of trouble and many colds are avoided. Each player who makes her costume can quite well waterproof it as well. Here is a recipe: Dissolve sugar of lead and alum in rainwater (1 oz. of each to a quart of water) and leave standing for several hours, stirring occasionally. Leave it to settle all night, and next day draw off the clear liquid, using a piece of rubber tubing to transfer it from one vessel to another. The vessels should be earthenware or enamel. Next saturate the garment or material in the clear liquid, leaving it to soak at least 24 hours. Finally, dry it without rinsing, wringing, or squeezing, in the open air. It is most important to see that the liquid is quite clear, as any sediment makes white patches on the garment when dry.

Naturally, every pageant has its own special conditions, and a great deal of voluntary work will be needed in every section. An appeal for this should be got out early, giving the various jobs for which workers will be needed, and it is as well to hint, even in this appeal, that no one has any use for "the ungodly," who "promiseth but doth not perform." But the Committee must be sure that it does not ask for unlimited work from busy people, and at the same time pay salaries that are not fully earned—a not unheard-of occurrence. If the public has confidence in its Committee it will work for it, and will find the work varied and interesting; the more people engaged in helping

it on in one way or another, the greater is the enjoyment, and the sense of achievement at the end.

THE STAGE AND THE AUDITORIUM

The site should be chosen early by the Author, the Pageant-Master, and the Grounds Committee, for there are several important points in connexion with it that may take time in the consideration. We have seen how the site will affect the author, and how important it is that he should have a voice in the



A PAGEANT AT A HAUNTED BRIDGE IN
NORTHUMBERLAND

The Ghost of Lady Derwentwater and Attendant Spirits

choosing of it—we must now see how it affects the production and the organization. It is by no means easy to be sure of a site that will be equally good all round, and one consideration has often to give way before another. Somehow or other the public has to see and hear the pageant easily, to be given every comfort possible while seeing it, to be able to reach it and get away without difficulty, and generally to enjoy it. Besides this, the arrangements behind the scenes and on the stage must be such that the pageant can be played as well as possible, and that the players are not hampered by lack of organization.

ACOUSTICS AND VISIBILITY

Since I have already laid some stress on the value of dialogue in a pageant, and since it is quite possible to find stages on which dialogue can be heard with ease, it is worth while considering the acoustic properties of any suggested site first. The Greeks and Romans understood

a good deal about outdoor acoustics, and Vitruvius, a Roman writer, has given some interesting information on the subject, which is quoted in *The Open Air Theatre*, by Sheldon Cheney. (This book and *The Attic Theatre*, by A. E. Haigh, are well worth study by the organizers and producers of pageants.) In America a large number of outdoor plays are performed, and it is quite usual to erect outdoor theatres on the classic plan; for our pageants in this country, however, we rarely construct artificial stages, but prefer to use the natural surroundings as far as possible, and experience has shown that these have certain advantages and also disadvantages that must be considered in choosing the site.

Trees, for example, form a beautiful background, and as such will send the voices forward; at the sides they will be useful in enclosing the stage picture, or masking entrances, or in throwing across the stage pleasant shadows that contrast with the strong sunlight; but on the stage they are dangerous, for they swallow up the sound, and in a high wind will make such a noise that the players will not get a hearing.

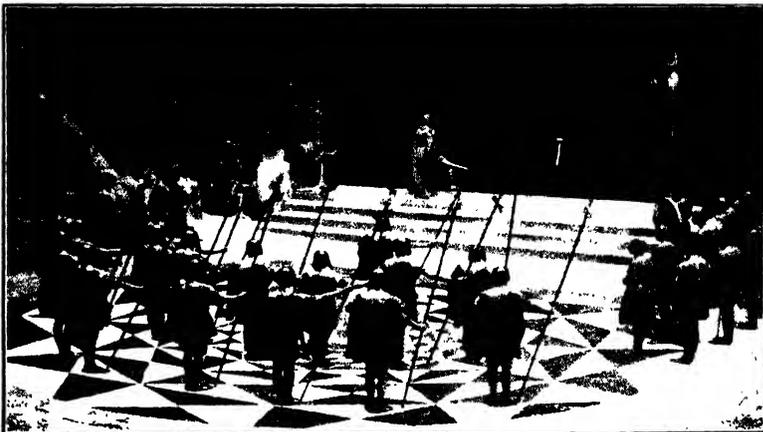
Backgrounds of hills, or of gently rising ground, or of masonry, or of a hanging wood, will all make good sounding boards, and the voices will also be carried forward by a dip in the ground between them and the audience, or, better still, by water. If there is a chance to get a quiet stream or still pond well down stage, it should be seized.

Rain and wind are always enemies, rain being the worst, for even if the players brave the wetness of the rain, they cannot successfully push their voices through it.

The stand, especially if it is covered, will catch and concentrate the sound, so that the general audibility becomes considerably greater directly it has been erected.

The comparative levels of actors and audience

were carefully studied in Greek and Roman theatres, and the best form of natural stage does, in reality, approximate to the later Greek and the Roman: that is, the actors at the focal point will be on a level with the third or fourth row of the audience, while the ground will fall away a little between, and the rest of the auditorium will rise



SCENE FROM A GREEK PLAY AT BRADFIELD

By kind permission of the Editor of 'Drama'

above the stage. If the actors are too high above the audience there is a danger that the voices will mount and disperse, so that it is always important to raise the auditorium, even if a good natural platform has been found. In the Hearst Greek Theatre in America an audience of ten thousand can hear every word spoken in conversational tones on the stage.

This country abounds in ancient grassy amphitheatres such as Maiden Castle or Pirran Round, and these offer ideal conditions for outdoor production, except for the fact that they are often exposed to the winds. The bailey of an old castle is also excellent, because of its form, and the amphitheatre can be made there. If it is possible to find a site that has this shape it is always better to use it than to take something with a wide background, since it is not only better for audibility but for visibility as well. All the seats are equidistant from the focal point, so that everyone can see and hear equally well, and the attention

of the whole audience is drawn to that point, so that it is not likely to see anything beyond it unless the producer wishes it to do so.

If no natural amphitheatre is to be had, then it is important to build the stand as a section of a circle, and, though this may be more costly, the expense is fully justified, since each day's



THE OLD BOLDERMAN CARRIED BY HIS THANES, BRADSTONE

audience is satisfied and goes away saying so, and therefore swelling the next day's. In a long, straight stand the people on the outer edges get out of touch with the dramatic focus, and they do not hear easily; they then begin to talk or laugh, which makes it impossible for their neighbours to hear, so that the talking spreads inwards and the illusion is lost.

Different levels on the stage are useful for the producer: walls or a tower or a grassy knoll—all will help in the picture-making, which is so important a part of the production.

The entrances are seldom entirely satisfactory, and some sort of screening has to be used here and there. This should be done carefully, under the Pageant-Master, so that it does not stand out from the general colour of the background. If hessian is used, it should be dyed green to tone in with the foliage and grass; if hurdles and brushwood, the brushwood must be fresh, and not withered and brown. All screening must be high enough to hide a horse and his rider, includ-

ing weapons, and it must be fixed firmly, or jostling crowds or restive horses may bring it down. The Pageant-Master may want architectural screening in the form of canvas buildings, walls, gatehouses, etc. It is not wise to use much of this, since it is hard to get the right illusion out of doors, but a skilful scene-painter, working on the ground itself, can succeed in blending them in with the real. In one pageant a number of black-and-white Tudor dwellings were placed at the foot of a castle wall of stone; the contrast between the timber and plaster and the stone prevented comparison, and the effect was quite convincing. A wise plan is to place these buildings in the shade of trees, where the trees themselves will help to make them one with the setting, and will tone down the general effect. They must be built in the round, with apparent thickness, and with roofs; but it is not necessary to be too literal about them, and one

gateway, well placed, will give quite enough suggestion of an abbey or a castle for any audience. A building, conveying a definite idea, gives a kind of focus to some part of the stage, and it is possible to get an effect of changing the scene if the focus is shifted from one part to another, as is exemplified in the "houses" at Oberammergau.

"Prompt corners" have to be found somehow, and they must not be corners at all, but close in among the players. Prompting is sometimes done by megaphone or microphone from the front of the stand, but this may be heard by the audience, which is inexcusable. Probably the best method is to use peripatetic prompters, who keep close to the principals with books hidden in their props, but the Bedfordshire W.I. Pageant Committee dug a grave for their prompter down stage, with a little grass mound to hide him from the audience. It was quite a comfortable little grave, but I had the feeling, when I saw it, that unless it were carefully fenced from horses it might become a grave indeed!

When once the matter of the stage and the entrances and exits has been settled, an exact plan should be made of it, showing everything that may concern the production. Copies of this plan will be sent to every sub-producer, who will mark it out, with a tennis marker, in the field that he is to use for rehearsal stage. The players in each episode will then rehearse on exactly the same space that they will find for their performance, and all the grouping will fall into place automatically. A rehearsal stage should also be marked near the place where the pageant is to be held, for if all rehearsals are held on the pageant ground itself, there will not be a blade of grass left for the performance, and there may be a morass. The Grounds Committee must watch the actual ground carefully throughout the rehearsals, and do their best to keep it in good condition. Usually it is necessary to hold preliminary rehearsals on the real stage, but when the effect of the ground and surroundings is thoroughly realized, the transfer to the rehearsal stage should be made.

THE AUDITORIUM

To return to the auditorium. The Pageant Committee must face the fact, from the beginning, that a raised and covered stand is necessary, and that its cost is one of the essential expenses of the pageant. Apart from the artistic advantages already mentioned, it is sound finance, for unless the audience is made thoroughly happy and comfortable on the first day, and can see and hear with ease, and does not get wet or cold, it will go away cross, and nothing can damage a pageant more than a cross audience on the first day. It is well to advertise the Raised and Covered Stand, as the public is inclined to be a little suspicious of pageant arrangements, and likes to know that it will be kept dry and be able to see when it has paid for its seat. The stand should not face into the sun, and its sides should be closed against a driving wind, and it should have plenty of easy entrances. The audience at Oberammergau, four thousand in number, is out of the theatre in two minutes, and this may as easily be achieved in any outdoor auditorium in England. The stand must be put up by a firm used to the work—this is not a job for amateurs—and it must be inspected by an official of the

Board of Trade. The Grounds Committee will have to reckon carefully the amount of seating capacity in any given space, and send in an estimate of the amount to the Finance Committee before any site is finally chosen; sometimes by shifting the position of the stand a little, a larger number can be seated, and the possible seating capacity must be reckoned against the general cost of the pageant. There are various methods of getting timber for stands.

The car park should be as near as possible to the stand, and organized efficiently, since long delays in getting in and out are a bad advertisement for the pageant.

The Grounds Committee must be men of determination and authority, for they must be prepared to deal with undisciplined crowds. Some lawless spirit is evoked by a pageant in its audience, and it behaves as other audiences do not. It is strangely determined to come on to the stage, and ropes are of no account in its eyes; it likes to have picnics on the stage, to climb up into the trees, to sit on the walls and towers, and generally to be where it is not meant to be. Aged ladies will make a slow progress right across the stage, from some unknown spot to their seats, just as King Arthur and his Knights with all their following are making an imposing entrance through the Castle gate; a charabanc load of the Historical Society will examine the foundations of the Abbey, and even give short lectures on some interesting feature when the Spirit of the Ages is taking breath for her blank verse harangue, and the Press photographer, in all his horror, dodges about among the horses' heels to take snaps of Lady — as Margaret of Anjou! So not only must the Grounds Committee make strong fences, but they must recruit a good staff of strong men for the performances.

THE CAST

An early start should be made in recruiting for players and workers, and it is advisable to have ready some kind of synopsis of the pageant when doing this, in order to interest people. With this, the Secretary may ask to address the meetings of various organizations in order to get support from them, and, if he has a power of description, he should be able to give them an idea of what the pageant will finally

become. The best supporters of any pageant are always found in societies that are working with some social or artistic aim, and are already a community—local amateur dramatic societies, women's institutes, British Legion, young people's organizations, and so on. If any such body undertakes an episode, it has within itself a spirit of co-operation and of teamwork that is infinitely valuable to the organizers. Moreover, it knows how to use this work to the benefit of its members by getting the utmost out of it educationally and artistically. If the first approach is made to individuals there is nothing to hold them together until the interest of the thing has gripped them, and it takes some little time to make a real cement of this interest. Any organization that is asked to take an episode will feel a pride in making it as good as possible, for the honour of the club or company, or whatever it may be, and a friendly rivalry will arise between the episodes. It will recruit players from outside its own membership if large crowds are needed, but the episode will appear under its name, and it will do the necessary spade work.

Incidentally, it will in all probability add to its membership from among the individuals whom it has drawn in, for many firm friendships are made in pageant-acting. One of the best groups with which I ever worked was the Hampshire Hunt, which took over a Saxon hunting scene. They were already friends in the hunting-field, which made for a delightful spirit among them, but more than that, they spared no pains in the rehearsal and general perfection of their scene, and performed it as artists. Since then I have always asked for the help of the local Hunts, and have always found them to contain not only people who could ride, and who lost all self-consciousness while on horseback, but people who could really act as well.

The prospective players should meet the Pageant-Master as soon as possible in order that he may talk to them about the pageant and about what he expects of them. He has an opportunity here that he should not miss. His crowd will be enormous, and, mostly untrained, they will have little idea of what the pageant is going to be, of what they can do in competent hands, or even of what acting and the discipline of acting really are. He can at once make them feel that they have

powers, and impress on them that only sound work will enable them to use them; he can make them feel that they are going to enjoy their work, and achieve something really fine; and he can make them respect and like him, which is extremely important. When this personal contact has been made, the Secretary's recruiting work will be easier, for people will know what is expected of them.

REHEARSALS

The main rehearsals, taken by the Pageant-Master, together with the dress parade, and performances, should be fixed at an early stage. The Secretary should then have a duplicated paper which he can put into the hands of every performer, giving these, and certain necessary conditions. If it has a slip at the bottom, which the performer fills in with his name and address, it will supply a record for his office. Later, but not much later, a further list of rehearsals will be issued by the episode sub-producer. With these precautions, there will be no excuse at all for players who say, "Oh, you never told me the rehearsal was on Wednesday!" or "I can't possibly manage *that*, my dear!"

Rehearsals will, of course, be in the evening to suit those who are at work during the day, and they should begin with absolute punctuality, even if only a few are there. If the producer waits for principals, and they know he will do so, they will be later and later each time, and the crowd will get exasperated, and drop off. If the principals are avoidably late, it is well for them to see that understudies are being rehearsed in their parts; they will be punctual in future!

The cast is not easy to handle for a good many reasons, and the whole organization must be prepared for this. It is composed mainly of people who do not know anything of the necessary discipline of a production; they have no idea of the time that it takes to work at any point or to study a part; they have, perhaps, never used their imaginations very much, and all this has to be made clear to them. To begin with, they are quite casual about punctuality at rehearsals, or even about attendance, and when they do attend they feel that it is a social function, and that they can talk freely. Sooner or later the Pageant-Master will have to deal with them and to give

them "a piece of his mind." Once should be enough, and the Pageant-Master will know when to apply this tonic; afterwards he will get their attention, and can begin to awaken their imagination and power of expression. He has to make them understand that everything that every single person does, while anywhere on the acting area, counts; and he must repeat this many times during rehearsal time. Unless the players get this well into their heads, and really do come right into the scene, the temptation to look off the stage into the auditorium will be too much for them on the day and they will shirk the discipline.

CROWDS

Village players are the best possible crowds. They are entirely unselfconscious, and can throw themselves into a scene with real abandonment. The mere fact of being in a crowd is so unusual for them that it excites them, and they give the utmost attention to their producer. In recruiting, it should be made clear that the crowd work is important, and that the best players are needed for this, quite as much as for the principal parts. No one should feel that a part in a crowd is a small thing, and that it does not matter whether he attends rehearsals or not. I once heard two ladies discussing a pageant. One said that she would like to be in the crowd, but that she couldn't manage the rehearsals! Her friend replied, "Oh, *that* doesn't matter at all! We all have substitutes, and one goes one day and one another!" Which was enlightening.

Village players are also better able to speak and to move out of doors than townsmen, and as the men can usually ride they are valuable material.

Type casting is almost inevitable for the principals, since they have so often to represent well-known historical characters; but it is essential that they should be able to act as well. In the familiar Queen Elizabeth scene, it is disappointing to see an Elizabeth who looks the part to perfection as she is carried in in her litter, but who roars as gently as any sucking dove when she has to act. They must have good carrying voices, they must have a "presence," and often they must also ride. Now it is usual, as a matter of compliment, to cast the "County" in the parts of Kings, Queens, and great figures of history, because they have the manner of the aristocracy, but it is a dangerous

practice. The manner of the aristocracy, or of Society, to-day, is not that of past days, and, speaking generally, they cannot assume any other manner. The speech of history more nearly resembled our country dialects than the thin flat tongue of the lady or the gentleman to-day, and there is a greater dignity in a Westmorland farmer than in a modern peer. Even for types, it is better to be quite indiscriminating about class, and to make for the real thing, and it is always better to have people who can assume the right character than those who merely resemble it. The best place for the County is in the representation of its ancestors. They will be happy in such parts, and can carry them off; they can wear lovely clothes and heraldry, and so on, and feel themselves as important as the principals. The unpunctuality at rehearsals, caused by the sacred nature of the dinner-hour, or by late tennis parties, or treasure hunts, will matter less to the producer in such parts than in any others. Their inclusion in the cast has a definite value, as many more people will join in if they feel that they will be mixing with Countesses, or even Honourables, and it has Press value, but it is well only to put them in parts where defection does not matter.

Understudies will be found, as rehearsals proceed, from among the keenest and most talented of the crowd. Having attended rehearsals regularly, they will know the geography of the scene, and be pretty well aware of what the producer wants, so that they can step into principal parts easily. If possible, they should be allowed to play the part during one performance at least.

CHILDREN AND ANIMALS

Children are always needed, and, well handled, are a gift to the producer. They do not distract the audience as they do on an indoor stage, but they add greatly to the beauty of the effect, and are also capable of strong emotional acting. There is no need to put them always into pretty-pretty parts, for their imagination is strong, and they can express such emotions as fear and sorrow very poignantly. If gaiety is needed, they will add to it tenfold. The schools from which they are drawn should be chosen carefully, for the pageant reveals the particular character of the school remarkably. Generally speaking, the primary schools will give a freer, more vigorous,

performance than the higher grades, as the repression of emotion that is the creed of the upper classes always affects pupils of these schools in any artistic work. But here and there are schools in which the drama is practised regularly and under good producers, and these will certainly contribute a great deal. The main trouble lies in examinations, which seem to take place all through the summer.

A Pageant-Master is sometimes lucky enough to get soldiers, though the danger with these is that military duties may interfere with rehearsals without notice. Not only are soldiers invaluable as the military of any period, but in any other parts. They know how to wear costume, how to move, and how to speak loudly and do what they are told. More than that, they throw themselves into a scene with hearty enjoyment, and really let themselves go over crowd work.

Dogs, too, delight an audience, but being more concerned with their own affairs, they do not act as well as horses. The jealousy that exists among amateurs is nothing compared to the jealousy among dog players, and the latter give freer rein to its expression. Certain dogs belong to certain periods, and should not be used out of it; foxhounds, for instance, were not used in Shakespeare's day, though deerhounds and wolfhounds would be in the picture. In a scene of a period when wolves did exist in England, wolfhounds would be essential, and sometimes these can be had, for advertisement in the programme, from special kennels. In medieval scenes, small greyhounds led by the ladies or the pages are a charming decoration, and the species that can only be called "Dog" is seen in most medieval pictures. Spaniels, from the "King Charles" in the Restoration scenes, to any modern scene, can be introduced, but care should be taken not to use completely modern types. Avoid friction among dog players by keeping them on a leash.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is so important that it is impossible to over-estimate it, and yet it must be, to some extent, veiled. There is one curious thing common to all pageant-players—they are determined to see the show as well as to act in it. This they must not be allowed to do during its performance, though they should be encouraged to watch

rehearsals. It must be told them over and over again, it must be written in their paper, and posted up as notices, *that no player must be seen in costume unless he is acting in his episode*. The whole performance must be treated as if it were taking place in a theatre, and the stage life and real life must be kept completely separate. They must change between performances if they wish to go out to see their friends, and they must remain behind until their episode is over. Even after endless exhortations, rebels will still be found on the day, but they must be dealt with firmly. Nothing gives a pageant a more shoddy look than the groups of performers half in costume and half out, lounging about among their friends, and nothing can more completely shatter the illusion that it has taken months to create. The Press delight in incongruities of this kind, and pay more attention to pictures of Lady Blank as Queen Elizabeth, talking to Lord Dash as a medieval bishop, who has taken off his mitre and put on his Homburg, than to anything else. With a large cast it is extraordinarily difficult to prevent players from creeping round bushes or climbing over walls in full costume and taking up a good place, in full view of the audience, to watch the scenes.

In order to ensure that the cast do none of these dreadful things, it is most necessary that careful organization be done behind the scenes.

The entrances and exits must be arranged so that no outgoing crowd will meet any incoming one; one person will be stationed at each to see that everything is in order, and will give out and take back the necessary props. Large notices, "SILENCE" and "NO SMOKING," will be needed a little way back, and he will have to see that these are rigidly kept. The entrances must all be easily accessible from behind; if numbers of soldiers are to pour over a wall, for instance, there must be plenty of ladders for them. The man in charge of the exit has to keep the players out of sight until they make their entrance, and a line should be given beyond which they should not pass. (But they will, if they can!) The cue for the entrances is given by signals, and he must watch for these, and respond instantly. The signals are given in different ways, according to the financial position of the Committee; they may be flags, or telephone, or bells, or loud

speakers; if possible, the last are best, as they enable the whole crowd as well as the man-in-charge to hear.

I have mentioned the possible evil doings of the cast, but many of these will not occur if the players are happy and comfortable, and not allowed to get too tired. At Oberammergau, after the first performance, players come and go between their appearances, and Pilate may wait on his guests at dinner. There is no reason why pageant players should not do likewise, if they are thoroughly trained at rehearsals. Each episode must be perfectly ready when the preceding episode goes on, but when the first two performances have been given, the sub-producer will know just how long it will take to get them ready, and can allot them a certain time for arrival. When there are many children in the cast this is especially important, for several days of performance, which mean hanging about behind the scenes for hours, are bad for them. The value of several dress rehearsals for each episode comes in here, and, in due course, the costume and make-up take a short time.

Dressing accommodation should be well behind the scenes, and there should be enough benches for everyone to sit on between scenes. The players must be free to laugh and talk there as much as they wish, and they will then be far more willing to keep complete silence when they are anywhere near the stage. To secure, if possible, a barn or disused stables for dressing-rooms will save the expense of marquees, and be more convenient. There must be water within reach, and plenty of lavatory accommodation. The tents or dressing-rooms should be fitted like the episode workrooms, with clothes wires all along the side or in alleys up and down the middle, on which the costumes can go on their own hangers. The players will then put their own clothes on the hanger when they dress, and replace the costume when they change again. Long trestle tables, with a supply of mirrors, will be needed for make-up, and a special room should be set aside for the expert maker-up who does the principals, and puts finishing touches all round. Each Wardrobe Mistress will bring as many dressers as are needed for her episode, and each will be armed with material for mending. It will be necessary to have a place for washing and ironing during perform-

ances, in case of bad weather; besides, muslins and starched linens need freshening each day.

There should be a refreshment stall near the dressing tents, so that all performers can get their tea when they want it—an important matter when many women are gathered together! The players' car-park should be near the dressing-rooms, if possible. Many people prefer to dress in their cars, and the pressure on the dressing-room is relieved if they do so.

The Property-Master will also want some place for storage of props, and a small mending shed, as accidents will happen. It is always wise to make a few extra weapons if there is to be a fight, for some will certainly get broken. Players should never be allowed to keep their own properties; they will either lose them or play with them, and either may be disastrous.

Before the final rehearsal and performance each player should be given a paper telling him exactly what he is to do, and where he is to go: he must report to the Sub-producer, and will get his clothes in one place, his crown in another, and his sword in another, etc. This will save the Secretary much questioning, and will make for good order behind the scenes.

Temporary stabling will be needed for horses. The Grounds Committee will have to arrange for this, and also for the loan of any empty stables that there may be; anyone who has charge of horses at a horse or an agricultural show will know how to house the horses properly.

COSTUME, MAKE-UP, MUSIC

There is great value in making the costumes for a pageant. If central workrooms for each scene can be set up, and all the designing, cutting, dyeing, painting, and making up done there, the workers will learn a great deal that is most interesting, for clothes are both an index of character and an expression of social life. I have always felt that locally-made costumes have a character and a vitality that are lacking in the most gorgeous of hired costumes. Usually they fit better, as they are made for the wearers.

The Mistress of the Robes has to think on a large scale when planning the general design of the costume. Each different setting will contribute something to her plan, for it will give some special colour note that must be

used; an old castle may be built of granite or red sandstone, the foliage behind the players may vary, and the differing tones of elms, yews, or copper beeches, or of large flowering bushes will influence her use of colour. If she sees the site first in the winter, she should discover what the foliage is going to be in the summer. In most pageants there is a large proportion of green in the setting, which can be used to effect. If it is desired to make the players one with the background, the effect is easily got by dressing them in greens that tone with it. Fairies, for example, are traditionally dressed in green, and the effect can be heightened with green in the make-up, green hair, beards, etc., which will make them nearly invisible among the foliage when they are still. Foresters, for the same reason, are usually dressed in green, and in a large group of peasantry, who are naturally linked with Nature, green is useful. Of course, the foliage itself makes it imperative that no exotic greens be used, and emerald and jade are quite wrong on a grassy stage. On the other hand, if characters are to stand out in front of the setting, it is better to cut out altogether the strong note that the setting gives. An exception to this is perhaps found in the men in armour who appear so much before a castle; the armour must tone with the masonry, but the contrast can be got by a free use of heraldry. The effect of this is shown in the illustration of the Framlingham Pageant (page 699), where the heraldic banner gives an effective focus. Heraldry might be used in pageants a great deal more than it is, and it must have been so much a part of the life of the Middle Ages that the picture of the life is hardly complete without a good deal of it.

Colour must be used in mass out of doors, but mass must not be confused with uniformity. Both are valuable to convey definite ideas, but the Mistress of the Robes should use either deliberately. A uniform dress gives a set idea with the elimination of personality and individuality; it carries with it uniform movement, as with soldiers, monks, nuns, etc., and says something quite definite: the mass, however, conveys the flowing together of different personalities into one by some sympathy of idea, as in a mourning crowd, a group of Puritans, etc.—a general unity of idea without discipline. The

mass treatment needs a sensitive touch; it is not enough to buy yards of the same material and dress everybody in it; the mass colour effect is better reached by using all the scale of tones that go to make up a colour. Grey, for instance, becomes alive by using all its own different shades, running off into lilacs and soft blues at one end, and into dark purples and a little black at the other, the proportioning of the shades being a subtle affair. The value of home-dyeing comes out in this mass colour work, for nothing is easier than to break up the colour in the dye-bath, by letting it dye unevenly, by changing the next dip slightly, by dyeing the stuff one shade, and then letting its ends hang in a deeper one, and so on.

The definite note of uniform dress is also most useful, but needs balancing with variety in the rest of the scene if it is to be thoroughly effective; in medieval times it is got in the dress of any lord's retainers, who were numerous, and who wore his colours, and in the dress of the religious orders; after Cromwell's time we get military uniforms and a good deal of official uniform dress.

Everyone re-acts, almost unconsciously, to symbolism in colour, which goes back to antiquity, possibly even to pre-human times, since all animals see, and attach a meaning to, the colour red. This symbolism will all help to drive any idea home. The Mistress of the Robes must study dyes and textiles in order to know what type of colouring each period used, and what people meant by the colour at the time; mourning or wedding colours, for example, are not always the same. Contrast is, of course, tremendously important on a large stage, and she must do all she can to help out the contrast of the drama in her clothes—to make the principals stand out it is necessary to make every possible use of it, even to exaggeration. The medieval periods are the easiest for this purpose, as indeed for most purposes, since there is so much opportunity for variety in colour, form, and decoration, but a period that does offer easy opportunities for contrast is the time of the Civil Wars. Georgian dress is always popular with the players, but actually is not easy to use in outdoor work. It was a dress that was designed for indoor wear and for an artificial life, and it always seems

wrong on a pageant stage. An obviously important contrast is that between poor and rich, and this needs some study. The more extravagant forms of rich dress can be used on your large stage very effectively, and the more extravagant they are the better they contrast with the dress of the poor. The peasantry have made little



THE BRITON SPY, LAUNCISSON

Photo by Fitzgerald, Plymouth

change in their dress throughout history, and in mass the effect is nearly uniform. The general effect will be of strong but worn and faded dress, made of homespun, and all brought down to a similarity of tone by the weather. For festival occasions the dress will be smartened with ribbons and flowers, and the material may appear newer, but a peasant crowd should never, in any circumstances, be dressed in bright new casement cloth. The most commonly used dyes were blue, scarlet, crimson, and shades of brown and ochre. In Tudor times the "inland folk" were described as wearing "russet-grey," which sounds a contradiction in terms. It may not be generally known that "grey" is the natural shade of the undyed material, and, since different breeds of sheep have different fleeces, this varies greatly with the locality, hoddren grey in the north being quite different from the "grey" in the

south. (The disputes over the actual colour of the Franciscans' "grey" arise from this fact.) The scarlet petticoat was also characteristic of the peasant woman in the days of Elizabeth, and the scarlet and crimson hooded cloaks worn by farmers' wives when going to market are a peasant note in a crowd. The dress of the Elizabethan farmer's wife survives in the so-called Welsh National Dress. Special notes on material will be found in my little book, *On English Costume* (Deane).

The Mistress of the Robes must undertake a great deal of study on all the periods of the pageant, for she must know the dress of the various classes, professions, and ages of each time, of what material it was made, how it was worn, and what it all meant. The Wardrobe Mistresses want to know just as much about their individual episodes, and should teach their helpers too. But when the study has been carefully done, the information should be allowed to settle down for a while. There must be a certain process of forgetting, in order that the essentials should rise to the surface, and the general character of the period appear, not confused with too much detail. If the designs are made immediately after the study, fussy details will certainly creep in and weaken the force of the design. There are certain pitfalls into which pageant dress frequently tumbles. One is the desire of individual players to be smarter than anyone else, and to rebel against any concerted design. These people insist on going independently to costumiers, and choosing their own dress; moreover they will pay any price for this. If such people can be got to realize that their dress must be chosen by the Mistress of the Robes, and by no one else, and that the large sums that they pay to satisfy their own vanity might, if subscribed to the Costume Fund, dress quite a number of other people, a good deal will be achieved.

Another trap is the dressing of all gentry as if they were courtiers. I have seen a group of cavalier officers in the field, fighting a losing cause, dressed in full court dress and wearing light kid shoes with rosettes, on horseback! Squire Hardcastle tells us something of the dress of the country gentleman, and almost every portrait and monument shows us how far behind the fashions these were.

Professional and occupational dress is worth study, if the crowds are to get individualization in any way; the dress of the pilgrim, either man or woman, is well known, but perhaps that of the tooth drawer is less familiar. He wore what might have been more appropriately worn by his patients, a white feather! There was a great deal of occupational dress in the Middle Ages, when traders and professional men were itinerant, and it gives a pleasant variety in a crowd. It should be remembered that the parish clergy had no regular outdoor dress at this time, though they were enjoined to wear dark clothes, and the cowl; that neither they nor the monks always wore what they should have worn is evident from the indignation of preachers, and the caustic comments of Langland and other anti-clerical writers. Two valuable books on medieval dress are *The Life and Work of the People of England*, by Dorothy Hartley (Batsford), and *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, by E. L. Cutts (Simpkins). *The Roman Soldier*, by Amédéc Forrester (A. & C. Black), gives all the necessary information on this subject, and *Arms and Armour*, by Charles Ashdown (Jack), is excellent for medieval periods. Fortescue's *History of the British Army* is infallible on all uniform, and further books on the subjects of costume can be had from the Library of the British Drama League. Pageant designers should certainly consult Mr. Nevil Truman's article in *THEATRE AND STAGE*, which is particularly clear and businesslike, also his book, *Historic Costuming*.

If all the costumes are to be hired, the Mistress of the Robes will herself see the type of costume supplied by the different firms, and will get estimates; she should ensure in ordering that the costumes that she chooses are really booked to her, and subsequently sent. (I myself have spent some time in choosing a large number of costumes from a well-known firm, and found later that not one had been sent.) If the measurements have all been taken early no confusion need arise, and the orders can be placed with the firms in good time. It is, alas, not unnecessary to add that hired costumes must be treated carefully. Having run a Costume Department for twelve years, I know something of what pageant-players do in the excitement of the moment. They wear tights without shoes, and return them

footless; they cut off the hems of medieval robes so that they just clear the ground; they pack hats, bonnets, and crowns at the bottoms of hampers and all the rest of the clothes on the top, and many another evil thing besides, so that the damage on a pageant order is often very serious indeed. It is not their fault that the



"OUR LADY OF LEWESBURY"

The Lady Mary Strickland in the Lewesbury Pageant, 1934

costumes are covered with mud at times, but the careless treatment of costumes that are not their own is inexcusable.

The Wardrobe Mistress of each episode will have many chances to get it into her players' heads that it is not possible for everyone to be dressed in silks and satins and look lovely, and that some will have to be in rags and hessian, and made to look very ugly indeed; she should not lose these chances, if she is to avoid ill feelings at the end.

Make-up must be carefully considered. An expert will be needed for the principals, for their make-up is rather specialized; the characters may be familiar to the audience, or there may be portraits to be copied, and in any case the amount of emphasis needed for the large distant stage is not quite easily understood by the players. The expert should look over the crowds, but if the make-up people belonging to each episode have learnt their jobs thoroughly, there should be few mistakes to correct. The crowd should be trained to do its own arms and legs, and the simple "street make-up," which is all that they need, and some at least should be able to manage their own beards and moustaches. They must be practised in these, and no beard should be passed that is not thoroughly convincing, for it is on beards that pageant scenes very often fail. Children need little make-up; only a little dry rouge or ordinary lipstick if they are pale. The players should not be allowed to get at the grease-paints without express leave from the Wardrobe Mistress. The expression of the crowds lies in their movements rather than in their faces, for the faces are extremely small at a distance, and, therefore, heavy make-up is unnecessary.

Again THEATRE AND STAGE articles and Bamford's *Practical Make-up for the Stage* provide valuable help, and various authoritative books on the subject can be obtained by members from the British Drama League Library.

MUSIC

The Pageant Master wants, in his *Master of the Music*, a person of real musical knowledge and imagination. He should know a good deal about the history of music, in order to apply it rightly during the scenes, and to be able to reproduce it with the materials possible to him. He will often have to compose a song or dance, if he cannot find the right thing for the purpose, and he will be responsible for all the odds and ends of musical sounds that are used—the pipes and drums, trumpets, fiddles, horns, and so on. In the linking of the scenes by music, he can do an enormous amount to help out the whole emotional effect of the pageant. He can almost salve a feeble pageant in this way, and with a good one he can intensify and amplify the whole meaning. This alliance of the pageant with music is often

completely overlooked, and all that is done is to play cheerful tunes to fill up time! Besides planning all the music, he has to get it performed, and this will cause him some anxiety. If he is to have an orchestra it must be housed and kept dry; it will take up a great deal of room somewhere, and it will certainly cost a great deal; for in outdoor work a few fiddles and 'celli go nowhere, and the bigger instruments are absolutely necessary—these are often difficult to get in a country district, and the orchestra is a real problem all round. I have never been happier with music than when I had relayed electrically recorded tunes in a little lorry, which was set up without any difficulty quite quickly. Through it all the signals were given behind the scenes, and announcements were made to the audience when necessary, and through it I was able to have the bells of St. Margaret's, Westminster, the English Singers, and any other music I wanted. It could be faded out, altered in pace, stopped or begun in a second, all from the prompt box, and the effect was so convincing to the audience that they always applauded the English Singers, thinking they were a choir behind the scenes.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, ETC.

For a pageant of any size a paid publicity agent is necessary, but for smaller ones an agent's salary is not always possible, and the publicity has to be done by the Secretary and his helpers. The casts themselves should be able to do a great deal of it, for every player could bring at least two spectators from among his friends and admirers, and probably many more if he realized a responsibility for doing so. The whole cast of each episode should, therefore, be asked to help in making the pageant known, and each episode organization should include a booking office. The first day is, of course, of the greatest importance, for, if it is successful, it should cover the expenses of the pageant, and act as the best possible advertisement for the whole series of performances. One has to allow, especially in the country, for the large numbers of people who will wait to see whether a show is going to be a success before they risk coming to it; and the first day, with a good Press, is the thing to convince them. The casts should, therefore, try to get their friends and relations for

the first day, in order to secure an appreciative audience: the personal interest of the players will give the whole thing a good start, and, after that, if the pageant is worth anything, the audiences will steadily increase.

PUBLICITY

Public interest has to be carefully nursed during the whole time of preparation in different ways. The players and workers talk about it, because they are keen, and their intimate friends and neighbours will certainly hear of it thus; the book itself should be on sale at all the leading book-sellers as soon as possible; the County Library should be asked to send round books on the history that is to be treated in the pageant, and if there is a good historical lecturer in the district, he can do a great deal by going round and lecturing on the same subjects. *The Poster* and *Handbill* are most important, and the Committee should not be too stung over these, since they influence the minds of the potential audience considerably. An ordinary poster with a herald blowing a trumpet will suggest an ordinary pageant, and those who do not like pageants will stay away. A mysterious arrangement of distortions will suggest something "modern," and may easily frighten off the ordinary audience, leaving only the small company of earnest souls, who will not cover the costs. But a poster that does show originality and yet suggests that there is to be a pageant, is excellent, and the work should be put into the hands of an artist. It is not necessary to use a number of colours, and far more striking work can be done by limiting their use. The handbill should have the same design, and some decorative badge might be made for note-paper and programmes.

Another method of publicity is through the shipping and travel agencies, some of which have long lists of people who desire above all things to see pageants while they are in England. The interest in pageants is particularly great in America, and it is well worth while advertising in the American shipping line. All transport agencies should be approached early, both for arrangement of special services and for the display of posters and handbills; and the slip notices on private cars are an excellent reminder during the last few weeks.

Advance publicity through the Press is naturally important, and the local papers should be kept supplied with little bits of news about the pageant, photographs of people (preferably titled people) taking part, and doing unusual things in the general preparation for the pageant. Photographs of groups of players posed for the scene are also useful, but it is not necessary to sink to silly pieces of incongruity such as bishops drinking cocktails after rehearsal, or knights driving away in their cars. All this has been done so often that it is completely hackneyed, and no longer amuses the public.

It is customary, and wise, to offer reduced tickets to parties from schools, women's institutes, and other organizations, and an early approach should be made to these. If the teachers can see from the book that the pageant is really going to give the children some light upon history, they will welcome it, and will probably use it in their school work in preparation. If it is not worth anything, they may still bring the children, for the pleasure that these get from knights and cavaliers on horseback, and a lovely lot of corpses on the stage. A little country school, planted down in so desolate a country that it seemed inconceivable that children could be found to fill it, studied, rehearsed, and played in their schoolyard the whole of a pageant that was to be performed locally. They really knew what the history meant, and their enjoyment of the final performance was intense.

Amateur societies that cannot take part might well be offered reduced rates; they will form an interested and critical audience. It will not be too easy to convince them, however, that a pageant is to be regarded as drama at all, since most of them have seen the usual type and have dismissed it as valueless.

THE BOOK AND PROGRAMMES

It is better to sell the book everywhere and all the time than to print expensive programmes, with long, dull lists of names and synopses of the scenes. If the book really is a book worth printing, print it early, and get schools, societies, etc., to buy it beforehand, and push the sales in every way. With good organization, quite an elaborate book can be made to pay well, and the importance of getting it sold well in advance

is that your audience may come with some knowledge of the history, and so be prepared to watch the pageant intelligently. ("Yes," I heard a lady say behind me at Runnymede, "it was King John who got the Danes to burn down Chertsey Abbey, dear!") If they have to buy the book instead of the lists of names that make



HENRY VI AND HIS MOTHER, LICESTER
PAGEANT

the programme, they will be able to read the scenes between the episodes, and even to get hold of what the prefaces mean; one has to remember that the knowledge of history that the public possesses is well summed up in "1066 and all that," and so it should be given every possible opportunity to understand what the pageant is about. The list programme is not necessary if the players are sufficiently *in* the pageant; they should be prepared to act anonymously, and, indeed, they are very much wiser in doing so when the audience is mainly composed of friends and relations!

Insurance against rain is satisfactory, provided enough rain is registered, but in a country where soft, damp mists may obliterate the stage for the

whole day, and yet make no impression on the rain gauge, it is useless. Also, rain may fall heavily while the audience should be starting, but cease when the pageant begins, so that the insurance cannot be claimed. The best possible insurance is really good advance booking, done by thoroughly competent people. If the seats are sold beforehand, the audience will probably turn up even if it does rain, and the costs of the pageant will be covered. The booking is not a matter for artistic people—they should be kept quite firmly out of it—but for those who really do know the job. It is, even for a village pageant, a big concern, and there must be no possibility of muddle.

It may appear that I have been concentrating entirely on the large-scale pageant, but actually the same kind of organization is needed for every kind of pageant, and the same care should be taken over details of organization. Naturally, there will be less money to start on, fewer and smaller salaries will be offered, and a great deal of voluntary work will be needed for the village pageant. But voluntary workers should fully understand what is required of them before they take on any job. Villages need not fear the expense of a pageant if they set to work sensibly, and it is, indeed, possible for them to make quite a good profit. There are many ingenious people in the country, accustomed to make bricks without straw, and village players have a special gift for ignoring insurmountable difficulties until they are on the other side of them. There is, too, a quality that exists only in the country—neighbourliness, which helps things along most excellently. Again, you find, all over the countryside, that strong tie or relationship with the land which is so important a part of the pageant; and among agricultural people there is a feeling of timelessness that makes the past and present one. A village pageant can have a delightful unconventionality about it—as if it just sprang out of the ground—which is not so easy to get in the civic or county pageant—the charming village of Wrotham, in Kent, just below the Pilgrim's Way, held one in the middle of the village street, and raised their spectators on farm wagons!

It is always possible to get neighbouring villages to take some of the episodes, if the organizing village cannot get crowd enough to

go round, but the main incidents will probably be done by the latter, and a certain friendly rivalry will inevitably arise between them all. The educational value is particularly great in these smaller pageants, since it is easier to get the whole cast thoroughly permeated with the history and spirit of each episode when it is

the surface. To provide a common workroom and to arrange special nights for pageant work is a splendid way of interesting the people in their own past.

Now many people—perhaps most people—are apt to say, "Ours is such a little place, nothing can ever have happened here"—and on the



A FAIRY SCENE IN KILBURN'S PARK OPEN-AIR THEATRE
The effect was obtained by using artificial light, and the background is the natural daylight faded, the effect against the deep backs of the tree.

taken by a small rural community than when there is a large, unwieldy cast. The players will probably meet during the winter to make costumes and props, to learn the music and dancing, and so on, under their producer, and he will then have the opportunity for talking informally about the people who wore the clothes, and their method of life, etc., until they come alive in the imagination of the players.

Country people are very much interested in their forefathers, and they will often contribute interesting details about the lives of people whom they remember, and of older traditions still. I have been told, in a Rutlandshire village, of oral traditions that went back to the Wars of the Roses, and in such informal conversation stories of queer characters and strange events will creep out that would never otherwise have come to

surface it may seem so. But just begin to search, and the whole village takes on a different air. It may lie in a sunny haze, filled with the sound of insects, punctuated by the cuckoo, on a summer day—and indeed it has always known how to do that—but there is no question that beneath this apparent peace there has been as much human emotion as in any crowded town; and the lives of the people will to-day, as in the past, show the strongest and starkest drama. Most of us know nothing of what village life is now, and we know still less of what it has been. There is no need to drag travelling queens for miles out of their way to make material for a village pageant; the endless drama of squire, parson, and people will give you all that is wanted. There was that day before the Civil War when Mistress Bidlake and Mistress Ellworthy fought tooth and

mail in the churchyard, because Mistress Ellworthy, the farmer's wife, went into church before Mistress Bidlake, the Squire's lady; there was that distressing service on Christmas Day, when Laomedon Lippincott thrust his dagger into Roger Menwynnicke as he sat beside him in the pew in church; there was a Squire who dared not walk abroad for fear of his enemy who lurked behind the hedges, with his sons, ready to attack him; there was the burning of the unauthorized mill by the monks—and a host of other things going on all over our peaceful countryside. And besides these everyday affairs, there were the great movements which swept over the whole country, from which no one could escape, the Civil Wars, the Peasants' Rebellions, the Harryings of Kings, and so on. There is no village without a history.

County pageants, based on a careful study of the history of the county itself, with an equal understanding of social history throughout the country, offer a big opportunity artistically, educationally, and socially. The study of local history in the village has been encouraged for some years by the National Federation of Women's Institutes, which issued an excellent handbook, by Miss Joan Wake, on the best method of discovering it, and many Bishops are urging that a similar research be made by the country parsons. A county pageant may well be the flowering of such a study and an enlightenment by turning the imagination on to the facts.

The Bishop of Carlisle planned such a pageant for his diocese to celebrate its 800th anniversary, and though it proved impossible to complete the scheme for lack of authors it is one that might well be taken as a useful model.

A review of the history of the diocese having been made, the subjects most suitable for drama were allotted to their own districts, and not more than three episodes were allowed to each pageant, in order that the players might not have too much history to digest, and that the authors might have time to develop the idea of each scene. There

was an abundance of material in such a diocese, where the Church grew from the little settlements of early hermits to the militance of the Middle Ages, and in the end returned again to simple travelling parsons, who earned their living as they taught their flock.

The pageants were to have been played in succession throughout the summer, and a final long pageant, composed of scenes from each, was to have been given at Rose Castle in the early autumn.

Such a pageant needs early planning, for the work of organization is less simple than for a city pageant, but it need not be more costly, since the costumes could be passed from one district to another, and the stand could probably be removed to each place in succession.

A pageant can be a very happy thing indeed, if it is undertaken with the desire to do a good piece of work. There is so much enjoyment in meeting so many people over it, and in the rehearsals on long summer evenings; the cast will become infected with acting. They find themselves doing things they had never thought of doing before, and then feeling things that they had never felt before. The company helps them, the thrill of the action helps them, the grass and the blue sky and the sunlight help them, and they are carried away into a region quite beyond their ordinary lives. All sorts of people find themselves acting in a pageant, and acting well, who would never dream of getting on to a small stage. For the producers, too, there is an extraordinary thrill in creating a unity out of a mass of individuals, in seeing the idea fill them and come out of them.

All this joy of unity and accomplishment is really to be got only out of a big performance round some central idea that really matters to the performers; there must be the idea, there must be the drama, and there must be the artistic inspiration, or the pageant form will never be lifted out of the conventional and meaningless parade that it is gradually becoming.



HUGH ARTHUR SCOTT

FAMOUS PLAYERS OF THE PAST

HUGH ARTHUR SCOTT, Member of the Critics' Circle

"FAMOUS Players of the Past" is a vast subject that can only be most cursorily dealt with in the space available, even when attention is confined solely to native performers. But a few discursive jottings and reflections may be acceptable and perhaps of practical service in helping to correct the erroneous assumption which seems to be entertained too often to-day by some of our younger practitioners that the art of acting in a serious sense has only recently been discovered.

In point of fact, without reflecting in any way upon the achievements of the present day, study of the records goes to suggest not only that there were great men (and women) before Agamemnon but that they managed in some way or other to achieve results and produce effects the like of which are totally unknown to-day. Read some of the contemporary notices of Garrick, Kean, Siddons, and not a few others, and it becomes evident that these players affected their audiences in ways to which no sort of parallel can be found in modern times.

GARRICK AND KEAN

Thus of Garrick—good-natured, genial, businesslike Garrick, "an abridgment of all that is pleasant in man" in Goldsmith's famous line—one reads that in such parts as *Lear*—one of his grandest impersonations—he almost paralysed, not only his auditors, but even his fellow-players at times by the demoniac force and electrifying intensity of his performance.

Again of Edmund Kean's portrayal of the villain Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* we are told that on one occasion it sent several of the ladies in the audience into hysterics, threw Byron into a fit, and had such an effect upon his fellow-artists that one of them, Munden, had to be dragged off the stage by the armpits, his face fixed upon Kean in a paralytic stare.

And of Mrs. Siddons, in turn, hardly less remarkable stories are told. "The enthusiasm she excited," wrote such a cool and well-balanced

critic as Hazlitt, "had something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. We can conceive nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology. She was tragedy personified." Macready relates too—and he was not one to exaggerate—that when she played *Aspasia* in *The Maid's Tragedy* so terrible was her agony as, after seeing her lover strangled before her eyes, she fell lifeless on the stage, that the audience believed she had really expired and would only be pacified by an assurance from the manager!

What is one to make of such things? "Birds of wonder," said George Meredith, "fly to a flaring reputation," and no doubt there is a certain element of the fabulous in some of these stories. But the evidence as a whole is too overwhelming to admit of doubt, and one is left wondering, therefore, how it came about that such tremendous effects were produced by these great players of the past—and regretting that in the theatre of to-day such thrilling experiences are so totally unknown.

It may be, perhaps, that we are colder and more critical—less receptive and responsive—in these times, and also it is quite possible that some of the proceedings of these old actors, which moved our forefathers to such transports, would affect us differently. But, making every allowance on this score and that, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that they must have been terrific fellows, some of them, and amazing exponents of their art.

It would be, moreover, quite a mistake to suppose, although the error appears to be rather widely entertained, that their acting was all violent and exaggerated and devoid of subtler qualities, for nothing could be farther from the truth. Take Hannah More's carefully-weighed analysis of Garrick's *Hamlet*, for instance—though I have room only for a single passage here: "To the most eloquent expression of the

eye, to the handwriting of his passions on his features, to a sensibility which tears to pieces the hearts of his hearers, to powers so unparalleled, he adds a judgment of the most exquisite accuracy, the fruit of long experience and close observation, by which he preserves every gradation and transition of the passions, keeping all under the control of a just dependence and natural consistency."

And so, too, in the case of Kean we are told that, violent and extravagant as his methods often were, they were as far removed as possible from mere crude ranting and barnstorming, being all the outcome of the deepest thought and study, so that he would sometimes reflect for a whole day how best to deliver a single line—his practice in this respect provoking the remark of one of his fellow-players: "He slaved beyond any actor I ever knew." And one needs only to read Macready's fascinating *Diaries* to realize with what endless care and anxiety he, too, studied and considered every single detail of his performances beforehand—the like applying to nearly all of these old players and utterly refuting the popular notion that they merely stormed and ranted.

QUIN AND KEMBLE

But this is not to say, of course, that the methods of many of them were not such as would in these days make the judicious grieve. Emphatically of the old rhetorical, declamatory school, for instance, was the famous James Quin, but for all that a fine actor in his way, though destined to be completely eclipsed in due course by the more natural and realistic methods of his rival and successor Garrick. A strong-minded Irishman, Quin was a great character—like so many of the notables of earlier days, when social behaviour was less cut to pattern and strong personalities had freer scope. A fine Falstaff, he had also a Falstaffian capacity for gormandizing, while going one better than that hero in his readiness to defend his honour, since he actually killed two of his fellow actors in duels forced upon him.

Another famous actor of the older school was Mrs. Siddons's brother, John Philip Kemble, though there was the less excuse for some of his methods in that he came long after Garrick had shown the way to better things. But none the less he was a great actor, especially in heavy tragic

roles, and for a long period he enjoyed enormous fame and favour, particularly as an exponent of the great Shakespearean "leads," in conjunction with his still greater sister.

Sir Walter Scott wrote a delightful analysis of his rotund and ponderous style: "John Kemble is certainly a great artist. But it is a pity he shows too much of his machinery. . . . In *Hamlet* many delicious and sudden turns of passion slip through his fingers. . . . He is a lordly vessel, goodly and magnificent when going large before the wind, but wanting the facility to go 'ready about.'" Kemble was finally eclipsed by the advent of Edmund Kean, in comparison with whose tornadic vitality and prodigious natural genius his stiff and studied methods seemed more than ever artificial and unconvincing.

COOKE

A far greater actor in some respects than Kemble was his contemporary, George Frederick Cooke, who unfortunately ruined himself and his career by his incurable addiction to alcohol. The greatest testimony to his astonishing powers is indeed the fact that he contrived to retain so long the favour of the public and of the managers in spite of his hopeless unreliability and notorious vices. But, like Edmund Kean, whom he greatly resembled in style (as also unhappily in his weakness), he acted gloriously when sober and hardly less so, it was said, when drunk.

Exaggerated but overpowering intensity was the prevailing characteristic of his art, and some thought that in certain parts, Richard III being one, he was finer even than Kean himself. Lamb praised him unstintedly, saying that in the subtlety of his delivery of certain Shakespearean lines he was unsurpassed—which again illustrates how far removed from mere ranting were the performances of the greatest players of this type—while Scott was another who left a vivid account of the tremendous impression that he produced at his best.

Even more interesting is a description left by Washington Irving of his acting as Iago in the third act of *Othello* when playing once with Kemble as his partner: "He grasped Kemble's left hand with his own and then fixed his right, like a claw, on his shoulder. In this position, drawing himself up to him with his short arm,

he breathed his poisonous whispers into his ear. Kemble coiled and twisted his hand, writhing to get away, his right hand clasping his brows and darting his eyes back on Iago." One can well believe that it was uncommonly effective, and equally well understand the stately Kemble "writhing" as he struggled to escape from his fiery and (probably) half-inebriated confrère.

FAMOUS ACTRESSES

But so far I have said very little about the great female players of the past, though not a few of these appear to have been hardly less wonderful than the men.

A remarkable actress, for instance, was Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713)—not to be confused, by the way, with her namesake, the wife of Spranger Barry, also very fine, of the following century—who, after a most unpromising start, was coached to such good purpose by the Earl of Rochester that she became one of the most admired performers of her time. Colley Cibber, for one, praised her in the highest terms, declaring that "in the art of creating pity she had a power beyond all others," with which statement may be connected perhaps the fact that she was accustomed to shed real tears in pathetic passages. It is to be feared, however, that they were of the crocodile variety, since she was really a fiend of a woman and very nearly murdered one of her rivals (Mrs. Boutall), against whom she had a grudge, on the stage. She was supposed to stab her in a certain play and tried actually to do this—declaring afterwards that she had been "carried away" by her part, which nobody believed.

Another charming actress of the same period, who seems to have been specially distinguished by what would nowadays be called sex-appeal, was the delicious Mrs. Bracegirdle, of whom it was said that every man in her audiences would be her lover, although in fact, strange as it may seem for those days, her virtue was never impugned—as may be gathered from the graceful lines of her devoted friend and passionate admirer Congreve—

Would she could make of me a saint,
Or I of her a sinner!

But the excellence of her acting may be gathered from the fact that she was the original repre-

sentative of all Congreve's heroines, in which parts she was said to be without peer or rival.

Then later came the fascinating Kitty Clive, one of the most delightful of comediennes who, none the less, drove poor Garrick almost to distraction by her jealousies and tantrums and vixenish criticisms, although she did declare on one occasion after having been reduced to tears, in spite of herself, by his performance as Lear, "Damn him! I believe he could act a gridiron!"

And about the same time flourished also the famous Mrs. Pritchard, who also acted much with Garrick and by all accounts was a tragic actress of rare power—her Lady Macbeth in particular was long regarded as unapproachable. She acted the title part in Johnson's ponderous *Irene*, and was involved in a curious incident on the first night, the audience crying "Murder!" when she was about to be strangled and refusing to allow the performance to proceed. Needless to say, Dr. Johnson, though he bowed to public opinion and altered the ending, was indignant and, somewhat illogically, owed Mrs. Pritchard a grudge ever afterwards. But he had never been one of her admirers, calling her "a vulgar idiot," on account of her limited education, declaring that she had never read *Macbeth* right through, and adding characteristically: "She no more thinks of the play out of which her part is taken than a shoemaker thinks of the animal from which his leather comes." But she was unquestionably a great actress none the less.

PEG WOFFINGTON

But more famous than any of these was yet another of Garrick's leading ladies, namely, the fair and fickle Peg Woffington, who took the town by storm on 20th Nov., 1740, by her performance as Sir Harry Wildair in *The Constant Couple* at Covent Garden, and thereafter enjoyed prodigious favour throughout the remainder of her comparatively short but dazzlingly brilliant career.

In spite of her humble origin—she was the daughter of a Dublin bricklayer and began life herself as a flower-girl—she played to perfection, not only dashing "breeches parts," but also ladies of the highest elegance and refinement, as well as such Shakespearean characters as Ophelia, Portia, and Isabella.

In connexion with her immensely popular performance as Sir Harry Wildair an amusing story is told of her remarking to Quin: "I have played that part so often that half the town believes me to be a real man"—to receive the disconcerting reply: "Madam, the other half has the best of reasons to know that you are a woman."

Irresistibly attractive, generous, and impulsive, she was eminently "temperamental," and nothing if not a good hater. One of her most detested rivals was Mrs. Bellamy, whom she actually drove off the stage in the course of one performance and tried to stab almost in sight of the audience, while Mrs. Clive she loathed even more—no two women, it was said, ever hated each other so. No wonder that poor Garrick was hard put to it in trying to keep the peace between such difficult ladies!

Another brilliant actress of the same period who also acted much with Garrick—and likewise helped to make his life a burden—was Mrs. Abington, who afforded another striking example of genius triumphing over circumstances. For though she began as a street singer, she contrived none the less to educate herself, learned to speak French and Italian, and became one of the most versatile and polished actresses of her time, being admired especially by the "quality" as a representative of the fashionable ladies of the period. In tragic roles, on the other hand, she was less successful, one critic going so far as to say of her Ophelia that it was "like a mackerel on a gravel walk." But one seems to scent a touch of malice there.

MRS. JORDAN

Still another comedienne of the rarest gifts was the famous Mrs. Jordan, Leigh Hunt declaring indeed that she was actually the greatest actress England had ever produced. That may have been going rather far, but there seems to have been universal agreement as to her extraordinary charm and fascination. Hazlitt declared that her voice was a cordial to the heart and her laugh as nectar to the palate, while Lamb, Byron, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were others who exhausted their superlatives in praise of her.

She was celebrated also on account of her relations with the Duke of Clarence, afterwards

William IV, whose mistress she was for many years. And that her sense of humour served her well off, as well as on, the stage may be gathered from her amusing reply when the Duke, after a time, proposed to reduce her allowance from £1,000 to £500. This took the form of a theatre programme, with the words underlined—"No money returned after the rising of the curtain."

And, of course, later, and also earlier, there were hosts of others, alike male and female, to whom reference could be made.

BURBAGE AND BETTERTON

The briefest record would be incomplete, for instance, without mention of Burbage—Shakespeare's own Burbage—who had the stupendous task of "creating" such parts as Hamlet, Othello, Shylock, Macbeth, and Lear (to name only a few), and who, by all the evidence, acquitted himself right nobly in the result. Thus he was spoken of by a contemporary as one "such as no other age must ever look to see the like," while it is interesting to gather from other sources, what it may surprise some to learn, that he was apparently a player of what would be called to-day the intellectual, rather than the robustious, type. And John Betterton, another Shakespearean actor of the highest order, of the Restoration period, was a player of much the same kind. Of significance in this connexion, for instance, is the statement attributed to him that profound silence during the performance was a far greater testimony to an actor's power than any amount of applause at the end.

Then, coming nearer to our own times again, there was that wonderful comedian, Charles Mathews, who was followed in turn by his even more brilliant son, Charles James Mathews. The extraordinary powers and mimicry of Charles Mathews the Elder for some time completely overshadowed his great ability as an actor. As a mimic he was certainly inimitable. His power of transforming himself must indeed have been nothing less than marvellous. Without make-up, change of dress, or any other stage trick he could so completely modify his personality as to deceive his most intimate friends! Tales of his achievements in this way are indeed almost incredible. He was once expelled from behind

the scenes of a Liverpool Theatre where he was actually playing at the time, as an "intrusive stranger" and the next moment, after simply allowing his features to resume their normal appearance, he passed through the stage door again without any difficulty as Mr. Mathews. He gladly accepted a long engagement for his special kind of miscellaneous entertainment at £1000 a year, but his success was so enormous when the performances began that the contract was amended and he received much more. Despite this he died a poor man.

His son, Charles James Mathews, was in due course even more successful. He had been brought up extravagantly and went on the stage only in default of any other way of making money. Nevertheless, after a moderate start he carried everything before him as a light comedian of a most refined and polished order. No English rival approached the combination of consummate ease, nonchalance, polished manner, and brilliant vivacity that characterized his performances until he was nearly seventy years of age. Unfortunately, his own ventures in management ended in bankruptcy. He was never out of debt, and while he was making his audiences rock with his lighthearted representations of impecunious "wrong 'uns," he was actually suffering precisely the same experiences and worse, himself, in real life. The public thought he revelled in it because he made it all so amusing on the stage. How little they really knew! Incidentally, he was sadly burdened by the unbelievable extravagances of his wife, the famous Mme. Vestris.

Of quite a different type was Buckstone, who was lessee of the Haymarket Theatre for many years. His Tony Lumpkin, his Bob Acres, and his Sir Andrew Aguecheek have had few rivals. Clever actors have played them since, but never in quite the same way, for their humour has been that of the nineteenth century while Buckstone's was, so to speak, the genuine article.

PHELPS

Other great actors of the same period were Phelps and Macready. Phelps made his London debut in 1837 and had a big success as Shylock, *The Times* notice of him upsetting Macready so much that he (Phelps) was subsequently dropped from the bill! He was great in tragic

parts, but also had numerous celebrated comedy roles. His impersonation of Bottom, for instance, was wonderful. In 1844 he began his memorable season of management at Sadler's Wells. It was a daring experiment, for Sadler's Wells had been for nearly two centuries the resort of the roughest audiences in London, and clearing out offenders from the gallery was his first and most difficult task. The statement that he sometimes went up himself in his stage attire to assist in the operations, is, however, not strictly true. As a manager he was superb, and in the course of his long stay at Sadler's Wells (1844-1878) he actually produced all Shakespeare's plays, except four. As a tragedian he was fine rather than great and he was really at his best in character parts. It was characteristic of Phelps's sturdy independence that he entirely ignored the Press and kept them at arm's length throughout his career.

MACREADY

Another great figure at this time was Macready. No actor ever worked harder in studying his parts. He used even to go to the theatre on Sundays by himself to practise and try effects. But though always fine he never achieved the very greatest heights, perhaps because of some of his peculiar personal characteristics. Though well-meaning and high-minded, he was not a pleasant man. He was terribly jealous, as he himself admitted in his almost painfully frank *Diaries*, and he also had the bad taste to despise the profession to which none the less he owed everything. In America, too, he was unfortunate, a riot organized by a rival, Edwin Forrest, actually resulting in the death of twenty-two people! It might be said of Macready that he lacked the true mummer's temperament, which is nothing if not expansive and sociable. He should have been a civil servant or something equally prosaic.

Of a very different type was Frederick Robson, who in 1853, having previously been a low comedian, appeared as Shylock in a burlesque, and was pronounced in *The Times* the next day to be the greatest actor who had been seen since Edmund Kean! Afterwards he made a prodigious success in one of the trashiest of farces, *The Wandering Minstrel*, in which he sang "Villikens and his Dinah," which drew all fashionable

London for a twelve-month. Robson was a genius who could do anything with his audience, but he was morbidly timid and nervous, so that his terror of appearing became in the highest degree pathetic. While waiting his cue he would positively gnaw his arms until they bled, and cry out piteously "I dare not, I dare not," until the prompter had sometimes to thrust him before the footlights! Unfortunately, to conquer his timidity he took to drink—with the result that was to be expected.

Another actor, of a different sort, was E. A. L. Sothern, whose Lord Dundreary became famous. The piece *Our American Cousin* was described as one of the worst plays ever perpetuated by a competent playwright, Tom Taylor, and when he received the part Sothern was so disgusted with it that he was induced to play it only on the condition that he was to be allowed to do what he liked with it. There was no objection, and Sothern determined therefore to make it utterly ridiculous. Accordingly, he dressed absurdly, lisped, stammered, and turned the whole character into an absolute figure of fun. To his astonishment, however, he found that the public revelled in his absurdities, and in the end he realized that instead of a fiasco he had achieved one of the biggest hits of the day, and the piece had an enormous run in consequence. More curious still, it was equally successful when it was brought to London, so that Buckstone, then running the Haymarket, made a clear profit of £30,000 out of it! Otherwise Sothern was one of the worst actors who ever made a name for himself. In serious parts he was mediocrity personified. Nevertheless, by his *bouhonic* and animal spirits he achieved enormous popularity and became one of the social lions of his time. The whole story illustrates surprisingly the utter incalculability of stage affairs.

Then came the Victorian period, bringing a host of other famous players to whom a few references may be made—to say nothing of the many distinguished artists of our own time, of whom I do not speak here, since many of them are still alive.

HENRY IRVING

Of those who have departed Henry Irving leads the list, not so much because of his greatness as an actor, for he was universally criticized,

but because of his strong character and picturesque personality. He was condemned all round on every ground—for his unnatural speech, his laboured gait (almost like that of a lame man), and so on, and yet it would not be going too far to call him the greatest theatrical figure by far of the Victorian age, so overpowering was the effect of his commanding and irresistible personality in spite of technical vagaries. His Shakespearean productions were memorable, although the frivolous declared that the great charm of them was not Irving at all, but Ellen Terry's bewitching heroines. Yet, whatever the cause, the fact remained that they drew the whole intellectual world as nothing else could, and made Shakespeare once again an unrivalled box-office "draw."

But Irving certainly had his critics. That witty and amusing critic, A. B. Walkley, once wrote of him, for instance: "Over the recollection of his 'Romeo' one passes hastily, suppressing a chuckle." But it was Walkley also who wrote: "The sensuous, plastic, pictorial side of Shakespeare had never been seen before he showed it." Irving's very pronounced peculiarities and mannerisms were not easy to understand. He certainly thought long and earnestly about his work, and loved to discuss it with suitable people. He was, too, quite willing to take advice sometimes. Thus he entirely altered the inflexion of his opening words as Shylock: "Three thousand ducats—well" because of criticism passed on his performance in America by Dr. Milburn, Chaplain of the Senate, who was, incidentally, a *blind* man. Milburn had said to him on this point: "I thought you sounded too amiable. I seemed to miss the harsh note of the usurer's voice." And Irving's comment was: "He was quite right in this. The audience should, from the first understand, if one can convey it, the dominant note of a character." And as a result he altered his reading accordingly.

On another occasion Irving said: "It is often supposed that great actors trust to the inspiration of the moment, but nothing can be more erroneous. There will, of course, be such moments when an actor at white heat illumines some passage with a flood of imagination (and this mental condition, by the way, is impossible to the student sitting in his arm-chair); but the great actor's surprises are generally the product of long

thought, well weighed, studied, and balanced, and it is the accumulation of such effects that enables an actor, after many years, to present many great characters with remarkable completeness." In the same connexion he observed: "The actor must before all things form a definite conception of what he wishes to convey. It is better to be wrong and consistent than to be right but hesitating and uncertain."

On another occasion he remarked: "The greatest of all the lessons that Art can teach is this—that Truth is supreme and external. No art can achieve anything on a false basis. Sincerity, which is the very touchstone of all art, is instinctively recognized by all." But he never forgot, or allowed anyone else to forget, that the purpose of stage art is *illusion*. Hence "to appear to be natural you must in reality be much broader than natural. To act on the stage as one would in a room would be ineffective and colourless."

About an actor shedding tears Irving was very sensible: "It matters little whether an actor sheds tears or not, so long as he can make his audience shed them. But if tears can be summoned at will and are subject to his control it is true art to utilize such a power, and happy is the actor whose sensibility has at once such delicacy and discipline."

Again: "I do not recommend actors to allow their feelings to carry them away, but it is necessary to warn you against the theory, expounded with brilliant ingenuity by Diderot, that the actor never feels. It is necessary to this art that the mind should have, as it were, a double consciousness, in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may be in full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for every detail of his method." And Bram Stoker, in quoting the statement, recalls how on many occasions he had seen Irving putting his principles into practice. "Once, for instance, during a performance of *The Lyons Mail*, while Dubosc was breaking open the iron strong box the horses behind him began to get restive and plunged about wildly, making a situation of considerable danger. The other members of the murderous gang were quickly off the stage, while the dead body of the postillion rolled away to the wings. But Irving never even looked round. He went calmly on with his work of counting *billets de banque*, while he interlarded the words of his part with

admonitions to his comrades not to be frightened but to come back and attend to their work. Not for an instant did he cease to be Dubosc, although in addition he became the manager of the theatre."

In his earliest days Irving suffered badly from stage-fright and more than once broke down from this cause, forgetting his lines entirely. Once when playing in *A Winter's Tale* he got into such a state that in his desperation he called out "come to the market-place and I will tell you further" and so got himself off the scene.

There was no denying his mannerisms, but Henry Labouchère once remarked very shrewdly that had he given them up he would quite certainly never have made the mark that he had. But whether this could be accounted a justification of them is, perhaps, another matter; otherwise, the stage would be full of people behaving in the oddest manner in the hope of similarly achieving success! Irving had qualities that made him great *in spite* of them, yet they were undoubtedly very trying at times—as many friends have testified. Some of his "business," too, was peculiar. In *Othello* some of his strange panther-like movements evoked downright laughter from flippant members of the audience. His movements otherwise were sometimes incredibly awkward, suggesting almost a state of paralysis. The matter became, indeed, almost a joke on occasion. "How do I get there?" he cried out once at a rehearsal, when a certain change of position was required. Ellen Terry had the wit and the audacity to reply "Take a hansom." In spite of everything, however, Irving was always Irving, the one and only, and as such he will always be remembered in the annals of the stage.

ELLEN TERRY

As to Ellen Terry, whom one thinks of at once when speaking of Irving, she had no mannerisms, certainly, of Irving's kind, but it would be a great mistake to suppose that she escaped criticism altogether. On the contrary, it may surprise many to learn that in her day she was severely criticized for many things. Even her wonderful looks did not find full favour; Charles Reade, the great novelist, pulled them to pieces remorselessly. "Yet somehow," he ended, "she is beautiful. Her expression kills any pretty face you see beside her." That was,

of course, the truth. So it was with her acting. She might have made mistakes that more careful performers might have avoided, but in the long run they counted for nothing in the face of the incomparable charm and grace of her performances as a whole. Irving himself when he saw her first was not much impressed. "Always bright and lovely and full of fun," he said, "she had a distinct charm; but as an artist she was rather on the hoydenish side." Later, when she came to act with him, his admiration for her was unlimited. He said that her pathos was "nature helped by genius," and again that she had "a gift of pathos." He appreciated fully, too, the value of her playing, both to himself and to the public, and many plays were put on expressly for her benefit, including some (such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*) in which he thoroughly disliked his own parts! He handled her with exquisite judgment and tact. An amusing story is told of one occasion when, discussing what she should wear as Ophelia, Ellen Terry said that she had thought of having a black dress as a change from the usual white.

"Oh," said Irving, "a black dress, eh?"

"Yes," replied Ellen Terry innocently, "I thought it would be a rather nice idea."

"Oh," said Irving again, "a black dress, eh? I see. As a sign of mourning perhaps for your murdered father, Polonius? A very nice idea, I think. We must ask Loveday what he thinks."

And so in due course the idea was put to Loveday, Irving's experienced general manager.

"Oh Loveday," said Irving, "we have been discussing dresses for *Hamlet*, and Miss Terry is thinking of having a black one for Ophelia."

"A what, sir?" replied the astonished Loveday, thinking that he must have got things wrong somehow.

"I said, Loveday," replied Irving, "that Miss Terry was thinking of putting Ophelia in black in one of her scenes."

Then Loveday tumbled to the situation and rose to the occasion. "But surely, sir, in *Hamlet* only the Prince himself can wear black?"

Then, too, Ellen Terry realized what an appalling "bloomer" she had made and with what exquisite tact Irving had dealt with the matter. Loveday was quite right. Irving him-

self, as it happened, attached the greatest importance to such matters, although in this particular case he had most carefully disguised his real feelings. On another occasion he achieved the same result in another way. For one of her parts Ellen Terry had designed a delightfully original dress. It was so very striking that after Irving had seen it it actually *disappeared*. And Ellen Terry, sensing the situation, never had the courage to ask what had become of it!

But she and Irving were always the very best of friends, and they parted company finally simply because there were hardly any plays left in which they could both have suitable parts.

OTHER CELEBRATED PLAYERS

If Ellen Terry was the supremely great British actress of her time, she did not stand alone. One at least of her contemporaries was probably her superior as a mistress of her art—Mrs. Kendal. It was often said that Mrs. Kendal could do more with a flick of an eyelid than anyone else by the most violent movements. She was, indeed, a consummate artist. "Try never to play a part," she said once to a rising actor, "unless you feel it is going to take something out of you." She concerned herself only with the performances, leaving all the business side of the theatre to her husband. Hence, like a famous French actress, she could say "*Les recettes ne me regardent pas*."

If Mrs. Kendal was great in one way, so was Lady Bancroft in another. She and her husband, Squire Bancroft, were among the most popular and successful of all the players of their time, so much so, that they were able to retire at the height of their powers and to live in affluence to the end of their days. But it was all done by hard work and fine judgment. To them was largely due the enormous improvement in the mounting of plays that has taken place since their time. Someone laughingly said that the only drawback to their plays was that they disgusted you so thoroughly with your own surroundings. In *Caste*, rooms had ceilings and such details as locks on doors were seen for the first time on the stage. But apart from such material matters, they were both, but especially Lady Bancroft, artists of the highest order.

Another actor of much the same order who

was much associated with Bancroft was John Hare. He was such a finished artist that someone once called him the Meissonier of the London stage. In this connexion he once asked Lady Bancroft to pass judgment on his appearance. "Perfect, Hare," she said.

"But don't you notice anything?" he rejoined.

"No," she replied, "you seem quite all right to me."

"But damn it," he persisted, "don't you notice a wart on the left side of the chin?"

As a manager he was curiously apprehensive. If he saw an empty stall he would say, "I don't like that empty stall, what?" The same quality lost him two big winners—*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *The Professor's Love Story*. He was also nearly giving up another, *A Pair of Spectacles*, half-way through the rehearsals, telling Grundy it was "too light" and not realizing that his own wonderful performance as Benjamin Goldfinch would draw the town.

Then there was that adorable comedian Charles Wyndham, whose name lives still in Wyndham's Theatre. He was once described by W. L. Courtney as "the lineal successor of Charles Mathews and the English rival of Got and Coquelin." Certainly no one who ever saw him at his best, say in *David Garrick*, ever forgot his irresistible charm. Wyndham suffered from the trouble known as "aphasia" (complete forgetfulness of a particular word) and his own company derived much amusement from noting the strangely unexpected words he sometimes substituted for the right ones. As he became older, however, the trouble became more serious, and he had many unpleasant experiences with audiences who, not understanding matters, jumped to the conclusion sometimes that he had not learned his part. In his prime, however, he was almost unsurpassed.

Later Beerbohm Tree became prominent. No one would suggest that he was a great actor in the highest sense of the word, and there was an amusing story (true or false) of a remark said to be made by that incorrigible humorist Max Beerbohm, bearing on the point:

"How did you like my Mark Antony?" Tree inquired.

"Oh, I liked it," Max replied, "I thought it was funny without being vulgar."

But Tree was none the less a great figure in his day. At His Majesty's he put on some wonderful productions, such as *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and many more. Max Beerbohm in a tribute to him said: "'Big' is a word that attaches itself in my mind to so much concerning Herbert. His body was big and his nature big and he did so love big things!" Mountains, cathedrals, frescoes, Shakespeare, summer skies, Wagnerian opera—his spacious temperament welcomed everything of that sort. Things on a small scale, however exquisite, did not satisfy him, yet rather paradoxically, Max thought that His Majesty's was really too big for Tree. "Robust though he was in mind and body, it was not in sweeping effects that his acting was pre-eminent. The full strength of his art was in its amazing delicacy." Incidentally, Max recalled that he had strongly advised against *Trilby* (in which Tree played Svengali), saying that it was utter nonsense which would be a dismal failure in London. In reality it was one of Tree's most memorable and popular productions.

Then there was another enormously popular artist, Gerald du Maurier. He was, undoubtedly, a most brilliant actor. Extraordinary lightness of touch and the acme of "naturalness" were his outstanding characteristics, so that he seemed at times—but only *seemed*—to be merely walking through his parts. This, however, was only a case of the art which conceals art pushed to perfection, for though the parts in which he appeared were mostly of the lighter order, he took them all with the utmost seriousness, and attained the results achieved in them only by unending labour.

Remarkable, too, in a totally different way was the immensely popular artist, Johnston Forbes-Robertson, as may be gathered from the single fact that he was generally regarded as the most perfect Hamlet of his time and an irresistible Romeo. In such parts he derived all possible advantages from a supremely attractive appearance and personality which seemed to embody the last word in masculine grace and refinement. The same qualities stood him in good stead, too, in interesting semi-mystical play of Jerome K. *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*.

Yes, truly, there were giants in those days.

PLAYMAKING AND IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION

ROBERT G. NEWTON, Adviser, Middlesex County Drama Committee; Author of "Acting Improvised"

THERE is little doubt that humanity will only with difficulty recover from the shock of the Second Great War. It is true that the War itself did not reduce civilization to complete barbarity, but because of the harnessing of atomic energy that threat hangs over us all like a Sword of Damocles. Science is still making tremendous strides and the machine has not only come to stay, but will remain to be perfected beyond our wildest imaginings. The logical result of this is not, I think, the "robotizing" of our civilization—a fear that inspired so much Expressionist Drama years ago—but rather a release for humanity from much of the drudgery of living. Enforced leisure will be one of the most fundamental changes that our civilization will know. This enforced leisure will require a fundamental change in our mental habits; the change will take place gradually, because the evolutionary process of Nature works slowly. One thing is certain. Should the perfection of mechanical efficiency come about the human race will perish unless it can adapt itself to the requirements demanded by enforced leisure. The increased mastery of the machine could well be a step forward in the progress of the race, because man will then have the opportunity of depending more upon real emotion and thought, than upon sensation and watertight, conventionalized opinions. The key to this essential change of mental habit lies in the development and in the exercise of the imagination.

The growth and popularity of the Amateur Movement is fundamentally connected with a universal feeling, conscious or unconscious, of the part to be played by the imagination in all systems of education in the future. The urge behind a great deal of the dramatic work to-day is not primarily a dramatic one, but more an act of rebellion against the fear that life, as we know it, will be dominated by the machine. The kind of feeling that finds expression in the words, "I'd go crazy if I didn't act"—a remark made at the British Drama League Conference some years ago—is at base part of humanity's realization that

in the future the survival of the fittest may be dependent upon the imagination. For this reason I am inclined to think that the Amateur Movement has more biological than artistic significance; it is debatable whether it has contributed much towards the Art of the Theatre, but that it has made a beginning in the matter of imaginative education there can be no doubt. The practice of play-making, and all that goes with it, is one of the best forms of imaginative education: it provides ample opportunity for social, and even international, understanding, and of all the imaginative activities it is the easiest for the beginner.

The Amateur Movement has, as much as any other, brought all sections of the community together in a united purpose. Great religious movements have, of course, done this too, but here, in most cases, it has been the desire of one section to save the other. Where there is a real Community Theatre the different sections of the community meet together for the practical purpose of producing a play. Whether this is a good thing depends upon the colour of our individual social outlook. What is important is the extent to which this social element in the Amateur Movement affects the questions of leisure and imagination. I dare say in the distant future—a period that Shaw describes as "As Far As Thought Can Reach!"—the pleasures of the imagination will be independent of the social element, but to-day we are taking only the first steps in imaginative education. This point cannot be over-stressed. Human frailty will necessitate a compromise. The exercise of the imagination is ultimately dependent upon isolation, but the human race is by nature gregarious, the herd instinct being a dominant factor. What would be the result of too much isolation upon a people essentially gregarious? An exaggerated conception of the world in which class differences might easily become over-accentuated. The reason for class in the first place was that one section of the community might enjoy leisure at the expense of the other. If leisure becomes a thing



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enforced, the foundation of class will collapse. Until such a time as the imagination has become disciplined of its extravagances, it is important that an understanding between the classes should play a part in the first steps of our imaginative education. Now a Community Theatre that is really a Community Theatre does attempt to do this.

Imagination has obviously greatest freedom in such pursuits as Poetry, Philosophy, and Art, which depend to a considerable extent upon isolation. This isolation is too austere for those who are taking their first steps in imaginative education: it is cold and remote; out of sympathy with those strong, human, gregarious impulses. Offer a group of miners the choice of sitting in a room with a volume of Kipling's poems or the chance of appearing in a scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Which would be the more popular? Which provides the greater opportunity for developing their imagination? Surely *Julius Caesar*, and the reason would not be aesthetic but biological.

Now, although the theatre *can* achieve the greatest heights, it is, as an art form, much cruder than most others, appealing as it does more to mass feelings than to those of the individual. This is precisely its value as an introduction to imaginative experience; it appeals to the herd instinct, not to the individual in isolation. Music, Community Singing, and Folk Dancing will most certainly play their part in the imaginative education of the future. The theatre has, however, these advantages over music. It is more catholic, embracing all sections of the community, and catering for a variety of interests; also it is visual as well as aural in its appeal.

To show in detail how the practice of the theatre assists the development of the imagination would be too complex for the present purpose. This much can be stated. The degree of imagination, in acting for instance, is simpler and frequently more nearly related to commonplace human experience than that required by many arts. Music, except when it is obviously emotional, requires considerable powers of concentration. Poetry depends almost entirely on the aesthetic instinct, which is rarer than the theatrical instinct. Incidentally, it is astonishing how satisfactorily some people act without any theatrical sense at all. Visually also the demands of the theatre are, on the whole, less exacting than those of either painting or sculpture. Another factor that makes the theatre easier is that it is far more satisfying to the herd instinct in human beings to be shown something happening than to be told about it. Finally, the theatre finds an outlet and escape for people whose surroundings or occupations are uncongenial to them.

The important thing is that, in spite of all its crudeness, the practice of the theatre does depend fundamentally on imagination, without which it cannot continue; even the most realistic modern play, or the most arrant piece of nonsense, is dependent, in the first place, upon illusion—the idea of "Let's Pretend," or, shall we say, "Let's Imagine." There is, of course, much about the Amateur Theatre that is infuriating, and much that seems a waste of time. We do well to temper our impatience by realizing that the Amateur Stage is preparing people for a time when they will not have to depend upon their work for a way of life, but upon those resources in themselves that they are able to draw upon.

PLAYS IN VERSE

CLIFFORD BAX, Author and Playwright: Author of "Mine Hostess," "Golden Eagle," etc

PLAYS in verse are not popular. Most people rush away from them pell-mell, assuming that they are unrelated to life, largely unintelligible, and probably undramatic. Who is to blame for so unhappy a state of affairs? The public because it is shallow-minded? Yes. Actors because, with few exceptions, they cannot speak dramatic verse? Yes. The poets because rarely indeed do they possess much instinct for the theatre? Yes, again.

The fact which makes the modern situation so queer is that throughout history, right up to the time of Machiavelli, it was normal for a play to be written in verse. Nobody expected anything else. Even Shakespeare began, in *Love's Labour Lost*, by writing not only in verse but to a great extent also in rhyme; and it is extremely interesting to watch how he took more and more to prose. But in his young days most playwrights appear to have believed that prose was slightly ignoble and suitable only for their comic characters. The reason for this is quite clear. "The adoption of verse," said an American critic, "is a pledge of beauty": in other words, if you use verse you must justify it by getting away from the flat jog-trot of ordinary talk. Think, for example, of the rolling and resonant "heroics" of Corneille and Racine, or of our own Dryden's brave and persistent attempt to rival the grandeur of their rhymed tragedies. We live in a deflated period.

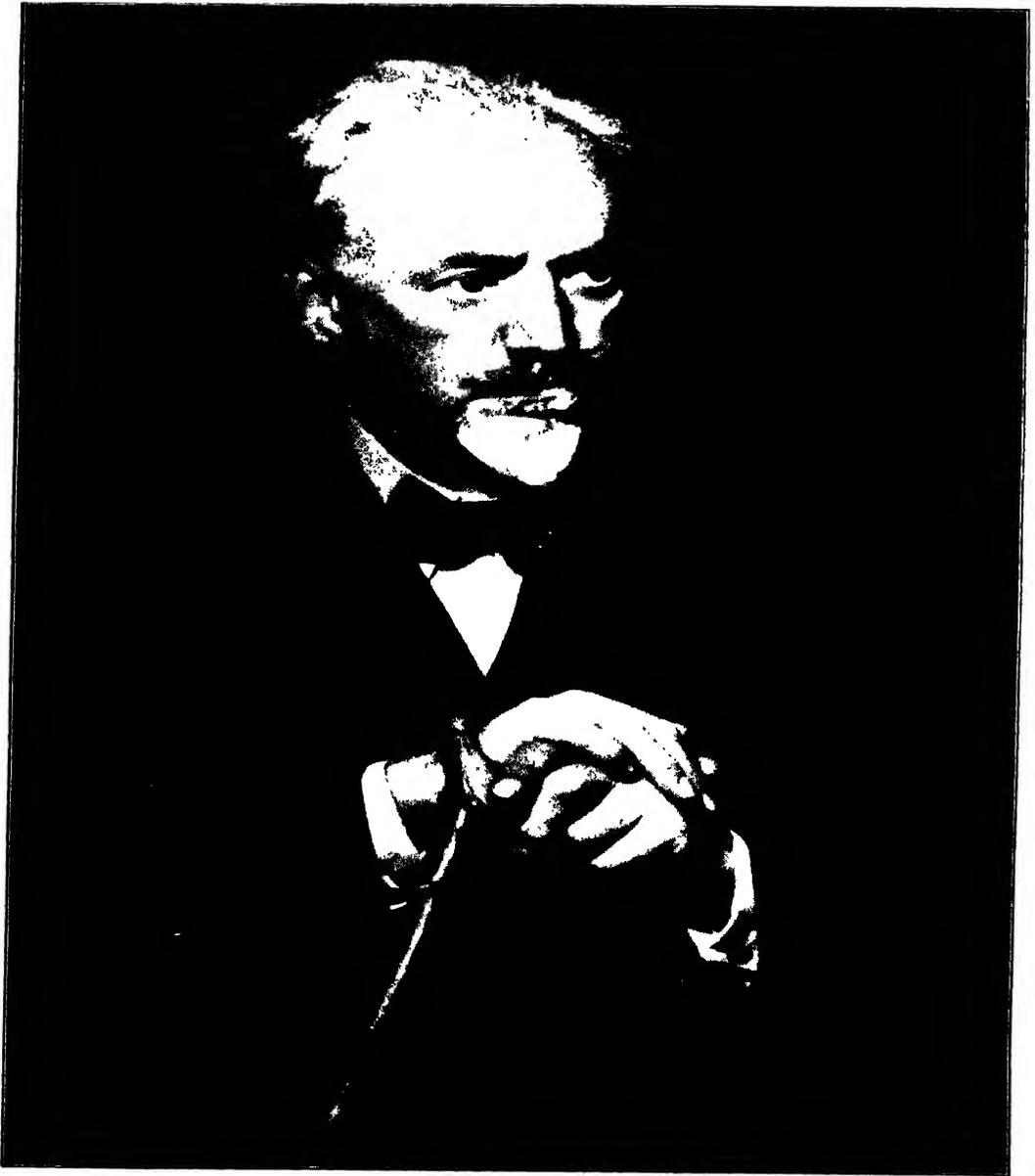
We like understatement, as when an intrepid air-fighter referred to his do-or-die battle among the clouds as "a decent show." And we have no longer any joy or pride in the English language. Anyone who uses it expressively and with a fair range of vocabulary is regarded as a bit queer, a bit "precious." Now, in such an atmosphere of society there is little or no chance of plays in verse ever achieving presentation on the West End stage. It is more than forty years ago that a play in verse—or rather, several plays by the same man—actually succeeded in the West End. These were the triumphs of Stephen Phillips—*Herod*, *Ulysses*, *Paolo and Francesca*: triumphs of a man who, often writing fine poetry, had also

as real a sense of the stage as any of his prose-contemporaries. And yet even at this period it was rumoured that Beerbohm Tree, rehearsing a Shakespeare play, exclaimed impatiently, "Make prose of it, boys, make prose of it!" Again, I went one evening to the pit of the Old Vic to see the simplest of Shakespeare's plays, *The Taming of the Shrew*, but the play had not progressed for more than five minutes when a soldier who was next to me said to his girl "Oh come along! This is one of them old plays where you can't understand anything."

It is customary, I know, to flatter the public, the little man, the ordinary decent citizen, and to assure him that in a democracy he is bound to be right. I cannot take this attitude. The crude taste of the general public is to me a sad spectacle of mental malnutrition, and we all know what an outcry there would be if the physical health of our people were dangerously low.

A few years ago, helped by a friend, I gave a broadcast of Mary Stuart's love-poems. Another friend, finding that his radio-set was out of order, went to a Soho restaurant where he is well-known, and asked the proprietress if he might listen-in. She said that she would do likewise, but after hearing a sonnet or two she remarked seriously "It's as bad as Shakespeare!" If you think that is amusing, I agree: if you think it is merely amusing, I believe you are wrong. Remember that the public once listened spell-bound to Hamlet's soliloquies, to the mighty language of *Antony and Cleopatra*, to the purely lyrical poetry which ends *The Merchant of Venice*. Something has happened to the public. It likes the commonplace, it has no taste for splendour, it cannot even think quickly enough to follow the flight of poetry, and it has been fed so long upon trivial realism that it is happiest in the theatre when it can murmur "Isn't that just like Aunt Esther!" or "Makes you think of Noel, doesn't it?"

The whole purpose of poetry is, or should be, to lift us for a brief while away from the commonplace, away from our private concerns, away from the particular (yourself) to the eternal (Man as a



CLIFFORD BAX

Fayer

spiritual being) so that, if only for a few moments, "We feel that we are greater than we know." Of course I am aware that British poets under forty are doing their utmost to prevent poetry from ever leaving the ground, but I must quite simply state that I do not believe that they are writing poetry at all, and I am content to rely upon the verdict of posterity.

The public, then, has cataclysmically deteriorated, but only, I surmise, because humanity has a natural preference for what is easy and what is vulgar. Arabs produced nothing but charming stuffs and delightful pottery until they were given a chance of using aniline dyes and Brummagem pots. Actors have lost the ability to speak poetry as though it were the natural language of spiritual protagonists, and they have lost it because it is out of fashion. We prefer the newspaper to the noblest writings of A. E. or Ruskin; and some there are who get more delight from Shaw than from Shakespeare, from T. S. Eliot or Rilke than from Tennyson or Traherne. As for our poets, they seem to me not to understand the theatre at all. If only they would first win their spurs in the competitive theatre, learning that drama has more kinship with poster-designing than with the art of the miniaturist, and also learning the mere mechanics of the stage and the sheer necessity of keeping the audience attentive—if only they would first prove themselves to be effective men of the theatre and then, having the goodwill of the managers, proceed to show us that poetry can increase emotional tension, can reinforce a dramatic situation, can "lift" a scene just as beautiful incidental-music can incalculably enrich a play such as *Mary Rose*.

But that is not how our would-be poet-dramatists think. They believe that an audience will listen enraptured to "choruses" which contain, it may be, sentences that overrun five, six, or seven lines. They never consider the strain of listening; and—worst of all faults—they fondle their lines and phrases, and forget that a play must for ever move onwards, the better indeed if it sometimes leaps on the back of Pegasus and hurries us up into an emotional-intellectual atmosphere which is exhilarating. The post-Phillips poetie-plays which I have seen and heard could not rightly be called "plays." Marlowe and Shakespeare had to overcome the counter-attraction of

the bear-garden. The modern poet-playwright should either go back to his lyrics and meditations or should prove that he can equal the prose-playwright as a contriver of tense and absorbing drama. Choruses are deeply suspect. They so often go with uplift. Consider, for instance, how Drinkwater ornamented his excellent prose-play *Abraham Lincoln* with an opening chorus to each act. At the revival of this piece a few years ago the producer omitted these sententious stanzas, but I doubt if he could have done so if Drinkwater had still been alive. The plain truth is that choruses nearly always hold up the onward momentum of a play. Even in Greek drama they must have done so, but we must remember that Greek choruses were dances plus music plus words. Besides, the general movement of Greek drama, magnificent in its total effect, is massive, slow, elephantine, powerful. It was still religious and haunted by ritual. The choruses, therefore, were somewhat like a stately procession of priests and acolytes in some major service conducted by the Roman Church. People did not go (at sunrise) to a Greek theatre to see a representation of their neighbours' domestic trials or absurdities, nor did they enjoy the feeble pleasure of recognizing an actor as "just like Aunt Sappho" or of exclaiming "How it makes you think of the Socrates household, doesn't it!" They went to watch a revelation of the dangers, the weakness, and the heroism of the human soul; and, if at the end they witnessed a rollicking, ribald comedy, they were obeying a fine spiritual instinct (which the Puritan lost) of not staying too long in highly rarefied air.

All this has long since passed away. Ritual still has a connexion with drama, but the drama presented in our theatres has had no connexion with ritual since the time of *Everyman*, some five hundred years ago. Our poets, nevertheless, possibly feeling that they stoop a little when they write for the theatre, take refuge in the chorus. Here they can be oracular, sententious, and need not bother about the wretched play. They wallow in a chorus; but they seem never to be able to make a chorus anything else but a velvet patch in a costume of leather. Has the audience assembled to hear a recitation of verse or to see a story unfolded? I believe, in a word, that our poets eagerly adopt from the ancient Greek

drama precisely that part of it which was itself an archaic remnant of religious ritual. First of all, people danced and sang in honour of the wheat-goddess or the wine-god, and then "actors" emerged, probably playing the part of Wheat or Wine, and slowly poets developed real dramatic situations, but there was, as usual, a time-lag—and the chorus remained when it was no longer of value to the play.

The reader may not be surprised to hear that I am asked each year to read several plays in verse and, like every other well-occupied author, I could wish to be left to tackle my own problems. Now, on most of these plays, or at least in those which definitely manifest some sense of the stage, I perceive with wry amusement that as soon as the play becomes reasonably dramatic the poet writes prose. Then a little later, feeling that he is a renegade to his high calling, he introduces an entirely extraneous lyrical passage about (shall we say?) the woods in September or, ever-mindful that he is not a mere playwright, settles down happily to the composition of—a chorus.

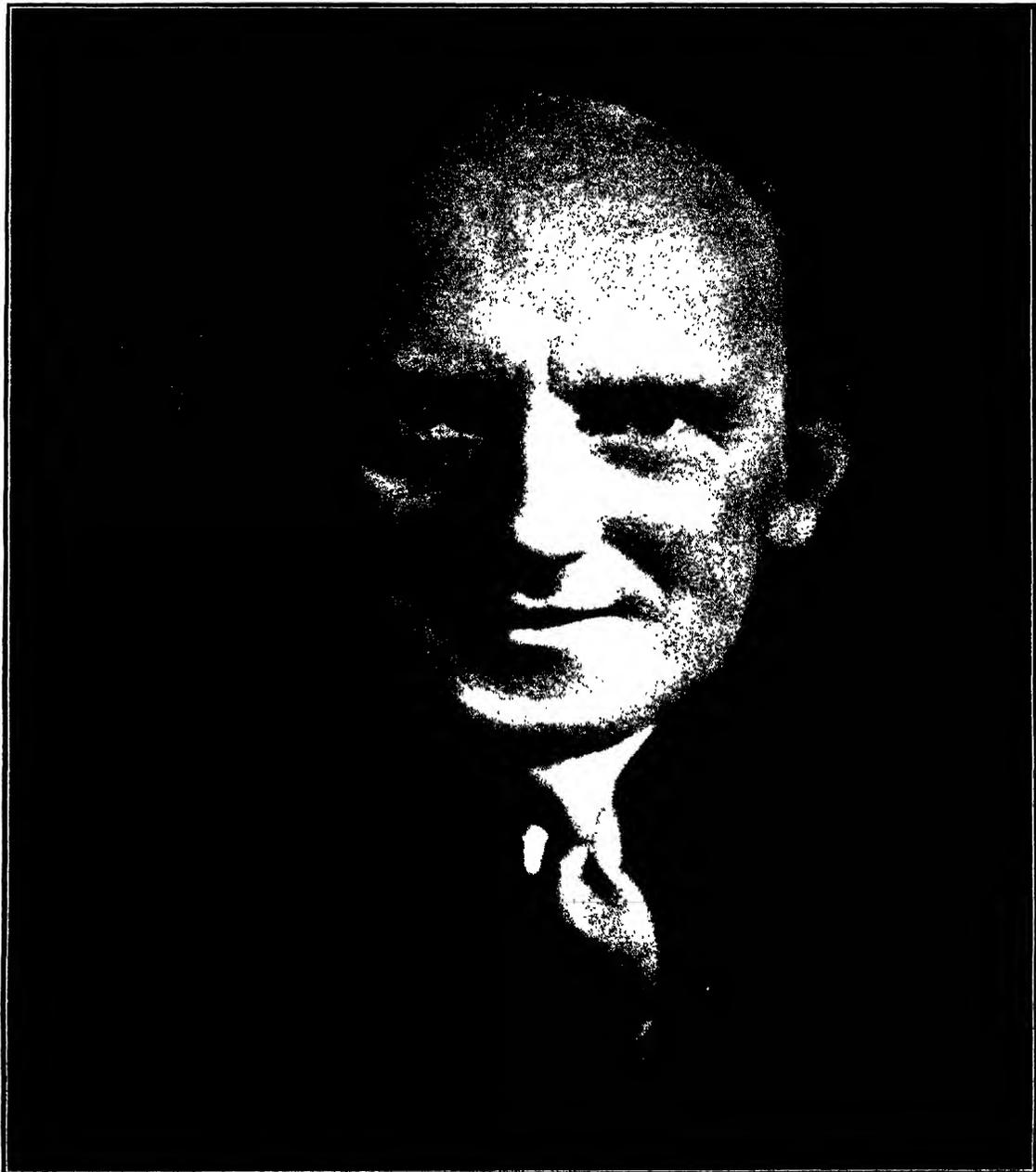
The trend of these pages may suggest that I am not sympathetic to verse-drama. On the contrary, I spent several years of my twenties in writing plays in rhyme or at least in blank-verse. My earliest success came when a theatre-manager returned an Arabian Nights play with a letter of praise which amusingly began with the words "Although it is in rhyme, your play does show..." In those distant days I wildly supposed that, if I produced a story of tension and surprise, our managers would be thankful that at last they could restore verse to the popular theatre. In those days we did at least understand that, if only because of the coughing-season, it is useless or unwise to construct long paragraphs of verse. We did know that verse must be incidental to drama. But now? Is not your poet-playwright a man who over-estimates our speed of apprehension? Even when he is writing his "lyrics," if they can rightly be so called, is he really crystal-clear? But in the theatre a playwright must be sharp, definite, clear as crystal: for any verbal effect may

be accidentally lost. In the theatre you must write simply, boldly, and unmistakably. Shakespeare did.

Poets, if they mean to work in the theatre, must use bold colours and lines, as Kyd and Marlowe did. It is futile to hold up for public appreciation a miniature on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre. Am I forgetting Mr. T. S. Eliot? No. On the contrary, I have been remembering him all this time. Many young people must have relished his *Murder in the Cathedral* or it would by now be forgotten. Fewer, perhaps, found genuine delight in *Family Reunion*, a piece upon which I must not comment because I was unable to sit it out. So strong, moreover, is Mr. Eliot's influence that there has now arisen almost a School of Eliot, as the art-critics would say— young men responsible for experiments tested in practice at the Mercury Theatre.

My fear is that modern writers will not be able to bring poetry back to the theatre for the simplest of reasons—that they are not writing poetry even when they have no associations with the stage. It is true that small audiences (not necessarily to be ridiculed) may support hothouse efforts to evolve a new drama, but they will be the kind of specialized audiences which so loyally rally to a festival of folk dancing or a Dolmetsch concert of viols. No doubt I should provide more welcomed reading if I could express an enthusiastic belief in the early arrival of such a dramatic springtime as that which produced Kyd and Marlowe. The evidence is against such delicious optimism. This very morning I read an article by a critic of uncommon intelligence and find that she accounts Mr. Bernard Shaw "our greatest living writer" and then proceeds curiously to observe that "it does not seem to matter that in his plays he shows only the most casual interest in human beings. He gives our brains a good brushing." If this attitude is general among intelligent people, a rebirth of poetic drama is likely to be postponed for an incalculable length of time. Who said "As well as being tax-payers, we are immortal souls?" It was not Mr. Shaw.

Clifford Bax



WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

THE PLAY'S THE THING

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG, Producer, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Former Director, Liverpool Repertory Theatre; Editor of many volumes of one-act plays

IF every amateur dramatic society would accept Hamlet's immortal words as its motto and, when choosing a play for production, remember their significance, then amateur dramatic art in this country would become vitalized to an extraordinary extent. That the amateur can play an important part in improving the standard of theatrical taste is undemable and the phenomenal progress of the Amateur Movement has been one of the most encouraging signs in the world of the theatre. Acting, production, and scenic design have reached an unusually high standard, but, generally speaking, the minimum of courage and wisdom seems to be given to the all important thing, namely, the choice of the play itself.

That the right play is difficult to find I would be the first to admit, but judging by many of the plays performed by amateurs it is evident that the worth or quality of the play chosen was the least important consideration. When I hear that this or that society is doing a certain play I ask myself "Why that play of all plays?" until I remember that the cast contains at least three characters, few of them below the rank of a Baronet, and, as the society in mind has many acting members, it is proverbial that the greater the number of these able to exhibit their talents to admiring relatives then the greater will be the sale of tickets . . . no matter how trivial the play's quality may be. Another club spends its energies and its far from meagre funds in producing a play that has been done by at least half a dozen local societies, thus betraying a complete lack of initiative or originality. A third will attempt nothing that is not labelled "Well-known London Success," put itself on the back at its choice, but be quite indifferent to the fact that the play chosen has been toured *ad nauseam* by professional companies with all their advantages of technical experience.

Fortunately there are many societies that prove by their judgment that with them "the play's the thing" every time. With commendable unobtrusiveness and little spectacular publicity they do consistently good work, attempt little known

plays by lesser known dramatists, and in many instances have players happily content to remain anonymous. Unlike many of the richer societies, which deserve the epithet or, if you will, the epitaph "mutual admiration societies," they have no opulent membership, but although funds are scanty they possess something of greater value . . . a fine courage and a sincere love for acting plays that are worth acting. To all such adventurers I would like to say: "Thank you. All good luck to your efforts."

Judging by the fact that the great majority of plays performed by amateurs are of a comedy or farcical nature, it seems as if the serious play is looked upon with disapproval and dubbed "bad for the box-office." Why should this be? I know that the first function of a theatre, amateur as well as professional, is to entertain, and an audience is quite justified in demanding entertainment. But need the word be synonymous with imbecility? I do not think so. Life is a puzzling business these days for everybody, and there is no finer "escape" from its perplexities than a genuine first-rate comedy with its tonic of laughter. But there is an equally good "escape" in a serious play that grips the emotions and stirs the imagination. The ridiculous unreal farces that make up the staple fare of so many societies often fill me with suicidal tendencies while a fine play of dramatic intensity always stimulates and thrills me. Do not imagine that I advocate a serious play that is shrouded in morbid gloom or, what is worse, a play with "a high educational purpose" . . . plays of this nature would deservedly bankrupt any society attempting them.

Remember that a good serious play can be carried to success more easily than a comedy. To quote the words of one of the best exponents in the art of comedy, "The acting of comedy calls for a higher intelligence. The written tragedy already has action, emotion, and situations to hold the audience. In comedy every moment is fraught with risks, every word has its duty." As for farce, the choice of nine out of ten societies,

it is, in my opinion, the most difficult type of play for amateurs to perform. Usually written round the personality of a "star" with a genius for farcical acting, it also demands from its performers a superb slickness and pace, together with the most perfect "team work" procurable. And these assets are rare in amateur acting. Yet



THE FINAL SCENE IN PHILIP JOHNSON'S ONE ACT PLAY "LEGEND"

Performed by the Liverpool Playhouse Circle in the British Drama League Competition Festival, 1927-28. "Legend" was awarded the prize for the best original one act play in the Festival.

it is farce, and more than likely a very poor one, which is the most popular of all play forms with many societies. A bad farce badly played is hardly fair to an audience, which has infinitely greater intelligence than it is given credit for, an audience which would rather be caught up in the thrill of a serious play than be depressed by the imbecilities of a poor farce with its "ever opening doors." If you wish to test my theory, listen to the expression of appreciation at the end of any performance. You will notice as the sequel to an evening of continuous laughter that there is only

desultory applause. A good play, with a definite purpose, on the other hand, seldom fails to rouse an exciting enthusiasm from its audience.

Another type of play dearly beloved by amateurs is from "the cocktail school" of drama, with its glittering and shallow artifice and its assembly of worthless people. This is too often produced by a society with players who have little or no knowledge of the world that the dramatist depicts. The results at times are ludicrous. These comedies require a high degree of distinction and sophistication, not only in the acting but also in the settings and general atmosphere. Again, it should be noted that a badly written or poorly constructed play, no matter how successful it may have been in London, with its galaxy of stars, is extremely difficult to produce and act. Without its star artists the play rests entirely on its own merits as a play and more than likely will be a dismal failure in amateur hands.

Again, unless you have a large and well equipped stage, resist plays that require heavy realistic settings or plays with many changes of scene. Long intervals are a glaring fault in many amateur productions and can mar an otherwise successful evening to a pathetic extent, especially in these days with the lightning rapidity of the cinema.

It is a curious thing that the one-act play has found little favour with the amateur except in the British Drama League and other festivals, which have proved that excellent one-act plays are being written by new authors all over the country. Many volumes of admirable one act plays are now published and the choice of good one-acters is unlimited. Why not instead of doing hackneyed long plays try an evening of three or four one-act plays? If the prospect frightens your Box Office Manager, play for safety with a Barrie, Shaw, Milne, or Brighouse, and one or two by a new author. If your society has many acting members twenty or thirty of them could be absorbed in the casts of the plays. Instead of one producer two or three could have a chance of proving their worth. Contrast the plays carefully and include one or more of a serious nature. Among one-act plays I can recommend are *Count Albany* (Donald Carswell), *The Last War* (Neil Grant), *Two Gentlemen of Soho* (A. P. Herbert), *Lonesome Like* (Harold Brighouse), *Doctor my Book* (Rudolph de Cordova and Alicia

Ramsey), the comedies and dramas of Philip Johnson (one of our most prolific and skilful writers of one-act plays), and those of Bernard Shaw, St. John Ervine, Sladen Smith, Joe Corrie, James Gregson, and James Bridie. But

Another way in which the amateur can perform a real service to dramatic art is to give the new and untried dramatist a muchly needed chance. Judging by the avalanche of manuscripts that pour into the offices of theatrical managers,



A SCENE FROM SIERRA'S PLAY "THE KINGDOM OF GOD"
Produced at the Liverpool Repertory Theatre by William Armstrong

if you decide to do "A Triple Bill" of one-act plays, be prepared for many questions as to the author of such a play. This happened when I contemplated producing "A Triple Bill" at the Liverpool Playhouse some years ago. Why not an exciting evening of international one-act plays? From America you can choose a Susan Glaspell, a Eugene O'Neill, or a Thornton Wilder, from Spain a Martinez Sierra or a Quintero, from Russia a Chekhov, from Ireland a Lady Gregory or a Lennox Robinson, and so on indefinitely.

half the population of Britain seems to indulge in the fascinating adventure of play-writing. The majority of these plays, if performed, would drive even the most uncritical audiences to the safety of the cinema or even the cemetery, but many of them are excellent and quite worthy of production. But the professional theatre, handicapped as it is with heavy weekly running expenses, cannot, alas, run too many risks or experiment as much as it would like. Here, then, is where amateur dramatic societies could prove of

inestimable value to the theatre in general. They are confident of an audience to a sufficient extent to make experiments a possibility. There must be many local dramatists with a good play awaiting production. But the amateur dramatic society courageous enough to risk a play by a local author must be prepared to face antagonism from the snobbish section of its patrons who refuse to sit through any play which lacks a London label. I remember when I was about to stage an excellent comedy by a Merseyside dramatist at our Playhouse overhearing a disgruntled playgoer remark "I don't want to see that play, for if it was any good then it would have been done before." Do not imagine that this attitude is entirely provincial, for it is a well-known trait of countless London theatre-goers who will purchase tickets only for a play by a well-known author or one in which a favourite "star" appears. The new, untried playwright must face this lamentable state of affairs in the London theatre world, and not too readily condemn its managers who keep to safe revivals and plays by the popular, established dramatists. Few plays are written only to be read in the study so why should not your society give some young author his first chance, so eagerly

awaited. It may not be so exciting as that "West End Success" which packed your theatre last season, but surely the effort would be well worth making. It may possibly be a triumph, and when, in consequence, the play reaches the London stage, think of the glowing pride your society will have in the knowledge that "we did the play for the first time on any stage." I can name several plays which owe their success to a first production by amateurs. Or will you be content to go on in the old smug way, ignoring the budding dramatist, the serious playwright, the maker of one-act plays, and keep to the safe and easy track of "famous London success"? Don't. The professional theatre welcomes in every way the marvellous and ever-increasing enthusiasm of the amateur dramatic world, not only because this enthusiasm helps us in creating playgoers, but also because it is of the greatest value to the arts of acting, playwriting, and production. The amateur can do immense service in furthering all that is best in theatrical art, free as he is from the burdens that cripple the commercial theatre. He can act, produce, design, and write . . . let him but add to these gifts courage and judgment in his choice of play and all will be well.

William Ash Grove



C. B. PURDOM

J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

THE WORK OF THE PRODUCER

C. B. PURDOM, Author of "Producing Plays," etc.; Dramatic Critic and Producer, Founder of Letchworth Players and Welwyn Garden City Theatre; Adjudicator, Secretary, The Guild of Adjudicators

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE in *The Theatre in My Time* described the producer as an affliction: he said that he ought to be abolished; for he wants to see the author as producer. I agree with him to this extent, that the ideal conditions for a play are the author who is an actor producing his own plays. But we get them only rarely—examples are Shakespeare, Molière, Pmero, and Granville-Barker, and, at the present time, Noel Coward and Emlyn Williams. Certainly, the author knows more about his play than anyone else, but to put it on the stage he must know the theatre too. That is why I regard the first qualification of a producer to be that of experience as an actor: no other experience is its equivalent. To be a scenic designer or an electrician or even a playwright is not enough—he must have some mastery of the stage as an actor.

A producer there must be, however, for a play must have one man responsible for it, just as an orchestra must have a conductor or any group of people engaged on a common task a leader. That is what the producer is, a leader, the man into whose hands is put the responsibility of getting a stage production carried out as a complete thing. He has to know everything about the play, otherwise his work will suffer. He has to know the play itself, the cast, the stage on which it is to be given, and the costumes, scenery, and lighting required. He will have others to work with him; but he must be able to inspire them and co-ordinate their work.

Because so much is demanded of the producer he is difficult to find. Good producers on the professional stage are scarce; on the amateur stage they are not often met with. This is not to be wondered at, for not only must a producer have knowledge, but he must possess tact, ability to handle people, teaching capacity, and creative power as an artist. No wonder he is so rare! But so far as my observation goes, we are getting more producers than we had a few years ago on both the professional and the amateur stage. The craft

is being taken seriously. All the same, I should be hard put to it to count on the fingers of one hand the producers in London to-day whose work could be called consistently first class.

Yet the stage must have producers. Young men ought to go in for producing as a career; but they must not expect to step from the academy into the position, or feel themselves qualified after a year or two's work in a repertory company. Years of hard grind are necessary and a true bent for the work. Amateurs must develop their own producers, though I hardly know how it is going to be done, for it is very nearly a full-time job. However, amateur companies have made up their minds that they should have amateur producers and not employ professionals, which shows how ambitious the amateur theatre has become. But there are few amateurs who can give the time required to become qualified. Occasionally one comes across a man with a gift for producing: he should be encouraged; but he should know in his own heart how much he has to learn and set about acquiring knowledge. The distinction between amateur and professional is, however, an artificial one and I would like to see it done away with. The only honour the amateur has over the professional is that he does what he does for love: there is no honour in the fact that he knows so much less how to do it.

These points are intended for those working under the conditions that exist on the amateur stage, and I have in mind all who work on that stage, the chief of those conditions being that the work is done in one's spare time.

The first step in production is to choose the play, then follows casting, planning, rehearsing, and finally the performance. The choice of play is the first and most important step. Without the play nothing can be done. How should a play be chosen? There are, in my opinion, four rules: (1) the play must appeal to the producer, (2) it must attract the players, (3) it must be likely to please the prospective audience, and (4) its production must be practicable.

(1) It is useless for a producer to attempt to do a play that he dislikes or that does not interest him. He must be able to put his whole heart into the production and he cannot do that if he is indifferent. Therefore, if you are a producer, do not undertake to produce a play that does not appeal to you—let someone else do it, for you will not be able to do it justice. If you are a manager or the secretary of a company looking for a producer, make sure that he is really interested in the play you want done. Test him severely. If you are not sure about him don't let him do it; find someone else. Never force a play upon a producer.

(2) The play proposed must attract the players, or they cannot be expected to do it well. Do not let an enthusiast induce a company to start on a play that it doesn't want to do. It is true that people do not always know their own minds in matters of taste—and that must be allowed for. But be very sure before you decide upon a play that the actors will like it—if not at first, then before they have done with it.

(3) The play must be one that you can reasonably expect to please the audience that is to see it. A successful production depends upon the audience as much as upon playwright and actors. The audience completes the play. This does not mean that the audience should be master: far from it. The playwright-actor is his own master, as every artist is, but it is his business to satisfy the audience. The audience employs the playwright-actor and must be served: that is the essential basis for sound art and for a healthy theatre. But the artist serves as an independent man. He has to win his public. He has to get it to want what he wants. He does that by serving it faithfully: rendering it honest, sincere, and fine work. The audience must never be despised nor pandered to. Above all, it must not be forgotten. Many amateurs are inclined to forget their audience and to think only of themselves. That is a fatal mistake.

(4) It must be practicable to perform the play. Even though producer, actors and audience could all be expected to be pleased, there must be a suitable stage, an adequate cast, and sufficient money to make the performance possible. I put these matters last, because they are least; but they cannot be overlooked.

When the play is chosen the next step is to cast it. The wise producer does not allow a play to be

chosen without a cast in his mind. There are plenty of good plays that cannot be done because a cast cannot be found—usually the actor to play the leading part. A good play and the right cast means that half the task is done. So cast the play with care. The leading characters come first. See that they balance each other in appearance, voice and manner. Choose the other players in relation to them. Don't cast to type if you can avoid it—I mean do not give anyone a part because he "looks" it, or because he has previously been successful in a similar part. Amateurs often have to do this because their choice of players is restricted, and I do not say that they should not choose players who "fit" the parts required, for they must do the best they can. In principle, however, it is an injustice to the actor to treat him as a type and to cast him (more than once, at any rate) on his face. This applies to amateurs as much as to professionals. In the end, however, you must get the best cast available no matter how you do it, and the producer who knows what he wants will not permit anything to stand in his way.

Notice that I have referred only to the producer in relation to casting. I have not mentioned the committee. No committee can cast a play or should be allowed to do so—that is the producer's proper task. But the committee can advise and help by discovering talent. The wise producer will consult it and will induce it to work hard to find players for him; but the final decision must rest in his hands.

PLANNING THE PRODUCTION

When the play is cast, the producer has to plan out the production; he should put everything down on paper, and not carry what he intends to do in his head.

1. Make a detailed study of the play as a whole, of each character, and each situation. Write down the main features of each character and give them to the actor. Study the climax of each situation and the climax of the play. Absorb the play until it moves within your mind and you can re-create it mentally: see and hear it as a complete thing. Forget every production of the play you have seen and everything you may have read about the play: come to it afresh and strive to get at its secret: why was the play written? what does it do? Digest the play and make it new.

2. Sketch out each scene and act, and make a scene plot in consultation with your stage manager and scenic artist.
3. Prepare a property plot in consultation with your scenic artist and costume designer.
4. Make plans for the necessary costumes in close consultation with your costume designer.

allow a debate to arise. This should be an inflexible rule: never allow argument to take place at a rehearsal. All argument should cease once the play has been started upon, to be resumed only after the production is finished. At the first reading, arrange when and where rehearsals are to take place. Divide the play up for the convenience



THE WELWYN GARDEN CITY THEATRE SOCIETY'S PERFORMANCE OF "DON JUAN IN HELL," FROM BERNARD SHAW'S "MAN AND SUPERMAN," PRODUCED BY C. B. PURDOM

The setting is black and gold

5. Prepare a lighting plot in consultation with your electrician.

See that your stage manager, scenic artist, costume designer, and electrician, consult together and with you so that they arrive at complete understanding.

After the plan has been prepared start rehearsals. Begin with a reading of the play. Let the players discuss their parts and ask questions; be as explanatory as possible; don't, however,

of rehearsing—there is no need to start at the beginning and go steadily through to the end, time after time: take the players where they come together. But let the second rehearsal be a walk through the play, the actors taking their approximate positions on the stage. Then give the actors time to learn their words—a few days; and ask them to come to the next rehearsal with their lines memorized. The real work of production cannot start until the words are known.

It will be hard to get this done: but insist upon it at the start. Have the prompter present at the third rehearsal and induce the players to do without their script.

I suggest at this stage that the producer should

actors know their parts until they are sick of them they will do nothing worth while.

The chief matters to which every one should pay attention are positions, movements, interpretation, voice, speed, cues, and climax.



ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THIAETRE'S PRODUCTION OF ST. JOHN ERVINE'S "THE LADY OF BELMONT"

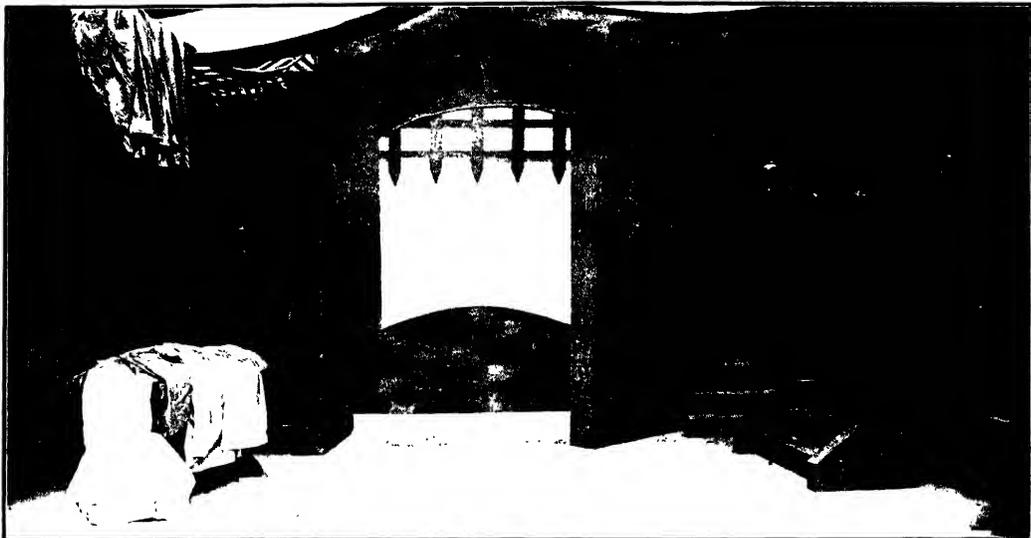
The setting shows the ill-effects of a shallow stage, one of the chief defects in stages that amateurs are compelled to use

impress these points upon the members of the company—

1. To be punctual at rehearsals.
2. To work at their parts at every odd minute they have. The real study of a part is done at home, not at the rehearsals.
3. To remember that they belong to a team, and that each actor depends upon all.
4. Not to be afraid of over-rehearsing. Unless

When the rehearsals have reached a certain point, build up each scene, each act, and the play as a whole. Get as many full rehearsals as possible on the actual stage you are going to use. Bring the properties into use as early as possible. At least a week before the production have the scenery ready, and get the actors used to it. Teach the actors to wait for laughs.

Have scenery, property, and lighting rehearsals



THE HUDDERSFIELD THESPIANS' SITTING FOR "THE KING'S JIWRY" (HALCOTT GLOVER)



THE MARLOWE SOCIETY, CAMBRIDGE, IN SHAKESPEARE'S "KING HENRY IV," PART 2

before the dress rehearsal; *everything* must be ready before the dress rehearsal.

Let the dress rehearsal go through just as at a performance; have no changes; do not be in despair if it goes badly: but be suspicious if it goes too well. Warn the actors not to take the advice of their friends to alter their playing or to vary your instructions after the first performance: let them know that you rely upon their loyalty.

The producer should have control of the play until the run is concluded. If, after the first performance, there is something seriously wrong with the production he should call a rehearsal at once. Not until a play gets before an audience is it possible to tell exactly what its values are. Sometimes an actor goes wrong in his part, or perhaps the emphasis of the whole company is faulty, or the climax is not properly brought out. In any such event a rehearsal must be called. The producer must watch the play during its run and if necessary he must call rehearsals to tighten up anything that has got slack. The audience affects a play and the actors may be tempted to respond to the audience in such a way that the values of the play are changed. This must be put right.

CREATIVE EFFECT OF AUDIENCE

The producer has to remember as he watches the play that what comes to life on the stage is not the mere repetition of what he and the actors have done at rehearsals. The stage in the living theatre is different from the stage as a workshop. When the play unfolds itself before the audience in the theatre a new element enters: it is thrust upon a new level contesting for its integrity before the eyes and minds of the audience, and while the discipline of the workshop should hold the players firmly together, they must be able to rise within that discipline, carrying with them the power of the audience, as they reach towards the heights of creative action. Unless the players are free artists the play will not live; but this freedom depends upon carrying the audience with them. Unless the actors transform themselves and all that has been done at rehearsal, the play will not embody that life and unity for the sake of which the theatre exists. The soul of drama is in the play as it is performed. As the producer watches the performance he will look for the birth of the

embryo, the butterfly emerging from the chrysalis, and he will, if he is supremely fortunate, share with the audience the thrill of creation.

The authority of the producer should never be disputed, either by actors or anyone else. Success depends upon absolute loyalty to him. The company must work together whole-heartedly under his leadership. That is why the personality of the producer is so important. He must be worthy of loyalty; his company must have implicit confidence in him. He is not a dictator or a despot, but a leader who interweaves the work of all into a single unity.

A producer must have the capacity for paying attention to detail. He must observe and prepare for every little thing. The conception of the production as a whole is his; but he must neglect nothing that helps to realize it. Every movement of the actor, every detail of properties, costumes, and make-up must be attended to. A production can easily be ruined by thirty seconds' bad playing or by wrong make-up of a single actor or by properties or lighting that are unsuitable. Leave nothing to chance.

The position of the producer is one of pains, anxieties, and disappointments. He will never be able to get on the stage the production he has mentally visualized. That is because he is human and is employing human agents. He is imperfect, and so are members of the company. Therefore, he must not expect to reach the mark he has set before himself. That does not mean he should not aim high. He should continuously raise his aims and realize that to fail in reaching it is part of the price he must pay for the position he holds.

THE FUNCTION OF STAGE PRODUCTION

Finally, let me say that stage production is not an opportunity for producers to give rein to their own idiosyncrasies. The producer owes a loyalty too: he is not there for his own sake, but for the sake of the play. There are clever producers who are concerned only with their own ideas. They should write their own plays and act in them. But when a producer has another dramatist's work in his hands it is his business to be true to it, and to put it faithfully on the stage. Play production is not a thing in itself. When we see a play and admire nothing in it but the production, we can

be sure that there is something seriously wrong. Production should serve the play—the play should not be an excuse for a producer to perform tricks of stagecraft. That is sometimes done; but it is sterile, and brings the theatre into contempt. To translate the play into the forms of the stage, directing the actors to that end, is what the producer is required to do.

The application of the general principles outlined will be illustrated in specialist treatment of the production of naturalistic plays, farce, comedy, romantic drama, and tragedy.

PRODUCING NATURALISTIC DRAMA

There are two main forms of plays—Comedy and Tragedy. The three other forms are variations of them. Between, there is an endless variety of combinations of forms such as farcical-comedy, tragi-comedy, romantic comedy, naturalistic comedy, naturalistic tragedy, and so forth. I shall touch upon them in the course of what I shall write. It is important to know to what form any particular play belongs, for the method of production depends upon its form. Comedy has a different form from tragedy, and must be handled differently. Many mistakes in production arise from uncertainty as to a play's true form, converting comedy into farce, or vice versa, or romance into comedy. Clear definition in production depends upon understanding of form. Dramatists are very often much to blame, not knowing to what category their writing belongs, perhaps because they are not sure about what they want to say.

Naturalistic drama is elementary drama, drama in its simplest form, because it is nearest to common life. It is the easiest form of drama because it is so familiar. The dramatist goes into the street, or into the slums, or stays in his own home, and writes down what he observes. The Manchester School of Drama, which had an honourable career at Miss Horniman's Repertory Theatre (1907-1916), was naturalistic; its chief writers were Stanley Houghton, Harold Brighouse, Allan Monkhouse, and Charles McEvoy, the characters being lower middle class or working people.

The origin of the modern drama is in naturalism. T. W. Robertson's *Caste* (1865) was the first important naturalistic play in England;

Pinero and Galsworthy were naturalistic; so is Shaw. The Irish dramatists apart from W. B. Yeats are naturalistic. Ibsen, Bjornson, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Wedekind, Strindberg, Maxim Gorky, Chekov, Brieux, and Eugene O'Neill, are all naturalistic. The attempt to make the theatre real has inevitably made it naturalistic in every country, and the part played by ideas of social reform in reconstituting the modern theatre is a subject worthy of study.

What the naturalistic writers sought to do was to put real life, individual, social, and political, upon the stage. They wanted the actual problems of the time to be considered. Therefore they took the people they knew in the situations with which they were familiar and made plays out of them. When these plays came to be performed they had to be acted differently from the romantic, melodramatic, poetic, and merely theatrically conventional plays with which the actors were familiar. A new method of acting and stage production had to be developed. The Bancrofts became the pioneers of this new method when they produced Robertson's plays in the sixties of last century. Their influence grew steadily, but it was not until the opening of the present century that any real progress in naturalistic acting took place in this country, though Eleanora Duse (1858-1924) had been a great exponent of it in Italy, and Constantin Stanislavsky had practised it in Russia since 1888.

VEDRENNE—BARKER SEASON

Harley Granville-Barker in the Vedrenne-Barker season at the Court Theatre (1904-1907) set the standard of English naturalistic production. His work in those brief years has not been surpassed by any other producer, and it is still fruitful in the English theatre. Granville-Barker was without question the greatest English theatrical producer of modern times, and the fact that he had done nothing in the theatre since 1920 (though he afterwards wrote and translated many plays) was a grievous loss to the English stage. He was essentially a naturalistic producer, paying attention to reality, building up his results from minute detail, and studying the actual rhythm of life.

Granville-Barker was an example of the naturalistic dramatist who is a true artist because he passes through naturalism to imagination.

The high-water mark of his work as producer was the three Shakespearean productions at the Savoy Theatre in 1912 and 1914. These were not naturalistic but poetic. In these plays, his strictly naturalistic methods adapted to the medium of poetic drama resulted in the most truly poetic productions seen on the London stage. In fact,

than perform Shakespeare without sufficient seriousness—though Shakespeare is necessary, as I shall show later. What is required is straightforward playing, truthful and sincere, and staging that is modelled on life. That is the beginning, and nearly everybody can do it.

But that must not be thought to be the end of

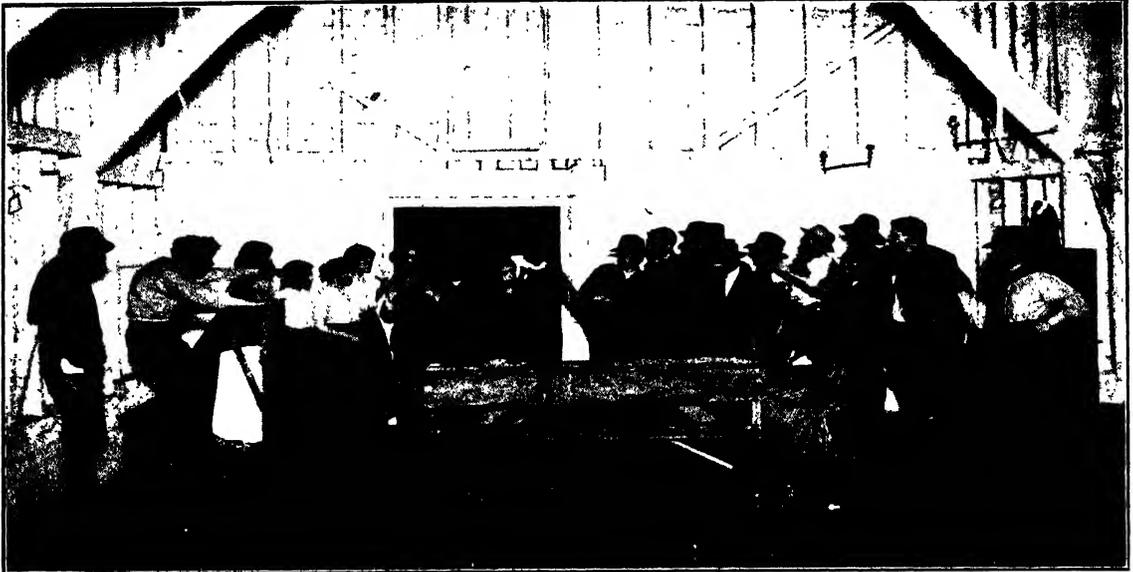


“ADAM THE CREATOR” AT THE CAMBRIDGE FESTIVAL THEATRE
 Example of Expressionist Treatment of a Naturalistic Play
Scott & Wilkinson, Cambridge

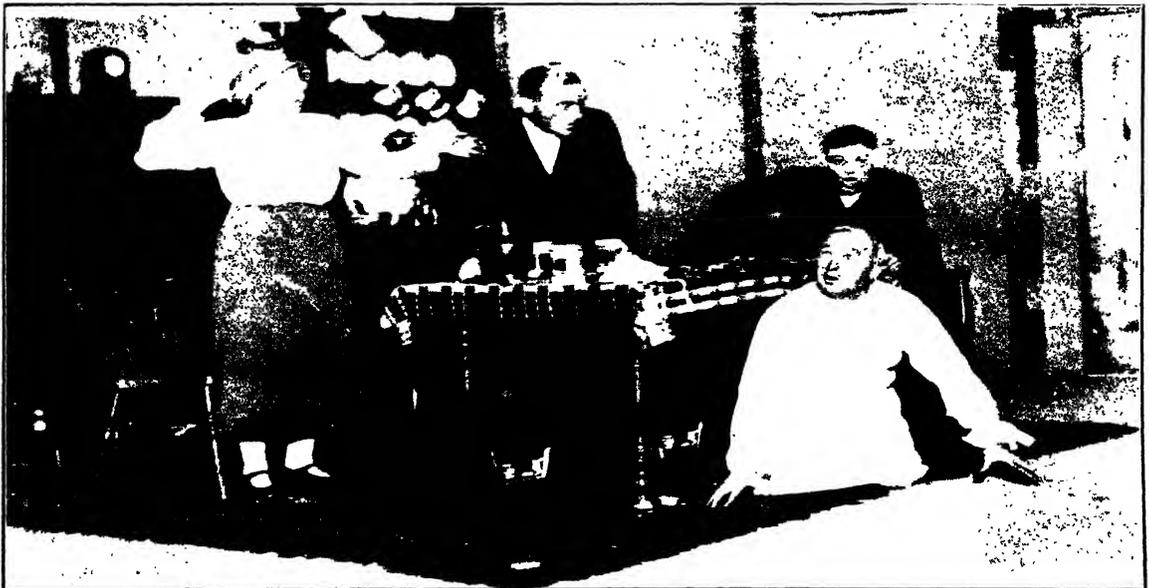
no dramatist, actor, or producer who possesses greatness is merely naturalistic—for example, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekov, Shaw, Duse, Stanislavsky, and Granville-Barker. I repeat that naturalistic drama is elementary drama; but elementary art must be mastered before great art begins.

Amateurs find naturalistic plays the easiest to do: they *are* the easiest. And it is right that they should start with them, because they start on familiar ground. To put the life they know on the stage is what amateurs can do with the least difficulty, and they should do it. It is right to start by being oneself. I encourage amateurs to do this form of play, for I would sooner see them do it

naturalistic drama. The beginning of art is to do what is nearest, but the end is to aim at the unattainable. So in naturalistic plays we ask first for sincerity and real life; but we soon ask for something more. The actor starts by being himself, but he must end by surpassing himself. Therefore, it must not be thought that there is no technique required for naturalistic plays or no creative imagination. The most perfect art is demanded. In fact, unless the actor in naturalistic plays quickly drops “being himself,” he will degenerate and become, if successful, not an actor but a mimic—that is a caricature of an actor: and, if unsuccessful, he will be a mere bore. The naturalistic actor must acquire art.



THE FIRST PERFORMANCE BY ENGLISH ACTORS OF BERNARD SHAW'S "THE SHOWING UP OF BLANCO POONCE" BY THE LEICHWORTH PLAYERS (1911) PRODUCED BY C. B. PURDOM
This was a completely naturalistic setting for this naturalistic play.



"THE COFFIN" PERFORMED AT THE WEIWEYN THEATRE BY THE WEIWEYN GARDEN CITY THEATRE SOCIETY, PRODUCED BY C. B. PURDOM

The naturalistic drama holds the mirror up to Nature; but the truth is that it does not give an imitation of life, but a representation, or interpretation of it. It is not real life we see on the stage, but play: something that seems like real life, but actually is not. The producer must remember, therefore, that his task is not to imitate life in acting or staging but to be more like life than life is itself.

Suppose, for example, the producer were to get a real out-of-work, a real charwoman, and a real Liberal Member of Parliament, and put them on the stage to perform Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*; could they do it? Almost certainly not; and even if by chance they were able to give a tolerable performance, actors playing the parts would make the real persons seem unconvincing. Real life and real characters moved bodily on to the stage would be uninteresting, for they would seem less than life. The actor has to make them more than life to appear real. There is no getting away from art.

What the producer of naturalistic plays has to do is to study life and then recreate it for the stage. The late Charles Hawtrey was one of the most natural actors who ever walked the London stage. Everything he did seemed spontaneous—he was so easy, so unaffected, so smooth and at home. Yet he rehearsed every movement. Every detail of his playing was artificial. He left nothing to the moment—all was prepared. He was an artist.

In naturalistic plays everything must seem to arise out of the plain necessity of the action. There must be no obvious preparation. The players must come on, move, speak, and maintain such relations with each other that everything seems inevitable and effortless. All consciousness of the audience must be removed. The playing must be kept well within the scene. The rhythm of the play must have the apparent flow of Nature. The diction must be that of the speech of the actual type of character represented. Accuracy of speech is the first rule. If a dialect play is done it must be rendered in the correct dialect. If that is not exactly known, dialect should not be attempted. Do not let English actors try to speak American: very few can do it, hardly any unless they know America. The same with Scots speech.

The dresses and properties must be accurate, and the staging must be right in detail. But do not

over-elaborate. If you are putting a cottage kitchen on the stage do not attempt to get into the scene everything that you know can be found in such a kitchen: to do that would be to spoil the effect, not to heighten it. Suggest the kitchen: that is all that is necessary. The rule is to use the minimum of materials and to rely upon suggestion. But let what you have be correct—the furniture, doors, fireplace, windows and all the fittings, ornaments, and pictures used must have the appearance of reality. If the real thing is practicable, use it instead of an imitation. Do not be slipshod.

The danger of naturalistic plays is that those concerned may think that anything will do—any sort of acting and any makeshift in staging. That is to bring the stage into contempt. To avoid that pitfall, remember that in naturalistic plays as in all others the actor makes or mars the production, and that there is no limit to the art that can be employed. Naturalism is only the outer form of the play—the inner spirit is the same as for the greatest drama. Let the actor know that he must act for all he is worth. His deepest spirit must be engaged in what he does.

Small theatres are best for naturalistic drama. If the actor has to exert himself to capture the attention of a large audience his attempt to be natural cannot be easily maintained. The naturalistic drama is essentially intimate. It is a pleasant form of playing with a good deal of interest for the producer. It is small art, but very agreeable.

The limitations of naturalistic drama—and they are severe—have brought the dramatist and producer into extremes of expressionism in the attempt to remove them. Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight* is an example of this, and Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*. In these plays the naturalistic element is conventionalized so that it is made deliberately unreal. Conventional stagecraft in the interval between the First and Second Great Wars raised naturalism to such a point of unreality that the drama was overcome by mere staging. Thus naturalism killed itself.

If, however, the limits of naturalistic drama are observed, it is a good starting place for the actor and producer. Indeed, I go so far as to say that until naturalistic acting is mastered the actor will not get far. The reason is that it originates in life.

PRODUCING FARCE

I put farce next to naturalistic plays in order of ease. The latter are plays of real life; farces are plays of topsy-turvy life. Farce is life reversed. In naturalistic plays actual characters in familiar situations are put upon the stage; in farces unreal people in incongruous situations are the subject-matter. Naturalistic plays have the rhythm of life. Farces have the rhythm of the machine. Yet a farce starts with the appearance of life. Ordinary people in ordinary dress in an ordinary setting are what every farce opens with. Such a common form of farce as *When Knights Were Bold* has the appearance of reality, or it would not be funny. The juxtaposition of life and absurdity is what makes farce. Absurdity in itself is not farcical; the farce lies in commonplace people getting themselves into absurd situations. The essence of farce is non-sense and unreality. Farce is not merely comic; it is ludicrous. Sense is eliminated. The secret of farcical writing and production is the conviction created in the audience that what is seen on the stage does not happen.

Farce is popular with amateurs for the very reason that it is unlike life; therefore the standards are only stage standards. Farce is easily imitated, for mimicry is a basic element in it. Also, farce makes slight demands upon the actors, for the numerous people with gifts of mimicry can excel in it, and it makes no demands whatever upon the audience. Therefore, amateurs who want something very easy to do that will be sure to please their audience depend upon farce. I do not seek to disparage farce, for it has its proper place on the stage; but it must be recognized as an elementary form of drama. I am inclined to think that amateur companies that wish to progress in dramatic art should avoid farce until they have become experienced. Farce is so easy that it makes amateurs think that acting is easy. Easy work means poor work, for it leads to bad habits and mannerisms that are not easily lost.

Farce is a form of comic play; but it differs from comedy in depending wholly on situation, not on character or idea. There is nothing in farce but laughs created by situation. If there is comment on life, irony, or philosophy in a play it is not farce. The plays of Aristophanes are not farce, but comedy. Goldsmith wrote comedy,

though *She Stoops to Conquer* is often treated as farce. None of Bernard Shaw's plays is farce, though some of his plays often approach it. There is no intellect in farce, and no serious intention; there is wit, not humour; incongruity, but not satire. *The Importance of Being Earnest*



THE ALDWYCH FARCE, "ROOKERY NOOK,"
WILLIE TOM WALKS AND MARY BROUGH
Stage Photo Co.

is an example of pure farce. It is one of the few farces that have literary quality, for it has wit, but it is not a play of character or ideas, only a play of situation. The Aldwych farces, written by Ben Travers, of which *Plunder* is an example, are in the same succession. The characters are dummies, with the exquisite appearance of real beings, manipulated as marionettes and controlled by the plot. They have no independent existence, and no validity apart from their place in the playwright's scheme.

This indicates how farce should be produced. As I have pointed out before, the style and type of every play determine its production.

Farce must not be handled as comedy, for instance. Its mechanistic structure must be strictly observed. The first thing the producer should do in producing farce is to set down its scheme of action—it should be plotted out on paper. Take

chess, and must be thought out to the last detail. In farce you cannot leave anything to chance.

There is no need to pay attention to character. There is none. Give all your attention to position and a well-balanced stage, and get your



TOM WALLS, J. ROBERTSON HARP AND RALPH LYNN, IN "TURKEY TIME"

Stage Photo Co

each situation and study its movement and point, make a diagram of the action and how the point is worked up to as mere stage movement, and then how it is worked away from and how the action is built up again. Farce is a pattern of movement, two people, then a third, finally a fourth making a variety of combinations. Entrances must be studied and positions carefully prepared for. Everything depends upon how the stage picture is made up. Unless the actors are in precisely their right places the whole situation is ruined. The movements must be as definite as movements in

players neatly on and off. The action must be quick. The audience must not be given any time to think. Cues must be smartly taken up. Get the points made sharply and see that the climax of each act is crystallized. Every farce speeds up as it proceeds, for nearly every farce weakens from act to act. The form of the play is to set a farcical situation in the first act, to wind it up in the second, and to unwind it in the third. The audience must be given the chance of realizing what the situation is, but after that they must be hurried, for only a farcical writer of

genius can unwind a farcical situation once he has set it. That is why first-class farces are rare, and why farce is often weakened down into comedy. Many so-called comedies are farces that the author has not the ability to work out in the realm of make-believe. There are hybrid plays known as farcical-comedies, such as *The Man in Dress*

The temptation in farce is not to know where to stop: that is where the artist comes in. Because it is a simple matter to make audiences laugh, the actor in farce is tempted to take things easily and to use the most obvious and casual means of getting his points. He has but to pull a face or to make a silly gesture and



MARY BROUGH, RALPH LYNN, WINIFRED SHOTTER, J. ROBERTSON HARE, TOM WALLS,
ELIOT COLLIDGE AND KENNETH KOVY, IN "THARK"
State Photo Co.

Clothes, where sentiment is used to get the characters out of the farcical muddle; but they are an inferior type of play, made tolerable only by the actor's virtuosity.

The actor in farce has to let himself go. He must not show the slightest trace of self-consciousness. If he does, he spoils all. Think of the accomplished farcical actors of recent years, James Welsh, G. P. Huntley, Seymour Hicks, Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Mary Brough, J. Robertson Hare, and Alfred Drayton, and you have examples of actors who are utterly natural though they do nothing natural. There is something of the droll in every farcical actor, and no one who has not that quality will succeed in this type of play.

he is instantly rewarded by the response of the audience. But he cannot repeat this too often; for just as audiences are quickly pleased, so they are quickly made indifferent.

The successful farce consists of one laugh after another. This means that the actor must learn not only to wait for laughs but what to do while they are taking place. He must not stand blankly. He must not be conscious of what is happening to the audience. He must maintain the situation, and then know how to move on to the next point. This is where the art of the actor is called for, and explains why the mere mimic will never get very far on the farcical stage. Technique is as necessary in these plays as in any others. The rules

are: let attention be directed wholly upon the speaking character, and that almost invariably the speaking character is to move. The life of farce is action. Actors who are not speaking must keep still. These rules apply to other plays, but in

must be taste too, for a farce cannot be too well dressed from any point of view. The men's clothes must be good and up to date. Nothing can make up for dowdy dressing in farce, so do not economize in that direction.



JOAN LANG, ROBERTSON HARE AND RALPH LYNN IN "OUTRAGIOUS FORTUNE"
Dennis de Marnes

farce they are of the first importance. Make all action definite; have bold movements. Think always of effect, not of what is natural. Yet remember that the actors must appear at ease.

Scenery is not important in farce. Everything is concentrated upon the actors. Therefore, the scenery must not be overdone; keep it down in tone and in style. See that doors and windows are in thoroughly sound working order, however, and that all properties that are used are also in proper order.

Lighting must be bright. Natural lighting does not matter. Get plenty of brilliant light always. Special attention should be paid to dress. It should be smart and correct. There must be no skimping in dress. The women must, if anything, be ultra-smart and in advance of the fashions. There

PRODUCING COMEDY

Every actor knows quite well that the easiest thing in the theatre is to get an audience to laugh. People go to the theatre ready for laughter. Yet comedy is the most difficult type of play to perform. The reason is that it demands perfection, being itself one of the two perfect forms of drama. Tragedy is the other perfect form; but it is easier to disguise shortcomings in tragedy than in comedy. Comedy uses the material of life as it is and tragedy always a transformation of life, so that anyone can quickly see where comedy goes wrong. To define comedy as the art of throwing light upon life would not be far wrong.

A comedy is a comic play, but, unlike farce, it

induces reflection. The laughter in comedy leaves something behind. In face, you laugh and forget; in comedy you have to remember, if only for a moment. In comedy laughter is not raised for its own sake, any more than terror is raised for its own sake in tragedy. There are jokes in comedy, but comedy is not a mere matter of jokes, for a joke leads to laughter that ends in itself. Laughter in comedy ends in an effect upon thought or feeling.

Comedy is essentially an ironical, satirical, paradoxical, critical, or sentimental comment on life. The comment is essential. In comedy we laugh with an object—not ours, perhaps, but that of the comic writer. We are hurt by satire, perplexed by paradox, stimulated by criticism, or moved by sentiment. After witnessing a comedy we are not as we were before.

There are three main forms of comedy, which can be divided into any number of sub-divisions—

Comedy of poetry, of which Shakespeare is the great example.

Comedy of manners, of which Congreve is the great example.

Comedy of intelligence, of which Molière is the great example.

The living English comedy writers in the second and third of these forms are Noel Coward and Bernard Shaw. I can think of none in the first; and only Shaw approaches the classic example. There are intermediate forms of comedy in which manners and intelligence are combined, as in the plays of Somerset Maugham, or manners and sentiment, as in the plays of Sir J. M. Barrie. Also, there is tragi-comedy, as in the naturalistic plays of Galsworthy. The plays of all these writers are subject to the comic spirit, whatever their subject, and no matter with what object they were written.

There are, of course, levels of comedy. Some comic writers aim high, as Shaw and Galsworthy; some have lower aims, as Noel Coward and Barrie. But they all aim at touching their audiences through laughter.

I have said that the laughter has meaning; it also has detachment. Comedy is, above all other plays, the mirror of the age. The age is seen truly, but at a distance. Realism is reduced to a minimum; indeed, it is necessary that while the reality of what is shown is recognized there is no

confusion of the spectator with it. We are not seeing life in comedy, but a selection from it, a pattern of it, something formal and artificial. That is what makes the greatness of comedy in drama. It is life re-created by the artist, the formless life of the real world given the meaning of form on the stage.

The means employed in comedy is not situation, but character; the laughter arises out of personality. Thus, the intention of the comic writer is always to isolate personality, to plumb the secrets of individuals. There is conflict between personalities, of course, for without conflict there is no drama; but the conflict reaches its height in the individual fighting with himself, exposing himself, making himself an object of laughter to the gods. This is true of every great comic character—Falstaff, Millamant, or Tartuffe.

Though comedy is the mirror of the age, the comic writer thinks more of persons than of the age. The weakness of modern comedy is that it tends to lose itself in abstractions. The chief fault in Bernard Shaw's plays is that he tends to sacrifice character to his theme. He is so anxious to attack the unintelligent spectator that he subordinates personality to his paradoxes. The proof that Shaw is a supreme playwright, however, lies in the number and variety of his characters—no dramatist has more of them—and each stands out as a distinct personality. Even the smallest character in a Shaw play has a life of its own.

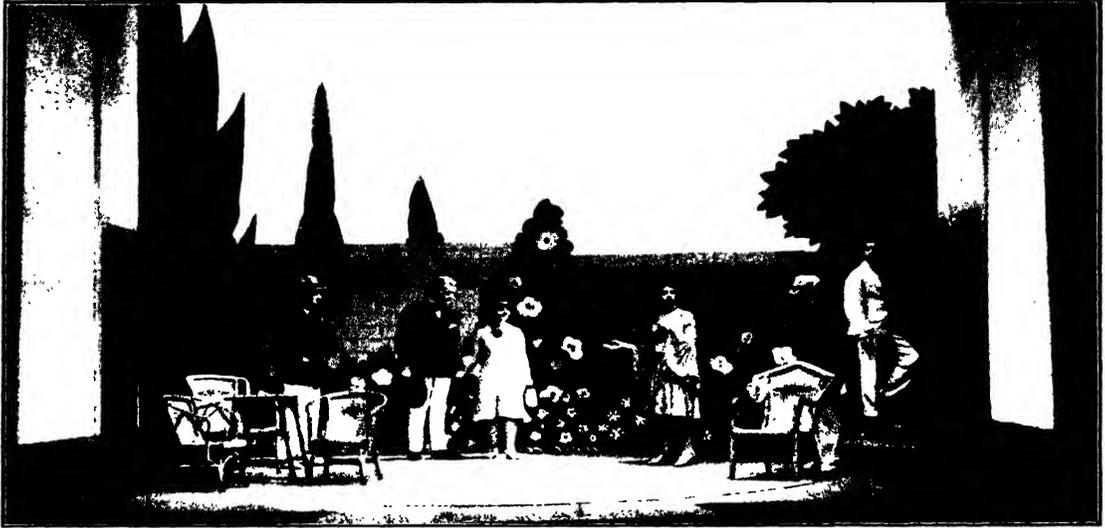
Now we can see how comedy should be produced. The elements are laughter, meaning, form, and character. Taken together, this means style in acting. The actor in comedy sets the style for the stage. There is no style to surpass that of the comedy actor, for even tragedy depends upon it. Therefore, in comedy, the actor is all-important—his efficiency, technique, and personality. I emphasize personality, but what is required is not personality in the raw, but controlled and disciplined personality. Too many of our comedy actors and actresses depend upon their personalities alone, upon their natural force, originality, smartness, or even good looks. Therefore, they do not go far unless they have great luck. How many actors can we think of, any of us who know the stage, who have nothing to recommend them but pleasing, forceful personalities, plus the

experience they have been able to pick up? The comedy actor has to go into training and keep in training, practising every day to keep fit—fit not simply in a physical sense, but as an artist.

The reason why amateurs are rarely able to achieve much in comedy is that they have no op-

Shakespearean plays is ever likely to become a master in his art.

So an amateur company should every little while put on a Shakespearean play as an exercise in acting, which means that they must play it and every part in it, for all they are worth. If they can get hold of a modern comedy in verse they



"MADAM PEPITA," PRODUCED AT THE CAMBRIDGE FESTIVAL THEATRE
A conventionalized garden scene
Photo by Scott & Wilkinson, Cambridge

portunity of acquiring style. They have insufficient practice. One often meets an amateur player who has personality, who might be made into an actor of merit; but he seldom can get beyond the indication of promise. I have rarely seen a comedy part played really well by any amateur, though I have seen a few who had talent out of the ordinary. Yet if amateurs intend to do anything on the stage, they must attempt comedy, knowing as they should that they are bound to fail.

The best comedy for amateurs in my opinion is poetic comedy, and above all, Shakespeare. They will learn most from that. Shakespearean comedy is in truth the foundation of all comedy, and no actor who has not schooled himself in

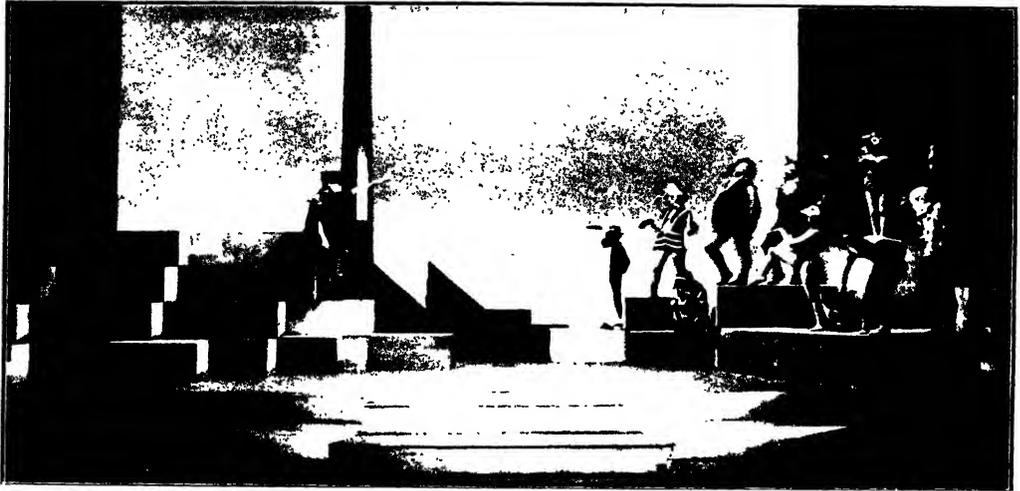
should do the same. Audiences may not like what they do, especially in modern verse plays, but they should, none the less, perform them for the sake of what they can learn.

No matter what kind of comedy is performed, the actors must be chosen with care. No comedy plays itself, though Shakespeare seems to do so, and Shaw is said to require little acting. That is wrong. Shakespeare demands perfection in acting, and so does Shaw. They rarely get it, even on the professional stage. What the amateur has to realize is that though the dialogue helps him and has merits of its own, he has to put everything he knows into his part to make a success of it. The audience may laugh and give him applause; but the critic will know how little the

actor has contributed unless he has worked with all his might

Comedy is the test of the actor. In doing it he must concentrate all his powers of expression and set alight all the imagination that he has. He has to bring the part to birth his being. Acting in comedy does not mean saving the

stacy, and also, and simultaneously, is in complete control. There are, therefore, heat and coldness in the true actor. He burns with fire, so that the character lives and the audience is infected with his passion, and at the same time he is fully collected and observes what he does as though it were done by another man.



ARISTOPHANES'S "THE BIRDS." PRODUCED AT THE CAMBRIDGE FESTIVAL THEATRE

A conventionalized setting.
 Photo by Scott C. Wilkinson, Cambridge

words and giving the right gestures and looking the part, but making an appeal to the audience's imagination. The comedy actor must himself speak, his own meaning must be heard in the voice of the part. That is the difference between acting and mimicry, between acting and pretence, between being natural and art.

The comedy actor must have ease, of course, but the ease must come from absorption in his part. He must give himself entirely to it, until there is, as it were, nothing of himself left. That is one half of his task. The other is that he must maintain detachment from himself so that he can do everything consciously. The secret of acting is abandonment and detachment—at the same moment. The actor loses himself in ec-

Comedy must be acted in this way or it fails. There is nothing mechanical in it, no matter how many times the part is played. The player cannot afford to think of other things as he plays. He must have his mind on his part and all his faculties devoted to it.

No wonder, therefore, that the amateur can do so little, for he has no chance to gain mastery over himself as an actor. Yet he must do his best, and if he knows what is required of him he can at least aim aright.

The producer must study the characters and work with the actors until they have a full understanding of who the persons are they are required to represent. He must encourage mental activity in his players, for without mental activity the

heights of comedy playing cannot be reached. The producer should make notes upon each character and get the player to do the same. The history of the character, what he was doing before he enters the scene, what his background is, what his life means, ought to be studied so that the actor enters into the personality that he has



"WHEN THE HEART IS YOUNG"

A conventionalized treatment of a modern drawing room comedy by the Welwyn Garden City Theatre (produced by C. B. Purdon)

to put upon the stage. Also the character's relations with the other characters must be realized. All this is objective study, not mere fantasy; and out of it the actor must select what is essential and pass it through his own imagination. The producer's task is to aid the actor, not merely to discuss with him what he is doing or what he has in mind, but to guide him in rehearsal so that relationships between the characters are worked out and the drama built up into an effective whole.

The staging of comedy requires the same sense of style as its playing. Nothing slipshod will do. Simplicity is never wrong, and comedy can be played in curtain settings; but it need not be. Remember that comedy reflects life; therefore, the staging should reflect what life appears to be. There should be the suggestion of actual rooms and gardens, and the designer and producer should keep close to fact. But they must also use their imaginations. They must not be mere imitators any more than the actors. Comedy staging offers

great opportunities to producers, though it is exacting work.

Costume must be accurate. This is always possible, and the necessity for it should not be treated lightly. Make-up must be given the closest attention. Comedy can easily be spoiled by careless dressing and make-up.

PRODUCING TRAGEDY

If I had not the actor in mind when writing this contribution I should have omitted writing it altogether; for why speak of producing tragedy to-day when nobody wants it and when there is no contemporary tragic drama whatever? The answer is that the actor must practise his art in tragic plays or he will never acquire it.

Acting began with tragedy. The Greek theatre was the home of tragedy; poetry began there and acting too. The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are still the unsurpassed models of drama, though we cannot play them and have no interest in them, except a merely literary one. Why do the plays of these old dramatists retain their supremacy? Because they express in a form that has never been excelled the conflict between good and evil, which is at the core of human life. Tragedy is the noblest form of play for that reason; it is the archetypal drama; it exhibits universal man of every age in his true aspect—torn between the desires of good and evil, tempted, fallen, defeated, yet victorious.

Tragedy depends upon the sense of the nobility of human nature. It shows the divine origin of man and points towards his sublime fate. Its characters, therefore, are princes and kings, or ordinary men who have the stature of princes and kings. It shows men who possess power, who have strong wills, who are masters of fate, who are beaten, overcome by greater power, weakened in will, overmastered by fate. So that unless a people believes in man and what man can accomplish, it can have no tragedy; for little men, timid, uncertain, faltering men, who are servants, who have no choice, who start life at a disadvantage and have no hope, are not subjects of tragedy. No one whose fate is of no consequence can become a tragic character; only representative men and women, those upon whose fate hangs the future of mankind, are tragic characters.

It is easy to see, therefore, why we have no

tragedy now. There must be firm belief, to start with, which we have not. There must be conviction of the greatness of human destiny, which we are uncertain about. There must be understanding of the fact that man creates his own future, which we question. There must be the belief that there are laws of life, inherent in the spiritual realm, ignored by man at his peril, which we are not prepared to admit. There must be noble individuals, though we doubt their existence. Finally, there must be the ability to contemplate utter failure and yet know for certain that the last word has not been spoken and that the spirit of defeated man will rise again. We have no tragedy because the spiritual conditions for it do not exist.

There has been no tragic play (except Shakespeare) that has held the English stage since the Industrial Revolution. Even the First Great War produced none, for *Journey's End* was tragic-comedy, and the tragic drama of the Second Great War has to be written. There have been tragic dramatists, unacted, as Shelley was, or regarded with polite respect as Mr. John Masefield is, or treated as foreign curiosities as Ibsen and Strindberg have been. Tragedy has not been able to exist upon our stage—and the modern writers I have mentioned do not make a tragic drama, for their works are individual rather than national—because we cannot bear the sharp reality of tragedy: we do not believe in it, or its themes or characters. The Shakespearean drama is an exception; these plays are tolerated for their poetical or historical or educational merits, and they have (it is popularly thought) little to do with real life.

An exception to what I have been saying is provided by Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, which is the only modern tragic play. There the hero is a common man, but in Ibsen's hands becomes representative of mankind. This play has lately, but only lately, held our stage, and shows what possibilities lie in modern tragedy. T. S. Eliot's two tragic plays *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Family Reunion* indicate these possibilities without realizing them.

There is a debased form of tragedy called melodrama, which was one of the most popular types of play in the Victorian period. It is a type of play in which good and evil are in conflict and in which good triumphs. Melodrama is a falsification of life, not its elevation, but life made absurd.

As the word indicates, it is drama done to music. Each character has its signature tune. It is unreal; but its unreality belongs to the realm of nonsense. It is not now popular on the stage, but is to be seen in full vigour on the films.

Though the present age has no tragic drama, I look for tragedy to come again. When we have a tragic poet who can speak the word that we must hear, we shall listen. He must speak our language, not that of a dead age, and his characters must be people we can recognize in situations that we know. Our own tragic poet will make tragic drama out of our own crisis. When he does that I have no doubt that he will be listened to. So that it is of no use to blame the age or the theatre because there is no tragedy. When the dramatist comes he will be acknowledged.

I have referred to the tragic poet. We must bear in mind that tragic drama is poetry. Comedy is prose, because it is the product of reason. Tragedy is poetry, because it is the product of emotion. There will be no tragic drama until poetry returns to the stage.

The actor, however, cannot wait for the poet. He must train himself in playing tragic drama to be fit for comedy or for gaining even the smallest mastery over the stage. So whether the audience likes it or not, he must act the present-day tragedies of John Masefield and Gordon Bottomley and Strindberg whenever he gets a chance. Fortunately there is the poet Shakespeare, and a grounding in Shakespearean tragedy is an essential element in the training of every actor.

Amateurs must not neglect tragedy. They should do it for their own pleasure and instruction, no matter what their audience may say. No amateur actor is worth his salt who has not had practice in tragedy. If he cannot get the opportunity of playing in tragedy he must practise by himself. Every serious actor does a certain amount of daily practice, and the amateur will be well advised to practise tragic parts. Let him take any tragic part and in, say, half an hour's practice every day get to know what it contains and try himself in it. He will find that there is plenty in any tragic character upon which his imagination can work, and if he takes the part line by line, working at it, with some degree of concentration, he will gain a marked extension of knowledge of his art. I do not say that playing

by oneself is the same thing as acting a part before an audience; but steady private practice is the means by which groundwork can be established.

The characteristic plays of our day are tragi-comedies. Life is presented as a painful jest. Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* is the supreme specimen of such plays. The full force of tragedy

noblest souls of the world made desolate. Yet without the acute pain of tragedy in which all is lost, and the greatest and the best suffer most, we do not enter into the mystery of human life.

This should be a time for tragedy, and, as I say, when the poets turn to the theatre, we shall get the drama of our new day. It will come.



"THE CARthagINIAN," PRODUCED AT THE CAMBRIDGE FESTIVAL THEATRE
Photo by Scott & Wilkinson, Cambridge

is not allowed to be felt and catastrophe is put in a comic setting. Our tragedies are railway accidents, murders, unfortunate marriages, and, in their largest aspects, wars. Tragedy is put on its lowest possible level, even war, which is regarded as the work of international gangsters and mere scoundrels.

Tragedy does not arise on such levels, for tragedy is not merely what is uncomfortable, tricky, painful, or even bloody. Unable to think nobly of the soul, as Malvolio did in his misery, we regard suffering with tender hearts and make it bearable by treating it lightly. Thus we arrive at tragi-comedy, where we smile, but with a pang in the heart. Though this is a time for greatness we will not admit it, so that we do not get tragedy where the highest is laid low, and the

What are the requirements of tragedy on the stage?

The first is power. Tragic acting calls for power of voice, decision and boldness in gesture and movement. I do not regard tragic acting as more difficult than comedy, providing there is actual power available; but without power the actor will fail. The power is primarily physical, and specifically of the voice. "The whole secret is in the voice," says Stanislavsky. Almost every handicap can be overcome by the actor if he has the voice. There must be depth, profound power of expression, and absolute control. No actor can attempt tragedy without a long period of vocal study, and, as tragic acting is the basis of all acting, my point is made that the student must prepare for tragic acting if he is to be an actor at

all, which means that he must start with the voice. It is not my business to say how the voice should be trained, but to point out the necessity of such training. A small natural voice can be made into a melodious organ of sound by right training,

selves. What the actor does he must do consciously as much in tragedy as in any other form of play, and that requires him to prepare beforehand. The actor must create the part imaginatively before he meets the audience, and, having



NICHOLAS HANNEN AS CHORUS LEADER, LAURENCE OLIVIER AS THE BLIND OEDIPUS, IN "OEDIPUS"
Presented by the Old Vic Company at the New Theatre
Courtesy John Vickers

which means the observance of a few simple rules and incessant practice. I emphasize practice: there is no art without it.

When producing tragic plays the producer must listen. He must get the right quality of speech. He must be able to judge what his players are capable of, because as tragedy depends so much upon emotion he can never get the full effect of what the actors will do until they perform before an audience. All the same, he must urge them in rehearsal to use their powers as fully as possible. The actors must not rely upon the audience to give them the emotional impetus that they need. They must be able to create it for them-

created it, he must rehearse it in cold blood before the unimpassioned eye of the producer. Not until an actor can do that has he any mastery of his art.

In tragic playing there must be restraint, though there should be the appearance of abandon. Indeed, the actor must render all that he has; but he must do it under control. This control is that of the artistic consciousness: it is not rational, but the result of vision. The actor must see the person he is playing and the emotion he is feeling, and project it through himself. The actor does not identify himself with Hamlet or Lear; he is the instrument; his body, voice, and

personality are played upon by the character, which he has himself imaginatively recreated out of the poet's conception. That is why restraint is possible. In acting passion, the actor is not as a man in a rage with his reason coldly checking him: that is not acting but devilish. The restraint of the actor is the product of his own integrity and the result of practice.

Stillness, poise, and repose must be studied in production. Every movement must have significance. Action must be taken out of the realm of realism. Tragedy is not on the level of actual life, but above it. No actual life is tragic in its natural aspects. Tragedy is life lifted up and seen from the point of view of eternity, what is painful or sordid in it being removed and only the eternal meaning remaining. The producer must remember this, and though tragedy may have the form of realism, as, for instance, in Strindberg's *The Father*, he must not treat it realistically. The object of tragedy is to fill the spectator with a particular kind of joy.

Tragic acting is symbolic, which means that its form is all important. There is inner fire and meaning; but the form expresses more than it appears to say. All true acting, as I have said, is the work of the imagination; the art comes in the making of its form. In tragedy there is depth of emotion conveyed by means of voice and movement, and everything depends upon the form the actor produces. Every tone of his voice, every gesture, must represent inner meaning. What the producer has to do is to establish this form, and he does it not merely by careful rehearsal of what the principal actors do, but by getting significance out of every part. In no kind of play is the importance of minor parts so great. Every scene contributes to the result, and the climax is built up from the very opening of the play.

I have referred to the producer's "unimpassioned eye," for the producer is, or should be, the actor's ideal critic. It is for the producer to bring what the actor does to the bar of judgment, to force the actor to account for himself, analyse, pull to pieces, and disintegrate the actors, for the sake of the perfection that is aimed at. The producer must be able to pierce to the soul of the actor so that he cuts through all the disguises that cause the actor to fall short of what he should be. In tragic acting the actor lays

himself open to such investigation with the least means of protection. The producer will not be deceived. That is why the exercise is so valuable.

Art is the search after perfection. In tragic drama the theatre reaches after the perfect drama. Everything, therefore, must conform to this object in every tragedy. Nothing short of perfection is good enough, and the actors must be roused to supreme efforts. The study of the Greek tragic poets is necessary for all producers of tragedy, for their work set the norm. In their work will be seen illustrated all the points I have been seeking to make.

Staging in tragedy must be simplified as far as possible. Observe severity, that is the rule. Only in costume should there be any richness or exuberance.

In staging tragedy remember that its characteristic is depth. Tragedy is the third dimension of the stage. Therefore the setting must not seem shallow, but must suggest space, mystery, and the illimitable. Its simplicity must be on the grand scale. Do not attempt to be realistic in anything. There is a temptation in tragedy to keep the stage dark, and certainly darkness must be used, for shadows convey the sense of the unknown; but do not keep the actors in darkness. What they do must be seen clearly as much in tragedy as in any other play.

PRODUCING ROMANTIC DRAMA

Romance is a form of comedy, which is not tragi-comedy, but has some relation to tragedy. Romance is not ordinary life, but life as we should like it to be. It ends happily, but it is serious in its progress, and touches heights and depths of feeling. Not much romance is written nowadays, because our realistic and cynical attitude does not favour it. For us, love is matter of fact and our poetry is satirical. Our characteristic form of play is comedy, in which life is analysed, commented upon, and treated as a comic affair. We cannot bear to be serious.

The romantic play is, next to tragedy, the most solid kind of play. It demands force in its playing, for romance, like tragedy, has depth. Its theme always is love: love which suffers, dares everything, and is victorious. In it love is elevated, dwelt upon, exhibited in all its richness and

fullness. There is no comment, nor self-consciousness, but utter surrender to love's illusion and full acceptance of the values of love.

One of the most perfect examples of a romantic play is *As You Like It*. It is poetry, which romance must always be. It has youth, which love requires: age is set in it only in contrast to youth. It has gaiety, for in romance the heart is lifted up. It has a serious element, for the path of true love never runs smooth. It has a pastoral element, for love must have the spring and woodlands. And it shows poverty overcome and wrong put right, which is always part of the romantic dream—for lovers put the world to rights.

Compare *As You Like It* with *Much Ado About Nothing*, and you will see the difference between romance and comedy. There is romance in the latter play, the love between Claudio and Hero, but it is not perfect romance, nor are we invited to pay much attention to it. The theme of *Much Ado About Nothing* is the comedy of Benedick and Beatrice, which keeps always on the plane of manners: a play of the intellect rather than of the heart.

Examples of modern romances are Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Neither is pure romance. The first is tragi-comedy treated in a romantic manner. In its presentation it requires romantic playing or it fails, and the part of Bergerac demands more power than any but a very few present-day actors possess. *Arms and the Man* is actually called an "Anti-Romantic Comedy," but it has to be treated as romance. It is romance turned topsy-turvy, which is as near as we can get to it in this age. The play must not, however, be handled as comedy, or its value will certainly be lost: unfortunately, it is usually played in that manner. Raina and Sergius are full-blooded romantic parts, and the rest of the characters must be given romantic treatment to support them.

Romance shares with tragedy the necessity for a hero. In tragedy the hero is in conflict with fate; in romance he is under the dominion of love. But he is hero in the one instance as much as in the other. The romantic hero is one who gives up all for love and is justified. Note that it is love that makes the hero. In tragedy the hero is the prince; in romance the hero may be the

nobody who surrenders himself to love. In tragedy there is a fall—the king who loses his throne; in romance there is a rising up—the humble man lifted on to the seat of love. Love makes every lover a prince.

In romance, too, the characters are personalities, not mere types. We must be interested in



LYDIA LOIKOVA (OLIVIA) AND URSULA JEANS (VIOA) IN "TWELFTH NIGHT" AT THE OLD VIC.

Photo by J. W. Debenham

the particular hero. The lyrical element may soften the outlines of personality as it does in Orlando, in *As You Like It*, but that is largely because Shakespeare's interest was in his heroine—to be played by a boy, let us remember. We are not asked to concern ourselves in romance with what the hero says, as in comedy, but with what he is and does, as in tragedy. Action is the essence of romance; and it is action in one direction—upwards, to the overcoming of all obstacles to the consummation of love.

We are ready, in my opinion, for a revival of romance. When that revival starts we shall know that national depression has reached its end. For

romance is symbolical of a period of accomplishment. Romance is idealism in action. The hero succeeding in love is mankind realizing its desires. When we get confident that we shall master the future, then romance will come back, and the hero will flourish on our stage

technique as comedy, and the lack of it cannot be so easily disguised as in many comedies. Fullness and power are its signs. The actor must get right into his part, for romance calls for depth of emotion.

The producer must go for depth too. He must



RICHARD GOOLDEN (SIR ANDREW AGUTCHEK), ATHLENE SYLVER (MARIA), AND ROGER LIVESLY (SIR TOBY BELCH) IN "TWELFTH NIGHT" AT THE OLD VIC

Photo by J. W. Debenham

So you see, I place tragedy and romance near together. Both depend upon faith, upon confidence in the destiny of man, upon the conviction that man can save himself. I do not say that romance is in conflict with comedy, for I think that comedy will continue to flourish beside romance. Indeed, comedy will gain when romance returns, for it will get more substance.

The playing of romantic parts calls for great intensity from the actors. It needs as much

get deliberate yet spirited playing, a sense of exuberance and overflowing of energy. There must be nothing skimped or held back, no meanness of any sort, but generosity of the most complete description. This must be pronounced in the acting and reflected in costumes and setting. The spirit of romance is happiness. Therefore let costumes, setting, and lighting emphasize the idea of joy. Romance is victory, so let joy be the note. Music is almost always necessary.

In no form of play is it more necessary to be definite about positions than in romance. The producer must work out the movements in the greatest detail and get the positions right. The rhythm of movement belongs to the romantic action, which is intricate and interweaving move-

ing to its character: that means to start right. He should recognize its character and thus know what is demanded of him. I do not mean, of course, that less trouble should be taken with farce than with tragedy, for example; with every play the producer (and the actor) must do his utmost. But



ONE OF THE FINAL SCENES IN "TWELFTH NIGHT" AT THE OLD VIC.

Lydia Lopokova as Olivia and Ursula Jeans as Viola (the two central figures), and Basil Gill as the Duke (second from the right)

Photo by J. W. Debenham

ment, gradually speeded up as the action reaches culmination.

In concluding these notes on the production of different types of plays, let me point out what my aim has been. I have endeavoured to suggest to the producer, and to the actor as well, the attitude he should adopt in setting to work upon any particular play. He should treat the play accord-

the attitude to farce is entirely different from the attitude to tragedy; and unless farce is handled as farce and tragedy as tragedy, the result is bound to go wrong.

There is no danger of farce and tragedy being confused with each other, but there is danger of farce and comedy being treated alike, and the same with comedy and romance. We see examples

of such mistakes on the stage every day. First recognize the play for what it is, and then it becomes possible to produce and act it rightly.

I call the difference a difference of attitude. It is really a difference of method. But I use the word "attitude" because I want to suggest a state of mind. It is what the producer thinks about the play he is to do that matters, for it determines everything he does. And before the producer gets to work he has to think hard about the play, and do more than think—let the play take possession of his consciousness. That is why his mental attitude is so important.

What I am actually pleading for is style. I do not care to use the word because it is usually misunderstood. Style is not a personal idiosyncrasy, nor is it an affectation. It is that which belongs to the nature of the work done. If a producer's work is to have style (and an actor's too) it must arise out of the complete understanding and imaginative perception by the producer (or the actor) of the play upon which he is engaged. It is not the cultivation of mannerisms or fads—there are producers who go in for tricks of grouping or lighting or scene construction to create something personal and to make their work different from that of others. These things are of no importance, and when a producer follows them closely he admits his deficiencies. Some actors cultivate tricks of speech, gesture, or movement in the hope of making themselves great artists; their efforts are equally futile.

Be faithful to the play is the rule, which must

not be departed from: style comes from that; it is honesty.

The producer has to get his way, but he has not to stand in the way of the actors. The producer's function is not to dominate the actors, but to achieve the co-operation that is necessary for the play's success. He must call from the actors the best that is in them and in so doing he is bound to encounter conflicts and differences; it is his task to resolve the conflicts, not by making the actor surrender his point of view, certainly not by any sort of compromise, but by lifting the effort upon a level where there are blending of wills and unity of purpose, without rejection of any aim. Elevation of aim, definition of purpose, clarity of intention should be the producer's guiding stars. He must be able to explain; he needs infinite patience; he must have the ability to impart help; he must win consent. Much is demanded of a producer to justify his position. Unless he can justify himself by his actions he had better not be there. But a good producer can make a contribution to the play that is equalled by no one, and a good producer is one who forgets himself, thinks only of the play, and serves the actors for whom the stage has been erected.

I have said nothing on the subject of melodrama or burlesque or phantasy or other hybrid plays. There is in fact no need to do so. Melodrama is false tragedy, burlesque is a form of farce, phantasy is the shadow of romance. The producer will know how to treat them when he recalls the stems of drama from which they spring.



MICHAEL MACOWAN

PRODUCTION PRINCIPLES

F. E. DORAN, Producer, Adjudicator Isle of Man, Jewish National, Leigh, Sale, and other Festivals

INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL MACOWAN

ONE of the paradoxes of the theatre is that an art, which can exist only through the combined efforts of a large number of people, should have a strong attraction for the assertive personality, and offer it so much scope. Probably the influence of the films upon the public is forcing the professional theatre to rely more and more upon the star system. Thirty or forty years ago it was expected that the rise of the dramatist and the producer as important figures in the theatre would suppress this tendency.

A more profitable subject for examination is the way in which this personal assertiveness, which seems to be inherent in the theatre, has caused the producer to develop himself as a star. It is easy to understand how this came about. Vanity, or to be more charitable, the desire to stand well in the opinion of one's fellow, is a universal human characteristic. There are few who are really content to work in obscurity. Only the most highly-trained discrimination can disentangle the work of the producer from that of the actors, the author, the scene designer, and all the other workers in the theatre. It was, therefore, only natural that producers should begin to take every opportunity of placing before the audience something that could immediately be recognized as their own special individual contribution.

At this point we must be careful. There is no doubt that there are departments of the theatre in which the producer as an original creative artist can be of great value. Innovation, experiment, a new outlook, are from time to time essential for the life of the theatre. The finest creative producers have often supplied these essentials. The idea that the assertion by the producer of his own individuality is a natural prerogative is the danger.

Anyone who has produced plays throughout a long period of years, working with first-class actors and actresses, realizes, if he examines himself honestly, how much of his knowledge, his feeling for the theatre, his capacity for imagination, he owes to those with whom he has worked. Production, like every other branch of the theatre, requires subtle and sensitive collaboration. It is not one-way traffic. The idea of the producer as the "boss" probably leads highly-talented, and sometimes brilliant, actors with successful careers before them to say they will desert acting for production, or, worse still, try to combine the two. Of course, one man may be both a good producer and a fine actor if he does not try to be both at the same time. When an actor alternates acting and production he takes a considerable risk with the development of his talents as an actor. The points of view are different, and only the level-headed can step smoothly from one to the other.

The theatre may have something of value to learn from the film. Films are advertised as "Production by A, written by B, C, and D, directed by E, starring F and G." Here, it seems, is a real feeling of team work or complete artistic collaboration. Many producers in the theatre call themselves directors. "The play directed by . . ." is common on theatre programmes. The division of functions between the producer and director of a film is worth thinking about. The director understands and arranges camera angles, the organization of the space of the screen, the work of the actors, the atmosphere, and the rhythm of the story. He directs the recording on celluloid. The conception of the film as a whole is the work of a producer. He chooses and brings together story writers, actors, designers, and the director himself.

In the professional theatre we merely call him the manager and he may or may not be creative in the sense in which the producer of a film is a creative organizer. In film work as between producer and director the producer is the boss. Were we to make such a division of function in the theatre, and acknowledge it clearly, it would be interesting to see who would desire to become producers in this new sense, and who could be content with direction.

The art of the theatre is the art of working together. In no other art is so much discipline necessary. Producer, director, and everyone else who works in the theatre, however, are equally subject to this discipline. The director, as we may agree to call him, must above all be an adept in the art of collaboration.

The wide variety of knowledge, talents, and qualities required by a producer (or director as we should agree to call him) is apparent in Mr. F. E. Doran's article. This is why my

introduction has been restricted to a rather narrow survey of the moral responsibility that the director must try to fulfil. There is one quality, a corollary, which can easily be overlooked. It is necessary for a director to be constantly examining himself in order to decide, for instance, whether a particular piece of work demands that he should be originally creative, or whether his duty is to be an interpreter. It is dangerous to approach all work in the same way, and to give as an explanation that that is the kind of director one is. He must beware that his methods and his ideas never become rigidly set, and conscious that his equipment can never be complete.

As the theatre is an ephemeral art, and must always be to a large extent conditioned by the circumstances of life, the director must constantly adapt himself in order to keep himself a man of his time so that he can interpret to the audience of his time.

Michael MacDonen

THE PRODUCER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The amateur in the theatre of to-day rightly fills an important niche, in fact the niche is sometimes the main doorway of living theatre, particularly in towns of about 3000 to 100 thousand inhabitants in which the films have swept the living actor out of doors so far as professionalism is concerned. Let me make it clear that for me there are no amateurs or professionals in the theatre. There are artists only. Some good, some bad; some paid, others unpaid; but all working together at the shrine of Thespis, each worshipping in his own way, with the furrowed brow of the Ibsenite, the beshakoed gorgeousness of musical comedy, or perhaps in simpler form some elemental mystery in the shadowed recesses of a great Cathedral. There are certain amateurs among the professional ranks, for what are the Sunday evening groups of workaday actors but amateurs in the best sense, giving their leisure and the skill to plays that are not attractive to the commercial mind, but intensely interesting from one point or another to the man whose life is in the theatre? That others are tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, rich men, and perhaps even beggar men or thieves, does not deprive them of that artistic unity with the regular actor, and so, as in time of war, when the amateur Territorial and the Guardsman were equal food for slaughter, to-day in the theatre there are regular and irregular forces. And it is the irregulars in the far flung battle line of the villages and towns who keep the art alive while the regular brethren of the buskin hold the towns. Therefore it is important that these irregular warriors in the cause of the theatre should be as well equipped as possible, with a full grasp of first principles and their application.

The tools of the workmen, the craftsman, and the artist may be the same—the same chisels, the same stone. One produces competent carving, another an interesting piece of work, but the third transcends everything. How then with all things

equal is the result so different? Perhaps the same number of taps with mallet and chisel, the same hours of work, even the same workshop—yet different results. Pen and paper are the same for poet and bookmaker. A world shaking sonnet may be scrawled on the back of greasy pastry bag, so the tools are not important. It is not the work, but the result that matters.

No art can come without some knowledge of the craft. Shakespeare had to learn his ABC—a point often overlooked by young men in a hurry to be producers. Without any knowledge, but with a confidence beyond dispute, an author's *magnum opus* is twisted until only a bare outline of his intentions remain, though no doubt the cast and the producer have thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Producers may be born, but a certain fabrication is necessary because the successful producer has to have a working knowledge of so many things, some very complex. Years ago the scenery, the lighting, the orchestra, the costumes were

only just noticed by the stage manager or coach, and the actors and positions were his main consideration. Any old actor, or one with acting experience, was considered suitable to act as producer, but as nobody thought of amateur theatricals in terms other than side shows for bazaars no great harm was done as there was always the local theatre in which to see the real thing.

For more than thirty years the orientation of workers in the theatre has been changing. Once the author, then the actor was, but nowadays the producer is, the dominant factor. The producer is the modeller of the finished product. Every detail of what the audience sees and hears should have been created or approved by the producer. Every emotional effect, every idea left in the mind of the beholder, the recollection of beauty or otherwise, are the producer's responsibility. He should think out his theory or "idea of" the play. He must know the points he wants to make. He must carefully study the personnel and acting tendencies and abilities of his colleagues. His



F. E. DORAN
Tabacotti Limited

scenery must fit the mood of the scene. His lighting must do its job, even if it is to cast only the right sort of shadow. His incidental music and entr'acte music all enter into the artistic calculations if a certain artistic result is to be attained. He must know angles of vision, sight lines, the various electric lighting factors, both of

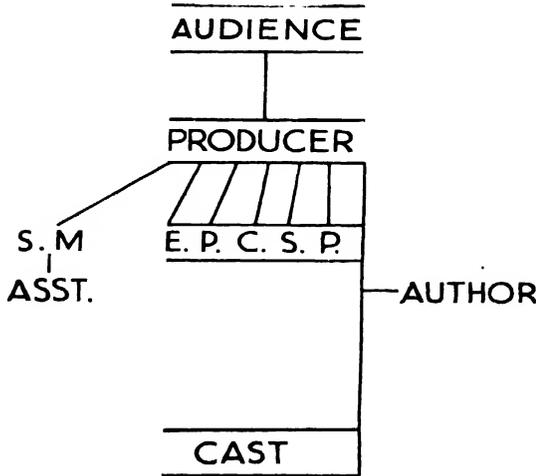


DIAGRAM SHOWING LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND EQUALITY

- S M and Asst. -- Stage manager and assistant
- E. -- Electrician
- P. -- Properties
- C. -- Costumes
- S. -- Scenery
- P. -- Prompter

illumination and safety, the properties of materials, the effects of grouping, the value of timing, pacing, pausing. He must organize the new work that has to be in the mechanical departments of scenery manufacture, properties, and costumes. He must clearly crystallize in the performance all the intention in the small parts, and yet all must be done so subtly and skilfully that no audience in the world is *consciously* aware of this terrific massed attack on its intellect through its emotions. All of which long story is only a method of telling the most obvious thing in the world, i.e. that the producer's job is to **PRODUCE**. By that, I mean what I say. The producer has to deliver the goods, produce the rabbit from the hat. The play,

like the rabbit, has been there all the time, but the producer has to use his materials or tools so that spontaneity is preserved, action unfolds, motives are disclosed, all as though what we are witnessing is real and as much part of the fabric of our everyday lives as the landlord and the income tax.

It is this unfolding to the subconsciousness of the audience that is the essential of production. All the previous items have been considered, selected, and related each to the other, so that the audience receive an impress of the pattern without being jolted by theatricality, which is what we mean when we speak of a show as having "creaked."

Each play has its own style of production, or rather a style of production is most apt for a given play, and though experiments in styles may be interesting for us in the craft, they seldom have interest for the general audience. Societies that have their own theatres in their own rooms can attempt such happy flights with great advantage, but when it comes to the paying public the producer's responsibility is to see that they get what they have paid for—a complete show, complete in every particular, and with every factor rightly selected and controlled.

The days of heterogeneity have passed. The producer of to-day is the pivot on which success or failure turns, and he must carefully study the elements at his command.

When all the factors have been properly used, it matters not whether by instinct or experience, then something is produced that can be recorded in the annals of theatrical history as belonging to theatrical art. Craft has produced Art. There will be some thing of beauty added to the world, because the producer has united his elements, used his tools wisely, brought the three A's together, the Author, the Actor, and the Audience, into common understanding and to one mind or way of thinking.

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

Most people have the vaguest and extraordinary ideas of how a play is produced, and not the least vague or extraordinary ideas are among many so-called producers themselves. There seems to be a notion, or rather absence of a notion, that a play, like *Topsy*, just grows. But the producer has to encourage and direct

the growth. He is like a dramatic gardener, trimming here, pruning there, and twisting this dialogue into such and such an effect. A little thought will recall that the theatre is no new thing. Our records go back to the Greeks, and some learned men will trace out a drama of sorts in aboriginal dances. Now it is reasonable to visualize that an art with over 2,000 years' history must have established certain principles. Everything worth while is based on principle. Mathematics, architecture, painting, engineering, cooking, all these and others have laws that must be obeyed. In architecture a beam must not be heavier than its supporting piers can stand. In painting certain lights produce certain colours. In engineering certain forces produce certain results, and so it is with the theatre.

It is no use trying to learn arithmetic from the middle of the book. The multiplication table and the four signs must come first. Their equivalent exists in the theatre and they cannot be avoided. It matters not what the play is, where it is, or why it is being performed, there are certain elementary principles that must be applied in every case. No matter what sort of play, wise or stupid, simple or lavish, comedy, farce, mystery, poetic, or prose, all is dust and ashes, wasted time and futile effort unless the following principle is tested—"*Can all persons in the audience, no matter where they are seated, see, and hear every word?*" The enunciation of this principle may seem superfluous. "*Of course*" (I feel my readers saying), "*Of course*, the audience must see and hear." In over twenty-five years of intensive criticism of theatre productions I have seen this fundamental principle either ignored or overlooked. It is because this principle is so obvious that it is forgotten in the mass of detail that rises from it and the performance of more picturesque details connected with a production.

The rehearsals of amateur, and sometimes professional, plays, too, usually take place in a hired room of small dimensions. If the group is happily placed or moderately well off, then it rehearses in a hall, perhaps the very hall in which the performance will take place. Lucky people these! But even here, as in the small room, the producer is in close proximity to the players, use of the script makes him familiar with the words, and the wish not to strain unduly the vocal capacity

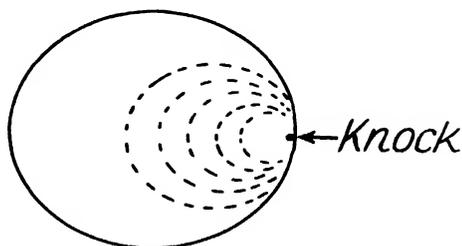
of his cast, all lead to a conversational rehearsal, and these conversational tones have a nasty tendency to creep into the textual interpretation of the play and when the time comes to enlarge the compass of the voices, the balance of the play is disturbed, if not destroyed, and even if the principle of being seen and heard is fully operated, it has not been properly applied, and so artistic damage of the first degree has been done.

The producer must, therefore, always bear in mind that rehearsals, particularly the early ones, are sketches to scale, as it were. An action or vocal pitch that is adequate in a small room, or when near the performer, can only be taken as indicative of the engulment that should be seen when the play is in full fling, and not as the final thing. Should the important State paper be taken with the right hand or the left, or the poison put on the shelf on stage right or left, should that or the other entrance be made R., L., or C., are the pin-points on which small scale acting can be helpful. Trial and error, a process of elimination, can be employed with small scale methods and sometimes significant detail discovered without strain, but it is advisable that when once the more or less accurate details are filled then full scale rehearsals should be adopted and the cast rehearsed in full glory of a complete range of vocal exercise. The producer should make sure, by personal and direct observation that every part of the hall is reached by the actor's voice, and that furniture, props, and other actors are in relevant positions, so that the view of the audience is not obstructed in any way.

Now this audibility principle brings up the matter of vocal education. Voice production does not apparently come naturally to us. No doubt it ought to, but when producing plays I have had hardly one person in six who had full vocal control. It is mainly a matter of breathing and the use of the diaphragm—a muscle that runs under the lungs and across the body. For stage and platform speaking, the lungs must be fully employed and used. Deep breathing and rhythmic respiration are essentials, and a producer is well advised to have a sound knowledge of voice production; not too much, as there are specialists who can more adequately deal with recalcitrant cases. The failing of amateurs is throat speaking—speaking from the throat instead of from the deep chest.

It is really a matter of mechanism and the application of simple rules. For instance, the bugle blast can be heard for a great distance, much farther than its ludicrous cousin the big trombone, because, though both have an approximate equivalent of wind in the throttle, the dissemination is different. In the case of throat speakers, they may shout and rant, but because they have no force or power behind each syllable, the words fail to overcome the resistance of the air.

The air is an invisible cushion. Let us imagine it as a large tank full of water. If you knock on



the side of the tank you will set up a wave travelling outwards but getting feebler and feebler as it gets away from the knock. Every word spoken is a knock on the atmosphere. Air waves in decreasing volume carry the sound so far, and when the wave strikes on the ear drum of the auditor, natural processes turn the air wave into sound and sound is transformed to speech.

But the sound must get to the auditor, and if the wave impulse is started up in the throat then it has no punch behind it, and not only will it fail to carry, but the range of control will be limited. Our old friend the "stage whisper" is a good example that will suffice for all. A stage whisper is really a whisper—not a simulated one, but its soft tones have behind them the full force of the speaker's expelled lung power, not just a wee bit of vapour from the back of the throat. It may be soft and low, but it has *projection*, and the proper projection of the human voice is essential to proper production.

When the knack of voice control has been mastered, parts can be spoken without fatigue, a whole range of emotional power is added to the producer's armoury, and the full power of poetic

imagery and the magic of the spoken voice is at his command. The talkie machine may improve itself to the perfect similitude of direct speech, but it will never supersede that wonderful contact, spiritual and mental, which is set up when a good voice is properly used in our presence. Practice, practice, and continual practice is a necessity. Once learnt, good speaking will never be forgotten, and will be an asset of great value. But it must be learnt. Like skating on ice, it is not so simple as it sounds. But, again like ice skating, it is hard to forget, and practice makes perfect.

I would always advocate poetry, particularly Milton and Shakespeare, as an exercise for all adolescents. With good breathing and timing of sentences it leads to voice control, mental and bodily poise, and physical health. The Bible, Carlyle, Macaulay's *Essays* and famous speeches,

{ Auditor :



such as Warren Hastings' and so on, are all good material on which to practise.

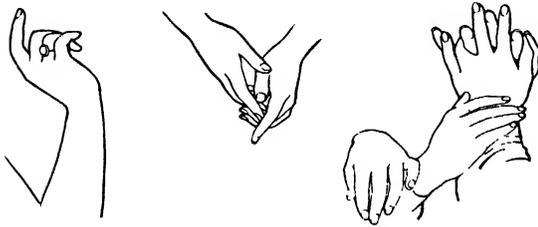
The next part of the principle is "seeing." This can be divided in two parts, active seeing and passive seeing, i.e. seeing *action* or essential movement, and then such passive parts of the whole as the throne, or a safe, or desk, or some such prop used in the development of the story. For the immediate purpose I deal with the producer controlling the actions of the actor.

Gesture is almost as important as the voice and in some instances can be more eloquent than the most poetic passages. It is a powerful reinforcement to the capabilities of the voice, and a study of graceful movements and bodily poise is essential to successful and artistic results. It is no part of a producer's function to instruct an actor in the elements of either voice production or bodily movement. The actor should provide that technical equipment himself, but, assuming knowledge in the actor of first principles, the producer must be able to apply, and to apply consciously, those principles to bringing out the third principle—the author's intention.

I have no wish to be pedantic in the German

fashion and to anatomize the art of acting into so many little bits or to choke the reader's mind with meticulous formulæ that will but terrify and hamper, but when a producer has a job in hand he must know (a) what to look for from the actor, and (b) what to contribute to the actor. He must know, and consciously know, where to put his finger on a weak spot, and he cannot know this until he knows where the strong spots are. So I must do a little more analytical work for the beginner to become *aware* of the task before him and not be blindfolded when performing one of the most important tasks in the theatre.

So to consideration of bodily movement for the audience to SEE. Bodily movement should be free, lissom, easy. The actor should project



assurance over the footlights. His walk must be certain and sure. I want our embryo producer to appreciate that an ungainly person in the cast, as one without bodily control, general or particular, is like an odd piece in a jig-saw puzzle, it might fit but not harmonize. So the producer must insist on players learning control of body as well as of voice.

The joints of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, knuckles, hips, knees, and ankles, are separate elements, and can be brought into particular service. Whoever has seen either of the Misses Vanbrugh will appreciate this point, for these artists make their very finger nails eloquent, and the mere crooking of the little finger bring about the downfall of an Empire. Certainly absence of acting of this quality has brought about the downfall of one sort of Empire, and its magnification on the screen the development of the other Empire!

Most amateurs appear to have no use for the arm above the elbow. The upper arm is irrevocably glued to the ribs. Consequently, when a gesture of domination has to be made it is as

though the actor is partially paralysed. Spaciousness of movement is hard to develop in this age of restraint. We are trained not to show off, not to be assertive, but, unfortunately, the actor must be assertive, he must take his part, and what is

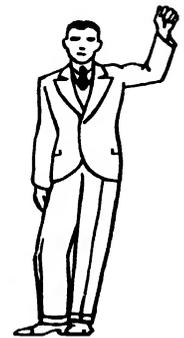


probably blatant in the drawing-room is unobservable on the stage. If an action is done *au naturel* the audience has been robbed because they have not had an opportunity to see what they have paid to see. Do not be afraid of dumb-bell exercise or Indian club swinging. Get the muscles of arm and leg free, the joints as it were, well oiled. Study pictures and statues. Note how to fold the fingers for various purposes.

When walking be definite. Place the feet firmly. Do not allow a player to slouch (1) or walk like a ram-rod (2) or let his legs come before his head (3). The legs can speak as well as the tongue. Those who saw Sir Henry Irving in *The Lyons Mail* will remember how the soles of his feet used to tell the story of the innocent man's execution. Irving was on the roof of a shed, with his feet to the audience. They did all the acting.

Graceful leg position can be learnt by studying fencing poses. "One leg straight, the other slightly bent, and arm by the side," was an old instruction, and a very good foundation as a basic position from which to start. Stooping shoulders are no good to anybody. A head thrust forward is a bad unit to work with. Beware of the actor who flops his hands from the wrists, or slouches from the knees. Knowing what not to do is as important as knowing what to do.

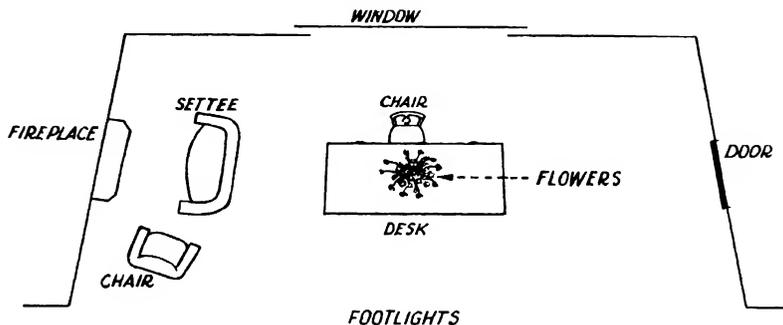
Now for hints on stage settings. How often



do we see the stage set in such a manner that important action is hidden by the furniture, or a character's facial expression lost because it is presented in a place masked by a faulty light or something more tangible. This is often seen in professional productions, so while the amateur producer may claim good company, I maintain it is bad practice whoever does it.

How often do we see something like the illustration given below in which the vase of flowers

proportion dictates width—or the nature of the scene (i.e. an old-fashioned cottage where windows are always small) forces the producer to a small area. In these and similar circumstances, do not allow your curtains to mask over the window space. Take care that the space is well lit. In rehearsal, look at it from every angle (consult "Sight Lines" page 792). See that it is high enough to clear flares, lamps, etc. Similar remarks apply to terraces, and to any other use



must obscure the face of anybody sitting in the chair at the desk? Or, worse still, the armchair completely masks all that goes on on the settee, from one side, and the desk and back of the settee masks all from the other. So that all we get is some disembodied voices rising from the depths of the upholstery.

There must be no compromise with these principles of seeing or hearing. They are the kernel, the very quintessence of the game. All scenery must be subordinated to it. Positions are arranged to suit it crossing worked out in accordance with them, and all these and much more are made so much easier and comprehensible when the producer knows *why* such and such a thing is done.

Now all this may appear as ABC. Without *knowledge* of this elementary stuff no producer will get far. Once he has studied and assimilated it, he can forget it, but he will always know what *not* to do. It is no fun to me to write this very basic comment, but it is the foundation on which I am going to build—Seeing, Hearing, and Why.

One of the trickiest bits of scenery to use is the back-stage window. It can be too narrow—often a common fault on small stages where

of the back stage. If the attention of the audience has to be focused on something important up and back stage, rehearse and measure to that point, and work your other characters, props, and furniture so that they do not obstruct vision. Simplicity itself—but I have often seen an audience on one side of the theatre sway to see what is happening on the invisible wall of the scene on their side of the stage. I saw a professional production of *Ten Little Niggers* where a big slice of the O.P. audience could not see the disappearing ornaments. It was a bad production and had probably never been looked at from all angles, or worked out by "Sight Lines."

THE PRODUCER'S STATUS

The status of the producer is one that has given rise to much controversy in the course of this century. Roughly speaking, the latter part of last century and a few years after saw the actor-manager as sole arbiter in the theatre, the Shakespearean productions of Irving and Tree, the social dramas of George Alexander, the melodramas of Wilson Barrett being examples of the actor's controlling influence. The actor

was the be-all and end-all (and end-all it nearly was) of the stage. The producer was absolutely unknown. There were people called stage "managers," and there were "coaches." Occasionally, somebody would "present" a play, but the producer was a phenomenon to come. It is difficult to assign any definite direction from which the idea came, but Gordon Craig, at work in his Goldoni Teatro in Italy, had something to do with it, and Huntley Carter with *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre* gave the idea an airing. It was evident that the social theatre of the Ibsenites wanted more than acting and a collection of properties and scenery. The mood of a play had to be expressed, and with the impact of the Russian Drama, this feeling for mood was intensified. The old Crummles methods of acting, the old catalogue notice of properties, was worse than inadequate, and quite early, soon after the Boer War, the new spirit began to manifest itself. The repertory theatres at Glasgow and Manchester, the Abbey Theatre at Dublin, and soon the well-established pioneer amateur societies like the Stockport Garrick, got hold of the idea and gave it open expression.

I should say that Granville-Barker's two Savoy productions of Shakespeare forced the principle home, though Bernard Shaw, with his elaborate stage directions, had something to do with paddling the producer's canoe. Books of plays appeared with minute instructions of detail of settings, size and position of furniture, colours and patterns of wall-papers, characteristics of photographs, and so on, all with the notion of giving first aid to the new producer, as yet on rather slippery ground, uncertain who was friend or enemy, the actor or the author. But the principle of unified control was maintained, and by about 1908 or so, and certainly by 1912. So and So's production of "Such and Such" was general comment. But the producer was still suspect, and the older school of thought objected to the demand for the dictatorship of the producer over the actor. The actor's idea of histrionic expression dominating the idea in the play and the forceful technique of the transpontine school were soon found to be at loggerheads with team work, and it was not long before the author took a hand in the game and began to support the producer.

Enlightened public taste, the divorce of the dramatist from limelight notions, and the improvement of stage apparatus soon forced the producer to the fore, and by the time the War had finished, and the new youth brought a serious mind into the theatre, the producer had thoroughly established himself in the hierarchy of functionalists, and the field was definitely clear for full recognition of the producer as the captain of the ship. The actor became a member of the team, and in theory at least each part was as important as another, each dovetailing into the scheme as a whole according to the pattern devised by the producer.

The status and function of the producer is now clear, justified by expediency and proved in practice. Few modern plays of consequence rely on the transpontine technique. When it does appear it is secondary and very much a means to a primary end. While maintaining that, in the nature of things, a second-rate play will be carried off by first-rate acting, good production of a first-class play will bring out high qualities in actors not of the first flight. It is imperative, therefore, that the producer should know his job, and that his team should give him the leadership, and recognize his status as O.C.

The producer must have a competent staff of supporters and helpers regardless of the acting cast.

The cast and assistants should be informed, individually and clearly, of the work expected from them. It is not enough to tell the costumer or wardrobe mistress to provide so many medieval costumes, and the scenery department to provide a wood. The details must also be indicated, if possible by sketch design, with colour and wood marked out. The property man must also be provided with details of size and shape and the lighting plot evolved. When these and other departmental details are scheduled, these sections can get to work with a minimum of last-minute rush.

It must be remembered by the team, and a wise producer will support the thesis, that fine detail is for the department, broad principles for the producer.

So far as the cast is concerned they must add that individual something that cannot be described or defined. Call it personality or art, what you will, but there is a personal contribution

which no producer can command but which may be evoked. A cookery book can give the recipe to the last grain of salt and half a degree of temperature. This may be meticulously carried through, but two persons will produce two different dinners, probably poles apart. Acting is more than memorizing words, wearing costume, and disguising with make-up. These are merely the outward signs of the inward spirit that only the actor can provide. That is the genius, or creativeness, of the actor-artist. It is built on technique and training; observation and study of the part and the words. Inflections can alter the whole meaning of a line, and a wrong emphasis can ruin the finest finale ever written.

Take this short dialogue and test out its many variations—

He. "I love you."

She. "Why?"

He. "I don't know."

These seven words can be presented in so many ways, whimsical, tragic, sad, humorous, wildly comic, and many other ways. There is a whole orchestration of vocal intensity and human feeling in this short dialogue. A few experiments with it will illustrate the meaning and importance of the preceding comments on the actor's contribution.

Always remember the three A's and their relation to each other, the Author, the Actor, and the Audience—the trinity of the theatre.

It is this trinity that the producer must orchestrate. The audience are passive, negative, receptive. The author is the primary cause: his work done, its powers are latent in the script, dormant until the spirit of life is breathed into it by the breath of the actor. The actor is the potent power, the dynamic principle to be applied to the passivity and the potentiality of the audience. The producer stands with his hand on the lever, controlling all these influences, emphasizing here, subduing there, modulating this or the other, bringing all the elements into one single control and unity of purpose.

The status of producer is essentially one of control. He is, indeed, the Autocrat of the Theatre, unto whom all things must be subservient. Which is all very fine and large but not so easy as it sounds. For the producer must also justify his autocracy by knowing what he is doing.

While producers of the stature of Granville-Barker may be born, they must also be made, and the making is a tortuous process implying study of many things if the autocrat of the theatre is to be listened to with respect. Blind and unreasoning theory is no good because it is not based on certain known factors which are essential.

It is true that in the realm of artistic adventure the mind and spirit of man may be free, but there are artistic twos which must always make fours. This mathematics of production must be learnt, and when learnt the cast will be ready and willing to sit at the producer's feet to co-operate willingly in producing the pattern in the producer's mind.

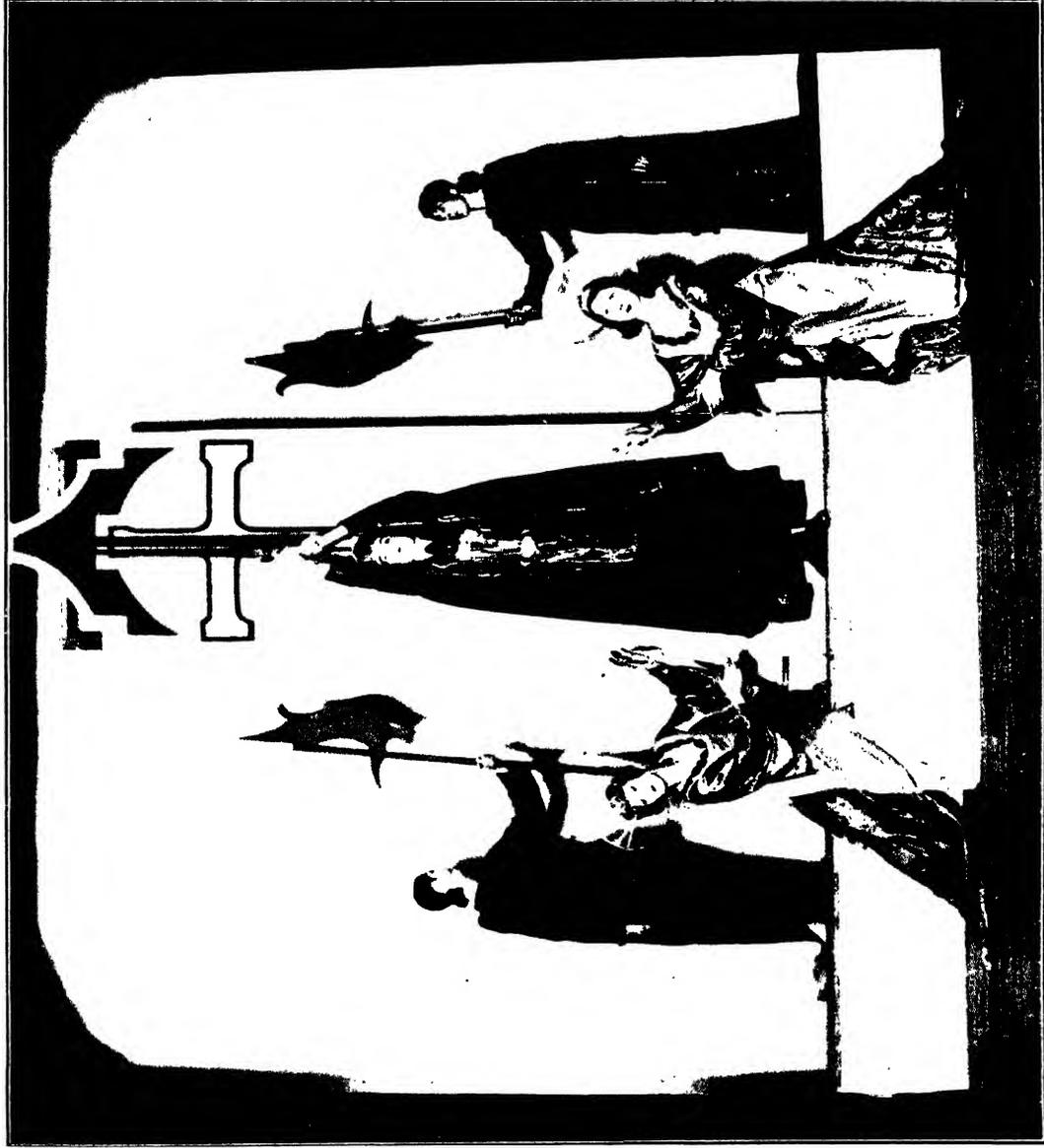
We have only to examine the lives of Reinhardt, Craig, and Granville-Barker to see the breadth of training they underwent before they were able to experiment.

In the lighter realms of musical comedy and revue, a high degree of imaginative skill is demanded of a producer if the often tenuous elements of his script are to be acceptable to the audience. He must have a wide knowledge of dance, rhythm, colour, light, and mass emotion, in addition to the basic principles of the actor's craft.

It must be remembered that while the audience may be a passive element, it is also a critical element, in so far as it has an instinct for critical and comparative reaction which at once responds to the work seen on the stage. It is this frame of mind that the producer must attack. He has to marshal his actors, his dialogue, his costume, his colour and all the other elements into a formation that advances by irresistible stages through the emotions of the audience and leaves behind some ever-abiding recollection.

If his marshalling is bad or inefficient the recollection will be either of a bad occasion or soon forgotten, but if the marshalling is directed effectively, with understanding and control, the abiding recollection will be of something outstanding which was also a great experience.

The producer is entirely responsible for the change in presentation during the last thirty years, from the full realistic, heavily lime-lit settings of the beginning of the century to the simplified and sometimes stark settings of the extreme moderns. Compare the trees with real apples, the forests



"THE COMING OF CHRIST," BY JOHN MASFIELD, AS PRODUCED BY THE EVERYMAN PLAYERS AT THE EVERYMAN THEATRE, HAINSTAD

with real goats and waterfalls in the Shakespearean revivals of the Boer War period to the curtain and rostrum effects of to-day.

I am not concerned here to express an opinion on the merits of the differences between the two forms of production. I am concerned, at this moment, in drawing attention to the difference, and in pointing out that it is the producer as autocrat who is responsible.

The producer found that certain effects and emotional control were just as effectively produced, in some instances much more so, by cutting away all the dead wood of representation and that a reliance on pure suggestion by abstract forms could be just as good. But the producer had to know what he was doing and experiment with these new forms with knowledge.

The result has been that the producer has definitely established himself in the status of one in control, and he claims authority over the three A's: the Author, the Actor, and the Audience.

The importance of the producer can be illustrated by modern developments in Russia. During the past twenty-five years or so the theatre has made enormous strides. Producers are trained in Moscow or other Central Theatres and sent out to remote places to organize a company or to produce plays: but nearly all the stock productions have a propaganda twist, and it is the propaganda that counts. If a producer does not quite get the idea "over" he is recalled and trained again. It does not seem possible that *Romeo and Juliet* could be turned into propaganda, but according to Soviet production it is a drama of the young idea in revolt against the old feudal idea of parental control. Such an idea can be put over only by a technician who knows what he wants and how to get it. He becomes single-track minded for that particular purpose. Consequently, any individual actor trying a personal expression must be moulded to the main idea. I do not maintain that such a principle is good or bad. I cite this example to show that a production is, literally, something produced by the producer, not a mere matter of sitting in front of the players at rehearsal and moving them here or there.

The importance of the producer was realized in Russia over fifty years ago. It is no new thing.

Gordon Craig and Ashley Dukes preached producer status before 1914 and the principle overcame all our ideas of actor-manager, star performer, or stage manager, and steadily the idea of unified, specialized control made headway.

SUCCESS IN ARTISTRY

It might be asked why the producer should have to go to all the trouble of looking after measurements of stage, position and shape of furniture, colour of scenery and lighting, and nature of materials. Is not his job to bring out the talent of the actor and direct him here and there so that each member of the cast fits in to the general idea? This is his job, certainly, but so is the other, because these things are all part of the same whole and must be considered as part of the same problem. The producer is the most important member of the team, being coach, referee, and rule *maker* all in one. His status is one of command and direction, and he must be equipped with knowledge as well as *flair*. He must be as patient as Job, as energetic as a beaver, as far-seeing as any prophet, have the organizing genius of a Ford, and possess the tact of an archangel. His cast must be loyal and unselfish and give the producer credit for knowing what he wants, and appreciate that when certain things are asked for there is a reason for it. So while the producer's lot is not a happy one, until the show is launched it is a responsible one, and his cast and staff must each pull its weight.

It all depends on the personnel of a society what staff a producer should have, but his minimum is a stage manager, prompter, electrician, and "props" or stage carpenter. To these a wardrobe mistress, a maker-up, assistant stage manager, and others as convenient may be added, and I would advise that once appointed, and the producer's plans given to them, the producer should leave them to their own initiative to build up the detail. This leaves him free to give all his energies to the rehearsals of his cast.

It is at rehearsals that he will build up his ideas. Perhaps, in fact usually, the idea that seemed so effective in the mind's eye of original invention is totally unsuitable when tested out life-size, and, impromptu as it were, the producer must evolve some spontaneous solution that fits in with the ideas being carried into effect elsewhere.

It may be that one wrong detail, if persisted in, is found to make all that follows wobbly and uncertain in effect. It is important, therefore, that the producer's mind should not be hampered by the execution of detail when once his plan is satisfactory, and that his staff should work with him and for him. His cast must also respond and fall into the general picture as presented by the producer, working up their own talent into the detail required to make their own particular part good *in relation to the whole*.

This human, or personal, element must be examined in two parts: (1) The individual actor; (2) the crowd or super element. The individual actor is the key of the play as seen by the audience. Audiences hardly know of the producer; still less are they able to separate his work from that of the actor. But it is the producer's idea and the actor's carrying out of it that produce the great moment, particularly in modern plays, where an idea, rather than a story, is the gravamen of the piece. The individual actor has a duty to himself and his talent and a duty to the producer. It is as though each actor was a note on a keyboard—individual, particular, separate; of no consequence alone, but when brought into an arrangement by the player on the keyboard, then the place in the scale of things becomes manifest, and the actor's particular note must be presented not too loud, or soft, or out of key. If error is made, either producer or actor may be at fault. Therefore, it is necessary, for the art of the theatre, that the producer should know the details of his job. His cast, and particularly his leads, must have confidence in him. An actor may have his own ideas about the playing of a part, and if these are in conflict with the producer, the actor will give way with ease only if he has confidence that the producer knows what he is about.

The individual actor must be able to help the producer by being able to carry out his desires without coaching. It is not the business of a producer to waste too much time on teaching his leads how to kneel, or gesticulate. That is elementary, and should be learned in crowd work or away from rehearsals. The producer is the fusing element, and his requirements as to turning, gesture, emphasis, and so on should be at the actor's command; not have to be pumped into him (or her) while the rest of the cast hang

round watching the elaboration of a detail that should come spontaneously.

In many cases the desire for leading parts is greater than the ability to play them, and many a show has been spoiled through artistic impetuosity. There are many aspirants to leading fame who do not lift a finger between shows, and sometimes not even between rehearsals, to improve their technical knowledge. Others are so busy hopping from part to part, from society to society, that they are learning as they go, but never reflecting on what they have learnt. This is what produces the "quick study," but never an actor-artist, for such a one will always be himself. Mannerisms will abound, make-up may vary, but movement and intonations never. Such an amateur will never *act* a part, only play it. Whereas if only one or two summers, 'tween seasons, had been spent in studying basic principles, we would see all the difference. Gone would be that wagging head whenever lines have to be said. Gone would be that awkwardness of the hands and feet. Gone would be that constraint when a long silence has to be gone through. One who has trained himself by precept and observation will never be *afraid*. He will have the consciousness of ability to do what is required of him, and his artistic success will be a matter of degree. Some parts will be better than others because the individual is more *en rapport* with the part; but when the actor is trained a performance will always be competent.

HELPING THE PRODUCER

I am writing thus, not to damp ardour, or to present success in artistry as an impossible or extremely difficult goal, but I am stating that individuals in a cast have a duty to their producer, and that a competent actor, by contributing competence, helps the producer to an exceptional degree. In other words, beginners should seek to walk before they run away with the big parts.

Apart from individual tuition, good practice can be obtained in crowd work. The management of his crowd is one of the signs of a good producer, particularly on small stages. In musical comedy work the chorus is not so difficult, as not much harm is done if the crowd form a perfect semi-circle, or get too much bunched up in one

PRODUCTION

place. But in drama, particularly tragedy, the crowd can make or mar.

CROWDS

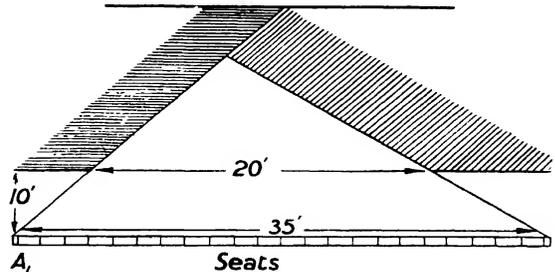
In general, avoid any suggestion that there are more people than the stage should hold. See that entrances and exits are wide enough to allow easy movement of the crowd. If necessary, have many small exits, rather than one congested one, so that many exits at one time will leave the stage clear. A great offence is the "hang-over." When a crowd exit has to be made for a solo entrance, do not allow lingering so that the entrance coincides with the last flutter of the last skirt. Make it clear cut. "*Exeunt Omnes*" must be done quicker than said, and only when the stage is definitely empty should the pause before the vital entrance be counted. The hang-over is usually caused by the feeling of time. A second or two to the man waiting his entrance is like five minutes, and while in the wings, keyed up, it seems ages before the crowd gets off, and when he sees a reasonable clearance he wants to prevent a stage wait. His entrance is premature and the effect is woolly and uncertain. We cannot blame the actor. A producer must account for that sort of urge, and get his crowd off with a click, as it were. This does not mean hurriedly or in scramble fashion. It means neatly, in order, and with finality.

When on the stage members of the crowd must not be bumping into each other. Each (except when chorus work demands) should be made to feel that every individual has a personal piece of acting to perform; that he or she has as much relation, as an individual, to the action of the story, as any lead. When a story is being told, their manner must show interest, not only when they have to say their little piece, but all the time the action is on. Only too often have I seen a chorus or crowd in the market place leaning on each other's shoulders while murder is being committed, to be suddenly galvanized into life because "He has killed her" has to be said. There would be all sorts of antecedent occasions that each individual could act, and a producer may have to build up little bits of business for each.

This sort of created business can have a sound technical purpose by leading the eyes of the audience, subconsciously, from one part of the stage to another. The eye will always be attracted by

THEATRE AND STAGE

movement, and a little time before an important action, say an entrance, or opening an envelope, etc., a little movement, running round the crowd, will cause the eye of the audience to be where it ought to be at the tricky moment. This focusing can also be done by colour. Imagine a crowd in greys and other quiet colours, and one solo costume of geranium red among them. If that red costume starts to move up stage and come to rest,



just as an entrance is made, that entrance will have more force behind it because all the eyes of the audience will have been drawn to the point of activity.

The movement of crowds in relation to the action of the play can be controlled by reference to the ground plan of the stage. The awkward angles right and left, marked by the proscenium sides shown by the shaded parts in the diagram above can be used as watersheds for the supers when their presence as a crowd is necessary, but vital action must be seen in the clear space in the centre, that is, something is happening that *everybody* must see if their comprehension of the author's intention is to be quite clear.

I mentioned above that a certain solo circumstance, i.e. a murder, would have certain antecedent events and that the crowd or chorus could build up atmosphere by personal business created to fit in the scene. I suggested that the producer could build up this business. But I might add that it is better for it to be created by the chorus members and controlled by the producer. The zeal of the crowd members must not outrun the balance of the play, but it is important that the crowd should be not just a mass, but definitely a crowd of *individuals*. It follows that, human nature being what it is, each reaction to the

circumstances will be personal. One will shriek, another faint, another, bolder than the rest, will dash forward to prevent the crime, others will help the victim, others call the police, while, if the villain is exceedingly ferocious and Sicilian, no doubt others will make themselves scarce. But certainly everybody will do something, each according to his kind, and it is this personal something that the usual chorus member fails or omits to provide, and piles the whole work of evolving business on to the producer whose mind is sufficiently harassed with details of the principal event. It is no good waiting for the big part before attempting to act. The lethargy of many choruses is due to a frame of mind that will not regard the little job in hand as big enough to do well. "Only a bit of chorus work," and so they stand listless and apathetic on the stage as lifeless and not half so useful as the painted scenery that forms the background.

It is not possible, in the confines of the space of this article, to lay down definite instructions because, as I have said elsewhere, there is no rule that can be applied at all times and to all circumstances, but there are certain principles that ought to be used as a touchstone or test whenever a problem arises. In this case the principle is just one of the similitude of reality. Each member of a cast, and particularly the crowd, should ask himself or herself privately "Given the circumstances of the instance concerned, how would I behave?" On that basis of considered conduct there is something to start with, and personal and private development of the idea will bring to the producer a finished piece of acting, something ready to be incorporated into the general plan, something that has saved the producer's time and temper, and something on which the budding star can sharpen his histrionic teeth, with the incentive of knowing that the ultimate result is his own creation. This contribution, personal and complete, is sure to catch the producer's eye, and at once he knows he has a worker, one who thinks and builds. Consequently, the trier is put on the solo list for a small part, and in due course he gets his chance, having graduated by individual work from the crowd, through small parts, to the lead, but with this great advantage—a sort of tradition of work that is all his own. He has been *acting*, *acting* all the time, so that when the big part

does come his way he has a technique to employ. He is a craftsman, if not yet an acknowledged artist. He is credited with capacity and he has a record of created parts. Producers and selection committee nominate him with confidence and in two or three seasons he is among the recognized players.

Now, on the other hand, what of the diffident, the shy, the humble, who fear to thrust their own learners' notions under the nose of the Producer Great Panjandrum? There they are diffident, shy, etc., willing, eager, and waiting to be told. So eager. So willing. What of them? I can only say that they also serve who only stand and wait, and waiting is as far as they will get. For diffidence, shyness, and modesty are no good to such an expressive art as the art of the theatre. It demands projection to the *n*th degree, and if the demand for projection cannot overcome the shyness and other desirable attributes of a drawing-room, then artistic success will never come the way of this lovely flower born to blush unseen.

Now I do not want to convey the idea that at the next rehearsal of the crowd the producer should be faced with a chorus of twisting bodies, violently gesticulating hands, and faces screwing and twisting violently into all kinds of distorted expressions. There is reason in all things. Extreme action is not desired, but a certain amount of action; and my point is that if one wishes to succeed in stage work one must be positive in mentality, and, above all, positive all the time, and particularly so in the beginning. Stage work is hard work, and it is no good the amateur thinking of it as a nice hobby for the long winter evenings. The amateur stage has passed that stage, and there are now large towns that can put up a company as good as a group of professionals; but they have undoubtedly worked for their competence.

The curse of the amateur is vanity and complacency. Acting looks so easy, and with talent as fuel, it is easy. But it is not easy to be excellent, and I am here pleading that natural talent should be cultivated, trained, and developed by conscious practice. This means thought, sacrifice of leisure, concentration, and many other forms of discipline not acceptable to modern thought. But Art will not be denied and the neophyte must sacrifice if success is to come. It is a simple choice, but choice it is.

I will add a few words which may raise the ire of many a juvenile lead and leading man. Sometimes good-looking youngsters, and those who can wear their clothes well, get leading parts without having had any preliminary experience in small-part work. Because they *look* the part all goes reasonably well. Youth, however, does not last for ever. These young people are all right as long as they have the pretty bits to do and the

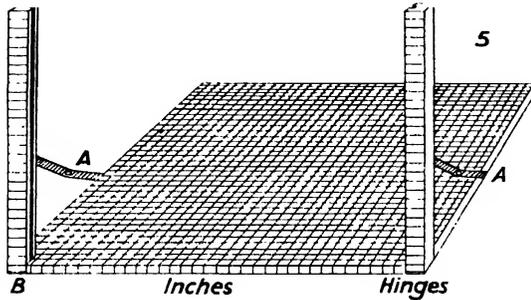


FIG. 1

Saville Rows to be seen, etc., but one day the part won't be in Saville Row's neat and natty gentlemen's suiting or the latest fashions. It will be something in "character," and then there will be a re-testing. While youth is at the helm, is the time to learn.

Sometimes it is harder to be in the crowd *and to act* than to play the lead. Consider the chorus part. There are no lines for the individual player. He is one of the crowd and in the ruck. Yet all the individuals collectively have to convey mass emotions. This is not done by all shouting "Hi" or "Hurrah" and by waving arms. My suggestion is that the rising young juvenile should act a little with the chorus, and experience what it is to think from *within*. Each member of a chorus should be an individual, and yet part of the general pattern. Most chorus crowds look alike, with never a match seller, or an artificial leg or a beard, or a commissioner, or a navy with his dinner, or a bus conductor, to introduce interesting variations from the ordinary. My message is that chorus work involves players in something more than merely standing round waiting for cues. Those who stand and wait

cannot also act. Juvenile stars who test this do not waste time.

BASIC NEEDS

A producer should endeavour to realize the value of models, which should always be made to scale and brought into service as early as possible at rehearsals. It is a great help to all concerned if a cast has some idea of the *milieu* in which the action of the play will be presented.

A useful skeleton model for a producer likely to be using various stages of different dimensions can be made as follows: First a flat board, say 3 ft. square, marked off in square inches. This gives a scale of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the foot, or 1 in., as the case requires. Next, two grooved uprights at either side (preferably hinged to the board), also marked off in inches from the bottom or foot-lights end. Into these grooves a piece of black cardboard is inserted to the appropriate depth, and two side pieces for the proscenium sides. Assume that work has to be done on a stage with a proscenium opening of 20 ft. by 14 ft.

The struts *A* are folding hinges in addition to hinges at *B*. The three cardboards *C* 1, 2, and 3 when placed in proper position will give an opening of 20 in. by 14 in., and this when placed on

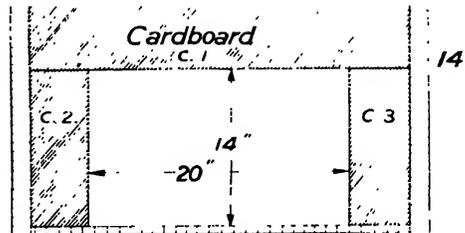


FIG. 2

a piece of paper giving the right lines and other data will enable everybody concerned to co-operate with each other in accordance with the producer's plan. Such a model, when used in conjunction with scale scenery and props, is of the utmost value, when working conditions do not allow of rehearsals on the actual stage of the production. As this is the usual fate of amateur productions I must point out that false and covering positions can be easily avoided when such a model is in use.

The number of amateur shows that proceed gaily without understudies is astonishing, and it is extraordinary how seldom the actual need arises. In many years' experience I have come across not more than a dozen instances, among hundreds of shows, where a player has definitely fallen out and left the promoters frantically tearing hair, scribbling reply-paid telegrams, and/or anxiously phoning to that persistently obnoxious wrong number that haunts such crises in the affairs of men.

It is no gospel of perfection to advocate full understudies. In spite of the practical experience above (i.e. that societies without understudies have always managed to pull through), there is the great advantage of security, and when a player is late at rehearsal, or absent through grave cause, an understudy is useful as a peg on which to hang necessary work with other people in the cast. There is a feeling that understudying a part is a sort of second-hand casting, a sop to the backward, and one way of disposing of the body of a successful ticket seller with a small part. It should be freed from any stigma of that kind and looked at rationally. A second string to all essential parts is a common-sense necessity. It gives a beginner a chance to make good. Small part people have an incentive to study the bigger part for which they are understudies. I know it is a dangerous doctrine to adumbrate, but I see no harm in asking stars to play small parts from time to time and to understudy. This evolves and encourages the team idea, which is a great stimulant to good, even working. The adoption and practice of this policy would require the greatest tact on the part of the producer, and I regret that tact is not one of my subjects. Nevertheless, I would emphasize that a producer who rejects the use of understudies is neglecting a useful weapon, and is asking for trouble of the first magnitude.

A producer will instil into his cast, particularly the beginners, the importance of good make-up. It is astonishing how few amateurs can do their own make-up, and how few producers can tell the earnest inquirer how to achieve what is wanted. Usually it is left to a hired professional, who works to types. "Dark lady—elderly," or "Young lady, fair, heroine," says he, and accordingly produces a type of dark lady—elderly, or young lady, fair, heroine, which fits the subtleties of the part as aptly as a wanted-by-the-police

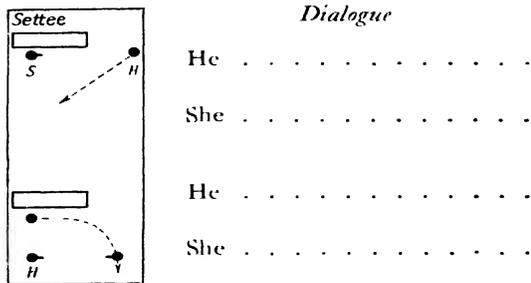
description. Make-up is simple enough and when properly understood can be of immense help to an actor in building up a character.

The same arguments of internal significance apply to costumes and the use of them as to words and make-up. A little thought and examination will evolve ideas for colour and texture of materials that will harmonize with the character. A producer working to the modern spirit cannot neglect this aspect of his work, and he will find that a knowledge of new colours and materials is of the greatest value. Anybody who has seen Sargent's portrait of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth will realize how the long plaits of red hair and the green vesture help along the characterization. This also applies to the designs of the late Charles Ricketts for Shaw's *St. Joan*; in particular, the costume for the Earl of Warwick. Another example from present-day practice is the use of Lancaster cloth (sometimes, but erroneously, described as American leather) for Expressionistic Drama, the hard, shining surfaces just fitting in with the chromium-steel wit and satire of such plays. Silks, velvets, cottons, wools, all offer different textures for varying moods.

Involved in all the foregoing is the question of prompting, and again, as with understudying, I approach the matter entirely from the aspect of a sense of security and efficiency. Prompting can be good or bad, as any one with working experience knows. A good prompter is a jewel, and should be treasured as such. The fact that a good cast should not require a prompter no more invalidates the argument than the fact that a sure-fire principal does not need an understudy. Too, too often the prompter is any odd person who has nothing else to do, and who is expected to act in desperation if a speaker dries up, but if *the* prompter is brought into the scheme properly, he or she becomes the producer's left hand as a good stage manager is his right.

I am afraid that the right use of the prompt copy is a craft not properly grasped by those to whom it can be of most use. It is what its name implies, a *prompting* or reminding copy, and is a record of the words, movements, lighting, properties, noises off, and all the incidentals of the play. Too often is it regarded as the instrument by which a lagging memory may be jolted into action, but its use goes far beyond that.

A wise producer will catch his prompter early, in fact the first thing, and will mark into the prompt copy every position and movement decided upon. A good way is to mark in symbols, thus—



This, or any other symbol method, saves a lot of space in the margin of a printed book. Large dots can represent crowds or groups of various sizes. Colours can be used for individuals. Each act and scene should have its lighting plot clearly described, a full list of stage "props," and a list of hand "props," with the names of the characters that will use them. If a character has to use many "props" it is better to arrange—

ACT 1	ACT 2
Lord Charles—Riding whip	Bundle letters
Telegram	Small box
Notebook	Notebook
Fishing rods	Bunch keys

rather than a list—

Lord Charles. Whip, Telegram, Notebook, etc.

A wardrobe list should also be incorporated, so that a full record of each character's costume is kept.

When typescript copies are in use they will be typed on one side of the paper only. The blank side can be used for the details above, and clearly marked with the warnings to call a character some minutes before the cue. If the book is printed it is necessary to have two copies, to separate the leaves, or an interleaved copy, and to paste in a dummy book if this process is to be employed. When books are scarce, the marginal method is efficient and economical.

When the details of the prompt book have been

filled in, it should be given to the prompter, who should be someone definitely appointed to the job, and not any person who is present at rehearsals or during the show. The prompter should act as a sort of producer's secretary, taking down his directions to the cast, making notes, and ultimately checking the cast, through the producer, when things are not going on according to Cocker. If the prompter attends rehearsals and studies the players, he or she will soon know when a player is deliberately pausing or has really forgotten. Nothing will put a player out of stride so much as an unwanted prompt. It is almost as bad as the wanted prompt that never comes.

The prompter should have a good voice, clear pronunciation, and the confidence of the players. A prompter who is negligent gets the cast on edge, and if there is the slightest feeling that the prompter is not following the script and prepared to prompt at any second the tone of the show will drop several degrees. I remember an incident of a prompter with a typescript that had been altered and re-altered until it was almost illegible with back references, cuts, and re-insertions. Blue crayon over red, lead pencil, ink, written and typed additions and deletions made each page a regular jazz pattern. One night the prompter (a professional actress) was so absorbed in the play that she forgot to turn over, the result being that my Lord of Leicester, in Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, recited impromptu blank verse of preposterous content that must have made Schiller turn in his grave. Not only had the prompter lost the page, but, owing to the markings, she could not find out whether to turn forward or back.

The rehearsals should be attended by the prompter. This is important. Some prompters are too ready to butt in, and the job requires tact and understanding.

COLOUR TONES

One of the most important elements the producer must control is colour. Colours cause emotional reactions, and the atmosphere of a play can be established as soon as the curtain rises by attention to this valuable weapon in the armoury. Those who saw Komisarjevsky's production of Chekov's *The Three Sisters* at the Fortune Theatre in 1929 will recall that the prevailing colour tone was a sort of Corot

grey, a colour tone that immediately established a mood in the mind of the audience.

A producer can just as easily, though perhaps not so readily, spoil the author's intention by a wrong colour scheme as by bad acting, and before he goes far in his work of rehearsal, he should have made up his mind on two points; (1) the author's intention, and (2) the colour or mood of his production. This must not be confused with the "period" or style of a setting. I am dealing exclusively with the psychological aspect and how a producer can penetrate the emotional inertia of the most hidebound audience if he appeals to all their senses in the right way.

Take a Noel Coward comedy, say, *Private Lives*. I visualize this as set in chromium steel, grey velvet, a touch of black, scarlet flowers; mirrors with steel frames; the minimum of furniture, everything modernist design and functional. The same author's *Post Mortem* I visualize as much less hard, though it is a play with more lash to its whip. Wealth, comfort, power, and betrayal are the strings of this instrument, and the author's purpose evolves as the play proceeds. *En passant*, the producer of the spontane drama had hold of this principle, but dealt with it in a simpler and cruder form by relying on "incidental music" and for what they were some of these "incidentals" were excellent for their purpose. Struggle music, tear music, pursuit music, all employed the aid of the musician, and a try-out of a selection of these pieces by a modern producer who despises incidental aids as adventitious is a challenge to produce the same effect by the more subtle means of colour.

Having established the mood colour of the scenery or setting, the producer will now think over the individuals in relation to the author's intention, their place (as working parts) in the play, and their relation to the framework in which they appear, i.e. the setting and the rest of the cast. The colour scheme of each costume must harmonize and have a definite relation to the individual performance. I can do no more than mention this important part of a producer's duty, as here it is almost impossible to extend the rule to example, but here again I may recall that the producers of melodrama had hold of the idea when the villainess always appeared in scarlet sequins. This point of colour in costume must

not be confused with the detail of "character" parts, and there are times when a setting might have to be designed "to" a costume, as, for instance, a certain uniform that has to be worn, and does not allow of departure from standard fact. Those who saw some of the Cochran revues will realize the point I am aiming at when I recall the black and white Highlander of Massine in *Wake Up and Dream*, the Hungarian wedding in an earlier revue, and the Boccaccio episode in another. In these instances, some from among many, all the senses of the audience were approached and the cumulative effect was sweeping.

Having created the scenic mood, heightened or intensified by the costumes of the principals, the moving background must be dealt with. The crowd and supers must be considered in exactly the same way, i.e. part of the whole scheme. Whether the colour scheme of the crowd and supers should be in contrast or in harmony the producer must decide for himself, but always in accordance with the integrity of the "author's intention."

The producer, having got so far, must then consider his lighting plot. In this section *shadow* must also be considered as part of lighting. When designing scenery and costumes always work to the effect in *artificial* light. Gas, electric, and lime light have varying effects on colour, as every woman knows, and certain lighting effects will kill certain colours. The principles here are so obvious and can be tested so simply that to enumerate examples would be a waste of space. But I might mention my testing "box" apparatus. Any large box will do. I used a Tate & Lyle sugar box about 2 ft. 6 in. square, blacken the interior, and fix an electric lampholder inside. When materials are submitted for approval of colour, or tests for colour effects are required, the desired lamp can be fitted in and the subject tested out.

A testing box will teach a producer more than I can hope to write: the effect of light on the same colour but in different material, the depth of shade, the overbearing weight of one colour (light) on another—red will kill any other colour—colour groups, i.e. effect of 2 yellow to 1 red, and so on. These experiments, though on a small scale, give a producer invaluable information that

can be readily enlarged into a part of the whole seen by the audience.

I have endeavoured to relate the "elements of the play" over which the producer has direct and personal control, what we might call the inanimate elements. Having grasped the essential importance of these, I propose to start building up on the human side, and in due course to bring both together in the unity of the play.

To find out the "Author's Intention" is to move towards the creation of this unity. I deal with the mechanical or stage manager's elements before the human or emotional element because I want to bring home to both producers and actors the truth that they can be the victims of these base mechanics. Before going into action there are simple principles that must be applied. If the application is not reasonably well done, efforts on the human side will be made ridiculous or nullified. To avoid misunderstanding I hasten to add that the producer or actor who would compel the artist to be subordinate to the set or to be a mere foil to a producer's trick, does so on his own responsibility and I trust not through a belief that I made the recommendation. The actor is not only an interpretive artist, but also part of, or an element in, a synthesis.

THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION

The producer who knows his job, whatever may be his height of brow, the producer (whether of farce, Greek tragedy, modern comedy, no matter what the medium may be) sees that every ounce of content is brought to the attention of the audience, and to every individual member of that audience. For want of a better phrase let us call that content "the author's intention." What did the author mean at this or that point? What does *this* bear in relation to *that*? and above all, what relation does *this* and *that* bear to the other? I will illustrate this by recalling two experiences. I saw Edyth Goodall in her famous performance of Clare in John Galsworthy's *The Fugitive*. The part is that of a highly sensitive nature, repelled by the smug complacency of her solid husband. She is attracted by the volatility of an artist, who is not too fine in his moral thinking. Her relations with him are purely platonic, but her husband, as a smug husband would, thinks

otherwise, and after a volcanic scene the wife seeks the protection of the artist. The rest of the play shows her sensitiveness in continual retreat from life, until sheer physical desperation forces her to attempt the attractions of her charms in a public restaurant. But the vulgarities of the men who approach offend more than ever, and she, the fugitive, flies from everything—by poison.

This is an incomprehensive survey of the play, but sufficient for my purpose, which is to recall the sensitive "retreating" of Edyth Goodall. It must be remembered that this is the big part. Husband, artist, philanderers, are only adjuncts to the prime theme, the impact of the commonplace on a highly sensitized nature, and that nature driven to destruction by inability to cope with coarse-fibred circumstance and people. Now I also saw a certain actress attempt this part elsewhere. She was altogether different, and the play was ruined. This actress saw it as a star part, all lead, on every scene, with a smashing death end. Being brunette—dark, a foreign type, with a strong face, and figure—she smashed and crashed through the fine texture of the piece until her grand death bit, which pulled round after round of applause from an audience goaded into excitement by the storm troops technique of this most efficient but wilfully misunderstanding actress. She was a craftsman, but no artist. Now, here is one play, two interpretations. Both satisfied the audiences. One was a comment on character and motives, the other barnstorming acting of the old type. The result of the second performance was to ruin the author's intention towards his audience. Galsworthy did not intend the producer, in this case one with professional repertory experience, to give us a highly charged display of frustrated femininity; consequently no matter how good all the other details of production may have been, the artistic result was unutterably bad because the author's intention had been ignored to give way to a busker's holiday.

The second instance was the case of two *Hanky Panky John* productions. This play is a comedy of human nature, in which a missing note at a house party leads to the guests self-accusing themselves to protect somebody else. It turns out to have been stolen by the host himself to test the loyalty of his guests. In the last act, a temporary butler appears and has some good lines

to say, but his appearance and words have little to do with the main theme except to act as comic embellishment. The first and professional production put the butler in his right place, but the second, done by a first-class amateur group, under a producer of reputation, was a fiasco as far as the theme was concerned, but a riot of laughter whenever the butler was on. The whole fabric of the play was destroyed, the night became a vaudeville with the butler top of the bill, simply because the producer had not checked or toned down the really marvellous comic personality of the butler. The subtle shades of comedy that had gone before were drowned by this great sunshine burst of comedy, and though the audience had a good laugh, they had not seen *Hanky Panky John*.

These two cases of what we saw and heard demonstrate the power of the producer, and though I appear to stress the point, I do so because I write as one in the stalls. When I go to see a Galsworthy play I want the Galsworthy intention, and if I go to see a modern comedy, I do not want vaudeville. So to come back to basic points, the actor is a producer's first and foremost tool, which the producer must learn to use and apply.

The recognition of this principle of the author's intention is one that cannot be too highly emphasized. It is the whole keynote of everything that arises from a play. If not thoroughly understood and applied, the whole art of the theatre falls to the ground and the art of production becomes a sort of false pretences in the theatre. When the author allowed the actor to use him as a stalking horse in the days of the early nineteenth century the theatre sank to its lowest ebb. When Colley Cibber "adapted" (save the mark!) Shakespeare at the end of the eighteenth century, we gained nothing by losing Shakespeare and getting Cibber.

A producer must be most careful in analysing the play and getting right down to a basis of complete accord with the purpose of the play, and then "producing" his actors, lighting, and scenery accordingly.

These important factors, the "mood" of the play, the "tempo," and the "colour," all have to be in harmony, interdependent, and inter-related. Sometimes there is a real problem of interpretation to be solved, and this often arises when a classic play is being revived.

A good example of this is the old "Morality" play *Everyman*, which has cropped up quite a lot since it was translated from the Dutch in the Middle Ages. This play takes us to the very root of the principle I am seeking to establish and also offers us a neat little problem, together with an example of how exciting play production can become. It is, of course, general knowledge that the origins

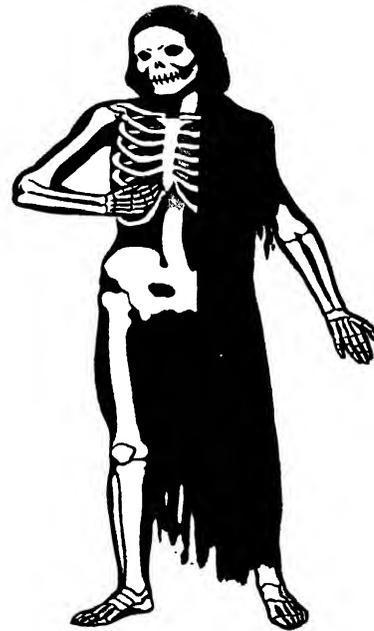


FIG. 3

of the theatre in this country were religious. The early drama consisted of acted sermons or lessons, which were performed to bring home to the people, in simple but emphatic fashion, the stories in the Bible. Later on these plays took on a more abstract form with a moral point attached. First a simple story of Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph, the Kings and Shepherds, and so on, was used, but subsequently the field was enlarged, and the Virtues and Vices, Good and Evil, and such like, were impersonated, and a "Morality" play built up to testify to certain religious teachings. *Everyman* is in this category, and a producer

handling this play must make up his mind that it is propaganda for religion. But a perplexing point will arise that he will solve according to temperament and faith. The gist of the play, or its scenario, may be expressed by saying that Mr. Everyman, while in full possession of health, wealth, and friends, is suddenly met by Death, who is sent by God to summon Everyman to his



FIG. 4

account. But Everyman is not particularly upset—at first. Surely his friends, and his riches, and his kinspeople will come with him on the journey and make it light. But one by one they say no, most emphatically too. Then Everyman begins to think, for he finds himself alone but as yet unafraid. He remembers some Good Deeds, so calls on them, but alas, “so weak I can hardly stand.” Still Good Deeds are alive and, while there is life there is hope, calls to his aid his own resources, his Five Wits of sound, sight, feel, smell, and hearing, his Strength, his Beauty, and asks for their assistance, but come with him they will not.

So he goes to Confession and does Penance, which revives his Good Deeds and when Death comes he is not so lonely. But die he must and does.

When that great artist of the theatre, William Poel, produced *Everyman* some years ago, before the War, he interpreted the play as a *grim* morality, a warning, with Death a grisly skeleton making a terrifying alarm with his clapper. Death the Terrible (Fig. 3). The effect on the audience is historic. People fainted and the moral lesson was so forced home that it was the talk of London. Sermons were preached on the imminence of Death, and the production generally raised a furore.

There is another interpretation (Fig. 4), equally sound but very different. Remember that the play is propagandist, according to doctrines of the Church of the Middle Ages. True repentance and Penitence make of Death the Gateway to Heaven, and there is no reason why the producer should not work his play up to a happy ending. The one interpretation is as justifiable as the other. Penance has cleansed him, his Good Deeds appear strong and healthy, and he is prepared to go to his “accompt.” But to arrive at this idea of the play asks for an understanding of the Middle Ages and leads to all sorts of speculations and inquiries. Such a play justifies the claim of the theatre to be an educative force, but ideas must go to its production, otherwise it will be as dull as ditchwater.

I quote this two-interpretation play of *Everyman* as an example of the producer's problem as distinct from the actor's problem. The producer defines the course, and the actor contributes his share by acting accordingly. The producer is in contact with the author's mind and directs the actors in relation to plan.

All plays worth their salt have this “author's intention” in them. Whether it be uproarious farce or the most intense tragedy, to be a good play the author must have had a nuclear idea which he wished presented in a certain way, and any method of production or acting which obscures that nucleus is bad acting or bad production.

There has been a tendency in recent years for producers to say, metaphorically, “Now here's a pretty thing, watch what I do with this pretty thing,” and before we know where we are,

chromium steel, revolving shutters, coloured lights or no lights at all, groupings and silhouettes are shown to us, and we are expected to grovel in worship. Sometimes we rightly grovel, but usually it is charlatanry, a craze for something merely different, and sometimes frankly sensational. But difference and sensationalism are only parts of the whole, and if integral beauty is destroyed or the sensation is so pronounced that the author's idea is overlaid, then we have seen the wrong thing.

It may be commented that I put too much responsibility on the producer. I retort that too many people claim to be producers and do not know what their responsibilities are. A play, particularly a good play, is too precious a thing to be mauled about by insufficient understanding, and play production is too important to be tackled by the inefficient. It is more than mere positions of actors and the placing of furniture. It is also the presentation of a case, sometimes a complex case, and each part must be balanced and correctly adjusted in relation to the whole. Particularly does this apply to modern drama, in which nearly every play has a serious aspect. *Take It Pays To Advertise*, a rollicking farce, but nevertheless with a solid criticism of modern life in it. It depends for its success on that criticism, and not on a lot of windows and doors with boggy-boggy entrances and exits.

There are other plays and before a producer casts his play or drafts his rehearsals he must carefully consider the author's point of view, and, having arrived at it, present it fairly and in full.

The actor, the scenery, the lighting are but means to that end, and if the end is not understood, then all else is in vain. A play is not a play until it has been acted. The producer controls that acting, and all that it means, and it is his responsibility to see that the intention of the author is "produced" for the delectation, entertainment, and excitement of the audience.

It will be observed that I avoid mentioning "education." While it would be futile to deny the educative value of the theatre I deny that it is a necessary function of the drama to "educate." More harm has been done through that false but well-meaning slogan than anything else. It *may* educate, but that is incidental. A view from a mountain height *may* be educative, but a climber

who toils up a mountain side purely for education is surely on the wrong path altogether. If the author's intention is to educate in its pure sense, then the producer will honestly bring that out, but in doing so he will show that it is a poor play that has no drama.

The drama is primarily emotional, secondarily intellectual. Good drama holds the mind through the emotions. This cannot be said too often. Let the producer eliminate the emotional content, for any reason at all, and he squeezes out so much drama. If for the sake of realism he turns aside the laughter and tears of the theatre and presents us with the stoical phlegmatic self-restrained conduct of ordinary people, his realism is too real to be in the theatre.

The author's intention may be the best in the world, but a wise producer will seek only those plays of good intent that are presented in dramatic fashion.

Many plays produced between the First and Second Great Wars were plays of good intention but poor plays. This was, in one way, not altogether a bad symptom, for good intenders may learn the knack of play-construction and then good intentions may be expressed in dynamic form.

To illustrate a point. I explained how the Russian theatre presents an author and quoted a production of *Romeo and Juliet* that emphasized the revolt of the new idea against the feudal idea of parental control. Now let us ask ourselves "Was this Shakespeare's intention?" On the answer depends whether the Russian production was good. That it might have been interesting or beautiful can be granted. But was it the author's intention to tell a story of frustrated love, or to attack a social system or philosophy? I would very much like to see a Russian interpretation on these lines, but I have an idea that I should be held more by the lovers' misfortunes than by their revolt against papa.

Some old plays are so stark in outline that the authors' intentions cannot be mistaken. The more a play is written for mere box office, the less any intention other than to amuse is discernible. The point specially made here mostly applies to the better types of play, in which the authors have used the dramatic form to convey some idea, good or bad. Once a producer and cast take

upon themselves the responsibility of handling that idea, their artistic integrity demands that there shall be no twisting it to fulfil other purposes. Some plays can be variously interpreted, and it is pleasant and exciting to see variations. Some plays, too, should be inviolate. How many intentions can be read into Galsworthy's *Strife*?

"THE PLACE"—SIGHT LINES

There are certain first rules of play production that must be observed no matter what

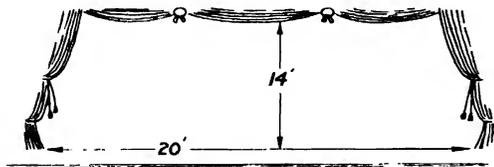


FIG. 5

type of performance is being offered. I am assuming that the producer has made up his mind as to what he is going to do with the author's play, and that he now considers all the means to that end. He will have a theatre, maybe a hall, perhaps a schoolroom, even a large room in a private house, and it is obvious that what suits one does not suit another. But there is one first principle common to all. Every member of the audience, from the man right at the very back of the (we hope) crowded gallery, to the man at the side of the stalls, has a right to see and hear everything relevant that happens on the stage. When I say, everything, I mean *everything*, and it is the producer's job to arrange every detail so that all relevant matters occur within everybody's sight lines.

Now it does not matter whether the show is in theatre, hall, schoolroom, barn, or house, it is possible to plan in advance and to work to inches. It means trouble and perhaps a certain amount of fussiness, but the result is well worth it. It is simply a matter of foresight and preparing the way. Recognition of the fact that in all play production a certain amount of mechanical and calculating skill is involved leads one to suggest the adoption of workshop and lay-out methods by putting down on paper all the factors of the problem.

One of the most important factors in a situation where all factors are important is "the place" of production. In amateur work, producers have to cope with difficulties that would drive a first-class producer crazy, and it is highly creditable how amateurs manage to fit their shows on to the nooks and crannies sometimes given them for a stage. Consideration of the following methods may supply something that eliminates chance, which, though it produces exciting moments, does not tend to produce a smooth performance. Remember we have to consider the audience—the people who pay to see our work, and it is right that the amateur producer should take every care to see that they get value for money. One of these values is the right to see everything that goes on, or, if it is a very modern play with a bedroom scene, everything that comes off.

It is not possible to plan a show so that it will automatically expand and contract in such a way that it will fit stages of all sizes at all times. Producers utilizing the same stage over and over again soon get to know the blind spots, but sometimes, in fact nearly always, the actual stage is not seen until the dress rehearsal. In these circumstances the following methods of production (Figs. 5 and 6) provide a good basis for working.

For a travelling show there is the old and well-known device of the false proscenium. I will describe this. Briefly, it means that the producer estimates the smallest stage area on which he will have to work, and designs his sets and regulates his cast movements accordingly. He works to that limit, no matter how big the stage may be

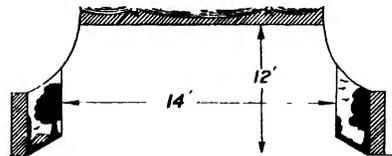


FIG. 6

on which his cast appears. Then he fills in the space between his own sets and the real proscenium opening with an invisible frame—invisible in the sense that it is unobtrusive—usually

of black or dark grey. This frame or false proscenium can be either flats or curtains. Curtains are better, as they are easier to handle.

Now to consider "the place." Methods suitable for one place are totally wrong or inadequate in another. That is why academic and pedantic producers should be chary about reproducing Greek Tragedy in the local church hall. Size of hall and stage is the first consideration, and the producer should leave NOTHING to chance. "It will be all right on the night" is a false allure. It is the rock on which hundreds of honourable careers have been smashed. It "CAN" be all right if care is taken and the producer knows what he is doing. Having carefully read his play and satisfied himself that he thoroughly and honestly knows what his author is trying to say, he sets about creating the right atmosphere in terms of shape and colour. He has as his medium scenery, whether painted or plain, curtains, properties, furniture, dresses, lighting, orchestral music, and so on. A small stage in a small hall, or its opposite, has to be considered as part of the general plan. The producer should therefore make a scale drawing

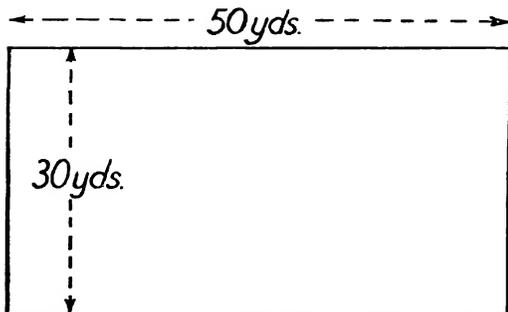


FIG. 7

of his stage in plan and elevation, bringing into it the simple elements of length and width of hall, say 50 yd. by 30 yd. (Fig. 7).

A convenient scale is $\frac{1}{4}$ in. to the foot, so the

sketch below would be enlarged to 150 ft. 150 quarter inches or $37\frac{1}{2}$ in. on the long side and 90 ft. = 90 quarter inches or $22\frac{1}{2}$ in. on the short side. Now make a scale of the elevation as in Fig. 8.

Your stage scale must be very exact, as it will govern the movements of your cast. This plan, when properly extended, would give you a drawing showing, hall length $37\frac{1}{2}$ in., eye level

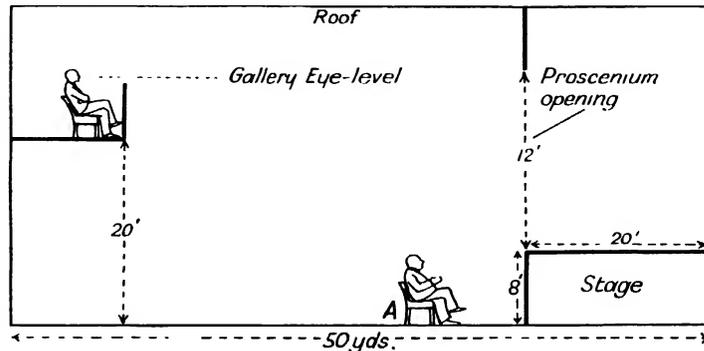


FIG. 8

in gallery say 24 ft. or 6 in., the stage height 2 in. and the depth 5 in., proscenium opening 12 ft. or 3 in. These measurements in relation to the eye level of the gallery and the height of the floor

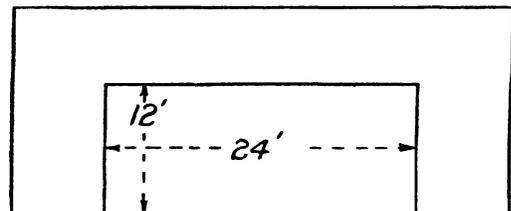


FIG. 9

of the stage are most important, as with them the producer can state to an inch the height of such things as walls, etc., or the depth to which flies and battens should be dropped to hide them from the little round gentleman so vigorously applauding these abstract figures. I call these measurements "sight angles" and when once these, and those in Fig. 9, are properly grasped, the producer

has information as elementary but as necessary and valuable as the multiplication table to an accountant. Now for Fig. 10, which is the ground plan of the stage, and should be on as large a scale as convenient, but I will keep to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. to the foot, for clearness' sake. Our stage, according to Fig. 8, is 20 ft. deep; now its proscenium width is as Fig. 9, or 24 ft. Now consider Fig. 7 plus the proscenium opening width (Fig. 11). A_1 and A_2 represent two paying members of the audience. They have paid to see and hear

to the other. All that is in the shaded space is invisible to Mr. A, so scenery must be designed

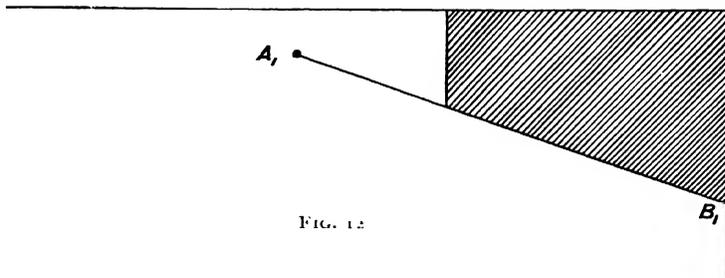


FIG. 12

to show all relevant action and props on the footlight side of the line A_1-B_1 , Fig. 12.

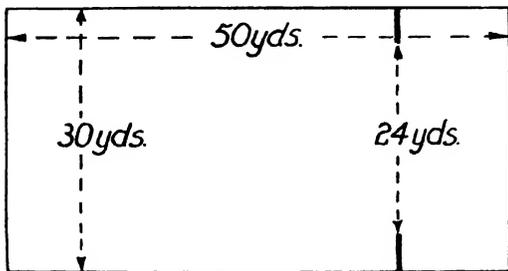


FIG. 10

everything of import on the stage. Get a straight-edge rule and make a good straight line along the sight line of Messrs. A_1 and A_2 , whom I will now de-twin, as what happens to one will happen

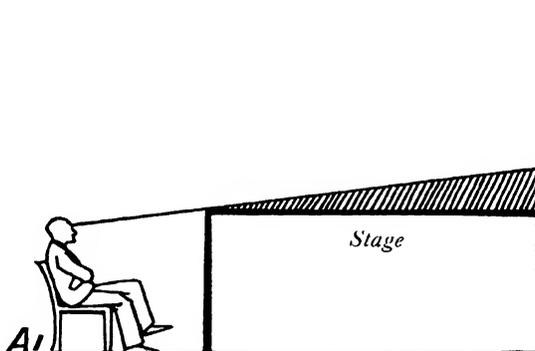


FIG. 13

The same system of triangulation as the pedants would call it is now applied to the centre stalls (or are these the wonderful and unpronounceable fauteuils, horrible word?), (Fig. 13), from which it will be seen that a wall top or ship's side must be taller than the shaded part, at any given point. (For purposes of simplification I am not confusing the drawings by dealing with a stage rake.)

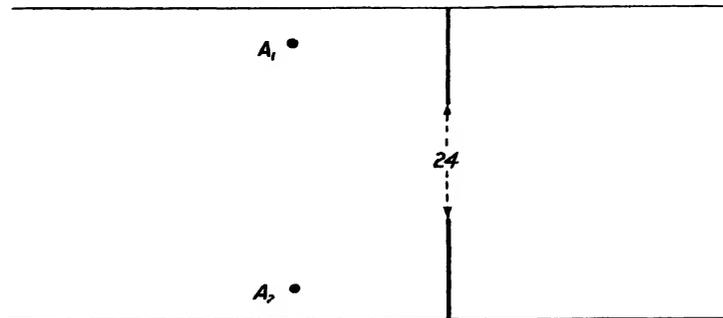


FIG. 11

Likewise some gallery friend, ever loyal and better playgoer than most, must be regarded (I

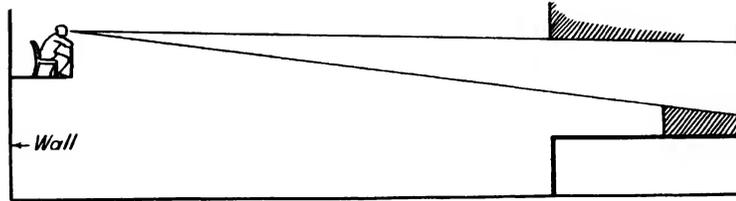


FIG. 14

feel here he should have come first), so that if you have to have confusion behind the wall, you must see that the height of the wall will prevent our gallant gallery man seeing more than is good for his artistic enjoyment.

Now the gallery plan wants a few lines (Fig. 15). Lines B_2 and B_1 will give you side angles for the gallery and then line A (Fig. 16) will show you just where your flies will go to hide your battens from a casual glance upwards, a glance always likely, and if details are not right, always destructive of illusion. The old hand's injunction to "jine yer flats" can be well extended to "hide your lights," if not under a bushel, at least with the borders and skypieces designed for the purpose.

Now refer again to Figs. 12 and 15. A plan like

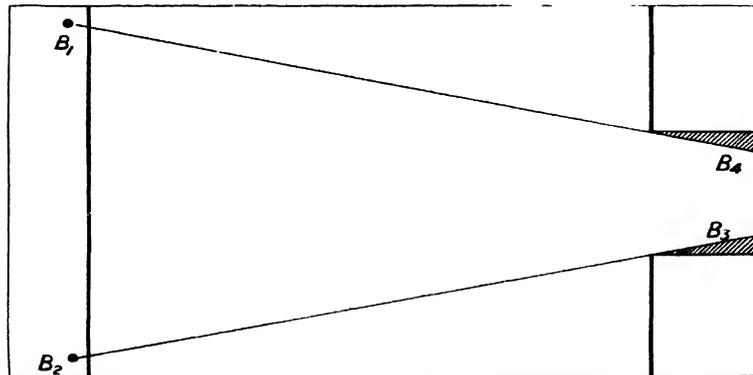


FIG. 15

this, to scale, can tell you how big your furniture should be, and where to place the settee so that it

does not mask the all-important drawer where the villain has hidden the secret plans.

All these details may seem pedantic and fussy, but no producer worth his salt can ignore the principles on which they are based, and which they help to apply. These principles, remember, are that the audience must see and hear everything of dramatic import.

Plans of Figs. 12 and 15 can be placed flat on a table and pieces of cardboard, cut to shape and scale, can be

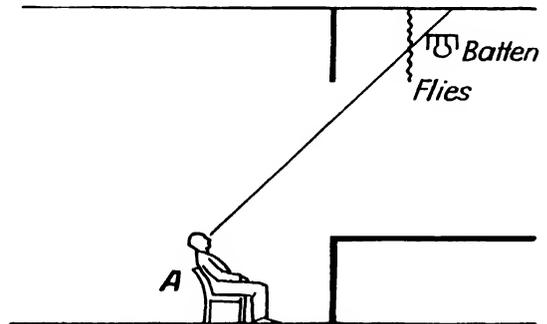


FIG. 16

moved like draughtsmen from place to place until each piece is right. Eliminate all other chairs and things likely to clog the movement of your cast. Give them plenty of room.

The cast should have access to these plans so that pacing can be gauged in theory, though if rehearsals are properly organized, the plans will be of preliminary value only; nothing beats the actual pacing with life size props and settings.

These plans and measurements are merely preparatory, and if done early enough, will save a lot of wasted time at rehearsals proper.

TRIANGULATION AND STAGE PROPERTIES

One of the main aspects of production is setting the stage, and the wise producer cogitates a little before jumping to conclusions or establishing finality in this important matter.

Setting the stage is a phrase that covers the appearance of the scene and "set" or position of the properties and furnishings. There are few scenes in which the whole of the stage is blank of obstruction, and interior scenes nearly always demand some sort of furniture and such-like props. It is the placing of these that requires consideration, as it is not enough to say "put this here" and "put that there" because there are two main things to consider: first, the movements of the actors, and, secondly, the vision of the audience. The components of the setting can be divided into two parts, the active and the passive. The active parts are those units necessary for action of the play, i.e. if a paper has to be extracted from a safe and the robber is caught in the act, then the safe is part of the play and must be placed in such a position that everybody in the theatre can see the action. The passive units are those necessary to fill in the scene, such as a sideboard, or curtains, a pedestal, and so on, and should be used to create atmosphere and suggest periods. These passive elements should be reduced to a minimum so as not to clutter the stage with unnecessary impediments that will hamper the actor.

It is extraordinary how little a stage wants when once the centre is occupied. A settee, a desk, a table, and necessary chairs will fill the stage, and curtains and pictures of the right kind will do the rest. Luxury or poverty ideas can be conveyed by vases and flowers, tablecloths, and so on. These points are, of course, obvious and are merely mentioned to suggest a line of thought, which, though obvious, is not always acted on. Plays of modern life are easily set, as modern furnishing notions are based on elimination, with simple colourings, but demanding great skill and taste. Everything must be in harmony. Victorian settings, on the other hand, are full of detail, odds and bits, bric-à-brac, and what-nots, and a producer must exercise great skill and more than a little wit if he is to get the right effect and yet not clutter up the stage like a museum. It is

the EFFECT that is desired, not the FACT, and too much realism will be destructive of the effect rather than helpful.

Another important feature of a setting is the ease, speed, and safety with which the properties can be placed in position and taken away. While many hands make light work, small stages do not allow for large staffs. Consequently, a producer must design for quick changes with few people, and if a man has to waste time bringing off a couple of vases, a clock, an aspidistra, and so on, it is likely the play will drag in the intervals.

In a play where visual details are necessary for period atmosphere, the producer must keep his objects of suggestion fully visible, and not waste space by having bits of things where they cannot be seen. They might as well not be there as there and useless. Consequently, he should plan the position of his big stuff first, beginning with the active essentials, then the dominant passives (curtains, windows, doors, etc.), and then select salient points for suggestive details. These points depend on the general set, but the mantelpiece is one, the view through the window another, and perhaps a wall angle.

The use of sight lines in the early planning will greatly help the preliminary design, and when the active elements of the set have been marked on the plan, and allowances made for the movements of the cast, it will be found that the opportunities for turning the stage into a shop window have considerably decreased.

A tricky setting, which often trips up even a good producer, is one in which a light on the table centre is necessary.

In Fig. 17, which stage directions often ask for, the figure at the table will hardly be seen, if the only light on the stage is that of the lamp or candle. Only the lamp will be seen, and like the headlights on a car, will only dazzle the spectator. It is extraordinary how often this mistake is made, even in professional productions. The right place for the actor is at the *side* of the table, so that the light from the lamp gets the face at such an angle that everybody can see the movement of the lips. This angle can be of any degree provided the candle is farther from the audience, be it ever so slight a difference. If it is imperative that the actor should be behind the lamp then the actor must be well *above* the lamp, so

that the spectator can see the face without glare.

In Fig. 18 the spectator would not see the actor's face until the face was at least 6 in. higher above the lamp. If this cannot be arranged, a good tip is to tone down the light toward the



FIG. 17

audience by putting a pattern on the lamp shade—this acts as a light baffle—or having some flowers, or a loaf, or some such obstruction to prevent the light glaring at the audience.

When setting out the producer must consider the aspect of space, and when steps, a dais, or a rostrum have to come into the picture, he must calculate a little before putting the prop in hand. He must remember that a step higher than 6 in. is not easy stepping, and that a foot tread less than 7 in. is unsafe. If his stage is only 18 ft. deep, it is of no use designing a grand cathedral entrance with about ten steps until he has planned out what ten steps, say 8 in. deep, will take off his stage space. Ten steps, each 8 in. deep (10 in. \times 8 in. 80 in.) will bite off over 6½ ft. of depth, which leaves him only 11 ft. to the footlights, which is insufficient for free movement for four people in line. In the other dimension, allowing a 4 in. rise to each step, the base of his cathedral door must be 10 in. \times 4 in.

40 in. from the stage level, and if his door is 7 ft. high, he is getting the top out of sight on a 12 ft. proscenium opening. If that is what he wants, well and good, but it is advisable that he should know the exact effect he will get before ordering the stage manager to put the work in hand.

The same rule of precaution applies to all the gear that will be upon the stage; and desks, settees, sideboards, doors, windows, can all be calculated in advance, so that when the dress rehearsal comes there is no hitch that reasonable foresight could have avoided.

No doubt my readers will remember that definition of the equator as an imaginary line running round the earth. On the stage there is an equally imaginary point that we might christen the dramatic centre. It is arrived at by the use of the sight lines of previous plans, and has to be calculated afresh for each new stage. But when it is once established, the producer's work is enormously lightened. The idea is to divide the stage into sections, each of which has a place in the scheme of production. The plan appears as follows, based, it must be remembered, on the sight line (see Fig. 19).

The angle $B-A-C$, is always in sight as a whole, and the centre of that triangle is the most valuable position on the stage. Plot the line $C-D$ and intersect it with a line drawn from E to F crossing the middle points of $A-B$ and $A-C$, (see Fig. 19). The centre dot is the imaginary dramatic centre

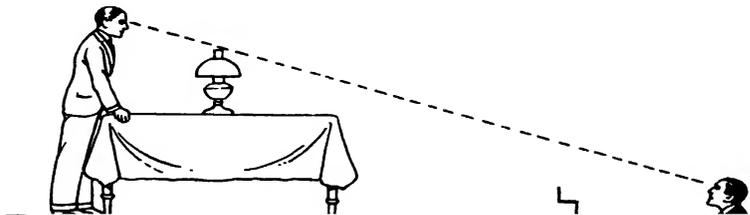


FIG. 18

and from it the essential positions and groupings can be made, and supplementary action and crowd work dealt with in the secondary angles. When this has been drawn to scale, say ¼ in. to the foot, and re-marked full size on the rehearsal floor, only a careless producer will find any part

of his essential action being smashed by bad crossings.

Such a plan will be of enormous assistance in arranging positions for the units of a set, not least important of which are the doors and windows. An intelligent understanding of this method will

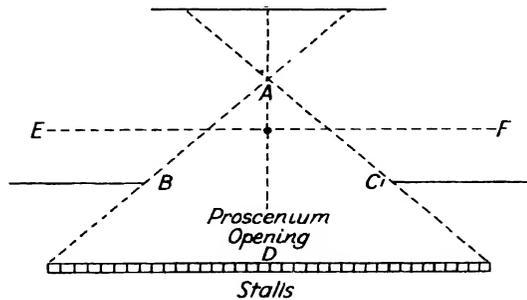


FIG. 19

act as a short cut for ascertaining the size of flats, wings, and so on.

This matter of measurement is often overlooked, and though it is really a matter for the stage manager, yet a producer should know the limits within which he has to work, otherwise he may find himself with an absurd wall consisting of a door, a window, and a fireplace without any supporting brickwork, which is obviously wrong, simply because he did not calculate that 4 ft. and 5 ft. and 4 ft. make 13 ft., and there would be no room for 2 ft. fillers. A preliminary measurement would have led to the elimination of the fireplace or the window. With proper measurements neat joints will ensue, and there will be nothing slipshod about the appearance of the set. Essential doors and windows can be properly related to the centre and the units on the stage.

Some time ago, I came across an excellent example of the application of this principle in a production of *The Waltz Dream* by Mr. Alan Pitt. The problem was to employ as many as possible in the chorus, provide as much room as possible for principals, and have a bandstand, chairs, tables, a solo dance, and room for twelve couples waltzing. Further, the impression of a crowded and popular garden restaurant had to be conveyed to the audience.

The total stage area available was 462 sq. ft., 21 ft. wide, and 22 ft. deep. The proscenium opening, less 2½ ft. each side, equalled 16 ft. When the large working diagram (Fig. 20) has been examined, I would suggest that a few experiments be made as a sort of puzzle or test of capacity as a producer, or to find out how many methods of utilizing these factors may be evolved. I will reset the problem in the form of an examination question.

The setting is a Viennese garden restaurant. Trees. Bandstand. Garden effect. Evening. Lights. Gaiety. Happy crowd of diners. The bandstand to hold orchestra of 7, a piano, and big drum. It must have steps to the band platform. Provide for a chorus of people, a solo dance, a waltz for 12 couples, the stage dressed with tables surrounded by diners. How would you arrange your tables, chairs, and wings to give good views of the solo incidents, and yet keep the impression of a

Back Wall

*Blank Stage
to contain "Waltz Dream" setting.*

Bandstand

*7 musicians, Piano, Big
drum*

Steps

Waltz for 12 couples

Solo Dance

Diners Tables Chairs Chorus

Proscenium

FIG. 20

crowded garden, remembering that the steps of the bandstand must not be covered?

Before reading further the reader should consider the solution.

Note that the problem is not one of producing these effects, but of getting them on to a stage of 462 sq. ft., with a proscenium opening of 16 ft.

The integral problem is the provision of a good clear space in the stage centre. Two things are essential, and cannot, therefore, be eliminated, the bandstand and the solo dance. Consequently, space must go to the bandstand, say 80 sq. ft. It must be a dominant feature of the set. That leaves 382 sq. ft. for dressing the stage with atmosphere, diners, waiters, tables with flowers, etc., and the dancers.

Each table *without* chairs is 2 ft. across, each chair takes (at $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft.) $2\frac{1}{4}$ sq. ft. The projection of the wings reduces the available space to the 16 ft. proscenium opening, decreasing to 14 ft. at the back along the line of the 22 ft. depth.

Each reader may evolve different solutions, reorganize the groupings of Mr. Pitt, and alter the number of wings, the shape of the bandstand, and so on. But I present Mr. Pitt's plan (Fig. 21) here as a real solution that can be departed from only in detail.

The ingenuity in the plan is the provision of the pockets at the top end right and left of bandstand. By angling or curving the bandstand, plenty of space is provided for the chorus to move on and off, particularly in the difficult waltz for twelve couples. These dancers were also seen at the tables, but when they got up to dance the illusion of great crowds was kept up by their seats being taken by members of the chorus who were occasionally seen by the audience as couples wandering through the woods.

It will be observed that the tables and chairs are unseen to a large extent by the audience at the sides. But what one side cannot see the other can.

To provide space these chairs and three wings were deliberately pushed back as far as possible to leave the centre clear. This is an example of the exploitation of the imagination of the audience. A garden scene such as this is nearly always symmetrical, i.e. one side repeats the other. Consequently, when the audience on the prompt side see tree wings and gay parties at tables on the off prompt side the mind's eye completes the invisible scene. Thus, the stage looks larger, and the effect of a crowd is maintained by applying the principle of "splitting," by which one half the world of the audience imagines how the other half lives.

It should be noted that this plan enabled Mr.

Pitt to have on his stage no fewer than fifty-five people at one time.

There is nothing empiric about a good set. It does not just come of itself. Its effectiveness is the result of knowledge of the craft, and a careful selection and elimination of details. The maximum effect with a minimum of means is a good

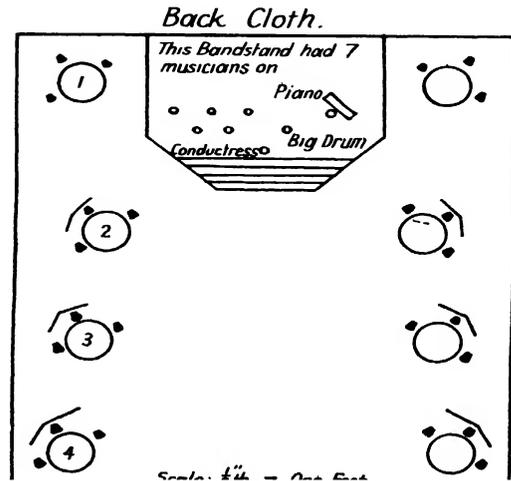


FIG. 21

slogan for the producer as it is for any other artist, and though these tips may be redundant to some of my readers who have evolved their own technique, the beginner will not find the foregoing useless.

TRIANGULATION AND SCENERY

A good producer will always remember that he is really an artist-workman with two sets of tools to work with, one set the living actors, the other the scenery or inanimate actors, using actor in this case as something presenting an illusion. His living actor may help him out at times, but he is at the mercy of his scenery, which will betray incompetence and slipshod methods.

A frequent and unnecessary fault is to disclose "behind the scenes" by not having the units of a scene properly set together. All illusion is spoilt if the edges of the flats do not fit together with neatness and obscurity. The flies or ceiling pieces used for masking top battens of lighting must

be at the right height so that the spectator in the front row of the stalls cannot see "how it is done."

The diagram at once demonstrates the fault and gives a method of ascertaining in advance how high the fly piece or the batten should be. It will be seen that a complete mask is effected by dropping the fly very little.

Modern producers have eliminated ceiling pieces, as shown in the diagram for the effect of a real horizontal ceiling with a candelabra hanging from the centre, but if Victorian drama in period sets is being produced they will have to be used, and they are also necessary in small halls where changes from interior to exterior sets do not allow of much room for manipulating a flat ceiling. The farther back stage we go, the less is the angle *A*, as is shown by the dotted back batten giving angle *B*. The height of these flies should be as high as possible, particularly in open-air scenes, so that the audience get as much freedom of view as possible. There are exceptions: a prison scene, for example, in which a compressed atmosphere and small spaces are to be suggested, but, generally speaking, spaciousness is to be aimed at, and this is helped by a minimum of top hamper.

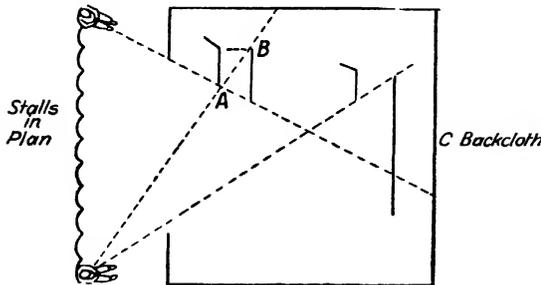
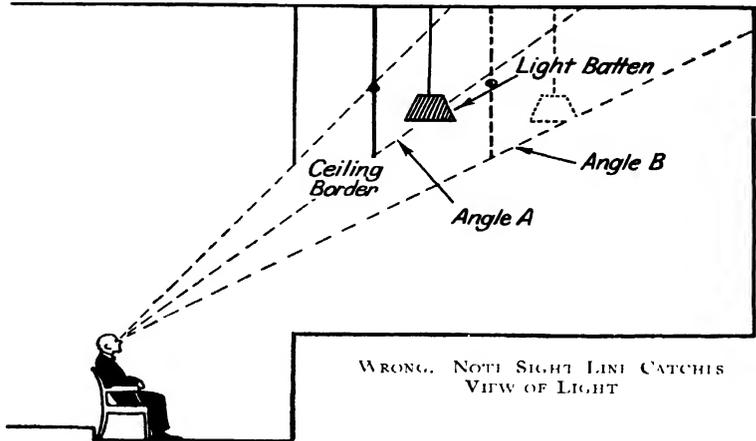


FIG. 22

The same principle applies to wings. Unless special occasion demands wing projection into the

stage, the space taken up by the wings should be the minimum necessary to produce the illusion required. The last set of wings should be in such a position that the edges of the backcloths are not exposed to people on the flanks of the front rows. It will be observed in the diagram that each wing presents a double problem. (See Fig. 22.)

The wing *A* must project sufficiently far on



to the stage to prevent a spectator at the extreme right of the theatre from seeing beyond the inner

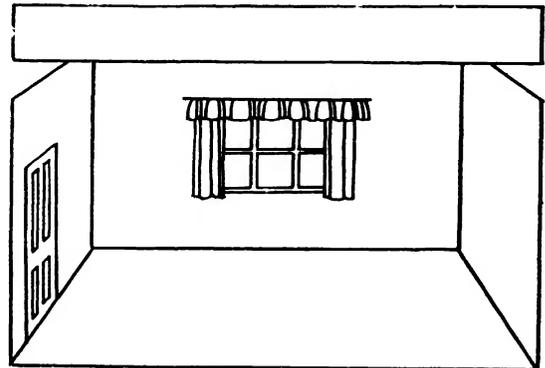


FIG. 23

edge of the wing *B* into the off-stage area. The producer must remember that it is one thing to

design your illusion, another to present it to perfection, and ragged details do more to undermine good foundations than any other factor.

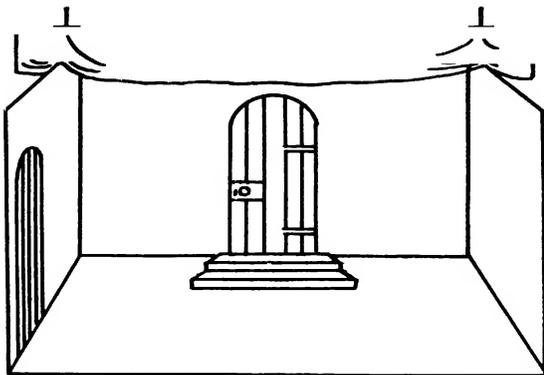


FIG. 24

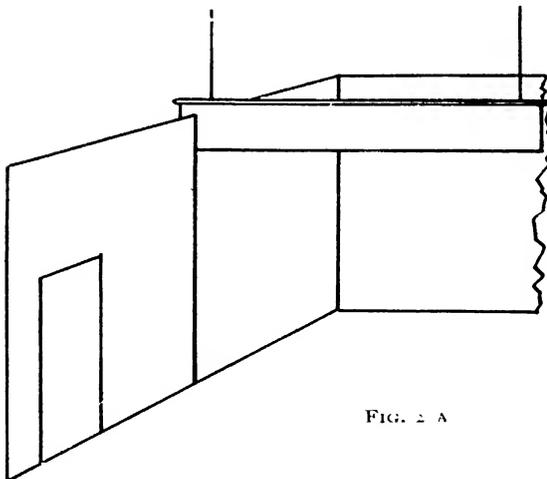


FIG. 2 A

The next point to observe is that in interiors the frieze and the ceiling flies should match so as to present an appearance of continuity.

In the diagram, Fig. 23, the ceiling cloth is resting on the top edges of the scenery, hanging quite flat and in order, not as in Fig. 24, where the stone top is all creased and untidy because it has been dropped too far. If a cloth has to be dropped

down into the set itself then it should go into one of the joins where flat is joined to flat, Fig. 24A. In exteriors, if the cloth is one of foliage, carry-

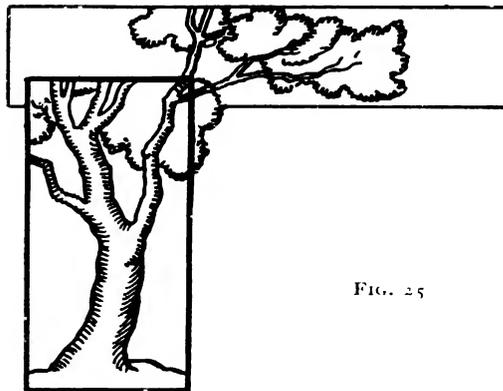


FIG. 25

ing the idea of an arching tree, care should be taken to match a bough or spring of a branch so that the tree on the wing is apparently arching over, and is not truncated all down

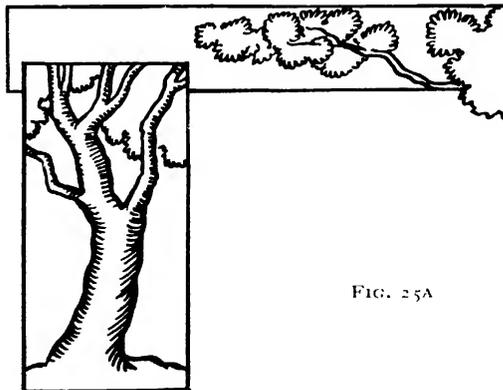


FIG. 25A

one side, with healthy twigs growing from nothing.

With cycloramic settings this problem is abolished, and I strongly advise all producers to try to fix up some sort of cyclorama for outside scenes. There is a reaction against the cyclorama in some repertory theatres, but I find it difficult to agree with this opposition.

PRODUCTION

The cyclorama relies for its effects more on light than on paint. It is really painting with light. With the old scenery the backcloth was

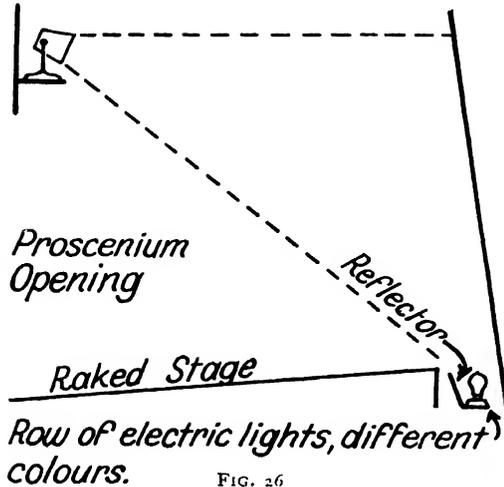


FIG. 26

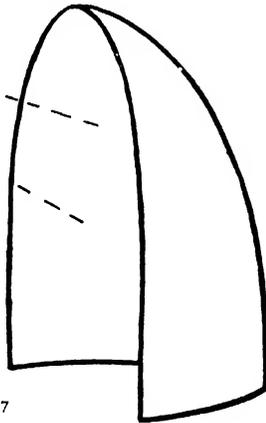


FIG. 27

a great trouble; its spires and rolling prospects seldom convinced the eye, though I have known of some fine effects from the brushes of Freemantle, Harker, and others, and also when Sir Herbert Tree and Sir Henry Irving mounted a play with lavish disregard of simplicity. But, generally speaking, and particularly with the

THEATRE AND STAGE

amateur, the backcloth was unsuccessful. Usually it was too near the foremost spectators to preserve the illusion, and it was largely with the eye of faith that the Piazza of St. Mark's or the distant view of Rome ever got beyond the mental fact of canvas and paint.

The cyclorama gives a fine atmospheric effect, as though the imagined scene was drenched in colour, as indeed it is.

The essential principle of cycloramic lighting is utilized in many ways, but, in brief, the application is to make a surface capable of reflecting any

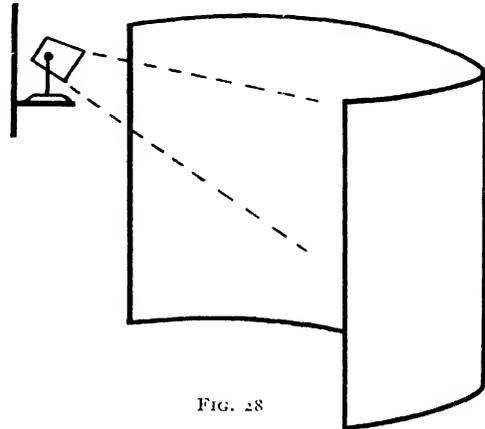


FIG. 28

coloured light projected on its surface. The colour of this ground is usually a neutral grey, light in tone, though practice varies. I have seen successful colourings of ivory, whitewash white, pale blue, or quaker grey.

A good arrangement is shown in Fig. 26.

Over the proscenium arch there is a shelf or gallery, on which there are two or more floodlights, with their beam directed on to a backcloth or plaster surface. The batten on the floor is a further supply of light, which can be complementary and supplementary to the main light. Suppose a twilight to moonlight effect is desired. If the floor batten is throwing up an amber glow and the projector is throwing blue, the base of the backcloth will show a sunset effect merging through green into the blue, and when the dimmer operates on the batten a gradual change will be effected until the whole sky is blue.

A cycloramic sky is very much more intense and beautiful in colour than painted cloths, and the possible permutations on a full colour range are too many to describe. A producer, even with

the most elementary knowledge of lighting, who cannot appreciate the possibilities of this system, should not be a producer.

Another cycloramic form comes from Germany and consists of a dome instead of a flat. This adds to the appearance of immensity (Fig. 27).

Another form is a plain, semicircular background (Fig. 28). Another of the simple designs is a board, movable backwards and forwards as desired (Fig. 29).

Sometimes the backing is perforated with small holes and a projector at the back gives the effect of stars.

There is also another method of presenting scenery. It did not get far, but I will mention it for its interest. It also was a German system, and was a sort of magic lantern method by which the painted scene was projected on to neutral cloths on the stage. It was expensive to install and found to have a limited application. It was an interesting method, however, as the scene was painted on to a slide and so was readily changed and lent itself to many excellent effects.

For practical purposes, and in particular for societies that have no permanent stage, the simple device of Fig. 29, with the projector working from the sides, is the most suitable.

The use of a cycloramic background calls for accessory scenery of a rather simple kind. The background being all sky, the background units of, say, a church, trees, bushes, etc., can be definitely silhouetted against a blue day or night sky, and wings can be simple, self-supporting pieces without much rope and tackle (Fig. 30)

The cyclorama shows to advantage in exterior scenes, as there is no necessity to continue a

piece of scenery to the flies; consequently, the outlines are clear cut with no false perspectives. This method adds to the electrician's responsibilities, as a lot depends on the proper use and application of light.

PLAY SELECTION AND THE PRODUCER

The selection of plays is one of the major aspects of production, and I doubt if a producer can do really good work if he is out of sympathy with his job. Producers tend to become specialists, and it would obviously be a risky matter, though its result might be interesting, if a musical comedy producer were put in charge of an Ibsen play. In theory, and within certain wide limits, a good producer can tackle any sort of play, but with experience, certain sympathies develop, and it is well that a producer should have his heart and soul, as well as his head, at work on the job in hand. The producer should have a word in the selection of a play, or if an outside producer is brought in he should be someone who is sympathetic towards the aims of the society in general, and the play in particular.

The heaven of dramatic endeavour has many mansions, and while one with wide experience of production should have the key to most of the doors, actual practice shows that the same words do not always carry the same meaning. What is

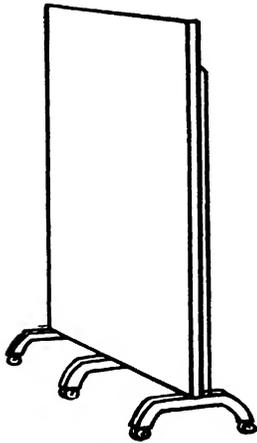


FIG. 29

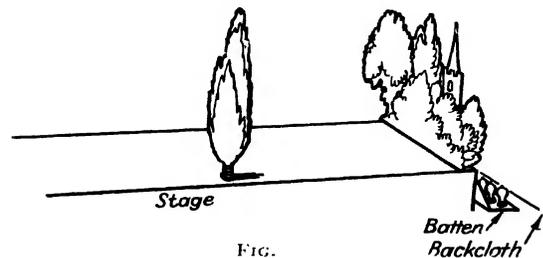


FIG.

“art” to one is highbrow nonsense to another. “Art” to the latter is something that the highbrow would dismiss with a shrugged shoulder. “What the public wants” is a catch-phrase that has wrecked many a selection committee. The public do not know what they want. There is no such thing as THE public. There are audiences.

There is an audience for musical comedy, another for heavy drama, another for comedy, and another for serious work. Some like to see plays they are familiar with, either by hearsay or experience. There is a small but secure audience for the adventurous new production: "first time on any stage" (and sometimes the last). These audiences overlap, of course, but I think it may safely be stated that the big audience for musical comedy is very little interested in the venturesome solo flight.

Selection committees and producers should, therefore, be quite clear to which type of audience they intend to appeal. When the course to be run has been decided upon, it should be run boldly and decisively, it being remembered that the public has to pay the piper. Therefore the selection committee should see that the tune is the best it can produce.

This question of policy is all-important and fundamental, and is really the work of the society concerned. A clear cut policy of production will gain supporters; an indeterminate zigzag policy means indecision and loss.

When once policy is decided, the appointment of the producer is the foundation of success or failure. The producer is the absolute centre and focus. Sometimes the problem does not arise because it is the producer who has taken the initiative and gathered round himself a band of followers to perform certain types or qualities of play. This sort of society does well if the producer is trusted and farms out the business aspects to a good committee, the members of which see that he does not spend more than his hall capacity will produce. Usually, however, it is the society that comes first, and then the producer is attached. If the committee is clear-headed, it will take the producer into its confidence, state the society's objects, and be guided by what the producer says. If the producer is clear-minded, he will be quite definite as to what he *wants* to do, and if his sort of play does not conform to the tastes of the committee, he should not attempt something that is unsympathetic to his own ideas.

Sometimes the committee already has the play title in mind. Similar remarks apply. The producer should be one in accord with the play. If his tastes lie towards creative work, with original scenery, costumes, and lighting, he will be impatient at putting on a commonplace, oft per-

formed farce, with stock scenery and hackneyed situations. On the other hand, the producer of the commonplace (and there are many excellent producers in this category) would be at a loss when handed a script with which he was unfamiliar.

In selecting a play, assuming the producer problem to be adequately settled, many things should be considered; not least the acting capacity of the group concerned. It is not fair to a producer to hand him a cast the members of which have not the elements of acting in them, and expect him to produce even a tolerable show with the crudest elements of production materials, or employ all the resources technical science provides. Yet this wonderland is only the background against which the acting will appear, and if the cast is inexperienced or incapable the truth will out.

It is extraordinary, but confirmed by many years' intensive observation of the amateur stage, that those groups with the highest ideals usually have the least efficient casts, while the skilled actors are to be seen in solid sorts of play that are certain successes. The intellectuals rely too much on the author, whereas the other sort rely on themselves. Nevertheless, the selection of a play should primarily be governed by the ability to play it. It might be argued that in those circumstances no man can ever begin, as at some period in time he is inexperienced. Quite right; but experience in acting can be gained, like any other experience, by starting at the bottom. Consequently, a new society, with only a nucleus of experienced players, should not select a play demanding good character acting in the majority of parts, or one in which the small parts have considerable bearing on the play. Societies should not allow ambition to outrun discretion; and, while maintaining a high standard in their type of play, they must exercise a lot of thought before deciding on a final choice. Size of stage might inhibit a big production, and limited space at the side of the stage forbid many changes of scene. In the beginning, a selection committee should take advice from the man who is to assume responsibility, and be content to cut their coat according to their cloth.

FAMILIAR PLAYS

Most societies find the task of play selection made easy by a prominent member of the selection committee who has opportunities for seeing

London shows, and as he (or she) can always act as brilliantly as the London star, it is thought a good idea to do that play with the committee member reproducing the accents and appearance of the London original. The idea does not usually materialize, but the player has satisfied ambition. Out of such selective methods little creative work will come, but somehow it does produce some tolerable imitative actors, who in due time and season develop their own style. But by that time the mould has formed, and the capacity to act has gone. Ability to perform remains, and so plays have to be built round a performance and each show is only a repetition of the last.

AGREED LISTS

Another method is for a number of people to make an individual selection, and then meet to pick one title. This meeting usually lasts for hours because each nominator thinks his nomination the best. It seldom occurs to such a group that a lot of breath would be saved if an "agreed list" were drawn up, and then given to the producer to produce as he found convenient. This method is most helpful, as it enables an alert producer to work ahead, and plan scenery, "props," and costumes in such a way that there is the maximum of use with a minimum of effort and cost.

Societies should beware of the "literary" play. There are many plays, some of them of first-class importance as literature, which *read* well, but *act* badly. They are traps inasmuch as they read so well, and the reader's mind functions so readily, that the difference between the *mental* picture and the *actual* appearance is overlooked. The bait and trap is usually in the dialogue, which is baited with ideas, brimming with wit, and full of happy allusion. But to develop the ideas requires words, and all dealers in ideas are not Shaws, and so what the mind assimilated, when translated to the actor, is slowed up and becomes a chunk of dreary polemic, without dramatic action. A case in point is C. K. Munro's *Rumour*, a powerful indictment of armaments, which, if acted as published, would have the audience sound asleep. But when it is pruned of its long dialectics, and tension is created, it is as good a play as any published within ten years of the date of its publication. So beware the literary and propaganda play until it has been made dramatic.

Debate is not drama, though drama can be in debate. The audience are interested in persons, not in abstract notions. If a society wants a play with ideas, care should be taken that it is not mere "words, words, words," but conflict and personal tension as well.

DANGER POINTS

There are exceptionally fine plays with ideas, but because *An Enemy of the People* is a good play does not mean that a long dissertation about the human conscience is going to hold an audience seeking entertainment. *An Enemy of the People* is at once a good play, good ideas, and powerful drama because in addition to the ideas it has far more personal conflict than many a modern prize fight.

There are danger points in another sort of play, in which a vital part of the action is described but not explained in the stage directions. D. B. Wyndham Lewis once hit this off very well with his—

"Enter two men. They cross the stage looking as though they lived in Balham with a mother-in-law named Higgins."

While this may be extreme it has more than a likeness to some of the directions that are impossible of achievement. There is a certain play, by a reputable author, in which a room is described. Over the mantelpiece is a portrait of an ancestor, which, when the curtain rises on the first act, shows the ancestor as an elderly man of fierce and implacable aspect, but as the play develops his expression changes until he appears benign and philanthropic. As a practical stage direction it has no value because the attention of the audience is on the players, not the "props," even assuming that any property master alive could produce such a picture that was not obviously fake.

As a rule selection committees should avoid "spook" plays of serious purpose. Angels and ministers of grace may defend us, but have little effect on modern audiences, except, of course, when they appear in simple, unsophisticated moralities and such like. I have always felt that *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* was more Forbes-Robertson than the Stranger, and when, as in some thrillers, the ghostly actor has been the active principal, he was never accepted by the

audience except on toleration and without prejudice. No audience would accept the effect of a fairy's wand, and no more is a ghost or spirit actually acceptable except as a mere device, and a poor one at that. The modern mind relies on itself, and the spook, whether good angel or bad devil, has a hard time as a motive force. Apart from this critical aspect of construction, there are few amateurs who can carry the atmosphere of a mystic visitor; voice, deportment, gesture, and a way of wearing clothes, have to be just right to carry conviction, and it requires ability plus experience to make the ghostly appearances effective. Also, there is always the knowledge that the ghost is no ghost but really Jack Smith or Elsie Brown, and that the miraculous results of the intervention are due not to the angel, but to the stage manager, who will reproduce the miracle whenever and wherever you like. This must not be taken as eliminating all "spook" plays, but before a decision is made consideration should be given to the use of the spook, and how far the effects are reasonable and intelligent. Spooks in this category cover a multitude of stage devices such as wizards and witches. If the play is placed in the fifteenth century, and an angel or wizard kills a man by just pointing at him, it is credible, for that sort of belief was natural at the time, but to have a modern share rigger killed in his Park Lane library by the same means is too much to hope for in these days.

GRIP

The test of a play is its power to grip the mind of the spectator with the fortunes of the cast. In Greek Tragedy, the interest is concentrated on the visible personnel against the background of destiny, but though the end is known, the greatness of theme and the struggle against Fate provide us with the excitement or tension inherent in good drama. The same power of grip is necessary whether in comedy or farce, and selection committees should always look for this element, whether their object is to produce plays of consequence or mere amusement.

Another element is action. Drama must move. The time available is too short to allow of literary description, and where description comes in it must be relevant. A study of *Macbeth* will show this. That martlet haunted castle is described

as part of the action; it is not mere description. It creates the atmosphere of peace, a peace soon to be disturbed.

It is this element of action that makes thrillers and such-like so attractive to play. Everything is obvious and to the point. That the point is not always a good one only emphasizes the excellent writing technique of a good thriller. If only playwrights with valuable ideas would exploit them with the same competence of technique, there would be little difficulty in selection.

DIALOGUES AND SITUATIONS

In the case of comedies, two things must be looked for, crisp dialogue and good situations. Do not rely too much on the epigram as read; it must be spoken correctly, and many a comedy, good in dialogue, weak in situation, has failed because of the loss of its epigrammatic flavour.

Inexperienced groups can nearly always get away with farces because of the boisterous character of the story. The theme of action is carried fully into effect, and the actor is a vehicle more or less satisfactory. Some farces are definitely built for a team, and it is dangerous for amateurs to try to repeat their success, but, generally speaking, when inexperience is a problem it is not a bad expedient to begin with a comedy.

When the play has been selected, the next problem is to cast it. As to this no golden rule can be laid down for beginners. It is a good plan, however, to have an audition at which a selection committee, or the producer only, shall select his cast after seeing and hearing the individuals desiring to take up a part. It is debatable whether it is better to have the candidates for histrionic honours tested by a set piece or to let them "shoot" their own material. In the former case, the judges can see how the player can control and use material provided, but if it is not quite suitable the aspirant may appear at a disadvantage, not at all representative of actual possibilities. For my part, no matter how big the list of candidates, I like to hear and see them do both, and though it may mean about five auditions of *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God* it is a method that does give a fairly good basis for selection. The producer should have a good say in selecting the cast, as he may see potentialities in an individual that he can bring out, or he may see a person as suitable

for a certain part when the rough tests of an audition fail to bring out the qualities required.

One of the things an actor must be careful of, if he wishes to develop his full talent, is not to allow producers to cast him because he is a "type." Nothing is more calculated to destroy artistic development than continually to be in parts that do not demand any creative work.

Producers should avoid the easy path of casting somebody who, without make-up, or any other art of the theatre, is "just the part." The job of the actor is to act, and the producer should produce, not merely present, a person in a particular part, which in turn is definitely acted. If an actor allows himself to be cast as a type, eventually he will not know how to act; he will be able to reproduce only his type. I am not saying that appearance, and so on, should not be regarded, to a considerable degree, but a good actor can usually add Art to Nature, and make-up counts for a great deal when it is intelligently applied. My objection to type casting is that an actor loses all sense of multiple character. Of course, there are people who are excellent as, say, duchesses or charwomen, and if the roles are reversed the result is not so good. It is all right so long as there are plays abounding with duchesses and charwomen.

THE WIDE NET

I give good advice in asking producers and actors to think in terms of the theatre and in terms of acting. Every producer should cast his net widely, mixing his players in parts, and avoiding stars as much as possible. This is difficult, I know, because when once a producer has found a good, reliable artist, he always wants to see that artist cast in the important roles. After all, the public is paying to see the best the society can do, and it is asking a lot that a known good actor should stand down for an unknown player. Nevertheless, producers should take a chance and if rehearsals show a woeful mis-cast, then a change must be made. But a producer who does resist the easy way of the star system and type casting, will, in the course of six or seven productions, have a good all-round company more or less capable, according to their ability and his talent, of tackling anything in reason.

Another advantage of training for all-round acting strength is that the plague of matrimony,

which so often depletes the ranks of an A.D.S., will not leave the producer entirely without leading man and woman resources.

REHEARSALS TIME-TABLE

One aspect of play production that the producer, but not always the cast, fully appreciates, is the importance of rehearsals. No matter how small his part, a player should always be on time, and for a principal to cut a rehearsal should put him in grave risk of losing the part.

If there is one aspect of production in which the producer should and must exercise the strictest discipline, it is in the matter of rehearsals. A slack principal is a disgrace and lets down the whole team by creating uncertainty. Sometimes slackness is due to sloppy arrangements by the producer, and he should ensure efficiency by working to a definite schedule, planned well in advance and known to every character.

It is not fair to the cast for a producer to leave everything to chance, and go on from rehearsal to rehearsal, building up in a haphazard way. Rehearsals are the most important part of the mechanism of making a play, and if properly arranged, there is no reason why they should not go through perfectly smoothly, if the producer plans well, and the players support him by strict attention to the schedule.

To illustrate my point I give a schedule for a production of *Macbeth*, covering a period of six weeks, say from the beginning of September to Mid-October, for production on 14th, 15th, 16th October.

This schedule should be carefully studied as it has stood the test of a number of productions. Note how it steadily builds up from woolliness to clarity, until each unit has fitted into the machine.

No matter how excellent a producer's method may be, he must have the fullest trust and co-operation of his cast. This or any other system of working will break down if principals do not attend. It is a thoroughly vicious principle for any member to develop the "all right on the night" philosophy. It will not be all right on the night unless everybody has worked to make it so, and one of the essentials of all-rightness is for *everybody to know what everybody else is going to do*, and this is not possible if members of the cast

“MACBETH”
REHEARSAL AND PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Week ending	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
Sept. 5	Reading full play (Club room)	Reading full play (Club room)	Staff consultation	Principals	Crowds (Stage Manager in charge)	Full cast walk through	
.. 12		Acts 1, 4 (Principals)	Crowds (Stage Manager in charge)	Acts 2, 3 (Principals)		Right through (Principals only)	
.. 19	Staff consultation progress	Act 5	Crowds (Stage Manager in charge)	Acts 1, 2		Acts 3, 4, 5	
.. 26	Try on costumes	Acts 1, 2, 3	Crowd, costumes, props	Acts 4, 5 (props)		Right through	
Oct. 9	Lighting, scenery, rehearsal	Right through	Right through	Rest	Right through	Right through	
.. 16	Principals dress rehearsal	Dress rehearsal (all in)	<i>Full Dress</i> rehearsal	<i>The Show</i> Good luck!	The Show	The Show	

have not been present to see for themselves and also to be seen by the others.

A deadly setback is the absentee who attends a rehearsal and has to be shown and told what happened at the last. If absolute necessity causes such an absence the understudy should take the rehearsal, and in the interval pass on the necessary instruction to the absentee, and if, when the rehearsal comes, the defaulting member is not according to Cocker, a definite hint about being dropped off the team might bring about a more earnest frame of mind. There should be no nonsense about this, and a producer must be firm. While efficiency and machinery may not be art in the fullest sense, it is sheer nonsense to think that good results will come without hard work and attendance. The big illusion is this nonsense about temperament. Temper is not temperament, only bad manners, and any producer who encourages the tantrums deserves all the bad times that come to him. A temperamental player is usually 50 per cent temper and 50 per cent mental.

Parts should be allotted and script distributed

as soon as possible, and for purposes of the schedule of rehearsal I have assumed that the Society Selection Committee had looked ahead as the season closed, and knew what they would open with the following October. This allowed them to cast their play BEFORE the holiday season, so that at the first rehearsal there was no need to worry about those "words, words, words." No actor can rehearse well when trying to *remember* words. The task of recollection will beat down the effort to experiment with inflections and emphases, and a producer will be building up while the player's memory is breaking down. This is no good, for at the next rehearsal the player will have forgotten all, or nearly all, the producer told him.

In the case of a new play the cast should be introduced to it by means of a full reading, which in some cases may be used as an audition. If this takes place, say, in late April, or early May, the cast can learn the individual parts in full possession of the value of the part in relation to the whole. It is astonishing how few societies work on the

reading system and how many on the old slapdash system of not letting the cast know the entirety of the play until the first time the play is run through completely. This reading should be held as soon as possible. There is nothing like a reading of the play, with each character cast with a separate reader (one fancied for the part is preferable) and with the reading done with the right inflections, as though it were a public performance. Even a rehearsal of this reading is an advantage. If this is done, then the individual members of the cast get the right perspective on their part, and in the mind's-eye can build up the character during the summer months and learn the lines, so that at the first rehearsal a "walk through" is possible. A "walk through" is reciting the lines as they will be given at the performance with rough and ready crossings and positions marked off, ready for closer detail work as the production takes shape.

A vivid variation of the schedule is obtained by colouring the squares a different colour for each section—stage staff, principals, etc.—and marking them off as each date passes. Slackers then see the evil day approaching and stimulate themselves accordingly, the producer sees visible progress, and the various departments see exactly when the hour of trial will come.

The use of these charts removes that sense of uncertainty that is the basis of most of the slacking, and gives no one any excuse for not knowing where he or she stands in the scheme of things.

Working plans remove the necessity for a producer having to explain his scheme of work to his eager but impatient cast, and when the scheme is seen plainly set out it will be found that absenteeism is reduced to a minimum.

A big fault with amateurs is to rehearse *only at rehearsals*. All that should be expected of a producer is that he produces the whole, and it is not fair for one individual, principal or not, to take up more than a due share of time.

If an inflection, or a movement, or an action, is not quite right after a few attempts at one of the early rehearsals, it is tedious and breaks down interest, if the rest of the cast has to hang around for the sake of one or two people working out a detail.

The actors concerned should thoroughly get hold of the producer's idea, then proceed with the

general rehearsal, and between rehearsals bring the difficult detail to perfection.

A similar attitude should be adopted to the learning of the words. It is not fair to a producer if the cast never study the book except at rehearsals. A rehearsal under the producer's orders is the time for action, construction, subtlety, certainty, and not for the learning of lines. Nobody can rehearse well with one hand holding a book. No rehearsal can go well when the prompter is continually butting in, not because he wants to, but because he has to.

When once the cast has a thorough grasp of the author's intention, and the producer's idea, and when crossings, gestures, positioning, etc., are all fairly grasped, the actual props, such as swords, pikes, handbags, etc., should be used, or if not the actual things, things as near the real things as possible. Familiarity with props is a good thing: it prevents fumbling and last-minute discoveries of an awkward character.

I remember once being interested in a show that was being produced by a young producer, and I gave him this advice. As it was free, it was disregarded, with the result that on the dress rehearsal night, the supper table projected over the footlights because he had forgotten that the dais projected 3 ft. from the balcony cloth, in its turn 4 ft. from the backcloth, so that 7 ft. of his 14 ft. stage was taken up. The table was 9 ft. long and had to be placed sideways along one side, as important business took place at the O.P. side round the table end. If that young producer had taken the tip of an old hand, and worked on chalk lines and actual props or copies, he would not have had the nerve-wracking dress rehearsal from which he suffered. Foresight is a big thing in good production, and rehearsals can be used for all sorts of things besides rehearsing the cast.

BAD HABITS

A wise producer will not allow his cast to smoke during rehearsals unless they are going to do so at the same time "on the night." We are all creatures of habit, and none more so than the cigarette smoker. If a slack producer allows his cast to smoke at incorrect times during rehearsals, then it is a million to one that at the dress rehearsal that particular player will not know what to do with his hands. He used to be fingering a

cigarette, but now he has no cigarette; consequently he has a hand and an arm too many. The correct use of the hands is difficult at all times, but when use is complicated by ignorance and self-consciousness, it is much more difficult. Again, when rehearsing a costume play the men actors should not be allowed to keep their hands in their trousers pockets; otherwise, when they get their tights on and find no pockets there will be much fumbling. I state this just to emphasize that a rehearsal should be a rehearsal. It is a serious thing, and should approximate in all details as much as possible to the real show. But there is staleness to be avoided, and a prudent producer keeps his cast fresh by always keeping something back and having something in view—a costume try on, rehearsal with props, rehearsal with costumes, rehearsal with costumes and make-up, and so on, so that the cast has always something fresh to look forward to. This question of staleness is one that particularly affects the small part holder. It is wearisome to be waiting for two or three hours, maybe three nights a week, for the moment when one must enter and say "My Lord, the carriage waits."

Yet it is important that that particular small part shall be rehearsed, and rehearsed well with the principal players. The player says only a few words, makes only a momentary appearance, but it may be that his or her entrance with that particular message at that particular moment is the very pivot on which the play turns. There is no such thing as an unimportant part. Some parts are long, some are short, but all are important—like the pause of the orator, or the calm before the storm.

Nevertheless, it is an undue strain when a capricious or exacting producer insists on attendance of these small part actors over a long period of time, and I feel that it is a mistake. No producer should ask more than his cast can usefully give, and if a player can do a small part in a few short, sharp rehearsals why waste time by keeping him waiting?

I have appealed, and will continue to appeal, for loyal and regular support for the producer, but that support is only deserved, particularly in amateur societies, by reciprocity. A person must feel that time is being profitably employed, and it is not good enough to be asked to give up two or

three evenings a week, for six weeks or so, to make a brief appearance.

The solution lies in recognition of the fact that the production of a play has many departments. The acting is most in the limelight, but there are all sorts of odd jobs that require organization and execution. Apart from understudying, which is important, there is an enormous amount of detail work that small part players can be getting on with while waiting for their little piece. If they are women, there is the wardrobe; if men, the properties or electric wiring. Always there is the office side of the job, envelope addressing, etc., for men or women.

Dr. L. du Garde Peach tells a good story in this connexion of his village players at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire. Dr. Peach had been asking for members and supporters for his dramatic society, and after dwelling at length on the community value of the work, drove the point home by telling his hearers that no matter what their occupation, interest, or vocation was, there was always a job for them in a dramatic society, and he invited offers after the meeting. In due course a member of his audience told him how much he had been impressed by the arguments and how anxious he was to help in any possible way, but as he could not act, or use tools, or sing, he did not see where his study and knowledge of philately could be usefully employed. But he was soon absorbed with the work when Dr. Peach put him on to sticking entertainment stamps on tickets!!

The whole principle is to keep all minds curious, alert, and occupied, eagerly looking forward to the completion of the task in hand, or looking for the surprise round the corner of time. Each rehearsal should see a job done, and a new one dawning.

If a producer can keep alive this sense of adventure, the cast is kept in a state of expectation that augurs well for the excitement of the opening and produces that electric atmosphere which communicates itself to the audience, so that players and audience are welded into one unity. The production of a play should be a great adventure, with everybody working as a member of a team or crew, each with an allotted task, great or small, which falls into place on the night of the full-dress rehearsal.

There is a superstition that a chaotic dress

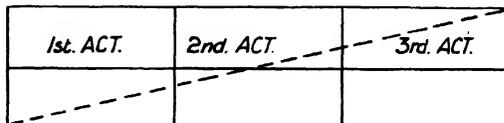
rehearsal presages a good first night. Perhaps it does. I cannot deny that I have seen dress rehearsals which were more like a Palladium crazy week than the culmination of a period of organized work and which preceded a first night that went off as smoothly as possible. Also I have seen a first night go awry after an excellent dress rehearsal. Nevertheless, I believe that I am giving good advice in preaching the elimination of all uncertainty by study and organized effort. Surely the cumulative effect of rehearsals should be so organized that, apart from the psychological factor, the opening night should be as good as any. I do not believe that it is good to trust to chance or inspiration. The chances should be taken, and the inspiration invoked, before the show, and not during the run. Rehearsals are periods of trial and error, experiment and elimination, and everything should be cut and dried before the curtain rises on the last dress rehearsal. The only uncertain factor should be the reactions of the audience, and cast and producer should feel that when the curtain rises on the first night, each and every one has honestly and conscientiously done his or her individual best to give the audience that which has been promised on the one side and paid for on the other—a good show.

RHYTHM

Every work of art has rhyme and reason. Without these it cannot exist in the world of art, and it becomes part of the great jumble of what might have been. Particularly is this so in play production, a form of art expression which, perhaps, offers greater complexities than any other, except architecture. But great though the difficulties may be, they must be surmounted if play production is to be accepted among the arts. Rhythm is the key: rhythm, a noun—something real: defined as harmony, metre, rhyme, beat, number, poetry. But definitions do not help us very much. Words are not sufficient, and dictionaries are inadequate to describe the manifestation of the human spirit. But inadequate or not, words are my tools, and with words I must convey this important message of Rhythm.

All plays are an appeal to the emotions. Without this emotional appeal there is no drama. With nothing but emotion drama is "mere

theatre." Drama is "theatre" plus intellect. A good play lives because it appeals to the intellect through the emotions. Take away the intellectual content, and a play is without lasting values. The converse is equally true. If a play is all intellect, it is not only ephemeral, but dull, like a time-table. Having found a play with these two elements of "theatre" and "intellect," the producer must bring out its rhythm. He must introduce a pulsation, a rise and fall, a crescendo of



varying impacts until, at the conclusion, the audience is in complete *rapport* with the play and players. Let the fact be thus represented.

The broken line is intended to indicate the steady growth of interest and grip of the audience. Such growth, however, would not make a good show. It would lack variety. Its plane of interest would be too monotonous and positive. It would weary the body, and hypnotize the mind. Variation must be introduced, so that the progress of the play is a series of stimulations and rests, thus—

CURTAIN FALL



Each act concludes on a climax, and each successive climax is higher than its predecessor, the finale being the highest and most conclusive. Shakespeare knew this trick (shall we be modern and call it technique?) of alternation.

A producer has two main avenues along which to direct his rhythmic demands, namely, the play as a play, and the actors as such. The construction of a good play enables these two avenues to be explored. The author makes one situation tense, the next humorous, and so on.

A good play to examine for this rhythmic content is Shaw's *St. Joan*. Examine the first

act between Dunois and the steward. The dramatic tension is steadily built up like the noise of galloping cavalry; then when the Maid enters, she comes into a full company of expectant minds, all concentrated on her, all in accord with her, all in mental and emotional contact with her. From then the play builds up, slows down, twists here, turns there, but all the time on a single theme—the destiny of Joan.

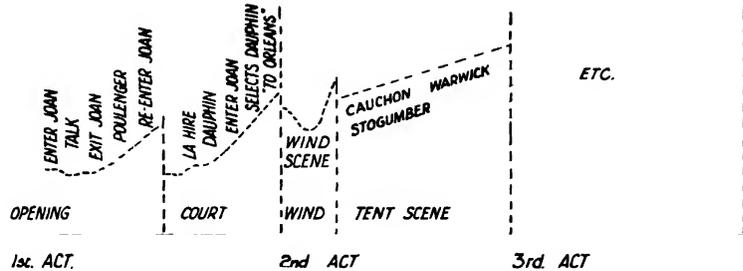
This quality of rhythm should be carefully gauged by the producer. He should read his script carefully, and get his mental picture clearly recorded—the dramatic value of each page should be examined, the full dramatic and emotional content of each sentence worked out, and above all, each line and each character put in proper relation to the rhythm of the whole. The result may be charted.

This is only a rough indication.

When the producer has evolved such a chart, he can discuss it with the cast as a whole, so that each responsible person can see at a glance exactly where his or her act falls into the general scheme.

Having arrived at his conclusions about the rhythm in the script, the producer must next analyse his human material. He will not be a free agent. Human nature is not easily harnessed to a single mind. A loyal team recognize a pro-

a producer's experiments and guesses, the individual member will seek to go the direct way as it is seen through his or her part. With a weak producer this attitude, adopted by the cast, can easily produce a series of extraordinarily good



personal performances, but the general structure of the play will be destroyed. Therefore, the producer must control his players and adjust and relate them in rhythm.

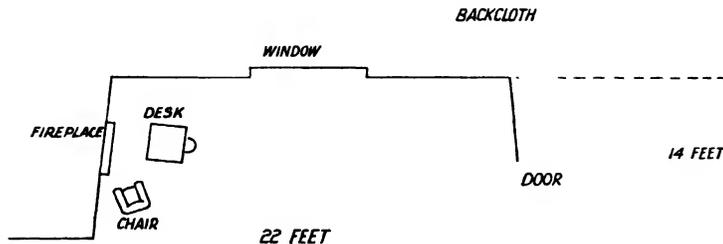
Each part will have its own rhythm. This, when related to the others, should form an emotional pattern.

It is difficult to illustrate this by example, as each play demands its own development.

However, analysis of an hypothetical part will illustrate how the principle can be applied. Think of a triangle play. A and B are married. C is the lover. B, the innocent party in the triangle, has been told of the intrigue by a well meaning but gossiping friend. B disbelieves, and on arrival

home finds an incriminating letter, which confirms the friend's story, but the letter is unsigned, and is without names. How can it be used to prove the partner's guilt? Imagine an empty room. We have seen the letter received, thrown down, and forgotten. We see the entry of B, the various emotions of disbelief,

suspicion, rejection, suspicion again, anxiety, disbelief; then—discovery of the letter. The absence of names creates hope. The circumstances are too coincident for innocence. The height of anxiety is revealed—then the guilty A enters. There is tension. Interrogation begins, and ends with the production of the proof. Up to the beginning of



ducer's difficulties if the producer himself is competent. It is when a team feel that a producer makes wild experiments and is guessing that the members become restless. The reason for this is easily understood. Each member of a cast can see (or ought to see) his or her part quite clearly. Consequently, unless there is sound reason behind

the interrogation regard this as a mute scene, with B pacing up and down, and so on. Now this pacing should be carefully modulated; it should not be too long and it should not be too quick; it should be neither scrappy nor jerky. It must be *timed*. Only experience and the individual concerned can properly gauge the time. The occasion

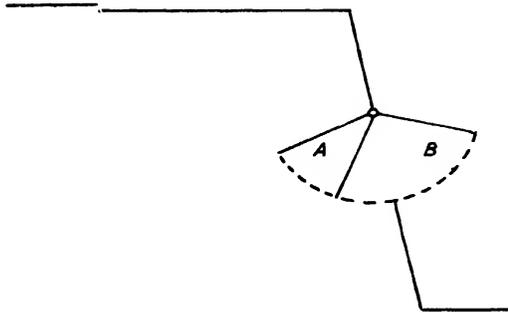


FIG. 31

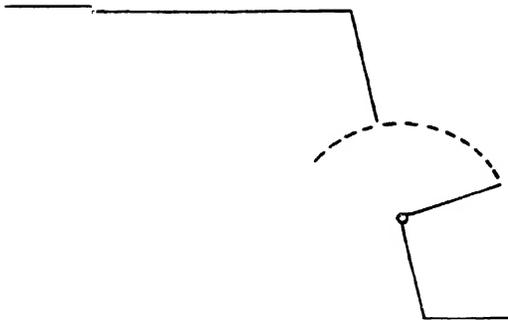


FIG. 32

is one for the use of artistry. Every look, every step, every pause, must have its place. If they are too long the attention of the audience will decline. If they are too short, the full height of interest will not be achieved, and the entrance of A will lose its force. If they are broken up and fussy, the attention will be shattered. The producer must see that the actor builds up the scene, but he can give little help except by criticism. Now in such a scene pacing may be employed, B going up and down, from side to side, from the window to the door. Pacing is often the amateur's downfall; yet failure can

easily be avoided if the principle of rhythm is known and applied.

Each step should be part of a pattern, and calculated to avoid half steps or broken steps. Steps are, of course, variable. Some individuals take longer strides than others. Imagine an actor with a normal pace of 2 ft. 6 in.—30 in. (This is a full marching pace, and though it is long it will serve for illustrative purposes.) Here is the plan of a scene. On the desk is the letter. B enters, and crosses to the mirror over the fireplace.

It will be seen that from the door to a spot just in front of the fireplace is, say, 20 ft., or exactly

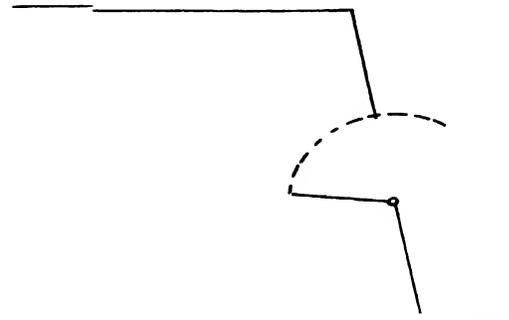


FIG. 33

eight paces. If normal pacing is, say, 20 in. or 1 ft. 8 in., then twelve paces will be required—a difference of half as many again. There will be a time lag of 50 per cent. Now the audience neither knows nor cares about a person's paces. The tempo of the play, however, is affected. If the 30-in. pacer goes at the rate of two paces a second and obtains the right effect, then the 20-in. pacer must also adopt the same TIME, time being the important factor, not the number of paces.

Now assume that the desk is the objective, that it is seven and a half paces away—the half must be watched, or the pacing will be seven paces and a shuffle. The actor should rehearse the distance until it is walked or paced, slowly or hurriedly, according to requirements, without any flurry or awkwardness at the end. The ending of a walk is particularly important when a speaking exit has to be made.

To continue with the consideration of the

hypothetical situation, we will assume that the discovery has been made, that the argument is at an end, and that B is leaving the house forever. The door must open away from the

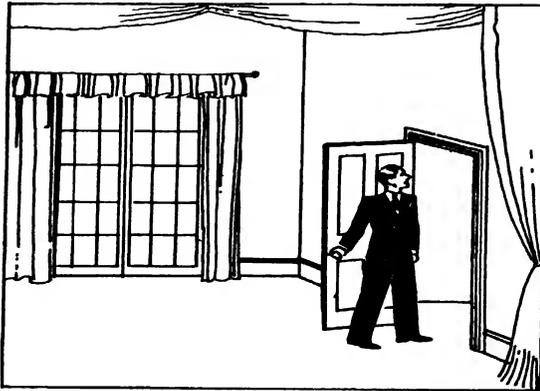


FIG. 34

footlights (Fig. 31), making the arc either A or B but not as Fig. 32 or Fig. 33.

In Fig. 34 the door provides a background for the final, annihilating shot in the verbal battle.

This rule, like all rules of acting, is made to be broken, but when a genius breaks a rule for his own purpose, he usually makes a new rule that is applicable to himself only. This matter of timing and exactitude applies no matter how many instances can be quoted of when a great actor did so and so in contravention of the rule. The great actor would not have become a great actor if at some time or another he had not had the alphabet of acting firmly instilled into him. The amateur actor should do this timing subconsciously, but he must be told about it first. Then practice will make perfect. An actor who has this technique at his finger tips will dominate a cast that lacks such experience, and a producer is at a great disadvantage if he is expected to teach the others the elements of the craft. Nevertheless, the cast must be in balance, particularly in modern plays.

Balance and rhythm are two most important elements. For balance, each character has a relation to everything in the play and the cast. For rhythm, each player has definite metre to strike out. When balance and rhythm are right, little can go wrong so far as acting is concerned. But a producer who knows his job in so far as balance



FIG. 35

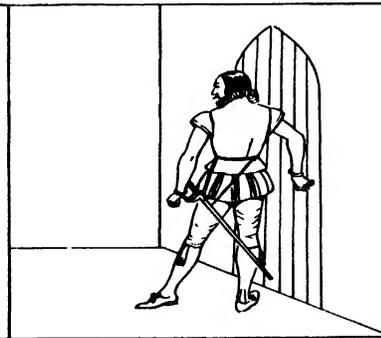


FIG. 36

The illustrations show how effective this use of the door can be, but its use can also be a failure if the actor has not carefully rehearsed his paces, for he must arrive at the door with that leg and arm farthest from the audience extended towards the door. Thus the actor will face the audience. If his pacing is wrong he will have his back to the audience, his mouth will be masked by his shoulder, and his exit will be awkward.

and rhythm are concerned will also be artist enough to see that his costumes and settings are also balanced and in rhythm with the play.

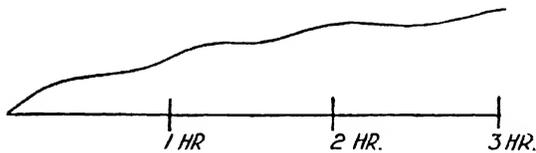
Those who had the good fortune to see the late Sir Gerald du Maurier will recall his exquisite timing. It seemed to be simple. The cigarette case, the cigarette, the match, the lighting, the whiff, the wave. How many movements? Do them, and note how long each takes. If the

total time taken is too long, the stage business will hold up the play, perhaps for only four or five seconds, but long enough to spoil a scene by relaxing tension and allowing the audience to return from illusion to the stark reality of grease-paint and limelight.

Rhythm has three sections: the rhythm of movement (business); the rhythm of speech (the lines); and the rhythm of body (the natural or unconscious movements of the actor).

BODY RHYTHM

The time factor in dramatic art is one that is continually overlooked, particularly when the control of body movement by the individual actor is concerned. In body movements, if a given action is too rapid, it is not effective; if it is too slow, it creates an anti-climax. We may visualize a graph somewhat on the following—



The horizontal line represents the unchanging and unalterable time factor, and the ascending line shows the rhythm—variable, and (we hope) controllable—which is contributed by the player. He has to make his own tension, as it were, in certain places and at certain times.

Modern methods demand more subtlety than was required for the old transpontine methods, the principles of which were thoroughly understood and fully expressed by the players of the time, as the accompanying reproductions of old Victorian theatrical actors and characters show. These are taken from the famous prints in Mr. B. Pollock's collection, and are shown on p. 816 as examples of emphasis by gesture to produce definite emotional results in the audience.

They tell their own tale, and indicate degrees of ferocity and determination. Full-blooded acting is depicted here, with no suggestion of the "cup and saucer" gestures, or the movements of the modernist. There is no subtlety. Note how the Sprite figure, mainly by keeping the fingers open, achieves his effect. Mr. Hicks, as Morden

Brenner, conveys a torrential temper by closing his fist. The flexion of the knees is different, and in the case of Mr. Collins as Paul Clifford and Mr. Hicks as Robert Macaire the slight variation in the body angle produces entirely different results.

It is this personal equation that controls the ascending and curving line.

The actor individually must have rhythmic balance, and the producer must balance the performers. If a cast is of unequal personal skill, or ignorant of first principles, then the producer's task, if we are agreed that it is to produce a work of art, and not to act as a mere coach, is almost impossible.

The actor must contribute something. In the old days of great acting and bad drama the actor did all the work. Read some of the scripts of the 1830 to 1870 period, and visualize the effect that was required to project the material. The plays raised audiences to heights of enthusiasm. How? By pure technique, skill! Look at the poses, and note how the strength or comedy of the character was projected by stance alone. Examine the angles of flexion at the joints. The basic description, whether for comedy or tragedy, would be the same; it would be a description of one pose. It is a matter of degree, of skill, plus temperament.

The fault of this school of histrionics was that it developed ranting and tub-thumping. But in spite of excesses of elocution and deportment, the work of the period should be studied, and not despised. While it certainly produced the Vincent Crummies School, it was also the period during which the Irvings of *The Bells*, the Wallers of *Henry V*, the Wilson Barretts of *The Sign of the Cross* graduated, and in which Kean and Macready were masters.

Such physical acting did not fully meet the intellectual demands of the play, but it was that school that kept the actor as the main prop of the theatre. The public still want acting. Consequently, second-class plays are often more successful than good intellectual plays. Second-class plays usually have good acting parts that a strong actor can project to his audience, whereas intellectual plays often sacrifice the theatre to the platform. An idea must not only be dramatic in itself (i.e. *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House*), but it must be presented dramatically, which means also theatrically. C. K. Munro's excellent play,

PRODUCTION

Rumour, was impossible as a play of the theatre as it was written. There was too much of the idea in it and not enough of the theatre until it was properly cut so that the producer, within the limits of the horizontal line on page 815, could produce the emotional and tensional effects that are

THEATRE AND STAGE

and, consequently, has not the spark of creative genius, though the touring company, if left to themselves, might produce equally good actions and business, though they might be different in detail.

All I can do here, and all I desire to do, is to



inherent in the plot and that are indicated by the curve.

It is difficult, and too dangerous, to lay down definite schedules, as each actor is a problem to both himself and the producer. The same scene is different for each individual, hence the weakness of a touring company that attempts to reproduce the actions and business of the original London company: the reproduction is a copy,

point out that acting *qua* acting has certain general and individual rules, and that a producer must have a cast that is aware of the traditions of the art of acting. There is a tendency among amateurs, particularly those of the advanced drama school, the coterie type, to ignore, and even to despise, the past. I think that the old-time actor had a lot to teach us, and that the modern drama, good though it may be to read, would be better

to look at in production if my opinion were more generally shared.

One thing that the old actor learnt and practised was rhythmic body movement. This may or may not have been unconscious, but it was certainly not complicated by the high-flown technique and jargon or terminology of to-day; nevertheless it was there, and, in consequence, the actor of the old school acted in a manner that it is impossible to caricature to-day: it is so much of a caricature itself.

It is a truism to say that bad drama makes good actors, and vice versa. This may be due to the balancing factor of the audience. The audience is the focal point of the combined attack of the actor and author. The attention must be held and interest aroused. This attention and interest may be held by the purely emotional content of the acting or the intellectual content of the play, or, and better than either, by both in combination. But how often do we see a play of ideas presented weakly because the author has not provided the actor with something to ACT as well as something to SAY, or because the actor cannot use for acting such material as the author has provided?

In the period suggested by the Pollock prints the drama had reached its lowest level. The plays of the period were quite out of touch with reality, and dealt with variations of obvious plots of the simplest form. Subtlety was unknown, characters were as white as snow or as black as coal, though occasionally true humanity peeped out of the comic relief. The effect was that the actor had to exert all his art to hold his public, and, consequently, histrionic capacity developed along physical lines. Heroes had to be heroic, in the grand manner, and when villainy was afoot, then 'twas villainy indeed. An examination of these old scripts will show at once how effective the actor had to be. The lines gave little help, and were often of the most platitudinous description when they were not definitely puerile. The actor carried the burden, and, consequently, voices that could roar like thunder or whisper like a trickling brook became a *sine qua non*, while gestures and body movements had to take on the similitude of the gods. I suppose Barry Sullivan would be the most recent exponent of the true barn-storming technique (which was also created

and affected by the poor illumination of candles or oil lamps), with the Irvings and Tree connecting the period with the moderns. This tradition could be seen in sublimated form when we witnessed players like Sir John Martin Harvey, who adapt the principles of that technique and refine it to the advantages offered by modern equipment.

The Shakespearean productions by Sir Oswald Stoll in Manchester and London demonstrated the principle in application. When *Henry V* was played by Godfrey Tearle the generosity of his body movements and the gracefulness of his poses became matters for comment, and more recently in *Antony and Cleopatra*, with Edith Evans. Yet this comment in itself was a commentary on the decline in the art of acting that is due to so-called realist acting.

This style of acting is purely a question of control and a knowledge of rhythm. Shakespeare knew of it when he made Hamlet tell the players how to do "The Mousetrap." Based on natural ability, it has to be learnt. Sir Frank Benson insisted on it in the great days of the Bensonians. Fencing, swimming, and football were all part of the Bensonian curriculum. There is an old story of a Benson advertisement in a stage paper. It read: "Wanted at once. Juvenile for Laertes. Must be good half-back." The voice, the legs, the arms, the eyes, and the mouth, even the shoulders and elbows, can all be made subordinate to the art of acting, and if any claim to satisfactory acting ability is to be substantiated, this subordination must be brought about by study of such models as are available and by practice. Where a good actor is to be seen, go to see him. Note his method, not for copy purposes, but as an example of skill in holding the attention of an audience. Note the details. See him two or three times. The first time watch the broad outline; the second his special business; and the third time the details.

Amateurs too often mistake their own facility for ability, their ability for competence, and their competence for talent. Over and over again an individual with no more knowledge of acting than is obtained by a yearly visit to the pantomime and weekly to the picture house will accept a part. Consequently we get mere performances, with no colour and no intensity, and often without

understanding. Acting will not come by chance, and without training and experience. The basis is simple and has been stated elsewhere. This contribution is an expansion of the basic necessity for the actor to be heard and to be seen. He must also be understood, and he must understand. In brief, before he appears in public as an actor he should be able to complete his contract, i.e. take his part and ACT the part in a reasonable manner. To do this he must have adequate knowledge of body control and rhythm. The great actors are his models.

It must not be assumed from the foregoing that I belong to the school that thinks that the days of great acting are past. Far from it. Sir Cédric Hardwicke and Charles Laughton can testify against me, and I believe the evidence of my own eyes. I witness two or three shows a week, and nearly always see something of first-rate quality, even in the most unexpected places—amateur or professional. My contention is that these instances of artistry are not accidental, that, consciously or unconsciously, the true artist has absorbed that tradition on which the art of acting is based, and that, unless an actor studies and understands these principles of the past, his work will never be in the first class. In case I may be taken too literally or misunderstood, let me hasten to state that the technique of Messrs. Hicks and Collins as illustrated would be entirely out of place in, say, a Galsworthy play, although it might be a good number for a Green Room Rag. But it is necessary to have a grasp and an understanding of the physical aspect of the art. The playwright of to-day presents character as well as situation. The authors of the period of Messrs. Hicks and Collins cared not a jot for psychology or character; action, revolt, tumult, and hand to hand combats were their stock in trade. The actors behaved accordingly. To-day the actor works on finer ground. Nervous sensibility is the ground work of the action. The sweeping arm has become the twitching finger. The call of the *basso profundo* for the villain's blood has become the request for a cup of tea, and I am prepared to state that to-day's artists can do either or both with equal ability because the one is the concomitant of the other; and the amateur who studies these elements is wise.

The present-day student of acting is fortunate, for he has opportunities, long missing, to study fine acting in team work. Not since Irving at the Lyceum, and Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, has there been such a team as the Old Vic Repertory Company. John Gielgud, Sir Ralph Richardson, and Sir Laurence Olivier are three artists who exemplify my point. The aspirant should study these actors, timing their work. To watch them once is not enough. First watch to enjoy. Repress the critical or examining faculty, and be absorbed. Next go to note vocal control and rhythm, and go again to observe body movements, the walk, the arms, the head. Use a pair of opera glasses to see details of the eyes and make-up. On a subsequent visit register the manner in which vocal and body rhythm are wedded. Talent was there as a basis. On it has been built a structure of technique to convey ideas and emotions. Inherent in performance is a world of dramatic information for the observer absorbed and carried away or the pupil eager to learn.

PROPERTIES, COSTUMES, AND DETAILS

The producer with a competent staff is lucky. Too many people think of amateur stage work in terms of acting only. Too few realize the fun and outlet for artistic expression to be had from work behind the stage—scene painting, property making, prompting, costuming, and so on. Some specialize in making up, but for reasons that I have given elsewhere I advocate that this should be done by the players.

When I was producing it was always my ambition to meet a man who could translate my ideas into practice and be satisfied with a good job well done, and when I did come across such a one it was a joy to work with him, but, alas, before half the season was over he had been dazzled by the footlights' glare, and a good "props" was turned into a bad actor.

I once knew a "props" man who was faithful to his trust. He was a marvel. His ingenuity was extraordinary, and if he had a fault it was that he aimed too much at exact reproduction. Imaginative or suggestive props did not appeal to him, but he would spend hours on research to find the exact details of setting, say Nelson's cabin on the *Victory*, and then disappear for days to

work wonders with tea boxes, condensed milk tins, and paint.

Ingenuity is the principal requirement of a good property man, and a producer cannot be too eager to find the right man. Success or failure is often due to him.

A property man should be able to provide the producer with stage props, which can be broken or damaged without great harm being done. I was once in a Chinese play in which various messengers made gifts of great value (vases, ivory, necklaces, and so on) to the Emperor. The props man produced some gorgeous things that he had borrowed from the trusting curator of a museum, who thought that it would be a good programme "line" to point out to the audience that "the vases and necklaces in Act 2 are authentic, etc." The vases were placed in a corner; one was touched by a swinging robe, and smashed. Another was chipped. The necklace was dropped and trodden on. This was early in my dramatic career. I learned then what I pass on now, that



FIG. 37

the art of the theatre is the art of illusion. Priceless vases are only jam jars, "precious" necklaces are merely string and sealing wax, and stage gold, although it glitters, is not the currency of reality. It is the similitude of things that is the real art of the property man.

In the case of hand props, such as pistols, there are occasions when precautions have to be taken. Imagine the catastrophic silence of the

occasion when a trigger is pulled, and there is no report. How can the villain fall dead? Not always has he the presence of mind to cry out "Good heavens, I'm poisoned" and to drop. Moreover, to do so would not help the next scene if the heroine is on trial for murder by shooting!



FIG. 38

Each case of this sort must be dealt with on its own merits as a problem. The problem of the pistol shot can nearly always be solved by having a double in the wings ready to fire if the pistol held by the player on the stage fails. It is better for the audience to hear a shot from the right than not to hear any shot, and they will give the gunman credit for making sure even if two shots are heard.

"Make sure" is the principle to apply. Rehearsals should, of course, make sure, but it is extraordinary how in the excitement of transferring activities from the rehearsal room to the actual stage things get lost or misplaced. Understudies of players are useful. Consequently, why not an understudy for the property man?

Costumes also call for comment. First, nothing mars the presentation of a costume play more than the unevenness in costuming caused when all the brightest and best costumes are worn by the principals, and the other players look as though they are dressed in cast-offs. Of course, King Henry VIII must look regal and kingly, and be richly and sumptuously attired, but it does not follow that the Duke of Buckingham must be shabby. This unevenness is a common fault in costume plays, even when they are produced professionally. Unevenness in costuming disillusioned the audience, as they are forced to see

the actor in costume, and not a very effective costume, whereas they ought to be seeing, say, the Duke of Buckingham.

A competent producer will put in considerable time and go to a great deal of trouble to ensure this evenness of quality. In practice unevenness is usually caused by lack of stock. There is a range of costumes for a given period, and the newest and best are allotted to the leads while the other players get the costumes that once were bright and sumptuous: the furs are flat with continual renovation; the colour of the fabric is dull and faded with age. Perhaps a new gaud or a piece of new gold lace only emphasizes the poverty of the dress, and the hypothetical Duke



FIG. 39

of Buckingham looks like a poor relation. The new velvets and silks of the few leading costumes shine and glisten, and the costumes of the crowd of courtiers look flat and tarnished. Not only does the contrast rob the spectator of illusion, but it also diminishes the glory of the King by making his Court unattractive. Where feathers are worn, all should be of the same quality and

newness, and evenness should run throughout the cast. If the choice had to be made between dressing all the cast in cotton or the leads in fine fabrics and the Court in inferior materials, I, personally, would produce all in cotton and rely for my effects of magnificence on colours and the skilful and subtle drapery of cloaks and sleeves.



FIG. 40

Another aspect of costuming, so far as the producer is concerned, is the fireside dress of his characters. I cannot believe that Lancelot or King Harold went to bed in armour, or always wore a tin hat when they were enjoying the Middle Ages equivalent of a smoke and a pint. Surely there must have been some sort of undress uniform, even for the most bellicose. A wise producer will exploit the change of mood by a change of costume, and give heroes of ancient time the equivalent of an unbuttoned waistcoat. Too often we see the cast doing everything in full dress. They must have had a second suit, and whatever they wore at Coronations, on Sundays, or on the day of the Big Fight, there were occasions when they were at rest and breathed deeply

in some sort of dressing gown or its equivalent. It is a moot question as to whether the sword was always in evidence. It is difficult to suggest details of any departure from the full dress of chivalry, and it is one of the aspects of production that is often overlooked. The fact that cathedral brasses and memorials and old pictures depict

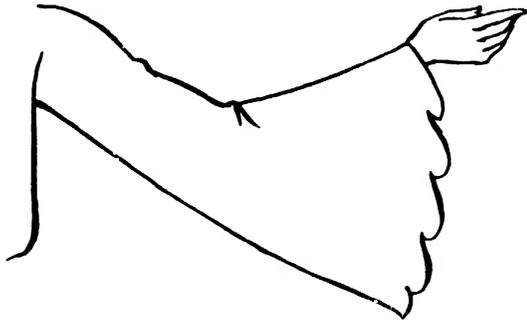


FIG. 41

people in full dress is due to the fact that these representations show people in their pride, and not in their everyday circumstance. A modern play, in which members of the peerage are the protagonists, does not show them in the glory of coronet and ermine.

Recognition of this difference between public and private appearances gives the producer an excellent opportunity to indicate an absolute change of mood. "Now are our bruised arms hung up for monuments," says Richard III. The wise producer will examine and act on the import of that brief sentence. In costuming, as in everything else of the theatre, attention to detail builds up atmosphere, regulates the flow of tension, and brings about a similitude of reality that is more real than mere realism.

Producers should see that costumes, whether hired, ready made, or specially designed, are "wearable." I mean by this that they should ask mentally, "Would a Tudor (Saxon, Norman, Roman, what you will) wear such a garment, shaped in such a way, and tucked and gathered in such a way? Would he have jewels and embroidery, and cloaks and a hat?" I think of the usual Tudor appearance with the hat worn at all sorts of angles that give ridiculous effects.

When it is worn as a Scotsman wears his tam-o'-shanter we get a similitude of a gentleman wearing a hat. Note the contrast between Figs. 37 and 38.

The wearing of Roman costume appears to offer great difficulties to amateurs. A little study at the local library is helpful. I imagine, in spite of fashion and the costumiers, that people in all ages preferred to be comfortable.

Another point in costuming is the capacity of the individual to wear a given design. I have seen masterpieces of design—on paper—the whole effect of which was destroyed or ludicrous when the costume was worn. What is the good of designing a lovely costume in scarlet and black and white for Romeo if the player has long thin legs that utterly destroy any illusion of the youthful, virile lover? The effect of his fine voice (which may have got him the part) is discounted. The producer should not be fobbed off with a copy of the Romeo costume worn by Sir George Alexander at His Majesty's Theatre, but should clothe his Romeo in a rich, long tunic, thus covering the legs. Figs. 39 and 40 illustrate this point.

Another principle to be grasped is: Do everything to help the illusion. In this case, Romeo is



FIG. 42

a young, impetuous, irresistible lover. Help him to be one, and take nothing for granted. Costume should always be adequate. Cloaks, tunics, sleeves, and flowing garments generally, can be used to create magnificent effects if the producer aims at them. A whole range of emotions and gorgeous stage pictures can be evoked if the producer utilizes the results of the play of light on texture

and fold. Consider a sleeve. When it is flat and pulled out, its effectiveness is only half used. Give it a few folds, and rich shadows add to its beauty, and colour and gesture are emphasized. Compare Figs. 41 and 42. Cloaks, of course, are particularly susceptible to the application of this technique, and offer the actor a wonderful

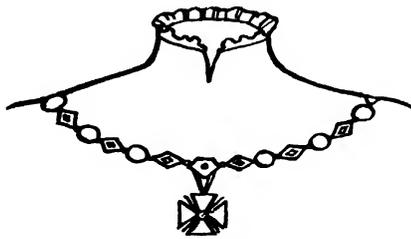


FIG. 43

instrument for the exploitation of gesture and movement. Cloaks should be free and flowing. There should be nothing niggardly or sparse. The colour should be selected with care and with consideration for the effect it will have in forming group composition on the stage. The right colour in a given lighting plot can set the whole mood

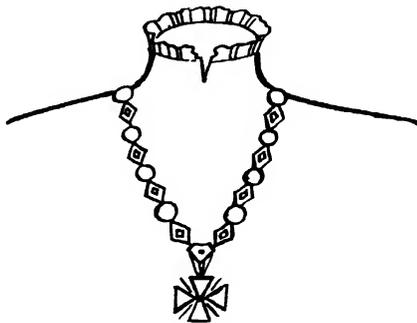


FIG. 44

of a scene, and should not be left to the haphazard choice of the costumier. Too often is the effect of a group, so far as position is concerned, entirely spoiled by bad colouring due to an absence of relation between one actor and another in costume.

A common fault with costume plays is slovenliness in detail. Here, again, the amateur is not the only culprit. Necklaces and the collars of

gold that add such a gay touch to medieval costume should always be made to set on the shoulders. Arranged thus a far fuller effect is obtained than when they are just slung on, so that in due course they drop and give a sort of halter effect, as though the ornament is worn casually and in protest rather than as a thing of pride. Compare the effects in Figs. 43 and 44.

Attention to these details makes all the difference between a well dressed and well produced show and one that is hackneyed and slovenly.

SPONTANEITY IN ACTING

The producer of plays for amateur societies must be patient, for he or she will seldom have a cast of fully experienced actors none of whom suffers from the nervousness of inexperience. The nervousness of many amateurs arises from inexperience and the fear that they may not be successful when they are once in full view of the audience. The fear is the fear of the unfamiliar. Even actors with long experience behind the footlights suffer from the same thing when occasion demands a public appearance off the stage—say as an after-dinner speaker.

One aspect of production is to get amateur players to overcome this nervousness. The best method is to instil into their minds that they are competent if they will only set about the work in the right way and think more about it than of the audience. The audience has to see them; it is not for them to look at the audience, but, in a sense, to forget its existence. For players the play and its circumstances must have reality and solidity, and they must accustom themselves to an acceptance of make-believe. The player must not only know his part from beginning to end, but when he is presenting it, he must present it as though he does not know it. It is a common fault in the amateur for the event that is holding or that should hold the audience to be to him a commonplace, and for him to act it without that spontaneity, or that unfolding of his part, which provides the grip of a play. This sense of the commonplace arises from lack of stimulus to the imagination, due to weaknesses in the producer, boredom at rehearsals, absence of sympathy with the part, or sheer, downright self-complacency. How often do we see players during a tense scene

standing and uttering lines, but not showing the feeling that the situation demands? They are doing something, but not showing it. In Fig. 45 "Uneasy Virtue" every person in the picture is tense. The varying individual reaction to the crisis shown is clearly presented, and it is possible to build up the story of the probable events that



FIG. 45

have led to the scenes portrayed. Every person in the picture shows *feeling* for the situation. But inexperienced amateurs often make half action, spasmodic and awkward, and do not carry conviction. They know what to do, what to say, and when to say it, but they are unconvincing because they do not *feel*. In nine cases out of ten this inadequacy is due to nervousness or self-consciousness. The players are afraid to break down their reserve and to appear "in character." I assume that the players have the desire to act, the will to act, and the latent ability to act, but that at the time they are the victims of social, dramatic, or other circumstances, temperament or some other influence. Time, experience, and the producer's tact and ability will break down these handicaps. Players should be encouraged to express themselves. The principle to seize is that of *spontaneity*. In Fig. 46, from the film "Charley's Aunt," note the appearance of spontaneous dismay on the part of the old gentlemen. There is no suggestion in the facial expression that he is anything but surprised. There is no hint of a rehearsed effect. Although the players know (or should know) every detail of what will happen when the curtain goes up, they

must convey the idea that the circumstances in which they find themselves are as fresh to them as they will be to the audience. The fact that they know every look, action, sigh, whisper, and word of every player on the stage must not be conveyed to the audience by the faintest suggestion of anticipation. Every flower in the histrionic garden must be fresh with the dew of art, and awkwardness is a weed that must be ruthlessly eradicated.

A good training, and one not generally tried, is an exercise that is based on the practice of the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*. This produced the technique of the old Italian actors who worked almost entirely from improvisation. Only the bare scenario of an act was given to them to work to, and their dialogue and business were improvised as the play proceeded. I intend, however, to deal with their method of acting, and to suggest to nervous aspirants to stage honours that experience with improvised and impromptu methods should bring assurance, a quick wit, and the confidence that comes from the knowledge that one's mind and body will properly react to almost any contingency that arises. *La Campagnie des*

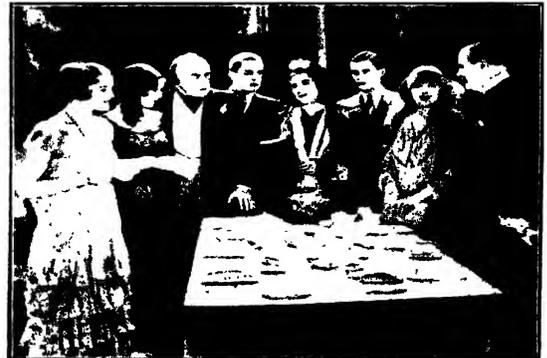


FIG. 46

Quinze in *La Mauvaise Conduite* showed that this company of French players had obviously not lost contact with *Commedia dell'Arte* tradition. I refer to this fact to emphasize that the impromptu method is not my own idea, and that it is not to be lightly dismissed, as it has the sanction of a great school of actors to defend it, and such

names as Harlequin, Columbine, Punchinello, Scaramouche, Pierrot, and Pierrette for patron saints and godfathers.

I will proceed, however, with the consideration of spontaneity. A common fault of the amateur is to fidget and to anticipate. When a messenger from the King has to burst "suddenly and unexpectedly" into the room, it is obvious that "suddenly and unexpectedly" mean what is stated. To secure the full effect of the entry on the audience each and every actor on the stage must be equally unaware of the startling event. But is it not a frequent occurrence that just at the critical moment, or rather just a split second before, a player will look at the door and almost utter a surprised ejaculation, thus alarming the mind of the spectator, and preventing the entry from having its full effect? Look at Fig. 47, from the film, "Widow from Chicago." Both the man with the gun and the girl show evident surprise, and in the case of the girl also terror. Even the still picture conveys the impression of



FIG. 47

a sudden opening of the door. There is no woolliness of anticipation. The audience has not prepared for that particular effect at that particular moment; consequently, the opening of the door is one of concentrated and immediate drama that would be entirely spoilt by any premonitory symptoms or fidgeting suggesting that the two

people in the room knew the man with the gun was going to break in.

This anticipatory demeanour more often occurs in dialogue. Usually it happens when quick-fire talk is necessary, and when one of the characters is so anxious not to let the pace drop that he speaks too soon, and leaves his *vis-à-vis* with



FIG. 48

nothing to say. This is sheer nervousness and lack of control. An error of this kind undermines the most painstaking production, and brings the audience back to reality with a jerk. What should be a passionate quarrel is transformed into stuttering incoherencies. This anticipatory error is particularly troublesome when it is expressed in action. Take Fig. 48. Everybody has been taken by surprise. Note the left hand of the officer on the right, with the unbuttoned coat. Every finger shows his individual reaction to the obviously sudden scene before him. All are interested, all more or less surprised, and at least one of the group is angry and dominant. The other shows that he is trying to say that the other is misjudging him, though there is also a touch of fear.

It is this element of control, mental and physical, which makes amateur acting a valuable hobby. Deep breathing, memory training, team work, co-ordination, self-discipline, all arise from

a few hours' drama, and if this matter of spontaneity is dealt with properly and firmly, it will be found to be well worth while from a purely selfish and personal point of view.

Here, however, I am more concerned with the immediate result. I wish to emphasize the fact that a play is too important to be taken lightly and



FIG. 49

without a sense of responsibility. If an actor goes on to the stage ill equipped by rehearsal and study, he does injury to the author; he is not fair to his producer; and he presents himself in an unfavourable light, to say nothing of taking money under false pretences. The audience has paid to see a play, with each player fitting into the scheme, but if one stumbles, and in stumbling trips up the others, he does damage all round. Examine Fig. 49 from the film "Uneasy Virtue." The lesson here is in the deportment of the gentleman with the cigarette who is apparently quite unmoved by the eagerness of the other. He has the situation well in hand, whatever that situation may be, yet there is no hint of any rehearsed effect.

It may be commented that I ask too much of the amateur actor, and that as he is acting for fun he cannot be expected to train and study as a professional trains and studies. I reply that amateur, as well as professional, takes money from the public for a specific purpose—a

performance in a stage play entitled " ? ? ? " That performance is offered, and the money is paid; the player should "deliver the goods," and before offering them he should take care to see that he is able to fulfil his part of the contract. Consequently, the producer and the actor between them should take every precaution, by paying assiduous attention to detail before the production, to ensure that the contract will be kept.

I have dealt elsewhere with the producer's responsibility. The extension of the argument to the actor is merely a multiplication, and not a division of artistic liability. The player must add his share. If the ultimate sum of artistic endeavour is not a total of producer plus actor, then the result is producer minus actor, which minus quantity means that somebody is robbed.

When I deal with the principle of "spontaneity" I deal with a recurring factor in a production, as far as the audience is concerned. From the minute the curtain rises to the moment it descends on the last, or any other, act, the mind



FIG. 50

of the audience must be held by the events on the stage. To achieve this result, no matter how fantastic the story or situation, the effect of reality for the players must be forced on to the audience. The player must have it in his own mind that the circumstances are real to him. It is said of Kean that if he had to act a scene of passion he

worked himself up into a temper in the wings. On the other hand, there is the story of Irving and Ellen Terry in the death scene in *Othello*. As Irving, acting the Moor, proceeded to smother Desdemona, he whispered, "What have you for supper?" and through the struggles came the whispered reply, "Steak and onions"! The truth



FIG. 51

is between these two extremes. I think the lesson to be drawn is that Kean and Irving were so *sure* of their requirements and limitations that they knew how far they had to grip their mind or how far they could subconsciously function as artists. In things of art the artist can decide for himself, but his decision can only be sound after training and discipline. Great acting does not come from a casual action and without a basis of talent directed by experience.

It is difficult to illustrate the point, but the two illustrations, Figs. 50 and 51, will be helpful. One is American, the other German. Examination will show that these have the appearance of reality, of spontaneity, as though what is happening is new, vivid, and sudden. I have used stills from films rather than pictures of stage scenes because stage scenes usually present a posed appearance as though everybody has settled down to have a photograph taken, but in these cinema stills we get the fluid effect, as though the camera has recorded in a flash one part of a certain movement. But static though the pictures are, as all pictures are, *action* is fully shown.

STAGE EMOTIONS

It is not possible, and it is not my intention, to deal here with the "how" of stage emotions such as anger, love, laughter, and tears. Being emotional, they are part of an individual temperament, and it is impossible to lay down rules, or even to make suggestions, which will be helpful to all. There is, however, one aspect of this subject that affects production enormously, namely, the ability of the artist to key the emotional occasion into the general story. Over-acting in the case of tears, and under-acting in the case of laughter, are common faults. Give a young actress a strong second act curtain finale and watch her rise to it, like a trout at a fly, while if a hearty gust of laughter is required, repression is the order of the day, and a polite laugh is the response. This phenomenon of a towering rise to heights of passion in tears and of no opposite response in laughter is something that cannot be satisfactorily explained. It is important, however, for producers and actors to remember the tendency and to act accordingly, *particularly at rehearsals*. I have in mind, of course, relating laughter and tears to the general tone of a production, and particularly to modern plays, which are written to represent a time when the open exposure of grief is regarded as bad form. Why, I do not know. It is really a question of over-acting or under-acting and of striking the happy medium for any given play. Here, again, team work plays a part. If an actor is competent and knows how to get his effects, and the rest of the cast is not so effective, the impression will be that the actor is overdoing his portrayal, whereas the fact will be that the others are not pulling their weight. It is here that the producer must work up the cast and make them realize that what they no doubt think is fine, subtle playing, full of light and shade, is really mere monotone. That makes the fine playing of the one stand out in contrasting colour, although it should be in harmony. For illustration take the race-course scene in *The Sport of Kings*. That scene requires to be acted *up* for all its worth, and if the audience get only a few loud laughs out of it either producer or actors have failed to convey the emotion that is evoked by the situation of the sanctimonious one being involved in a gambling episode.

The following may sound a commonplace, which it is, but it is also a fault with amateurs. They get too certain, and take things too easily, too smoothly, and evenly. These defects are usually noticeable in the level of a Thursday performance of a week's run, a performance that is



FIG. 52. IMMEDIATE FEAR AND TERROR PORTRAYED BY FRED KAY AS "EVERYMAN"

usually second only to the Tuesday performance, because in the case of Tuesday there is reaction after the strain of rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and first night excitement. On Thursday there is the feeling that the production is drawing to a close, and a tendency to "ease up" in readiness for Friday and Saturday.

This indifference usually shows itself in the strong emotional scenes. Father is not quite so angry, Dorothy is not quite so tearful, and young Jack is not so stormy in the quarrel scene; in fact, they behave almost naturally, and the full content of the scenes concerned is not presented.

This projection of stage emotion is a matter of concentration and personal power—what some call personality. Take stage kissing as an example. How often is a kiss given and taken as though it

were the most distasteful thing in the whole world. There is an obvious proffer of the cheek instead of the lips, followed by a peck and a break away as soon as possible. It is done, but there is no suggestion of *emotion*, there is no projection of exaltation, and, consequently, the audience has nothing to seize to maintain the emotional intensity of the situation.

In laughter, again, there is often an absence of sincerity. Mere cachinnation is not laughter. It is said that man is the only animal that has the gift of laughter, but some of the ha-ha's we get on the amateur stage give no indication of the singularity of the gift, but rather suggest that it is an affliction of the spirit. Again, it is a matter of projection, of something inward, and not merely technical. It is an impulse, and must be conveyed as an impulse, not as something that must be done at a certain time and in a certain way. Apart from the conveyance of surprise, I cannot call to mind any stage situation other than these two of kissing and laughter in which the appearance of spontaneity is so necessary for the full effect of the situation to be registered by the audience.

Horror is another emotion that is difficult to portray. If it is too extreme, it becomes an obvious exaggeration; if it is not sufficiently



FIG. 53. FEAR AND ANXIETY PORTRAYED IN THE FILM "WASWARD"

severe it gives the impression of a sort of fear, which is different from horror. Fear or fright has not the depth of horror, which is something greater than terror. Terror is personal, and belongs to the individual, but horror has moral content, and social significance. I will quote

Macbeth to clarify the point. Take after the murder of King Duncan, Act 2, Sc. iii—

(*Macduff has had the castle door opened by the Porter and has entered the courtyard.*)

MACDUFF. Is thy master stirring?

(*Enter Macbeth.*)

MACDUFF. Our knocking has awak'd him; here he comes.

LINNOX. Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH. Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF. Is the King stirring, worthy thane?

MACBETH. Not yet.

MACDUFF. He did command me to call timely on him.

I have almost slipp'd the hour.

MACBETH. I'll bring you to him.

MACDUFF. I know this is a joyful trouble to you;

But yet 'tis one.

MACBETH. The labour we delight in physics pain.

This is the door.

MACDUFF. I'll make so bold to call,

For 'tis my limited service.

(*Exit.*)

LINNOX. Goes the King hence to day?

MACBETH. He does: he did appoint so.

LINNOX. The night has been unruly: where we lay

Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,

Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,

And prophesying with accents terrible

Of dire combustion and confus'd events,

New hatch'd to the woeful time. The obscure bird

Clamour'd the livelong night: some say the earth

Was feverous and did shake.

MACBETH. 'Twas a rough night.

LINNOX. My young remembrance cannot parallel

A fellow to it.

(*Re-enter Macduff.*)

MACDUFF. O horror! horror! horror! Tongue nor heart

Cannot conceive nor name thee!

MACBETH { What's the matter?

LINNOX } Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!

MACDUFF. Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope, etc., etc.

O Banquo! Banquo!

Our royal master's murder'd!

Note the words "Horror! horror! horror!" Would "Terror, terror, terror," do? No.

Dread is another subtle thing to convey with adequacy. Apprehension and disgust get in the way. Dread is deep, black, sinister, but nothing like disgust, which has loathing as one of its degrees. One may *dread* an operation, be *terrified*, but not disgusted.

Conversely, we have joy, gaiety, happiness, heartiness, bliss, delight, pleasure, merriment, felicity, enjoyment, all of which may seem to be the same, but each has varying degrees of emphasis and continuity. Felicity is a state of mind

that can be disturbed or broken by fear or *dread*, but its essence is continuity up to the time of breaking. Happiness is more occasional, as people are happy one minute, unhappy the next, and so on.

I do not pretend to be able to measure these emotions with a rule or a pint measure. The possibility of any one definition being of any



FIG. 54. FEAR AND SHOCK PORTRAYED IN THE FILM "GIRL CRAZY"

service to a producer or actor in any one play is remote. The circumstances of each plot and of each character vary. The happiness of Romeo is not the happiness of the hero of musical comedy, and given a certain Romeo and a certain hero, it is unlikely that a common formula will fit either.

Nevertheless, the existence of these differences between individuals does not give as many happinesses as there are differences; the essential idea of happiness is still the same and has to be conveyed. The most I can do is to warn embryo producers and players that these differences are real, and that the projection of emotional situations has to be done with skill and thought to prevent under-emphasis or over-emphasis. The right and sure touch comes only when it is not taken for granted.

Take a glance at "hatred" and try to understand how it varies. The hatred of Uriah Heep is not the hatred of the strikers' leader in Galsworthy's *Strife*. The one shows hatred that is personal to himself; it is mean, the hatred of a mean man with a mean mind. But the hatred of Galsworthy's character is that of a man who is

seeking the destruction of something that he hates, something to be hated because it is bad for the world, and not merely bad or unjust to him. He sees injustice, greed, oppression, and tyranny in the system that his opponent supports. Consequently, we can sympathize with this noble hatred, but despise that of Uriah Heep.

Now think of "fear." The fear of Mathias in *The Bells* is not the same fear as that of the convict in *Escape*. There is remorse in the case of Mathias. He has done something the consequences of which he fears, whereas Matt has done nothing wrong, but is afraid of being physically caught. There is the coward's fear, and there is the brave man's fear. The fear of Stanhope in *Journey's End* is a suppressed fear, but it must be shown to the audience. It is fear that has driven him to drink, the fear of even looking afraid. In this play we get the two types, Hibbert and Stanhope. Stanhope gets courage from the bottle, Hibbert from example and under compulsion. These two parts can be played as a good exercise in the values of emotional playing. While it would be difficult to bring Hibbert out as a true-blue hero, it would not be difficult to present Stanhope as anything but heroic.

The amateur has to get hold of the inner essence of the emotion, and having keyed it to his own personality and the demands of the plot, he has to project it over the footlights to the audience exactly as he intends it to be received. When this task can be done, and be repeated, at any time, in any circumstances, with any given emotion, the aspirant will be a player who will rank with the best. That is the goal, and if it is aimed at the results will be much more definite and artistic than those that are produced by haphazard experiments, such as rolling the eyes, wetting the lips, clutching the hands and heart, and all the other tricks, which, unless they are understood, remain mere tricks. Of course, when they are known and understood they can be used to give the range of human feeling from *King Lear* to *Hot Coddlings*. Perhaps the last should be explained. When Joe Grimaldi, the great clown, was ill at Drury Lane, he sat upon a chair and sang his famous song *Hot Coddlings*. One night he sang to sing no more, for that night he died, but, almost in his death throes, with the

whisper of death in his ears, he *made* the audience laugh.

The key to this problem of emotion is for the producer to establish, early in rehearsal, the exact concept he wishes to be portrayed, and then to see that his actors carry it out just as he wants, so far as *degree* is concerned. Some might say that this is interfering with the art of the actor. To that objection I reply that "the play's the thing." The actor is one of a team, and his work is artistic only so far as it is operated within the framework of the whole. If he wishes to force his personality and his ideas of a part outside that frame, he is performing as a vaudeville artist performs, as an individualist, and not as one playing a *part*. The term "part" means what it says, i.e. part of a whole. Macbeth is part of a play in which appears also other parts—Macduff, the Witches, the King, and so on. Between them they make the whole. It is the whole that makes the play, and the play is the author's intention.

The process is logical, and any attempt to break down the natural structure of the author's intention, while adding to the personal glory of the individual, nevertheless produces a performance, not a play. This is the essential difference between the bad period of the mid-nineteenth century and to-day. The actor smashed up the play to give a performance, and he did well, for the plays were only pegs on which to hang his artistic hat. To-day the plays have a stronger basis, and the actor, as artist rather than performer, must recognize that basis, and not allow himself the exuberance of uncontrolled emotions. The producer should control; the artist-actor will have the response on call. The expert producer and the artist-actor will make quite sure of the degree of emotion the situation demands before bursting out into Rabelaisian roars of laughter or hysterical terror.

Three variations on the emotion of fear are shown. Fig. 52 (Mr. Fred Kay as "Everyman") is a portrayal of immediate *fear* plus terror. The fear is definitely immediate and entirely different from the *shock* and fear portrayed in Fig. 54. Both these expressions of fear have a quality of immediacy, but the photographs show, even in a limited degree, a difference. In Fig. 53 there is a different kind of fear, a fear that is also an *anxious* fear; anxiety is almost primary.

The actor cast for an emotional part, or a part in which an emotional scene is a high-light, should examine carefully the whole framework in which he has to act. Varied details will govern his method: the age of the character, his social circumstances, the situations that have led to the emotional scene, the period of the play, the nature of the emotion, etc. To examine a part in this way and to give it analytical thought saves time at rehearsals, inasmuch as the producer has not to explain the details. It also adds enjoyment and artistic satisfaction. It is stimulating to be able to begin with a well thought-out idea of a part that leads up to a big scene, to see it develop, through trial and error, finally to be built up to the great moment. Such scenes have great attraction for actors. Irving as Mathias in *The Bells*, any good actor in *David Garrick*, the late Matheson Lang in *The Wandering Jew*, John Gielgud in *He was Born Gay*, the late Arthur Bourchier in the flat-smashing scene in *Iris*: these are a few recollections from random memory of heavy emotional scenes that form the backbone of the story.

Whether the emotion has to be shown in a quiet or boisterous manner there is only one *right* pitch for that emotion in that particular way. The actor must first learn how to express, to any degree, the desired emotion, and then be able to adapt his skill to the occasion.

CHARACTER PARTS

The presentation of character parts calls for far more observation and care than are generally given to them. The pitfall is the ready adoption of the conventions that are usually associated with the parts. For the portrayal of an old man bend the shoulders, shuffle the feet, make the hands tremble, let the handkerchief fall out of the pocket, mumble in the chin, have white eyebrows, and a bald wig: these things are all very well as far as they go, but there is more in portrayal than the outward signs. There is, as it were, the inward make-up, the mind of the man, and the internal changes that are due to age, which must be conveyed by the actor unless he is to present a formula. Now whether the part be that of an aged person, a Chinaman, a comic stoker, or any "character," it is well to remember that there is a reason for such a part

being in the category of "character parts." Character parts are so called because they *are* parts of *character*! As one old man differs from another,



LIONEL BROUGH AS GARDENER

one Chinaman from another, and one comic stoker from another, so does one character differ from another. The same part in a play presented



SIR HENRY IRVING AS KING LEAR

by different actors may be as many different characters. Hamlet is a classic example of variation of character in the hands of different exponents.

Falstaff has tremendous fields of exploitation. I have seen Sir Toby Belch in at least three

different guises, of which the most distinguished was that of the late Arthur Whitby, who played with J. B. Fagan's Company. The like of his



H. BEERBOHM TREE AS SIR JOHN FALSTAFF

Toby had not been seen by living man. He was a tipsy Toby, not a drunkard Toby; a Toby always in his cups, but never out of his senses;



H. BEERBOHM TREE AS MALVOLIO

a Toby who was always instinctively a gentleman, not a taproom roysterer. He was to be laughed with, and not at; he was a humorous Toby, a genial Toby, but a nuisance to his kinsfolk. In the same play, and the same cast, was Miles Malleon as Andrew Aguecheck. Here, again, was an Aguecheck who defied convention and

possessed character. He was a ninny, but a personable and real ninny. He had his points, and was a human being. The memory of these two parts survives many years' continual contact with the theatre. The point I wish to dwell on is that while the hero and the heroine may get all the sympathy of the audience, there is more creative work in character parts.

I would be false to my pen if I did not recall George Weir, whose First Grave-digger was a masterpiece of character construction. No doubt most amateurs regard the First Grave-digger as



H. BEERBOHM TREE AS KING JOHN

a part for beginners, or for the assistant stage-manager's deputy to fill in. In the art of the theatre, however, a detail part can often be the salvation of a play. What is the theme of *The Pickwick Papers* without Sam Weller, or *Caste* without Old Eccles? Compare the Chinaman of Matheson Lang's *A Chinese Bungalow* with the usual convention of a stage Chinaman. Look at the stage Jew, the stage Irishman, and then examine the living person. "Staginess" is not theatrical art. Stage types are evolved by a process of false beliefs. In due course the pattern becomes standardized and out of touch with reality.

It is this presentation of differences that creates the character of the man and that is of the very essence of the particular individual. A ready figure of characterization springs to mind—Beerbohm Tree as Colonel Newcome and as Svengali. I would here pay tribute to J. S. Melvin for his Stoker characterization. Usually vaudeville artists

PRODUCTION

give you yourselves *as* a character—a parson, a stoker, an old woman. Actors have to give the presentment of an actual old man, or parson, or stoker, for its own sake. It is this difference between the vaudeville peg and the dramatic peg that I try to bring home by pointing out that in the play Jack Brown as a stoker is not enough. Jack Brown must forget himself, his works and pomps, and during his brief hour on the stage be just a common or garden stoker.

It is strange how, in real life, the real thing departs from stage notions. How many doctors



SIR HENRY IRVING AS BECKET

look like stage doctors, particularly amateur stage doctors? How many medicos do we see in frock coats, striped trousers, spats, and all the war paint of the naughty nineties, and carrying silk hat, cane, and glove, and how many stage amateur doctors do we see in an ordinary lounge suit *sans* trimmings? The answer is the same in each case. Dukes are great sufferers at the hands of amateurs. Monocles and “ha-ha!” seem to be inseparable from the peerage!

The working classes as a whole have a real grudge, or ought to have, against the manner of their personation on the amateur stage. They are presented as clumsy, uncouth, unshaven, rough spoken. This is only because it is a stage convention, and not a fact, and the biggest offenders are the working people themselves when they are cast for working parts. How would a plumber in real life play the part of a plumber

THEATRE AND STAGE

on the stage? Incidentally, has the stage ever given a part for a plumber?

This tendency to act to convention is more noticeable in the lighter plays than in those of



WILLIAM HAVILAND AS IAGO

more serious import. The reason for this need not concern us, as it is rather beside the mark, but as most amateur societies, particularly those



F. R. BENSON AS RICHARD III

in suburbs, like to go in for lighter dramatic fare, I mention the point as a matter of interest.

It is easy to take the short cut and to copy something out of a book. Take Sir John Hare in *A Pair of Spectacles* or Horace Hodges in *Light-nin*'. Here were examples of character creation:

definite creation, full of humanity, sympathy, and the touch of pathos that makes the whole world kin. Now it is not the right idea to think that by copying these two creations the amateur or his producer will show us a copy. Far from it. The one is but a pale reflection of the other from a different surface. The original creators of the part evolved the character by observation of the type, i.e. an old man, and by adding, subtracting, and polishing something *different* appeared, and *another* old man was added to the gallery. It is the sublimation of the part, in terms of the player's own experience, which gives us a real character. The creation of it is one of the real joys of amateur acting and production. It is not enough to take the stage directions concerning make-up, appearance, and costume; there is something internal, some spiritual content to be shown, and these cannot be evolved or contributed by instruction. Artistically, the stage will return only in proportion to what is given, and if a player or a producer is cursory, or works along the easy line of convention, then the result will be cursory and conventional.

I must here recall another great character, a character that kept an indifferent play in production for a very long run—Stillbottle in *Tilly of Bloomsbury*. I saw the late Arthur Bourchier in the part, and a fine, rich part he made of it. Then I saw a long sequence of amateurs who also had seen Bourchier, and I suffered. One night there was a portrayal of Stillbottle by one who had never heard of Bourchier, and who presented an entirely new type of Stillbottle. He had evolved his own sense of character, and, not having the Bourchier pattern before him to cramp his style, he worked it out for himself, and so added to memory a new figure of fun.

Stage character must be built up by constructing the character from observation.

There is another aspect in the production of character. It is, in a way, a negative aspect, but important. To create character the actor must *suppress himself*. Cedric Hardwicke the actor must die in order that Churdles Ash may live. In the case of that fine, rich figure of the stage, Paycock in Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, we had a partnership between author and actor that gave us Arthur Sinclair as the Paycock, but in the presentation we were as con-

scious of Sinclair as we were of the Paycock. In Churdles Ash the actor disappeared and only Ash remained.

This suppression of personality is particularly difficult in the modern comedy or drama type of play. Accomplished amateurs need only be themselves and deliver the lines with the right inflection, make the appropriate gestures in the right way, and a more or less competent performance results. But there is more to it than that. *We are all characters*. Each of us has his characteristics. These can be copied and used to reinforce acted character. Take *The Voyage Inheritance* as a play that shows people who may be found in any reasonably comfortable suburb—well established lawyers, their wives, sisters, and brothers. Here is a case where this sort of character-making can be practised. The actor playing a part in such a play can, if he will, bring to bear just as much addition in character detail as one playing a stage character part, simply because everybody in real life has characteristics.

The late Sir Gerald du Maurier was a consummate actor with apparently effortless ease. Everything he did on the stage appeared so easy, almost casual, that many amateurs thought that all they had to do was to be easy and casual also. They forgot the foundations. That ease hid a most masterly technique. Far from being casual, that presentation was the product of a highly polished technique, as anyone will realize who saw this artist as Willie Shand in *What Every Woman Knows*. Even when cast to type, a character that adds value to the part can be evolved.

Therefore, when cast for character parts do not be satisfied with the obvious. Think out little idiosyncrasies, subtle differences, and so on; above all, observe models you meet in the street, in the tube, in the market. Take something from them if you feel it can be used: a cock of the eye here, the wag of a finger there, a trick of gesture from someone else.

I hope that nothing I have expressed will lead to the overplaying of a character. Overplaying distorts the play, overweights and stifles the other players, and leaves a single actor impression. It is tempting to play up to laughs and to personal applause, but it is selfish and bad art. In musical comedy virtuosity may, perhaps, be encouraged,

but, for example, if Doolittle in *Pygmalion* is the over-riding recollection, what becomes of the author's intention? Obviously if one member of the cast is "going strong," all the other performers should "play up."

Most plays have small parts of which much can be made without disturbing the balance. I think of Margaret Rutherford as the clairvoyant in *Blithe Spirit*. Her riotous entrance does not disturb the balance of the story or the importance of the other characters.

All old men are not toothless and deaf; all policemen do not bob up and down; very few servants wipe their noses on the backs of their hands; curates do not hold their finger tips together and smirk through projecting teeth; all detectives do not bully people and wear their hats in the drawing-room; all journalists do not wear dirty mackintoshes, untidy collars and make notes in a pocket-book; all sailors are not rollicking and hearty: these are reminders of the inexhaustible list of stage misconceptions. Do not adopt a convention. Study humanity whenever you want to play characters successfully.

The character part illustrations have been reproduced by courtesy of Messrs. F. A. Smith, Costumiers, Manchester, from their collection.

STAGE SENSE

One of the most abstract things an amateur producer has to deal with is "stage sense" on the part of his cast. This sense of the stage is usually acquired by experience. A few gifted individuals have it by instinct. It can best be described as that sense by which the individual player gets the most out of a part and *gets it to the audience*. A player may get all that is possible out of a part as far as technique is concerned. At rehearsals his or her work may be perfect, but during public performances it is different and inferior. Why? Because the player has not sensed his audience or the theatre.

Now this sensing is difficult, subtle, intangible, but as real as a brick wall. It varies from night to night and from place to place. It is the player, and the player only, who can meet the unseen, but very much felt, requirements. It is seldom that the player is insensible of lack of contact; it comes back from the house side of the footlights as a cold wave, just as its opposite, full apprecia-

tion, is felt as a sort of warm wave—when the audience is held.

The most common cause of a player getting out of touch with his audience is too much speed. He will not allow the points to get home. Just as one is being registered, another follows and cancels the first. The consequence is that the player instead of registering two knocks on the nail head, as it were, registers only one and a misfire, plus a certain mental confusion and, certainly, annoyance at having missed a point. Multiply this experience by several throughout the night, and we soon understand why an otherwise good piece of acting is unconvincing. This is particularly noticeable in farce or comedy. The old injunction "Wait for it" to the impetuous holds good for the stage as well as on the parade ground.

The pause is an old trick of oratory. Its antiquity has not undermined its reputation, but rather increased its worth. When properly used, it forces home the point to be made, yet leaves the mind clear for the next one. It makes for the right use of the material at hand, namely, speed and hearing. The pause is of particular value in comedy, and it is here that it is not properly exploited by amateurs as a whole. Assume that a remark has been made: the laughter reaction is immediate, loud, and long. Good! The player, however, must let it have its beginning, its middle, and its end. No matter how long the laugh is, do not interfere. The next line may be equally funny, but art and common sense combine to tell that it is no good saying anything until the laughter subsides, for the simple reason that it will not be heard. Therefore, why waste a perfectly good line? "Wait for it"—but not too long! Do not be obvious about it. The laughter diminishes, and the moment for action must be correctly judged. Correct judgment will reinforce the first laugh, and the player will get a series of effects in a way similar to that planned by the producer to secure emotional effects and in the manner described elsewhere. The graph then used will serve here.

The wavy line represents the laughter strength as the play proceeds to the act drop, when it must be cut off in the ascent.

This pause of the "Wait for it" order is forced on the player by circumstances, but there

are times when he has to create his own pause and to build up his effect. This pause is of the kind that must be concealed by art, and there are many devices that can be employed to make it. The conjurer knows all of them. In brief, it is a matter of holding the attention of the audience. The conjurer knows that when he stops talking the ear breaks contact, so to speak, and he makes a movement, waves a wand or a handkerchief, so that the eye takes up the story. So it is with the actor. He can hold the mind by action. His pause in speech becomes fully charged with significance, though as far as the audience is concerned there has been no break.

I think that most players are aware of this idea, but operate it subconsciously and crudely. A combination of nervousness and ignorance

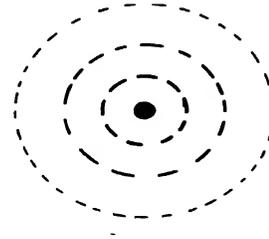


FIG. 56

brings about painful fussiness when handling cigarettes and case, matches, and handkerchiefs, when sitting on tables and with hands in and out of pockets, and so on. These movements are, after all, fumbling efforts to hold attention and to appear at ease. When the case does not open, or when it does and it is empty, matters are not helped very much, but the will is there, if not the notion.

A fruitful source of broken interest is noise, in which connexion amateurs are neglectful of their own interests. Whenever there is a struggle, or a tramping entrance, the thread usually gets broken, and, in my opinion, this is entirely due to the absence of a good stage cloth. I cannot prove this by rule of thumb, but I have been present on many occasions when the scratching of shoes and the sandy sort of scuffling noise that proceeds from the stage have broken down the delicate film of contact, and drama has become comedy. The whole atmosphere changes and the players lose ground. Something similar happens when the noise off is obviously somebody just stamping about the wings, obviously walking on stairs that are not there. There is a titter and

the tension is broken. I have a theory that this deplorable result is due to the fact that the audience reject as an intrusion a noise that is not a necessary part of a play. A play is an entity of its own, with component and necessary parts, e.g. a struggle or a man heard walking upstairs. If the struggle or the walk is accompanied by false



noises, the mind seizes on the intruder, and in doing so it has to break the spell of illusion that binds audience and players into one whole.

Another fruitful source of lost points is the taking up of a cue. To be too slow or too quick is equally destructive. Players must remember that the words they utter lose a minute fraction

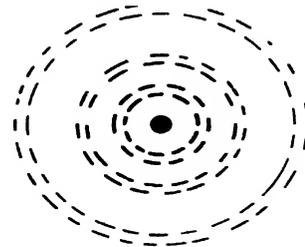


FIG. 57

of time in getting to the audience, and that if a word is spoken too soon it impinges on the preceding word and produces a woolly effect.

Drop a pebble in a pond, and you get rings (Fig. 56). Drop another and you get more rings overlapping the first (Fig. 57).

If you drop your second pebble with more force behind it than your first had, then your second set of rings will destroy the first. On the other hand, if you wait too long, there is too much calm.

Now transfer thought to speech on the stage.

A player has to overcome the initial inertia of the audience. Their attention is not merely a suspension like Fig. 58, where the emphasis and tension rise and are then arrested by silence, but it definitely drops (Fig. 59) so that the next player has to take up the slack to get the tension to the dotted curve.

The right place to pick up is when the point

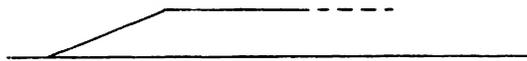


FIG. 58



FIG. 59

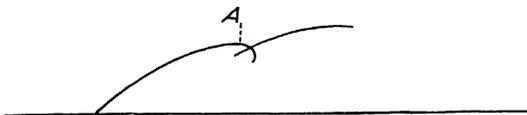


FIG. 60

emphasized is thoroughly established and digested as, say, at *A*, Fig. 60.

Then each cue emphasizes another. There should be no flurry; the attack should be neat, clean cut, and smart, particularly in modern dialogue.

There is one of the old conventions that is worth a few words—the old idea of “never speak with your back to the audience.” This is still shouted to beginners by irate coaches of the old school, who have forgotten that this convention was utterly smashed in a night about thirty years ago in a play called *Arizona* at the Adelphi Theatre. One of the leads, Tony, gave most of his lines from the Prompt Side, almost at the proscenium front, but with his back to the audience. Such a theory had never been heard of, and it caused much talk. The innovation was condemned by the old guard, but the freer spirits asked “Why not?” Tony was heard, he was effective, and he played to the whole stage. Nevertheless, there was a lot in what the old guard said. It is true of all technique, that one man, a master of his craft, can take liberties with technique, but to do so is successful only when the craftsman knows what he is doing.

Rules must be obeyed by the beginner, but may be broken by the expert. Now why should there be pother and fuss? In my opinion, because the old troupers had reason on their side, the reason being that hearing is better when you can see the speaker's face—this quite apart from the question of pitch, which is another story. The old troupers were familiar with the old days of relatively limited lighting, and it was imperative to face the audience to get the full illumination. So gradually the convention of never speaking away from the audience, in case a missed sentence should break the play, came into being, and ultimately became a hard and fast rule. But Tony soon smashed this, and the up-stage speech was added to the producer's armoury. Now it is a device of great effectiveness, though it must be used with caution. When used properly, it can be most effective, but if used indiscriminately, it ruins any episode in which it is employed. The great drawback is the fact that few amateurs can act with the body. They ought to be able to do so, but they do not. Consequently, when the acting is up-stage the audience get no help from the actor's back, and the method throws the whole liability for effect and emphasis on to the voice. This is all right if the voice is able to take up the strain, for it requires considerable stage sense to know how to control pitch and modulation. This control can be acquired, and it is something worth learning, provided it is not allowed to develop into mannerism. Those who were fortunate enough to see Alfred Lunt as Sir John Fletcher in *Love in Idleness* have beheld a masterpiece of back-to-audience acting.

The moment at which stage sense is a sheer necessity is when the curtain falls. Here is the culminating point of the production. Each act drop has its own significance, and if it is not properly done the work of weeks is destroyed. This quality of stage sense must go into the curtain operator, who should be able to judge, to split seconds, when to lower the curtain, when to raise it, how long to hold a picture, how long to let the applause continue before raising the curtain again, and so on.

Amateurs and producers should be chary of the slow curtain. In the first place, it is a great strain on the actors to hold a stage picture for a long time. In the second place, the audience

want to express themselves by applause. They must be caught when the need is strongest. Let the moment go by, and what might have been enthusiastic becomes lukewarm. The curtain that descends from the proscenium top and along its entire length at once, as the old drop curtain did, holds the attention better than the curtains that draw in from the sides. Why this should be so, I cannot explain, but I feel that slow curtains, at all times uncertain, should never be essayed with draw curtains. Many plays have the stage direction, "slow curtain," but I would rather trust my opinion and ignore the book than take a risk and rob the audience of the wish to applaud. I think the reason the slow curtain misses fire is because the stage is something dynamic. The slow curtain demands a tableau, a picture with figures in static position. This stillness destroys the illusion of action, of event succeeding event; the audience are brought back to reality and recollection of the interval.

Again, as in the instance of Tony's back, there are cases to be quoted against the theory of quick curtains. Take the last act of Monckton Hoffe's *The Faithful Heart*. After many vicissitudes of love and life, the leading man is taking his newly discovered daughter out to sea with him. Life is to start new for them both. A device of the first scene is repeated. As the ship passes a certain point, three blasts signal good-bye while the musical box tinkles a popular tune, just as it did twenty years before, when the girl's mother heard the siren as her lover went away. Now this scene necessitates an empty stage for about sixty or seventy seconds—a long time for an empty stage. First the blasts, then a pause and—Curtain. This is a bold attempt by Monckton Hoffe, and the fact that it succeeds is its justification. It is the Nelson touch in technique; the success of the device shows how unusual and risky it is.

A producer alert to the importance of right emphasis will always pay strict attention to entrances and exits. A second too much or a second too little and perfection is spoiled. An entrance, if the situation justifies it, is more effective when it is delayed for two or three seconds. This delay allows the preceding scene to get its full effect over, and provides the beginning of the new.

Most of the old play scripts suggest something

like this by creating a new scene for every entrance, each character as it were contributing his scenic quota. If one reads these old plays, the mind gets the full effect of these entrances by the mere mention of the entry and scene. It seems to mark the end of one phase, and definitely to underscore the beginning of the next.

I trust I shall not be misunderstood if I venture to quote the services of the Roman Catholic Church as examples of dramatic emphasis. To participate in a High Mass as sung by the Dominicans is to witness a marvellous example of point and counterpoint, the sense of development and fulfillment being completely conveyed by the liturgy. There is, of course, tradition behind this. Constant repetition, with no allowance for personal variations, has produced something definite and final.

In our own sphere we see it timed to a hairsbreadth in the rubric of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera. As any producer who has had Gilbert and Sullivan to produce knows, all actions and all business are laid down, the individual player being a human marionette. So it is with the professional company, so that at any given minute the manager of the company, though not even in the theatre, can say that at that moment Bunthorne is singing a solo or that the Dragons are about to make their entry. Now this exactitude of timing on general points means that every gesture, or every crossing, or every look has its allotted time, hence that extraordinary polish and slickness of the Gilbert and Sullivan performances, in which every point is clean.

The great point of emphasis to aim at is, of course, the finale of the last act. The whole cast have been aiming at that target. It is the predetermined end. The players must aim to have something in reserve for the grand climax, while getting out of each act and incident all that is necessary to reinforce the dramatic finish.

Stage sense comes by experience. It is the ability to play on an audience. It has to be backed by talent, and then used with skill. The essence of stage sense is the ability to command the audience, to hold its attention, and to make every action and word significant. A good illusionist and conjurer must have stage sense highly developed: a second too soon or too late, a slip

between patter and action, and the trick is marred, if not completely spoilt. Stage sense is not the sole responsibility of the principals. Small parts and chorus alike are involved. Small parts build up a character's crowd work or chorus works up to a principal's entrance. If this playing is not done with stage sense, the character is blurred, and the entrance can be ineffective. Good stage sense can be felt, but it is elusive and must be worked for purposefully.

THE PLAY AND ITS METHOD

There are many plays that require specialized treatment. What suits one is absolutely incongruous for another. On the other hand, there are certain plays that have added interest when they are seen in various production guises. Consider, for example, the modern dress productions of Shakespeare's plays sponsored by Sir Barry Jackson. I had the pleasure of seeing *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus* and the *Taming of the Shrew*. I maintain that the modern idiom emphasized the general story of the play in spite of incongruity of detail. A producer, before setting out on the detail of the production, will be quite definitely one-minded about the sort of production that he intends to give. He has to present the author's intention, and he has many methods from which to choose—fantastic, decorative, realistic, expressionist, simple realism, curtains, old fashioned, and new fashioned. Whichever he chooses, he must be consistent.

Sometimes the play is the method. There is no choice. What alternative to stark realism is there for Galsworthy's *Strife*? What alternative to the transpontine for *The Only Way*? What expressionistic touch can be played with *It Pays to Advertise*? None. Think, however, of the variations in method that are offered by some of Lord Dunsany's plays, or those of F. Sladen-Smith, or *Everyman*.

Curtains present all sorts of opportunities for quiet entrances and effective exits. With them background can be controlled to contrast with costumes. There can be equal effectiveness when there is no background—when there is, for example, the high altar of a cathedral for a stage; or a cart platform in the middle of a field with the players silhouetted against the skyline may be a good thing. I wonder how *Everyman* would play in modern dress and with a revolving

stage and all the appliances of a fully equipped theatre. How effective would Riches be with his gold-headed cane, his silk hat, his diamonded lady, his Bonds and Sureties in attendance!

Of course, generally speaking, most plays are written for the picture-frame stage and the method of presentation is obvious. But even with these things go wrong and in some cases even the professionals are not free from blame. During the past twenty years there has been a hankering after melodrama. *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* at the Gate Theatre, *Fortune* at the Kingsway, and *Sweeney Todd* on the Surrey side, are examples from many. These revivals can be divided into two categories, burlesque and serious. Now old melodramas such as *The Silver King* have to be skilfully acted, and when they are presented with force and sincerity they can be truly dramatic in the theatrical sense. Most of them, however—*London Nights*, for instance—are tawdry, conventional stuff, with a hackneyed plot, types—villain, hero, orphan, etc., instead of human beings; and in these days such plays are unreal and can be burlesqued with joy and success. But melodrama like *The Silver King* cannot be burlesqued without utterly destroying its texture. Therefore, it must be played for what it is, a serious play to be worked within the conventions of the picture frame and with a strong didactic purpose. If burlesqued, it ceases to be itself, and becomes something else, more or less funny, according to the skill of the exponents. A burlesque must be in caricature, and resemble the original. *Fortune* or *London Nights*, however, played as seriously as their authors intended them to be, would be funny to-day because they were funny originally, the difference being that in the old days the audience did not think this sort of play funny; to-day we do.

How can *The Voysey Inheritance* be played? How would the office scenes go if they were decorated with jazz patterns, and constructurist desks, and if the Voysey family were in Victorian checks of purple and white? Would not this fantastic treatment distort the play? This play, representative of many, must be given the similitude of reality. The producer has no choice. If he were given to thinking of production in terms of suggestive shadows and symbolic lighting, with mauves and pinks suggesting woods,

then he might produce something amusing, but it would certainly not be Granville-Barker's *The Voyage Inheritance*.

Compare the clear-cut diamond-like quality of, say, *It Pays to Advertise* with the atmosphere of *Madchen in Uniform* or *Young Woodley*. The one demands sledge-hammer treatment and direct force; each of the others a persuasiveness and a quietness that are more eloquent than words. The one has the quality of action, the other two of mind, and, therefore, the producer must start right.

There are other plays that offer a greater freedom of choice. Greek Tragedy can be played without the confines of a picture frame. So can Shakespeare's plays, which were originally given, as it were, in the round. An apron stage, a sword, Drury Lane, or three planks and a couple of barrels are all bases for the free drama.

Then there is the question of mountings and settings. The old technique of Tree and Irving, with the stage filled to overflowing with canvas and wood, is now demoded in favour of something simpler, but, nevertheless, there are plays of that period which demand elaboration of the old kind. Consider Tree's production of *Drake*, *The Last of the Dandies*, and others. Could they be put on with curtain settings and a blue light? The spectacle was part of the play. On the other hand, *Joseph and His Brethren* (Wells) could be produced according to the wish of the producer, and Tree's real camels and such-like disregarded.

Now think of something of general experience but differing in type: *The Only Way* or *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* or Gow's *Gallows Glorious*. Here are four plays, two melodramatic histories and two dramas of history.

The methods of production of the first two are surely indicated as being in the bravura style.

They demand the flourish and the limelight, the emotional grip, the lump in the throat, and all the tricks and devices of the transpontine drama. Personality has to be doubled—or two personalities have to be laid one on the other. There is the personality of Sir John Martin Harvey plus the personality of Sidney Carton. There is the

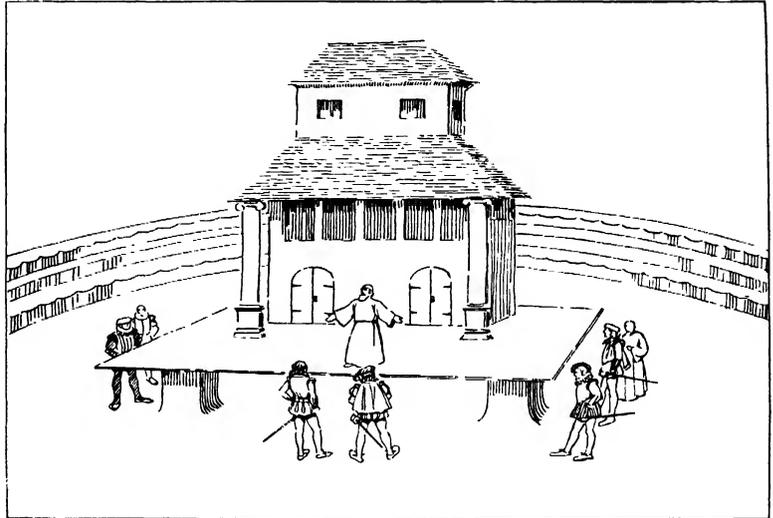


FIG. 61

personality of Fred Terry and the personality of the Pimpernel combined. These productions, therefore, aim at the exploitation of these personalities. Any attempt to produce these two plays in the mood of *Abraham Lincoln* or *Gallows Glorious* would destroy both play and cast. What then is the difference? Simply one of purpose and content. The purpose of *The Only Way* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is to amuse, to entertain, by the use of certain emotional effects. The purpose of the other two plays is to capture the mind, to hold the intellect, *through* the emotions. Both *Abraham Lincoln* and *Gallows Glorious* go one step beyond the emotional and leave behind the recollection of a definite fact of history in terms of human difficulty, whereas the melodramas stick to the mere personal element.

From this it must follow that a play that

appeals to the emotions to grip the mind has a method of production that will aim at subtly dealing with the idea or intellectual content of the play. A wider field for experiment is offered the producer, and while his choice is freer, the responsibility is greater, and a mistake is disastrous.

There are plays that are expressly designed for

skill, opens the Gate as an exercise in safe breaking. The bolts are drawn, the heavy golden Gate swings back, and the burglars see—the sky spangled with stars! Now here is a play with the simplest elements. Two men, the Gate, and the vista beyond. Examine the possibilities of that Gate. It forces only one thing—that it

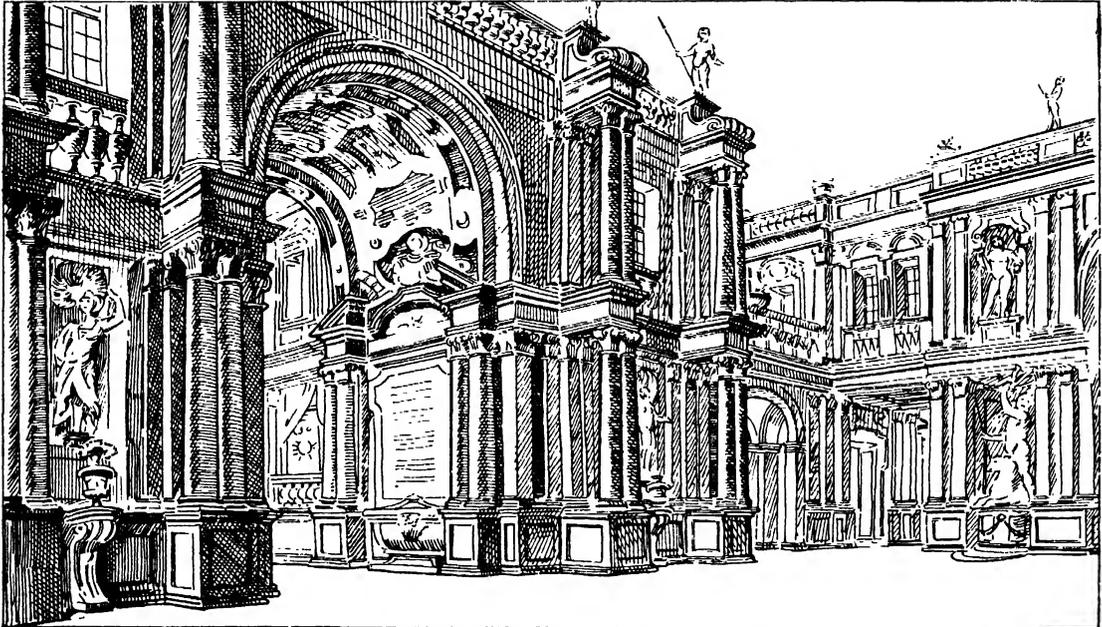


FIG. 62

small stages and intimate audiences, and others that require all the panoply of a full equipment. *White Horse Inn*, *Casanova*, and others are definitely organized as big stage spectacles, and any attempt to produce them otherwise destroys the very structure on which they are composed.

But I will deal with simpler things. One of the plays that rushes to my mind as giving the maximum of dramatic shock with the employment of the minimum of means is Lord Dunsany's *Gate of Heaven*. Two burglars, sitting at the Gate, are talking about the wonders beyond the Gate. They get impatient. One of them, driven by eagerness and a desire to show his

should appear heavy to make the swing back by the burglars necessary, so that there will be contrast between their labour and the result. As for the rest, curtains or flats, a simple setting or an elaborate setting are matters of choice.

This question of methods of presenting the plays, like all matters affecting the stage, is one that is extremely difficult to deal with in a general way, as there is always an obscure example to remind one that no rules need apply. While being aware of this, and also a little scared of it, I adhere to the foregoing statement and claim the example as the exception that proves the rule. What is the rule or principle? In brief, it is

simple: no play should be produced in a manner that is foreign to its nature. The Elizabethan Drama suffers by being compressed into the confines of the picture-frame opening. It was written for production in the round; a three-sided medium for quick and continuous action, which the apron stage made possible. The sketch (Fig. 61) is a diagrammatic representation of the old Swan Theatre, and is drawn from a scale model exhibited at the Manchester Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebrations. There is the platform from and on which the player had to address the *surrounding* crowd, "tickling the ear of the groundlings." Note how he literally has the whole stage. For interior scenes the characters drew up between and behind the columns. There was no waiting.

When the Restoration Drama came and Inigo Jones designed the theatres and masque, a new technique also came in. The apron was abolished and pictorial drama was created. The proscenium became a frame in which the action took place. Painted scenery as backcloths and wings appeared. This developed to a monumental degree, as is shown by the sketch of the Bibiena design (Fig. 62), the original of which in the Victoria and Albert Museum is well worth a few minutes' study. I can suggest only its main features, which the eyes of my readers' imagination will fill in with statues, floral swags, pilasters, domes, cornices, arches and other floridities.

With little alteration in principle the wings and side wings were the convention until the introduction of the box set by Tom Robertson, after which the modern period aimed at simplicity. Compare the complicated detail of the scene in Fig. 62 with the magnificent simplicity of Gielgud's production of *Richard II*, which no illustration can adequately convey, also with the sketch of the apron stage (Fig. 61). The spirit of the play was surely suggested by each.

It is not easy to capture the mood of a play when resources are limited, but it can be done with care and foresight.

The producer having fixed on the method of presentation, it follows that the concomitant costume and properties must be in harmony. A modern dress *Hamlet* demands modern settings, a melodrama revival the costumes of the

period, and so on. I have seen productions of period pieces in modern costume and modern settings, the result being sheer puerility in spite of departmental excellence. With a little study any play will suggest the method of its production, and it then remains for the producer to be consistent in the details, so that each unit, costume, acting, and setting combines to make a complete synthesis.

It is not sufficiently appreciated how many different methods there are of presenting a play. Methods vary with nations. There are some methods which our Western convention would hardly recognize. The Chinese method, for instance, is amusing to us. The stage is plain, with the property man visible at the corner. When the hero recites to the stars, up go a few stars on a stick; when the wanderers are on their weary journey, the props go with them, the property man carrying his cardboard mountains, and ready with his step ladder for the precipitous ascent. In Java there is puppetry; gorgeous tinsel and colour, worked with sticks to make the puppets' joints move. The women sit on one side of a sheet, the men on the other. The men see the flat puppets, the women the shadows. In Japan plays and playing are in the hands of a hereditary class, highly-trained and, to our ideas, working in a very subdued way. Our old religious drama was produced in the simplest way. The mediæval moralities and mysteries were produced on carts. Musical comedy demands spectacle opulence, sprightly chorus, and debonair men. Ibsen is in quite another mood. Each play has its method according to its kind.

SUGGEST, CRITICIZE, CO-ORDINATE

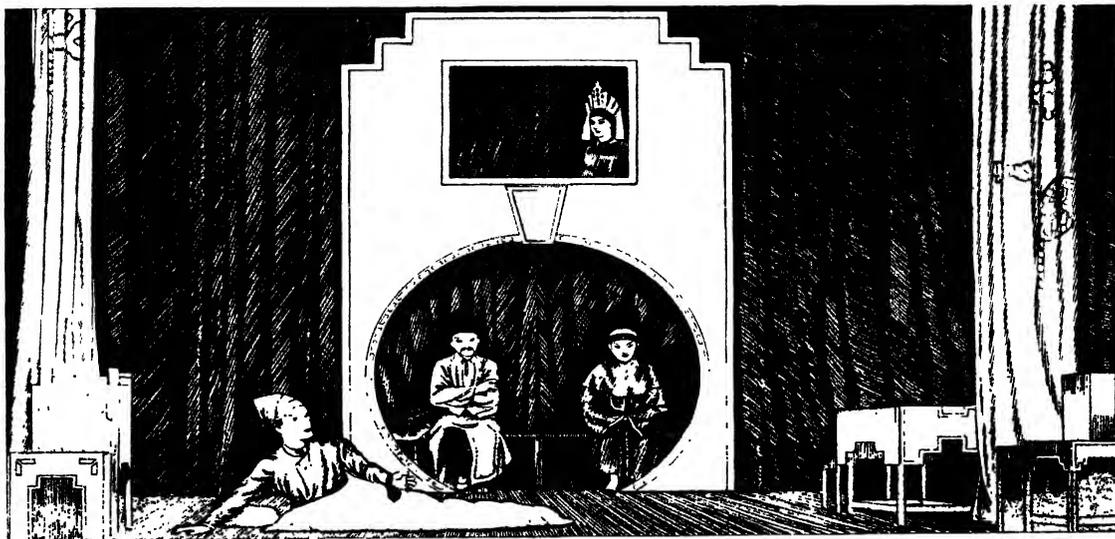
Three words, "Suggest," "Criticize," and "Co-ordinate," sum up the functions of a producer. Let me at once give credit where credit is due, and tell the reader that they are not my words. They came from that great master of the technique of production, Harley Granville-Barker, whose absence from our stage is a matter of the deepest regret to all who are interested in the welfare of the theatre.

Harley Granville-Barker would limit the producer to the phrase. Beyond suggestion, criticism, and co-ordination the producer should not go, except in desperation.

I epitomize in this way to try to smooth

out the sharp edges of much that has appeared elsewhere. It may appear (in fact, does appear) that in my idea the producer must be an autocrat, beyond control or criticism. That is my framework. No authority, whether in theory or practice, will controvert the basic principles that have been adumbrated elsewhere. The

A cast is not an army. It is not a unit to be drilled. It is a group of units (and this applies to the lighting and the scenery as well as to the human units) which have to be welded together. It is this welding that calls for the skill of the producer, a skill not only in the knowledge of his fixed units, but also in using people to get the



HULL PLAYGOERS' SETTING FOR "THE YELLOW JACKET"

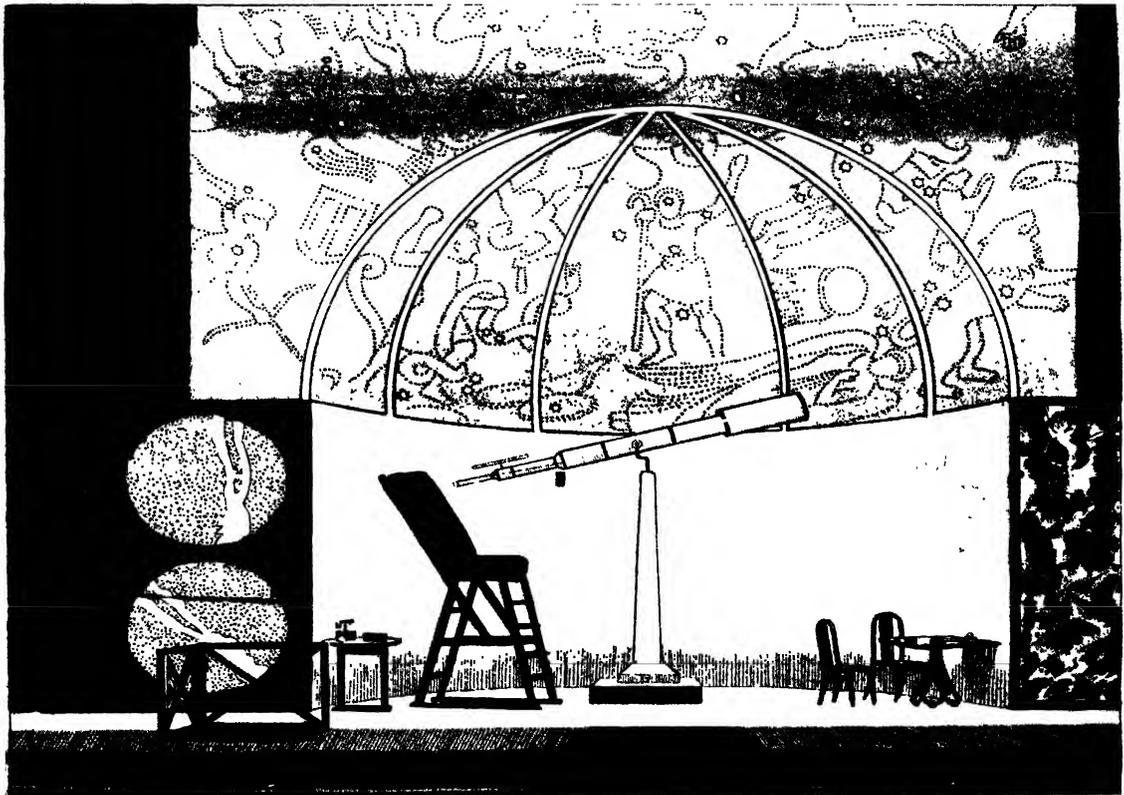
framework of aspects of production that has been built has yet to be filled in. I put forward "Suggest," "Criticize," and "Co-ordinate" as a *method* of achieving a result.

The production of a play can never be the result of forces that are created by working to a physical formula. Emotion cannot be measured by a quart pot or the skill of a person conjured from the vasty deep. Production is the most co-operative thing I know, and all must be contributors if the play is to survive as a living unit. But the difficulty of attaining exactitude does not eliminate discipline and direction, and I am here anxious to tone down into working limits any suggestions of mine that might lead neophytes to try to produce a play on the sergeant-major method.

best out of them. That best is obtained only when the producer shows that he can trust his cast and staff, and that they in their turn can trust the producer. This mutual trust paves the way for justified experiment in creative work. It is a producer's responsibility and artistic privilege to see the finished production in his mind's eye long before the human elements have quite grasped what he is aiming at, and if there is this mutual trust, then the repetitions of detail, the tiring rehearsals, the continual rubbing out and doing again, are made tolerable. A wise producer will take his cast into his confidence by pointing out what he is trying to achieve as a general result, and then encourage each section and unit in the section to contribute the personal touch.

There are still a number of groups, amateur and professional, which permit a play to be broken up into watertight compartments, each working separately. The costumier supplies the wardrobe from stock; the scenery is standard stuff, used

castle from *Patience* in one production turn up the following week as the castle for *Hamlet*. I have seen the same old "oak room," "palace set," and "garden scene" time after time in farce, comedy, fantasy, and tragedy. I have seen



SETTING FOR J. HIBERT'S "FLIGHT OF THE QUEIN BEI" BY A. HEYTHUM FOR THE STATE THEATRE, PRAGUE

over and over again for different purposes; the lighting is at the discretion of the electrician; the props. are subject to the fancies of the stage manager, and the "producer" limits his control to positions and inflections. Such was the old method, and it must be admitted that some of the results were not bad. But the method does not produce the perfect ensemble. I have seen the

costumes used in *The Gondoliers*, also as Spanish, Alsatian, Dutch, German, and Old English peasants' costumes. I have seen that range of costumes serve all plays from *King Arthur* to *Henry VIII*.

These are the haphazard methods that undermine the status of the producer and justify criticism of his power.

No cast of people, competent or not, provided they are willing to learn, should be expected to appear in a play hotch-potched together by such hit-or-miss methods, and unless a producer is prepared to plan his play as a whole he cannot

within the normal limits of human experience? The solution of this problem is to recognize that there is no problem to solve. The comedian-artist might take a part, appear, learn his lines, and obey instructions—but to fit him into a four-



LAST SCENE OF RUBENSTEIN'S "PETER AND PAUL" AT COPENHAGEN KAMMERSPILSCENEN

reasonably demand the service of his colleagues in the enterprise of putting on the play.

In view of the fact that the idea of the producer as controlling artist is as old as this century, also of the manifest excellencies of the idea, the number of rebels is extraordinary. "Rebels" is the right word, as it is surely obvious that the government of the theatre is definitely in the hands of the producer. He has not only come to stay, but has been here for a long time, and all progressive work can be traced to the influence of the artist assembler.

One stumbling block that often trips up a producer is the star actor—the one who just out-acts everybody else off the stage. How can one produce a play as a synthesis and with full satisfaction when a crashing comedian is in the cast, an artist whose comic personality overrides all attempts to crib, cabin, and confine it

square scheme of action would be impossible. He would be an individual, and all would have to play to him. Where, then, does the producer stand? Just where he ought to stand—as one who sees that the comic prop of the show must be allowed full play, and that all the parts must be directed to that end.

There are plays that demand an even cast, and here the producer must play on the formula "Suggest," "Criticize," "Co-ordinate." The implication is that he will know *what* to suggest and *how* to suggest it. A producer must have tact and patience. It is knowing *what* to suggest that is primary. *How* to suggest is secondary if the producer knows his job and proves that he knows it by suggesting things that are obviously right when attention is drawn to them.

"Criticism" opens up a more debatable field. Criticism goes a step farther than suggestion. It

is not merely destructive as most people think; it is positive and constructive, an attempt to get at the significance of something and to relate that significance to the whole. Take Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech. A producer can suggest such and such a reading, but to criticize that reading goes much farther. It compares one interpretation with another, relates each to the whole play, and so by suggestion and criticism the cast are helped individually and collectively.

It is in co-ordination that the real genius of production lies. If haphazard methods are to be avoided, if harmony and unity are to prevail, then all elements must be brought together and welded into a common whole. As a conductor brings in the strident bassoon, the gentle piccolo, and the tinkling triangle, so the producer must organize his players, his scenery, his dresses, his lighting, his play, his curtain falls, entrances, exits, emotions, and *finales*; all have a relation the one to the other, and only the producer can see them as a whole. Therefore, when he suggests he must suggest to a purpose already formed; when he criticizes he must criticize to a standard of work and interpretation that has already been formed; and when he co-ordinates he must co-ordinate to a set plan, four square and complete.

It is difficult to illustrate the importance of this by pictures, but the accompanying reproductions from *Drama* will show how a producer sets the mood and colours the whole production. Each picture strikes a note, the artistic sensibility of the audience is aroused, and the producer has to keep his production in harmony with it. In the case of the setting for *Flight of the Queen Bee* intellectual curiosity is aroused; one can feel that here was a production that was far removed from convention, and capable of vigorous attack or appreciation. It has life and purpose. It is vital and may be virile. Whatever it is, one must be curious about it. It has the element of artistic surprise that is a consequence of creative work. A producer who does not create is not really producing, but actually copying. He is a craftsman, but not an artist. There is always room for creation. The hoary revival or the newest play is all the better for the creative touch.

Various elements have to be brought together and co-ordinated to bring out the full purpose of a

play. Every play has a purpose. It is not enough for the actors to be good. If scenery and costumes are not properly considered, there is a loss of effectiveness, greater or less according to the producer's delinquency.

Co-ordination calls for harmony. All the parts, words, acting, scenery, costumes, lighting, form an harmonious whole. Everything needs to be related to the purpose of the play: realism for the realists, fantasy for the fantastic, riotous improbability in pantomime and, in Chekov, limitation to the mood of the characters.

DRAMATIC TENSION

Drama is action. Its emotional content is in the tension that is created by the sequence of events. The resultant of Drama, plus Tension, produces a good play. Almost anything is dramatic—the slum problem, a new railway, the tides, a war, maternity, hunger, and so on. But to claim these as dramatic is one thing; to make them dramatic is another. To select the form (tragedy, comedy, satire, etc.) is the author's task. The producer then presents the author's case, and his job is to present it as the author wished, i. e. dramatically. The author may have done his job. He may have presented his producer with a script dealing with the slum problem, or the tides, or maternity, but without presenting the case in dynamic form. Such a script may have literary value, or social value, but, lacking dynamics, it is unsuitable for the stage. Therefore, the producer should "turn it down." No amount of production trickery will supply the necessary quantity of drama or conflicting action. All the coloured light, quick curtains, chromo-emotional effects are no good.

One of the great difficulties of the advance guard in the theatre is to find playwrights with something to say, *who say it well*, and by well, I mean in terms of the theatre. Take Frederick Lonsdale's *Spring Cleaning*. The plot, I may be permitted to recall, deals with the wife of a rich man who has gathered round her a gang of useless, vicious people, more or less on the fringe of Society, and all with loose notions (we cannot call them ideas) of manners and morals. They are spongers, degenerates, half-sexed, bi- or duplex-sexed, while the wife herself is an ordinary, decent woman, bewitched by these people, on whom she

spends her husband's money. The high-water mark of the play is the end of the second act, where a dinner party is waiting, most impatiently, for the husband, who has unexpectedly, and as they all think, most unkindly, decided to be home for dinner with a guest. The two places are waiting. Bare backs and jewels are lavishly displayed, and criticism of the husband is as bitter as it is bold. At last he arrives, and his guest turns out to be an obvious street-walker of the most flagrant type, but she shows up the others in more ways than one, and the full force of the play is in the husband's taunt that he thought all these amateurs would like to meet a professional.

Now here is a play, which, in one line, contrasts promiscuity and prostitution. At the time it was written and produced that particular denouement had force, at least in London, whatever may have been its effect elsewhere and in other times. I am now dealing with the content of a play from the producer's point of view. Imagine an unknown playwright, full of the same social idea as this play; how would he present it? The question can be answered by calling to the mind's eye a script by Bernard Shaw and another by John Galsworthy, and putting them, with the existing play, as a triple contrast to an anonymous play. Mr. Lonsdale has produced a good, sound work of the theatre, but it differs from the hypothetical Shaw play in its lack of social invective. Mr. Lonsdale keeps his play to the personal element. Only the people on the stage are involved. The problem is personal. But can we not see the sweeping indictment of a whole post-War period that Shaw would have poured forth? In the case of Galsworthy, we can readily visualize the nicely balanced pros and cons for all concerned—a sort of six of one and half a dozen of the other valuation. All would be good plays. I also visualize the work of our friend Anonymous, a playwright we wish to encourage, a local lad, earnest, full of good words, and with strong feelings about the way the world wags, instead of going round quietly and steadily along predetermined lines. He sees what Lonsdale, Shaw, and Galsworthy have seen. He, too, is stirred about it. He writes a play that is full of argument about it, and the local dramatic society produces it.

Pity the poor producer! It is true, he has

brought the trouble on himself by his lack of frankness in not pointing out to the author that the long opening speech of the wife in Act One, though fine writing, is not dramatic, that it has no gait, no action. The arguments are there, very much so, but no producer can present a long array of arguments as other than what it is—a long array of arguments. The dialogue may be important and sincere, but, and here is the rub, it is *non-dramatic*. Think of C. K. Munro's *Rumour* as originally published. Every word of the missionary's speech is of vital importance and of the greatest value—if delivered from a platform to a public meeting! But if it is presented as a drama, then the dramatic facts must be selected, action must speak for itself, and the audience, not the author, supply the explanation of why things that should not be said and done.

THE MANCHESTER SCHOOL

This lack of tension, or dramatic technique, was the cause of the decline in favour of the Manchester School of Playwriting, which, so far as intellectual content is concerned, was as vital as any school of drama we have experienced. It was vital because nearly every writer in that School felt he had a message of importance to deliver. That it was the same message few stopped to consider. The general theme was always the same—the crushing weight of Capitalism on life and living. The peculiar social circumstances of the North gave local colour when the millowner's son wanted to marry the daughter of one of his father's workmen. People got tired of the continual polemics about work and wages against a background of collier's kitchens with real dressers and gas mantles. Yet the drama was there, for what can be more dynamic than the lives of the people in the industrial North? Nevertheless, the plays of the Manchester School lost favour because of the lack of tension. The case against social evil was presented without sufficient attention to form. The mind of the audience may have been interested, but the emotions were unaffected. This must not be taken to mean that the Manchester School did not produce good drama. It did—very good drama indeed, but its formula got over-worked, and in unskillful hands monotony was added to familiarity. *Hindle Wakes* and *The*

Younger Generation, by Stanley Houghton, are both good plays, and would play well to-day if the social conditions were the same. Examine *Hindle Wakes*. Note how the escapade of Fanny is disclosed to the audience. The false post card gives the usual news of a good holiday when Fanny's father and mother have just heard of the death, by drowning, of the girl friend Fanny is supposed to be with. Note the discussion about it, and about when Alan shall marry Fanny, and all the family side issues that are presented. Note, too, the grim Fanny going through the early action, silent and thoughtful; then her bombshell, when, in her presence, the two families have decided when and how Alan shall make an honest woman of her. There are the two families. All the details are arranged, Fanny, with shawl over head, suddenly bursting in with, "And where do I come in?" The consternation of the two families cannot be described. Then Fanny outlines her philosophy, which, in brief, is that she is not going to marry Alan to make an honest man of him, and that if she chooses to have a fancy man, she is going to. This was the first play in English drama in which equal immorality for the sexes was asked for. But would such a demand have the same dramatic effect to-day as then? I doubt it. Standards of conduct are different, and Fanny's bombshell of yesterday would be only a squib to-day. On the other hand, in comedy, the Manchester School is a little more permanent because the playwrights deal with characters rather than circumstances. Take *Hobson's Choice*. It is the characters, assumedly typical of Lancashire, which make the fun, and that fun is as good to-day as ever.

These models, good of their kind, led to imitators, as *Abraham Lincoln* brought out imitators; as all good models beget copyists. The point I want to press home to producers and selection committees is: Examine the social drama for the drama first and the social problem afterwards.

EMOTIONAL vs. SOCIAL DRAMA

As a general statement, I maintain that a good social drama is better than a good, purely emotional drama, because the one has purpose and drive and the other has neither except for a few moments. The latter is personal to the puppets

on the stage, and when the curtain descends their life is done. But in the social drama the life and the argument go on, until the evil it dealt with is abolished. Fanny Hawthorne has more vitality than the Lady of the Camellias. But the Lady of the Camellias is a romantic, emotional figure, with a direct personal approach; therefore, it is more likely that *the stage* will give us Camellias, while *drama* will give us Fanny or her equivalents as the Fannys change and their circumstances alter.

The foregoing is really a red flag to warn producers against the literary drama, and to suggest that action speaks louder than words, particularly where drama is concerned. Where you get good action, plus good argument, the choice is obvious, but it is dangerous to allow one's political, religious, or social prejudices to accept a play merely because its main theme is something with which one is in agreement.

In *The Exemplary Theatre*, Harley Granville-Barker divides the action of a play into two parts (1) the conscious action, and (2) the unconscious, or sub-conscious action. His definition of the conscious action is "everything that may be a part of the main structure of the play," and of the unconscious "everything in the play's acting—movement, expression, emotion, thought—which may, without disturbance of the production's structure or distraction of fellow actors, be carried forward in any one of many different ways."

These two categories are worth examining on the grounds that whatever Harley Granville-Barker has said about production is hall-marked with the stamp of highest authority.

CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ACTION

The first category of "conscious action" he further defines by stating that the structure he refers to is that part that ranks as constant as the dialogue itself. Exits and entrances must be made at certain times. Certain things must be done in certain places, and always with the same emphasis and intention. These are the unchangeable elements, as it were; the limitations of action in which producer and cast must move.

The second category is that which the actor and the producer bring to bear in clothing the structure with their own art and imagination.

The structure demands exits and entrances at certain times. The spirit of the play and the significance of these actions must be conveyed by the actor. It is the manner of presentation that controls the tension communicated to the audience. To make the play dynamic the drama must be built up, word by word, action by action, scene by scene, until the ultimate effect of making all this make-believe appear actual is obtained, plus the emotional effect of drama. In modern plays an attempt at realism will let the play down, for in reality people do not act dramatically, even when great tragedy enters into life. The tendency in reality is to endeavour to keep calm, to suppress emotion, and to control the situation with a stiff upper lip. This may be admirable from a social point of view, but the stage is an art, not a drawing room, and the inherent drama of the stage situation must be exposed by the player, not by theatricality, which is bad histrionics, but by interpretation.

VARIETY IN TENSION

It is not possible, or desirable, that one should go much farther than to create, in the mind of the beginner, more than a knowledge of the necessity for this state of tension. Having awareness, the artist will apply the principle according to circumstances. Nevertheless, I think it is supplementary to the main principle to point out that this tension varies in accordance with the type of play. The tension in, say, Edgar Wallace's *The Squeaker* is much more strenuous than in, say, *The Three Sisters* by Chekov. In the case of *The Squeaker* the tension is in the form of a series of short twists with quiescent intervals. In *The Three Sisters* the tension is steady, continuous, and gentle.

This principle is applicable to comedy or tragedy, and calls for response between player and audience. If the player is too violent in the beginning, he will not be able to apply the right force at the end, even if the audience has recovered from the shock of the first impact. Again, each player must be in tune, as it were, no one player varying from the key of the others; otherwise, the whole structure of the play is warped, and what should be complete becomes a one man show or vaudeville. Sometimes, often in farce, this effect is desirable, but, usually, serious drama

of the modern school does not provide for personal pyrotechnics.

The producer will separate the tension of the idea in the play from the tension in the action. Both are separate and non-recognition of the fact often leads to the downfall of earnest societies with ideas but no experience. Before deciding on a play because the idea in it is one that a society wishes to propagate, examine the method of its presentation. Are the characters human beings, as in a Galsworthy play, or parrots, as in a Shaw play? Does the development of the play arise naturally from the circumstances represented, or are the situations based on special pleading and forced conclusions? Does the right fellow get all the right answers from the author, or is the dialogue divided into fair question and answer? Do the dialogue and the action (entrances, exits, etc.), the conscious and unconscious elements, build up a state of intellectual and emotional excitement?

Even if all is in the book, the expression and the interpretation lie with the players. The most detailed prompt book still demands warm flesh and blood to translate its terms into action, and it is this realization and the sincerity of obedience to its requirements that make the difference between art and mimicry.

This difference between art and mimicry is one that every would-be player should thoroughly understand. It is difficult to set down in clear, definite terms, but, nevertheless, it is there. A player must call forth a response from his audience by their interest in his humanity, his flesh and blood, heart, mind, and soul. Without this his gestures may be exact, but they will be those of an automaton. The audience may be interested, in the general sense, in the actions of an automaton, but then emotional interest is aroused by the circumstances of a human being. The ultimate responsibility, therefore, falls on the players, and if they will not, from slackness, inability, or conceit, take pains to master the humanity of their parts, then author and audience alike are deprived of what they have a right to expect, and the producer has directed and created in vain. Assuming that a cast is doing well, only one member has to relax a little for the whole tension to slacken. Acting is as much a community affair as an individual responsibility. The

team spirit must operate if the audience is to receive the full impact of the play.

All this is obvious, but, nevertheless, it is frequently ignored. Too many amateurs take their talent for granted and their facility for skill. The talent and skill may be there, but no great work will be done until each is illuminated by understanding, and dramatic tension will be created and maintained only when the whole cast consciously co-operates to attain the desired end.

Some plays have the strongest tension at the end of the second act, and utilize the third for tidying up loose ends and to bring the story to a neat conclusion. Others, thrillers, for example, carry tension right through to the end. The audience is kept in suspense, until the least suspected person in the cast is exposed. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, by Webster, the tension of horror is not relaxed from beginning to end. Here is a classic example of how audience interest wanes because the tension is never eased. Contrast this with Shakespeare's use of the Porter in *Macbeth* when Duncan is murdered and in the silence of the night come the loud knocks on the gate. The Porter enters, but he is a comedian. His soliloquy is full of spicy humour. The audience sits back, breathes again, and laughs with the Porter, until in a short while the clanging bell brings it back to tragedy. Of these two plays one loses emotional weight through strain; the other heightens to its final catastrophe.

CASTS

Amateur acting has one thing akin to chemistry: before you can start it, you must know something about it. Having decided to act, the next thing is to decide what to act in. As in most affairs of the theatre, the choice is so wide and the conditions are so variable that one cannot lay down any golden rule. For my part if I were forming a new society the first thing I would have decided would be the principle on which the society was to be based. There are four bases on which to build: (a) Artistic; (b) Charitable; (c) Social; (d) Because you like it. Many societies come to grief because they are formed for one purpose, and perform plays that do not fit in with that purpose. The producer is the sufferer.

For a new society, particularly in small towns, I would suggest a series of six small cast plays, four of which should be comedies. Small casts are easy to reshuffle if individuals are unsatisfactory, and the producer can concentrate on essential detail much more readily than if his mind and energies have to be distributed over a wide field of action. This question of small casts is often overlooked in the anxiety to get as many tickets sold as possible, and each member of the cast is regarded as a potential ticket-seller. This ticket selling, based on financial fear, is all very well up to a point, but it overlooks the primary point in salesmanship, i.e. make the goods worth while and the public will buy.

When a group is in existence for purely social purposes, the issue does not arise to the same degree. The primary object is the creation of fun without pretence, and as I believe that people have a right to enjoy themselves in their own way, if their idea is to get together to produce *The Lagabond King* as a first effort, driving the producer crazy by their efforts, they have a right to carry it out; only the producer has any *locus standi* for objection. But societies that wish to build throughout a reasonable period of continuity must take the long view, not the social view, and even though the syllabus may be a riot of farce or the depth of Nordic depression the plan must be seriously considered.

"Value for money" is a good slogan, and a good play well done soon creates a goodwill and a following. If the promise of the first good show is maintained the group becomes an institution. It must, however, start right. A small cast play, with a good producer, is the best beginning possible. What does it matter if, being an unknown society with no following and no reputation, the first receipts are low? If the show is good, people will want to see the next production. If it is bad or clumsy, people will not want to see the next, and the society will wither through lack of support. It is all a matter of earnestness.

Selection committees should select their plays well ahead and have a full season's work arranged in advance. The selection committee should write down all the titles of plays they want to consider, say a list of twenty, which should be reduced to six. Of these six, four in the order

in which they are to be played should be fixed upon and then advertised as the ultimate selection when the season draws near. This is a much more orderly and satisfactory method than to decide upon one play at quarterly intervals with the concomitant heat of argument and fiery discussion.

Societies with experience do not need to be told with what sort of a play they should open. A new society, feeling its way, no matter how "highbrow" its claims and intentions, would be well advised to open with a comedy or farce.

Laughter and intelligence are not necessarily strangers. Select a laugh-making show—but see that it is a good one: good in its intellectual content. I suggest a comedy opening because in these days laughter is wanted, and a society should have a reputation for being *good* and enjoyable. The second show might, and the third certainly should, scale the heights of tragedy, and test the capacity of the supporting audience for the stimulation that good tragedy provides. But here again I must stress that qualification of goodness. Too many societies, in their desire to be considered advanced, and their eagerness to catch the critical eye by their boldness, fall into the trap of pretentiousness and produce something that is flashily intellectual.

Such groups ultimately wither to be the pets of a coterie. Therefore, the selection of the first season's plays is a matter for careful consideration and dovetailing: a syllabus of comedy, classic comedy, drama or tragedy, and a costume drama, or the two last as alternatives, will soon let a committee know where it stands in regard to popular support. The range of plays that can be considered by a society is extraordinarily wide.

Range of choice is one thing, capacity to perform another. Choosing and producing have a gap, worse often than an affinity, between them. But the principle of variation must be observed, and it is possible, within wide margins, to find suitable plays in any of the categories. In general, no matter what the category ("tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited," as Polonius puts it), not only variation of syllabus, but simplicity of production should enter into the choice. For the aim of the selection

committee to be ambitious is right and proper, but, as far as is possible, they should be *certain* as well—certain, that is, that the choice of play is one that comes easily within their capacity to perform, and perform well.

This brings me to a consideration of the size of cast. The schedule of the types of play to be given having been decided, the selection of the actual titles must be governed by the number of players available, their experience, size of stage, and so on. For my part I would select a play with a maximum of six for my opening show. In addition to a full cast of six (I assume a society to be at its very beginnings) I should have a reservoir of non-cast members eager to have a try. The six would be under the critical observation of their fellow members. The producer could concentrate his attention. The subtleties of the play could be carefully rehearsed and there would be more chance of putting up a four-square show with a certain degree of polish and finish than would otherwise be the case. Beginners do not realize the amount of detail there is in a show. The personal aspect as far as casting is concerned is only one of many departmental problems. The acting, of course, bulks largest in the public eye, but the details of the background, such as scenery, costumes, props., lighting, and so on, all require a producer's attention, and if he has a large cast of beginners his task is multiplied out of due proportion, and instead of being able to dot the i's and cross the t's, some of the details will have to be sketchy and blurred.

A producer, giving time and personal attention to individual members of a cast, can, at the same time, usefully demonstrate to the non-acting members what they will have to know when their turn comes. When in a cast the individual is naturally and properly concerned with the immediate and personal aspect of his or her particular part, and so does not get the broad outline of what to do as an acute and interested observer does. I am aware that the foregoing ignores the predilection of most producers, who like to rehearse free from the interference of sightseers, but our immediate concern is for the society that is in its early stages with everything to learn and nothing to forget.

Further, casting is not a simple matter at any

time, and though a large cast may solve the difficulty of selection by giving everybody a show, this broadening of the base also means a certain dissipation of executive energy, and adds to the risk of having somebody who will let the show down.

The foregoing is a personal choice, and the other side ought to be stated. An opening show with a large cast offers two substantial advantages. First, it enlists a goodly crowd of ticket sellers, and, secondly, it gives a producer a wider field of vision for future casting. The first consideration is tempting, but of minor importance. The second is well worth thinking about; its operation is largely governed by the basis on which the society is to be built. If a number of shows will be given each season, then it is well to have a large reservoir of talent available so that the audience will be interested in a variety of personalities, and the producer or casting committee never be handicapped by lack of personnel.

When a large cast of unknown quantities is employed it is permissible to bring in experienced outsiders for the leads so that the tyros will see how experience helps the production along, and in order to give the producer time to help the beginners in the less important parts to polish up their inflections and business. In short, a small cast means intensive culture of the few, and a large cast extensive culture for the many. Each society should apply the formula to suit its own needs and circumstances.

The primary objective of giving the audience value for money must never be forgotten, for recognition of the rights of the audience is as important as the pleasure of the cast.

When building up a society's acting strength casting should be designed to bring about the team spirit. *Esprit de corps* is as good in dramatics as it is in anything else. Parts should be shuffled as far as ability allows, and everybody should feel that the society is a corporate whole organized for a specific purpose, and not the plaything of a few. I write for the benefit of groups that wish to establish *permanent* societies, societies that will go on apart from individual personalities. The society founded for a clique or coterie goes on for a limited time only—just as long as the particular people concerned keep their interest alive, or can attract public interest. The clique was a

characteristic feature of the pre-War amateur society, and was built up mainly on a social basis for mutual enjoyment, and, occasionally, mutual admiration. All enjoyed themselves, and the only anxiety was whether the general public would subscribe sufficient ticket money or subscriptions for the members to have a good time without expense to themselves. But since those days a different idea has developed, and many societies have been formed with more solid intentions, based on a love of the drama for its own sake, and often to fill a gap in the theatrical facilities of a district.

Dramatic considerations take first place, and production of good drama is both the means and the end. Such societies will naturally receive the first, and, as time goes on, the greatest and most constant impetus from interested parties, but such interest is not always limited to a desire to act. These friends of the theatre are quite content to see others act, and will take executive positions in other departments. They are builders of reputation; first the reputation of the society and then the acting or artistic reputations of the personnel. These are the societies that will gain most profit by consideration of the foregoing opinions. Such an executive has no difficulty in creating and developing the team spirit, as the general membership realizes the general impartiality of a non-acting committee whose primary interest is the continuity of the society's work and at the same time adding to and preserving its artistic and financial integrity. Societies like this have their most painful and anxious time in the beginning, when nearly everything is a matter for experiment, but in due course stability is reached. The team spirit comes after a time, when a tradition has been established, and maintenance rather than creation of an ideal is the executive objective.

Team spirit is a real thing which in due time becomes as tangible as the treasurer's report.

Therefore, development of the team spirit is of the utmost importance, and gives everybody in the cast the feeling that no matter how small the part, it is part and parcel of the whole, and as such is just as important as the lead. A lead in one show can be cast for a small but effective character part in another show. The application of this principle keeps alive active interest based on hope, which itself is an incentive to study the art of

acting. In due course a producer will have a good all-round team, in which there will be no personal stars, except those who by virtue of applied ability have the artistic right to exploit their skill before the public.

In operatic work the problem of casting is not so subtle. Tenors cannot take bass parts; a soubrette is born, and not made, and often a producer has to take such personnel as he finds available. It is not often that the amateur who can play Baron Popoff will be equally as good as Prince Danilo. Consequently, while the problem may be set in more clearly defined units, nevertheless it is not entirely solved, and to a greater or less degree there is the possibility of building up a team consciousness apart from star personalities.

The star system has certain advantages, but selecting and casting plays for stars and leading personalities do not make for continuity. When the star loses interest, moves to another district, or for any reason does not take part, the public regard the next performer not only as a successor, but as a substitute, and the reception is not always as hearty as the performer has a right to expect. If the successor is extraordinarily good, the ex-star is permanently dimmed, and though the new star may scintillate in the theatrical firmament for a while, in due course the practical reasserts itself, and expediency has to be tried all over again.

A further objection to the star system is that it makes the other members feel that there is no hope of promotion. The casting is regarded as on a hierarchical rather than on an ability basis, and in time the "just as goods" break away to form lesser societies in which the small-part players become the stars. With each break away the prospect of one hundred per cent casting strength gets less and less, until in the last resort the public is called upon to support production efforts that are mere personal pleasures, and often mere personal rivalry between one society and another.

This continual break-up process and establishment of break-away societies is not a true development of the art of the amateur. It resolves itself into a number of competing groups with beginners for the main membership and one or two star performers always in the limelight.

When such stars have local obligations, such as parochial work or an old school call on their

services, another problem is presented which solves itself by recognizing that loyalty to parish or school is a fine thing. I do not call that a break-away group, because the membership is limited to a certain circle and its object is mainly private, with no civic pretensions. The society I have in mind is the one that takes the name of a district and expects the district to rally round, and support it for the sake of the prestige of the locality concerned. For such a society I suggest that all-round casting is the honest policy, and also a much better policy than maintenance of the star system. There is a firm basis when the community as a whole accepts the pleasure of a show that is presented by a committee that is resolved to give value for money every time, and give, according to artistic merit, a fair show to all concerned.

As I have dealt elsewhere with type casting and other methods, I will not go further into details such as organizing readings for testing, or the recitation of a set piece, and so on, but will here concentrate on first steps. Societies that are established, no matter what the basis of organization may be, will have evolved their own technique for casting, and as this will no doubt have been arrived at by a process of trial and error, their experience will be more valuable than my general suggestions. I have written primarily for the new society, and not so much for those in towns, as for those in smaller communities where the organizers are cut off from experienced help. Town people will nearly always be able to call on somebody with experience of amateur dramatic society methods, but the method that suits a large society, with a large membership to draw on, which produces musical comedy, may not be suitable for a village group, or one with parochial or other unit loyalties and ties.

As in all things connected with the art of the theatre, it is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules. Any attempt to state a definite practice would be disastrous, but I feel sure that in advising potential organizers to survey the ground and to establish a policy, both in regard to type of play and method of casting, I give advice that is of the utmost importance. Whether the objective be light or serious, the policy of casting so that everybody gets a show in due course is a good one. In asking groups to organize for continuity

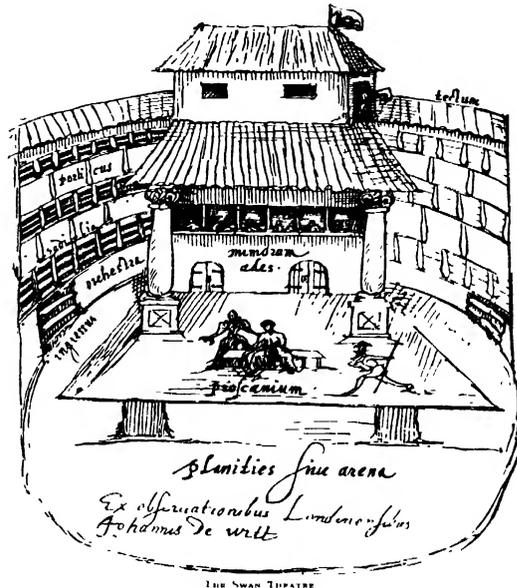
of action, I offer a good principle. Within the limits of these two basic principles is plenty of room for individual experiment to suit particular or personal requirements, and an evening's discussion on these two points will be time well spent, as divergences of opinion can be ventilated before any misunderstandings arise. Each and every member will be clear as to the sort of society that is being formed, also about his or her potential position in the society, and there will be general satisfaction in knowing that the society is starting with uniformity of purpose.

FRAMES AND BACKGROUNDS

One of the aspects of production that is often hinted at in discussion is the question of general mounting, by which I do not mean "settings," but the actual "mounting" or "framing" of a play. It is a point that is not sufficiently experimented with, even by the most advanced societies. The usual mounting is, of course, the proscenium, which I intend to classify as the picture frame. In actuality this is so popular and conventional that producers with years of experience never think of anything else. Nevertheless, there is a wide field for the use of other mountings. There is the "apron" stage, so called because it is an apron projecting beyond the footlights. There is an extension of this idea in the "circus" stage in which the whole of the action of a play takes place in the middle of a completely surrounding audience. There is the Greek convention of a fixed setting, without footlights, with steps leading into the auditorium. (This is, of course, suitable mainly for daylight performances, though it can be adapted for evening shows by properly arranged lighting. There is also the technique of open-air production for which a permanent set is required. Specialist mountings vary much in individual difficulty. Altars, for example, are used in the production of *Mysteries*, *Miracle*, and *Morality Plays*. Each site offers its own particular problem.

The picture frame has been our main mounting since the time of Inigo Jones. After the Restoration of Charles II, the Puritan ban on the theatre was lifted, and Court patronage and the release of the drama led to a great revival. The theatres of Elizabeth and James were found inadequate. Playwrights wrote for the picture frame. Scenes

were designed to appear as compositions, and players developed a technique in which the audience were acted "at" rather than "with" as in the days of the early drama. The aprons of the Globe and Swan Theatres were withdrawn behind the picture frame. In the old days a player had an audience all round him. In the theatres of



the Restoration, members of the audience were mainly in front of him. Reference to the print of Shakespeare's Swan Theatre will be illuminating.

The main exterior scenes took place on the platform. We can imagine how, say, *Falstaff* in his "Honour" speech would turn to his three-sided audience, and how the magic of Shakespeare's verse would be delivered with full force. Imagine, too, the rostrum scene in *Julius Caesar* with Antony and Brutus addressing the mob. The apron would bring the audience right into the play as no picture frame setting could do.

My main purpose is to suggest that producers should consider bases of production other than the picture frame, and at the same time to point out that any departure from the conventional

can be justified only by *good* results. Departure for departure's sake is merely stupid.

The first stage was the altar; the next was outside the church, in the market on a cart. Then it was in the inn yard or other convenient enclosure. At the beginnings of specialism we get the Tudor Stage, and afterwards the Inigo Jones Theatre. These five stages refer to England, and to them we may add the Greek Theatre, which was almost temple as well as theatre. I will not deal with the "Houses" of the Medievalists as they would not be practical to-day. The Greek Theatre was a permanent structure. There was no scenery change, the action of the play taking place throughout before the same arrangement of steps and colonnades. The action of Attic Drama is always in the open air; there are no interior scenes—hence a public place was the best setting, and columns and steps lent themselves to dramatic action and movement. Producers of pageants and historical events will find much help from study of the Attic method, and there are some modern plays that would make interesting productions in the open.

Most performances in this country are given behind the picture frame, which was originally designed for scenery sets. The use of curtains and the picture frame is a modern compromise that brings an older technique into use with something that is relatively new. The proper relation of these two principles of production and how their interchange with the three main styles is permissible are well worth a little thought. These three styles are the platform or apron, the curtains, and the frame. Curtains are a lazy producer's salvation, and they can be used wrongly. It is my intention to lay down the considerations that should operate in deciding on the method of production. To quote a slogan that has been used elsewhere and for other reasons is, perhaps, the best method of pressing home a point. "Fitness for purpose," say the Function-*alists*, and whether thought is concerned with a jug or a railway station, a shoe or an Atlantic liner, its fitness for its purpose is the acid test of its artistic quality. So it is with curtains, apron stages, or picture frames. Are they fit for the purpose of realizing the full value of the play? The answer decides the producer's capacity for his job, and the use of the materials to his hand

shows his capabilities in the theatre, i.e. the world of illusion.

The question resolves itself, then, into asking: "How shall I produce this or that play? If there are interior scenes, the Attic method cannot be used. The dress is modern, the dialogue is that of to-day, the action that of people and circumstances I am familiar with." It follows that the setting (scene) and props must be in keeping, that a harmony must be built up, but, too often and far too readily, for no reason at all except the foolish notion that it is "*artistic*," curtains are used. Critics are invited to gape in wonder at the mysteries of the curtain settings, and, of course, all they see are hanging and waving curtains when they ought to see a dining room or a kitchen.

Until just before the First Great War no amateur, and few professional, productions were mounted in curtains. All was scenery, back-cloths and wings were usual, and a box set was an innovation. Nowadays, the urge toward simplicity and "maximum results with minimum means" may lead to the complete abolition of scenery, and a reliance on simple curtain-hung stages. The plea of the producer is that curtains leave the filling of the scene to the imagination of the audience. This is all very well as far as it goes, provided it goes far enough, but curtains are curtains, and not the Forest of Arden. Neither, on the other hand, is a mass of three-ply fretwork, fishing net, canvas, and paint the Forest of Arden. Which way, then, does Truth lie? My reply is that if curtains are curtains, and fretwork is fretwork, the Forest of Arden is somewhere in Warwickshire, and would cost a lot to transport and compress on the stage; in other words, we cannot give a play in the Forest of Arden unless it is given in the real Forest. But the exigencies of the play demand that the audience shall be present and visualize certain events as happening in the Forest and that they shall have a mental picture of the Forest provided for them by the producer. This brings us back to the formula that the art of the theatre is the art of illusion. The *illusion* of the Forest must be, then, either pictorially (fretwork) or by suggestion (curtains), but neither fretwork nor curtains, *qua* fretwork and curtains, will provide the illusion unassisted. Suggestion

must be brought to bear, and when this suggestion is aptly provided we get that which we call an artistic setting. It is not a case of curtains *versus* paint, or imagination *versus* realism, but a matter of finding the right method of mounting a play

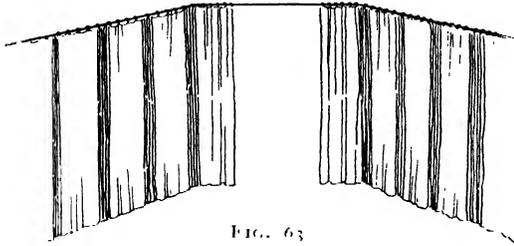


FIG. 63

to suit its mood. Curtains are more amenable, scenery is the more factual. Curtains seldom FULLY satisfy the mind; painted scenery, excellent for its particular purpose, fails in other ways. A producer, limited in expense, can do much with curtains, whereas scenery has to be repainted for each play. Curtain settings are more often the sign of a lazy producer than of an artistic mind. Curtains have been regarded as "artistic" for too

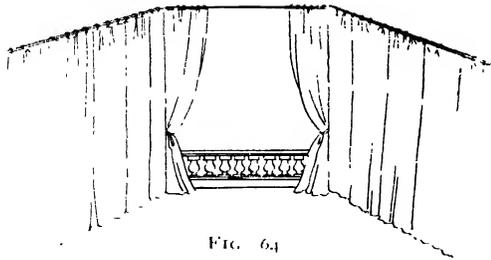


FIG. 64

long and used blindly because on their first introduction they were used intelligently and with purpose, but when the convention became a custom without meaning, curtains became something to fear. I remember a production of Stanley Houghton's *The Younger Generation* (a play that definitely calls for realistic treatment) in which the Victorian furniture was put in a curtain setting of black and white stripes about 3 ft. wide! It looked like a circus in mourning!

On the other hand, I have seen such a mass

of paint and fretwork, particularly in forest scenes, that it suggested nothing more than painted canvas and cut wood, and by its very plenitude destroyed all illusion.

Blind acceptance of the curtain convention is foolish and leads to ugliness, while too ready acceptance of the painted scene eliminates opportunities for simple effects that are most apt for the play in hand.

Some beginners fall into the curtain trap because they think that a curtain setting is cheap.

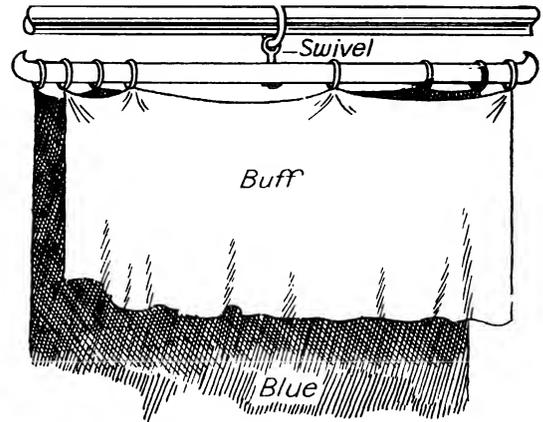


FIG. 65

Cheapness is a fallacy. The proper use of curtains demands additional props and lighting in nine cases out of ten. Curtains are usually suitable for fantasies, fairy plays, ballets, medieval plays, and such like, where the imagination rather than the mind of the audience has to be held. For most outside sets, too, curtains with folds, lit from the side, will give an impression of trees. Curtains are not suitable for plays of the Galsworthy type, say *Strife*, where the board room *is* a board room, and the collier's kitchen *is* a kitchen.

When curtains are in use great variation can be obtained by the use of the folds, particularly if two-colour curtains are available. A simple use is shown in Fig. 63, in which, it will be noted, a plain backcloth is employed. This is a great asset, as it gives an effect of sky for background, and if a simple cut out prop, like a balustrade (Fig. 64) is silhouetted against it, the effect is

enormously increased. It will also be noted in Fig. 63 that the curtains are separated to show that the sides are made up of three (or six, according to space) at the sides and four at the back, and *not* one big cloth. Three foot widths are convenient. If only one set of curtains is available, a good blue is the most useful, but if a free gift of green or buff is offered, good use can be made of it, particularly the buff, as it will take colour from the stage lighting. Unless the scene demands black, avoid it. Black puts too great a strain on the players and is depressing for an audience.

With a two-colour curtain set, the possibilities

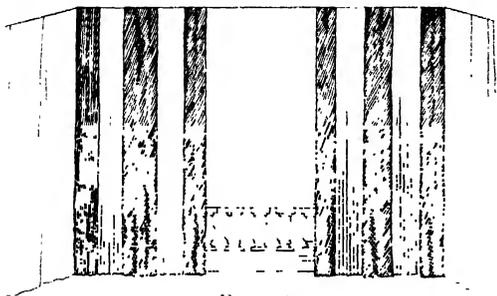
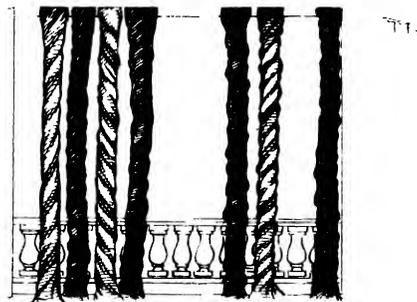


FIG. 66

of effective scenery are enormous. Not only can a complete change *en masse* be made but also a change in alternating curtains. The two most useful colours are blue and a buff. These curtains should be mounted in pairs, as shown in Fig. 65, and on a swivel, so that a change is made by simply turning the curtain round. If narrower alternations than 3 ft. are required, then each curtain can be drawn against the background of the other. This gives the effect of columns (Fig. 66), while if the curtains are twisted tight, a suggestion of trees is obtained (Fig. 67). It can be readily seen from these examples that curtains offer many advantages when space and cash are limited, but these advantages disappear when a realistic play has to be produced. If curtains are forced on to a producer, then they should be as unobtrusive as possible from a scenic point of view, and used mainly as a mask for the sides of the stage. Properties, such as fireplaces, dressers, and windows, should be relied on to "make" the scene, and flowers or a bright table-

cloth should act as a focus point for the eye of the audience, and so prevent too close an examination of the "walls" of the set. It is a mistake to fasten pictures or photos to a curtain set, because such trimmings draw the eye and the flimsy nature of the background is exposed. The use



of practical doors and windows in curtain settings is open to debate, but if the action of the play

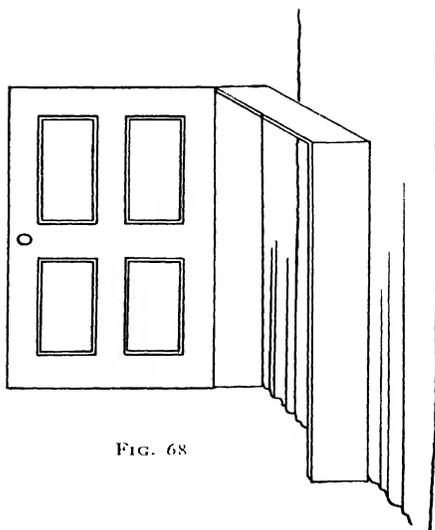


FIG. 68

demands a visible door, then a door there must be, in which case it should be built into a frame at a point where the curtains divide (Fig. 68).

PROPAGANDA AND PRODUCTION

One of the interesting points about modern plays is the extraordinary number of them that contain what may be described as "propaganda;" that is, they incorporate a certain gospel, creed, policy, or point of view, which, through being presented in play form instead of from a platform, receives an added effectiveness because the stage is more vivid in its presentation of ideas than the usual methods of oratory and rhetoric.

One of the aspects of production that is bound to force itself on a sensitive producer is how far he should deal with the play and how far interfere with the propaganda. One of the curses of the drama of ideas is that the authors forget the drama in their enthusiasm for the idea, the result being that we get words but no action.

Producers for advanced societies are often up against this difficulty, and it is because the organizers are so anxious to adumbrate an idea that the necessity for dramatic action is overlooked, and, consequently, the producer has nothing to produce except appropriate movements that illustrate long slabs of speeches. Propaganda *can* be dramatic, but authors must give producers something in addition to an idea and the words: that something else is called dramatic action, which is difficult to define and not easy to describe.

Consider some examples.

For the present purpose separate propaganda from the *moral* of the older dramatists. This *moral* had usually something to do with the individual in the audience. Some moral principle was illustrated so that it could be noted, learned, and inwardly digested. By propaganda I now mean a picture of society or a community in certain circumstances and what happens to that society or community. The moral of the old melodramas was that personal virtue would be rewarded, but none of them ever suggested any social reformation or development. Most of the plays of the Manchester School of Dramatists were propaganda, direct or indirect. *The Price of Coal*, for example, in a most dramatic manner suggests that the true price of coal is the lives of the colliers who hew it. Then there are plays that are frankly propagandist. *An Englishman's Home* was written before the First Great War to advance conscription. Most of the early Church

plays and the many plays written to attack the Capitalist system are propagandist. The use of the stage by Socialist advocates must have done their cause a lot of harm, as most of their plays are dull, though the changover from one state of society to another can be dramatic.

Propagandist plays usually fail because in all political theory there are several sides to a case, and the author is so obsessed with the justice of his cause that his side gets all the good advocacy; consequently, the play is too heavily weighted, as were the old melodramas. The old melodrama held interest because its tension was between the right and wrong of the people on the stage. Sir Jasper was the wicked squire, and Joan his innocent victim. They were not presented as exposing the evils of Landlordism or as examples of "Should girls be told?" It was the human relationship that created the drama. A propaganda play changes Sir Jasper into The Landlord and Joan into Maiden No 1. They are made symbols that force us to regard them as abstractions, not as personalities to be emotionally held by the conflict between opposing ideas. Consequently, the author has to deprive his *dramatis personae* of one of the most important elements—character—and to substitute types. A producer faced with the problem of having to present propaganda in dramatic form should concentrate on the human side as much as possible; and characterize his cast so that the audience is more interested, *for the time being*, in the personal and emotional aspects. When the curtain falls, then the intelligence will build up on the emotional basis by substituting *the* Landlord for Sir Jasper, all colliers for the dead collier, all homes for the one so devastatingly destroyed by the invader.

Whenever possible, dialogue should be made into crisp, personal expressions rather than set speeches. Each should have personality as well as argument.

Properly written and produced, propaganda can be as sweeping dramatically as, and far more valuable than, the drama of pure emotion—but there is a trap. Many plays achieved success years ago because they presented a radical point of view. Perhaps that particular point of view has been won on the political or social battlefield. Therefore, a modern audience would wonder what the stage

folk were getting so perturbed about. Thirty years ago a whole drama could be built up on the foundation of Lady Angelina riding alone in a hansom cab. Modernize the situation by the introduction of a taxi, if you will, but as modern thought sees no harm in Lady Angelina riding when, where, and how she pleases, there is no conflict, and therefore no drama. I doubt if a good play could be written round, say, the Reform Act, except in terms of personalities. *Julius Caesar* is a good play to-day, as it was yesterday, not only because of its historical, political, and military content, but also because it presents a personal conflict between Antony and Brutus, each directing the forces at his command. The conflict and dramatic tension are between personalities, live, vivid personalities, but the greater invisible drama is in the background. A similar remark applies to *Coriolanus*, which is too little seen in these days. I have several times wanted to see a production of *Coriolanus* on the night of a General Election: there would be the same social ferment; audience and players could be knitted together in one common intellectual purpose.

It is not difficult for a producer to make a propaganda play fully dramatic. It can be done by recollecting the simple principle that the mind of the audience *must* be approached through the emotions. The slum problem, for instance, is terrible. There is drama in it. Unemployment, too, provides excellent dramatic material, as *Love On the Dole*, by Greenwood and Gow, well shows, but it must be presented in terms of humanity, and not as Blue Book statistics. One slum, with one starving unemployed woman, is as potent a plea as a thousand attacks and five thousand people. The audience will follow, with emotional interest,

the good and bad features of the one, whereas the thousands would lose grip. To multiply the individual suffering by a thousand does not produce an effect a thousand times as strong; it only divides the emotional interest into a thousand parts. Consequently, when we get an Expressionist play with Book-keeper No. 1



"GREEN PASTURES"

Design by Robert Edmond Jones
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instead of John Smith, a book-keeper, the personal element is destroyed; the human side gives way to a type. This is more a matter of authorship than production. If an author wants to press home his argument by type casting he must have his own way, but he must not blame the producer and players if the financial result is not satisfactory.

My main concern at the moment is not so much to protect the author from his theories as to point out to producers that the dramatic value of a piece is largely dependent on the theatrical value; that is to say, not only must the author present his thesis, but it must be presented in

theatrical terms, which, in the long run, means an exercise in colour, costume, pity, joy, love, hate, men and women, which are also the ingredients of the crudest melodrama. I am anxious to protect the propaganda play from the propagandists. The play that has something to say is an *important* play. "Important" is the

stances of the times get the right perspective. In the first place, this was a period of world economic expansion. Wealth grew to an enormous extent, and industrialism and the machine developed enormously. Social and political values were changed. Poverty and riches became matters for comment. The Ibsenite Drama swept along the corridors of conventional drama.

The young mind of the early part of this century was in revolt against social inequality and suburban smugness. It so happened that in Glasgow, Manchester, and Dublin were three repertory theatres the managements of which were not afraid to put on plays that had values other than mere entertainment. To these theatres flocked young, ardent reformers with their plays teeming with comment on the evils of the time. Few had anything good to say of the life around. The Manchester School of Dramatists rose, and the curtain went up on colliers and kitchens, and the battles of poetic drama were banished for the turmoil of strikes and lockouts. But the public taste, then as now, was for the theatre of emotion,



"GREEN PASTURES"
 DESIGN BY ROBERT EDMOND JONES
 BY KIND PERMISSION OF "THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY"

word, but the play can also be a *good* play if the emotional as well as the factual content is given due importance.

In general, propaganda plays can be allocated to two main periods: (1) The period of the very early drama, when Mysteries and Moralities were used, and used frankly, as methods of teaching religious and ancillary truths, and (2) approximately since the '80s, when, starting with Ibsen, there was a steady growth of social drama, or "plays with a purpose" of all kinds.

Producers would do well to grasp the importance of this fact, and by relating it to the circum-

stances of the times get the right perspective. In the first place, this was a period of world economic expansion. Wealth grew to an enormous extent, and industrialism and the machine developed enormously. Social and political values were changed. Poverty and riches became matters for comment. The Ibsenite Drama swept along the corridors of conventional drama. The young mind of the early part of this century was in revolt against social inequality and suburban smugness. It so happened that in Glasgow, Manchester, and Dublin were three repertory theatres the managements of which were not afraid to put on plays that had values other than mere entertainment. To these theatres flocked young, ardent reformers with their plays teeming with comment on the evils of the time. Few had anything good to say of the life around. The Manchester School of Dramatists rose, and the curtain went up on colliers and kitchens, and the battles of poetic drama were banished for the turmoil of strikes and lockouts. But the public taste, then as now, was for the theatre of emotion, so in due course the realist drama of economic conflict became a byword for dullness, not because the issues were dull, but because the authors were more critics of a system than experienced playwrights. Nevertheless, these writers had something to say, and thought the stage more graphic and more abiding than the platform or the pen. Their primary purpose was didactic and social. Some were also artists, and some of their plays, such as *Strife*, still grip the emotions, and will do so, until our towns can produce an audience ignorant of what industrial disputes may mean. If producers will act on the principle that what these authors have to say is important, and then, by

bringing their theatrical knowledge to bear, express it in terms of emotion, much will be revived and brought out from the undeserved ashes of oblivion. The producer's approach to, say, *An Enemy of the People* is not the same as to, say, *Diplomacy*. One is an idea; the other a story. The first is based on character; the other on events. The one has a *moral*; the other none. Both are more or less contemporary, and in this connexion, and as an illustration, I will quote the late Clement Scott's criticism of *Hoodman Blind*, an 1885 play by Henry Arthur Jones and Wilson Barrett. The theme is melodramatic. Mark Lezzard (E. S. Willard) has robbed his friend of his money and in so doing also robbed his friend's daughter Nance, happily married to the reformed Jack Yeulett (Wilson Barrett). Mark surreptitiously loves Nance, and when she refuses to have anything to do with him he plans revenge. So he presses for the overdue rent, and contrives to put suspicion into Jack's mind by showing Nance and a lover kissing by a stile. In fact, the girl is not Nance, but a gipsy named Jess. Jack goes to the dogs for the orthodox Thames Embankment scene. Through befriending a waif, Jack gets to know the truth, and returns to his village to square accounts with Lezzard. Now for Clement Scott:

The play ends on as rank an exhibition of cowardice as I have seen applauded on the English stage. . . . I cannot regard Jack, the modern farmer, in the light of a hero, when he drags his wretched victim to the market place and throws him like a carcase of meat into the fangs of the bloodhounds. Is it the new code of Christianity to be merciless to your enemies and have we wilfully reversed the old order of things when we were taught it was the highest thing 'to pray for those who despitefully use you'? It offends me to the quick to see the representative of British virtue posing and attitudinizing on a village platform when he has flung his enemy into the hands of infuriated men all armed to the teeth. I hold that Jack Yeulett, who has tried to knife his rival, is here represented as a rank coward and dastard. I don't care what the villain has done to him. He has committed no sin worthy of the brutal exercise of lynch law. If the farmer had the pluck of a mouse he would exercise his own vengeance himself. He would either slay his enemy or let him go. He would not waste his strength on a cruel tirade, and then give an unarmed man to butchers, blacksmiths, and brutes. I sympathize with the villain at this point. . . . I sympathize with the sinner in this play more than with the hero. Because the one is at least penitent and because the other is merciless and unforgiving. I think of poor Mark with pity, because I see him, with his poor white face,

imploing for mercy from his stronger rival, who, instead of giving it, calls up a pack of wolves, and in the *méléc* strikes an attitude as a Christian martyr! . . . Is there a sinner in our midst? Yes! Then pound him into a jelly and send his soul to perdition! Let him not be saved because he was unclean.

A producer, reading the foregoing, would never imagine that Scott furiously attacked the Ibsen production that appeared in London a little later. Now I quote this long-forgotten critique for the purpose of showing how even old melodramatic forms may be seized on for propaganda, and how powerful a reaction can be obtained by the presentation of drama in terms of personality or people. Apply this technique to a play on wage rates, the slum problem, phthisis or the cancer scourge, disarmament, international peace, or any great problems, and then the silly and offensive war between highbrow and lowbrow ceases to exist. There are no heights of brow, but good plays and bad plays, and a good play is none the worse for having an idea as well as emotion. Therefore, a producer called upon to tackle plays of importance should concentrate on the human aspect of the story, and let the social aspect take care of itself. The particular, as seen by the eye, and the pity or humour experienced by the senses, will automatically enlarge into the intelligence.

The illustrations are from Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures*, the interesting play on Christian teaching as seen through the eyes of a negro slave. All the Christian ideology is interpreted in terms of the negro idiom, with Heaven as great "fish fry," and God as a white, woolly-haired pastor.

SEASONAL AND SPECIALIST PLAYS

One of the most valuable weapons in the armoury of the theatre is the seasonal play, and it is the most overlooked. This, no doubt, is due to the fact that most seasonal plays have a religious bias, and, except for the specialist societies, the religious play does not attract many producers and casts.

The bibliography of seasonal plays is not, however, entirely limited to religious works, as there are plays for All-Hallows E'en, Armistice Day, Empire Day, May Day, Midsummer, New Year, Peace, and, of course, for Easter and

Christmas. There may be added the Harlequinade plays of all sorts, and certain biographical-historical plays that are appropriate for local anniversaries and similar celebrations.

It will be gathered from this rough survey that a society with a large membership can keep all its acting members fully occupied all

evidently fulfilling a public need. There is no reason why other societies should not explore the possibilities of production in this field.

Let me plot a rough suggestion for a calendar year's work.

January. A New Year play.



FRED KAY'S PRODUCTION OF "EVERYMAN"

the year round by merely producing to a seasonal and anniversary schedule. Working on these lines, a society, if the publicity was good and the plays were well put on, would soon have more than a local following. I know of one society that went on from strength to strength each year with a repertoire of *one play only*, Benson's *The Upper Room*, which the society produced in a Holy Week during the War and at a time when the public was in no humour for amateur flippancies. Each year, in Holy Week, the society announced the play, and some extraordinary occurrences took place on occasion. I mention this as an isolated example of specialist work

Easter. A Passion play before Easter; Easter-tide; after Easter.

June. A Waterloo play.

November. Trafalgar or Peace play.

December. A Nativity play.

For titles there is the whole range of the Nativity plays, *Holy Night* (Sierra), the St. Nicholas plays, the Harlequin Series, and others, for the first part; for Easter there are Masefield's *Good Friday*, Maeterlinck's *Magdalen*, and others, including Easter Mystery plays; for June there are the Napoleonic Series, the Wellington Plays, *Disraeli*, and so on; for November there are Monkhouse's *The Conquering Hero*, Sherriff's

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Journey's End, or Neil Grant's *The Nelson Touch*, and others; for Christmas a seasonable selection can easily be made.

Having gone so far, I realize it would be easy to turn this enumeration into a catalogue of the titles of seasonal plays, but I forbear, as a list would be incomplete and would have to omit local occasions. I trust that consideration of the

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plays offer a rich and exciting choice. I have a list of nearly 200 titles before me, all personal plays, from many countries, including Mexico, Peru, China, and other places.

An international season of a number of foreign plays, each from a different country, could be mapped out. A series showing the development of drama could be planned, though if this



A PRODUCTION OF "THE WAY OF THE WORLD" AT THE ROCHDALE CURTAIN THEATRE

idea will provide at least one solution for any harassed selection committee.

Let me dwell on the more general aspects of the proposal. First, special work of this kind is definitely in the amateur sphere. Secondly, to undertake it is to play with a purpose. Thirdly, there need be no apology for selling the tickets for productions of this character. Fourth, there is the publicity value of a topical interest.

In the suggested schedule notice is taken of the broad seasons only, with *Waterloo* and *Trafalgar* plays for "tween" shows, but there are many other possibilities, i.e. working along a narrow, but specialized, line. There are numerous avenues to explore in the presentation of drama that will keep a specialist society hard at work for many productions. For instance, "personal"

is done the plays should be produced within a comparatively short period of time, with the plays close together.

If they are spread over too long a period, or if there is too great an interval between each play, the comparative test is lost, and each play stands solely on its own merits and out of relation to the others. In some of the well-organized areas I feel sure that the Local Education Authority would co-operate to a certain degree if the plays were of the right kind. A schedule of progress of English Drama might follow the following plan --

1. A Morality and a Mystery play (double bill).
2. Early Tudor. A pre-Shakespearean or a play by Kit Marlowe, Ben Jonson, etc. (*not* Shakespeare).
3. A Restoration comedy. Congreve, etc.

4. A Tom Robertson play.
5. A melodrama. (Geo. R. Sims.)
6. A play by one of the Manchester School of Dramatists. Houghton, Brighouse, etc.
7. A post-War play.
8. "Tween wars play.
9. "What have you!"

(Digressing for a moment from my main theme, I see that this schedule goes full circle: It starts

of English farce or comedy. There are many old farces that are well worth producing—if they are done as farces or comedies, with all the gusto of a stage play, and without any nonsense about literary values. Literature is for the study; drama for the stage. Many a good play has been relegated to the limbo of forgotten things through being made the subject of literature. Therefore,



A PRODUCTION OF C. K. MUNRO'S "THE RUMOUR" AT THE ROCHDALE CURTAIN THEATRE

with a Morality and finishes with a Morality, and as most modern authors are castigating somebody, something, or some class, the spirit is the same, though the letter may be weak.)

The steps may be long, but they connect, and definitely show how the propaganda of the early plays was steadily eliminated by the romantic tradition, which in turn degenerated into melodrama, after which the play was seized on by the intellectuals, became arid, though perhaps fruitful, and is now combining romance with propaganda, and trying to preserve entertainment value. Here, again, the shorter the intervals between the plays the better. Work in accordance with this schedule would create casting opportunities for a big membership society. Some of my less austere readers may be frightened by the apparent educational tone of the schedule, which, however, is intended only for illustration. It can still be followed through the development

eliminate the literary aspect, and produce for dramatic values.

The historical plan is peculiarly fascinating. Imagine a schedule composed of six Napoleon plays presenting Napoleon in many of his aspects—soldier, emperor, lawgiver, lover, husband, exile. In all Napoleon is a figure of drama. Our own history is full of dramatic figures, and a schedule could be composed on either vertical or horizontal lines; that is to say, the schedule could be of plays more or less of the same century, or in successive steps in time, as in the plan of the progress of English Drama. The drama of the Growth of the British Constitution offers an attractive field, starting with Alfred and his union of the seven kingdoms, through John (Magna Charta), the Tudors, the Civil War, the Chartists, and even the suffrage struggle. These offer a panorama as full of conflict, excitement, romance, and colour as any work of the imagination. All these deal with the pre-War period,

and since then there is a whole range of things to be shown.

This policy of history drama should not be confused with historical drama, which, quite often, is neither historical nor dramatic, but merely a sort of fancy-dress ball affair with words and situations. As entertainment, *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, *Henri of Navarre*, and most of the St. Joan of Arc plays (G. B. S.'s play is, of course, a notable exception), are mere histrionic affairs, and more or less efficient vehicles for the exploitation of personality.

As an example of progressive history drama, select plays for three weeks, (a) Ronald Gow's *Gallows Glorious*, (b) Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*, and (c) Eugene O'Neill's *Hairy Ape*. (a) deals with personal idealism, (b) with national idealism, and (c) with national practice. These three plays are true to historical fact, free from distortion of personnel, and intensely dramatic in development. They entertain and exhilarate. These are cited at random; I am sure that research would yield a much better selection.

In our own dramatic literature we have a priceless bibliography, with many famous events and persons. Mary Queen of Scots is one. Here is one of the most baffling and enigmatic persons in the history of the world. Native and foreign dramatists have used her as raw material, and presented her tragedy from many points of view. Was she wanton? Was she queen? Were Darnley and Bothwell true lovers or scoundrels? Her sister-queen, Elizabeth, was she right or wrong? A whole season's work, introducing many plays, could be devoted to this fatal beauty. Of Elizabeth herself, where can we, or where need we, stop? Then we have the greatest of them all, Shakespeare himself. The number of plays dealing with Shakespeare and his contemporaries offer many weeks' work, with a different play for each week. It is surprising that Shakespearean Societies seldom produce a play about Shakespeare.

Though all are not good (and, perhaps, there is something to be said against one playwright borrowing the artistic creations of another) there are the "penumbra" plays—those that circle round Shakespeare's genius and utilize his situations or characters, for example St. John Ervine's *The Lady of Belmont* (the later life of Bassanio

and Portia), and *The Mousetrap*, dealing with the Hamlet players, off stage, just before, during, and immediately after the great play scene.

Of recent years the historical or personal play has come very much to the fore. To mention a few, there are Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* and *Mary Stuart*, *Will Shakespeare* (Clemence Dane), and plays dealing with Florence Nightingale, Queen Victoria, Wellington, Napoleon, John Brown, Richard II, The Barretts, the Brontës, etc. Here is another line of policy, "Every play a personal play," and each one good entertainment and worth arguing about.

I have supplied enough matter for discussion without unduly elaborating the argument. In brief, there is room for "production with a purpose." A definite objective can be evolved, and so rich is our dramatic literature that any society can lay down for itself an interesting programme of work that will suffice for four or five years.

The illustrations cover three "progression" plays in time and nature. *Everyman* is a morality for the individual; *The Way of the World* is a skit on Society; *The Rumour*, international in scope, indicates the widening of the dramatic field.

A SOCIETY AND ITS POLICY

One of the first things a dramatic society ought to determine is the policy in accordance with which plays will be selected and produced. This may seem to some to be so obvious that they may think that merely to mention policy will establish a policy. Formulation of a policy, however, is not as easy as that. There are all sorts of societies, organized for different purposes, and before a person joins an existing group, or a committee starts a new one, there should be an attempt to answer that simple question—"Why?"

Why indeed! A young Guardsman on leave in London, suddenly thought that a little high life and joyous living wouldn't do him any harm, so while lingering over his old brandy he decided that *The Spring Chicken* and Gertie Millar were what the doctor would order. So he went, full of hazy joy, to a theatre. He read the bills and entered. One act passed in talk, to him all incomprehensible. There were no chorus, no

songs, no laughs—so out into the street again. Another look at the bills confirmed a growing suspicion. He had been to the wrong theatre. Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* was certainly not what he wanted.

The story is not a perfect analogy, but it is good enough to act as an illustration of the importance of making sure before establishing your Thespian existence. Some societies are definitely frivolous, with no pretension to be other than a group of people who like acting and who are prepared to let the public join in the fun. Other societies are built with more serious and far-reaching objectives, and some such have attained considerable reputation, occasionally national in extent. Some are established to "foster dramatic art," which is a good sound objective that is sufficiently "woolly" to cover anything from *East Lynne* to the latest craze. Others are definitely money-raising adjuncts of a primary body such as a church or cricket club. Some are built on the supposition that unless something is done, and done quickly, the whole art of the theatre will wither and die for lack of presentation. That something to be done is to form a society in which shall repose, in security and for ever, the pure Gospel of Dramatic Art. Again, particularly in villages and rural communities, a purely educational basis is the foundation, and here and there are highly specialized groups that concentrate on a narrow but definite line of action. Then there are welfare groups that are associated with large firms.

Now it is obvious that a society should be judged by its own claims. If it is frankly social and supported by its membership to provide fun and jollity, then it should stick to its last, and not go out for heavy, subtle stuff of intense psychological content. If it claims to be the saviour of the Drama and the members regard themselves as pioneers in uncharted waters, then Lonsdale and Coward are outside its ken. If an individual, seeking an outlet for artistic endeavour, is imbued with a strong sense of modern requirements, it is no use joining a society that thinks only in terms of the latest London successes.

When a basis has been decided upon, it is easy to compile a schedule of plays that accord with the policy selected, subject to local conditions. The widest basis of policy is one that enables

a society to provide theatrical entertainment of all kinds in a large centre from which the regular theatre has been withdrawn by modern conditions, such as the advent of the Talkies. A society that works under these conditions can rightly claim to fulfil many functions and to provide an outlet for all forms of dramatic expression. A society of this kind would be well advised to organize into sections, each equipped for certain categories of stage work, so that there would be many societies in one society, each enjoying the facilities offered by a business committee common to all. Printing, rent, lighting, costume hire, and so on, whether for musical comedy, Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, farce, or heavy drama, are arranged similarly. Each section could play to its specialized or selective audience, and get the advantage of those omnivorous few who enjoy all things in the theatre. Organized on this basis, the society would be able to utilize the services of more than one producer, each interested in a certain form of stage work, and to compare different methods of production.

I know of no town where such a unified body exists, but I write for the future, and there are sound reasons why such a doctrine of unity should be adumbrated. The amateur and professional theatres are being more and more forced into combination, and the old looseness and *laissez faire* ideas will have to give way to more intensive control. An organization such as I have outlined could deal with awkward questions, such as authors' fees, in a far more satisfactory manner than can six or seven groups each fighting individually. Many a society has been put into a state of panic because its schedule of selected plays has been suddenly disorganized through performing rights not being available or because royalties were excessive.

Whether such a combination of interests would survive sectional differences I cannot say, but in outlining the plan I feel that I have put forward a constructive proposal of the first importance, as isolated units are too diffuse in action, and often in definite and harmful opposition about the same play, when unity would ensure security.

Taking things as they are, and taking each category of society as already mentioned, I

suggest, assuming four productions a year, the following plan of campaign—

Category A. *Definitely Frivolous.*

- (1) Farce. Say *A Pair of Silk Stockings*.
- (2) Comedy. Say *It Pays to Advertise*.
- (3) Romance. Say *The Breed of the Tres-hams*.
- (4) Farce.

Category B. *Community Theatre.*

- (1) Modern Comedy.
- (2) Modern Drama.
- (3) Costume Comedy.
- (4) Classic Comedy.

Category C. *Fostering Dramatic Art.*

- (1) Sheridan Comedy.
- (2) Galsworthy Drama.
- (3) Blank Verse. Say Marlowe's *Edward IV*.
- (4) Modern Comedy.

Category C. Second Season.

- (1) Old Comedy.
- (2) Melodrama.
- (3) Greek Tragedy.
- (4) Foreign Play.

Category D. *Money Raisers.*

Comedies with low royalties.
Boisterous knockabout.

Category D usually does well in the beginning because of its local support, and often raises itself or develops into a higher category as the skill of its members increases.

So far I have dealt with societies in towns. Village groups are easier from one point of view; most difficult from another. Finance is the main stumbling block. In towns large halls for big audiences can be hired, or a hall that enables an audience for a number of nights to be easily collected can be found. The potentiality of the audience might run into hundreds. In villages the potential audience is relatively sparse and not easily got together when the weather is bad. The audience, when collected, likes the obvious, simple play of plot and circumstance, and has a strong preference for comedy. For good modern comedies heavy royalty fees must be paid and as entrance prices must be low, the acting society has not such a wide range of choice.

Nevertheless, it is well that the organizers should answer the "Why?" of any opening. Having established their basis, a schedule of twelve plays will give them work for three years, by which time they will know the strength and quality of their following. The village society is usually free from competition, and if it is properly managed and free from cliques and coteries, it can usually rely on the valuable goodwill of the district.

Excellent groups of players have been organized in villages, and some of these with a forward recreative policy have done extremely valuable work for drama as a whole. These results, however, have usually been arrived at by the enthusiasm of some one individual who knew what he wanted and how to get it. I do not write for these individualists, but for those who lack preliminary knowledge of ways and means.

There is a special bibliography of Village Drama, available on reasonable terms, through the auspices of the British Drama League, which incorporates the Village Drama Society—an organization that did an enormous amount of work in helping to organize societies in rural communities. Apart from the information that is available from that body, there is the aspect of production with which this article deals—the policy of the group when it is formed.

Village and small communities offer a wider elasticity of play selection than towns. It is probable that the village society provides the only opportunity for villagers to see the living play, and, therefore, the field for dramatic exploration is wide. In the towns there may be a local company, possibly on a repertory basis, or a theatre that presents visiting companies, and there will be dramatic societies. Therefore, in the case of the towns, apart from personal loyal ties, there is room for everybody, provided each society works along its own selected channel. By working on a parallel basis each not only has its own following, but also interests followers in other societies who are interested in the difference. If, on the other hand, each society just tries to beat the other by being the first to produce the latest London success, and filling in with titles that represent the general endeavour, then, naturally, each society plays to its own following only. This is all right if the following is big enough and is

sufficiently augmented from time to time to make up for leakages. In such a case obviously the society has found its level, and the future is assured.

The problem arises when a group of interested people are forming a society and each has a different objective. Preliminary discussion should do two things; first, show how far the promoters are in agreement, and, secondly, reveal if there is a field for the operations of the proposed organization. I feel that it is not a good policy to form a society when societies already exist, and that it is debatable whether when a society is in a flourishing state and well established, how far specialist groups should not work from within by joining up as individuals and then forming a specialist section. There are certain things that are common to all theatrical work—lighting, printing, orchestra, etc.—and a group with a special objective would be saved a lot of spade work by becoming a working unit in an existing organization. To illustrate this method visualize a town, say Bedford, where there is a flourishing operatic society. It has a following and certain working machinery. Now assume that a group of people want to produce something that is not being done in the town, say religious drama. Instead of forming the Bedford Religious Drama Society why not, after preliminary negotiation, join the flourishing existent society and work out ideas of religious drama as a specialist department? This method could be extended to cover other activities—a revue section, a concert party section, a pageant section, and so on, each working under a common banner, with the backing of a strong unity of interest, and in certain matters of overhead charges, each getting an advantage from managerial economies.

I am aware that such pooling of interests does not exist, but as a working notion for the future its possibilities are well worth exploring.

It would be out of place for me to state the policy that any society should take up, but I trust I may be allowed to mention one policy that is badly needed. The drama is well looked after by amateurs, and both actors and dramatists now well known can look back on days when amateurs encouraged and developed their talent. I would like the members of some enterprising group to devote themselves to giving young English composers a chance by providing an outlet for a

preliminary performance of operatic works. The talent, ability, and energy that go into an amateur production of musical comedy cannot be over-estimated. There are times when society executives are faced with the fact that there is nothing available that is as good as works that have already been produced. A good second-rater is put on as the next best thing. This dilemma occurs at least once in five selections. No society can go on beating itself year after year; the material is not obtainable, particularly when reliance is placed on the outstanding number from London's past season. We have clever English composers, and surely *Tom Jones* and German's *Merric England* are not the only pieces of English music that competent amateurs can tackle. Is the neglect of such a policy of production due to thoughtlessness, lack of a spirit of adventure, or the existence of a blind eye to the possibilities of testing the policy?

I am sure that any society bold enough to explore this avenue of endeavour would get every assistance from our composers, create more than a local reputation, and, at the same time, perform a great service to the struggling cause of English music.

I know of no amateur musical societies that have evolved national reputations for themselves similar to those of the Garrick societies of Altrincham and Stockport (the first an offshoot of the second), the Curtain Theatre of Rochdale, the Welwyn Garden City Players, etc. It may be granted that the mechanics of dramatic production more readily lend themselves to experiment, and that pioneer work in the realm of music is likely to produce a heavy expense sheet, but difficulties of this kind should be overcome. I am sure that in due course a society, properly directed by good management, which launched out on this course, would reap a satisfactory reward. The pioneer effort in this direction that was sponsored by Mr. John Tobin in Liverpool brought considerable credit to all concerned, but in that case the promoters had to compete with first-class attractions of all kinds available in a large city.

The failure or success of any particular policy in any one district is only partly a criterion of what will happen elsewhere. All factors must be considered, and the scale of operations carefully

worked out. Amateur experiment on a large scale in London, Birmingham, Manchester, or Liverpool is likely to be overwhelmed by professional facilities, but in many towns amateurs can work on a large scale and be more ambitious.

Whether the group functions in town or country it is advisable that the objective should be clear. There is room for all societies. There is room for all sorts of plays. Clarity of objective leads to continuity, and if a producer knows definitely what his society is out for, then he can give his best work and be of enormous value. When a society has not a clear objective there is a waste of time, energy, and money, which can be avoided by returning a straight and sound answer to the straight question—"Why?"

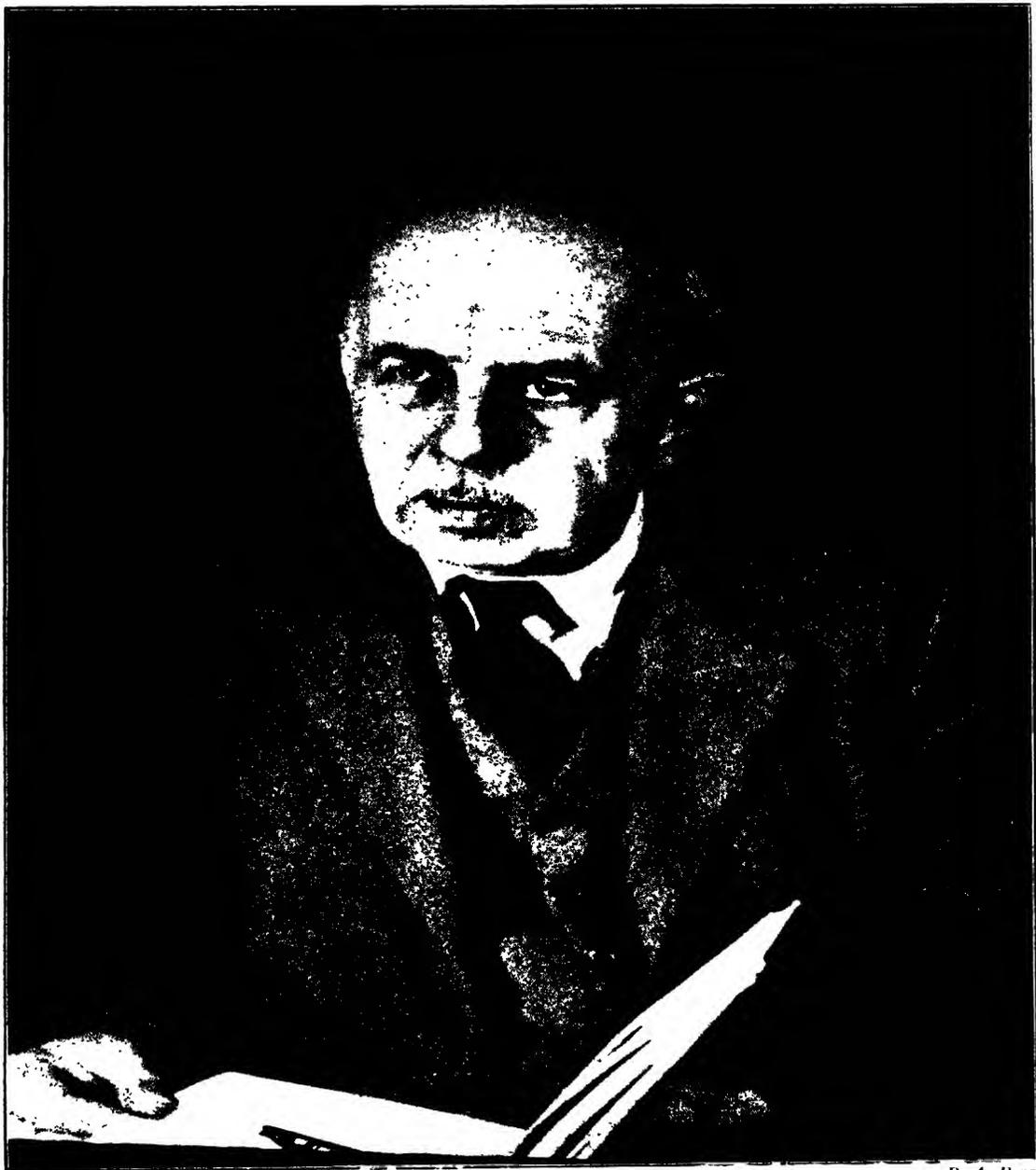
During the Second Great War the importance of stage and drama was increasingly recognized by authority. Both local and national boards or committees were set up to assist good work, particularly in rural districts. Recognition covered the whole range of endeavour: Sadler's

Wells, the Old Vic, touring companies, local repertories, and grades of amateurs and schools.

The Arts Council, the Nuffield Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, and others are now willing to lend an ear to the right appeal. Beginners can get expert advice, trained producers, and knowledgeable lecturers. The one test is artistic worth, and a society with the right intention can secure a wealth of support. Only indolence can excuse a poor standard of purpose and performance.

Though I have used the terms "professional" and "amateur" throughout, the truth is that the second is outmoded. An American theatrical historian uses the term "tributary theatre" for the best expression in the non-professional theatre. This is a good description, for the contribution by the intelligent amateur to the modern theatre is considerable and among the best work of the past thirty years.

I trust that newcomers to these distinguished ranks will remember that their own work must have their own individual touch, and will never be afraid to break a rule to try a new idea.



H. W. WHANSLAW

R. A. BIRK

PUPPETRY

H. W. WHANSLAW, Author of "Everybody's Theatre," "The Bankside Book of Puppets," "Puppetry for Schools and Homes," etc.; A Founder and President of the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild

PUPPETRY in one form or another was known to the ancients. There are many references to puppets in the works of Xenophon, Horace, and other early writers. Shakespeare mentions puppets in his plays. One of the earliest known records of a puppet show is on a miniature painted by Jehans de Grise about 1335. About 1600 an Italian, Silvio Florillo, introduced the dialogue of Punch and Judy into England, and there are 1666 records in the overseer's books of St. Martin-in-the-Fields of the payment of four sums of money, ranging from twenty-two shillings and sixpence to fifty-two shillings and sixpence, which were "Rec of Punchinello, ye Italian popet player, for his booth at Charing Cross."

In 1685 an old man, Phillips, was engaged by a puppeteer to play his fiddle in front of the show. Part of his work was to maintain a running dialogue with Punch and other characters in the play, a practice that persists to-day whenever Mr. Punch appears in public. In 1700 an Italian, Porsini, performed Punch in the streets of London, and became popular. He introduced the "call," a device placed in the mouth and through which the puppeteer produces the familiar shrill or squeaking voice used by Punch when singing or shouting to gather an audience, and which can be toned down to an ordinary voice, or an "aside," as required. The call is of two curved pieces of silver, or metal, wrapped with tape, with a layer of tape passing between the curved pieces like a reed, which produces a peculiar tone. The shaped metal pieces, which should be made to fit the roof of the mouth, when not in action rest on the tongue. The tape can be secured by thread wound round the call.

Ten years later the popularity of Punch, as presented by Powell at his place in the Piazza in Covent Garden, was such that on 13th March, 1711, the under sexton of St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, addressed a letter to the editor of *The Spectator* complaining that the ringing of the church bell, instead of summoning the congregation



SOKO AT LEISURE

H. W. Whanslaw's famous marionette has appeared in television, and starred in puppet films.

Photo by Ronald Bigg

to their devotions, resulted in them attending the "Puppet-show set forth by one Powell under the Piazzas," and that when he stationed his small son at the Piazza to inform the ladies that the bell was being rung for church "they only laugh at the child." The show was patronized by the ladies because Powell dressed his puppets in the latest French fashions, and provided them with dialogue that was typical of the period and much to their liking. Powell's figures were worked by wires and his "Punch" was supplied with mouth movement so that he could, as Powell himself says, "work his chops."

The first puppeteer to employ a real dog for the part of Toby was a man named Pike, supposed to have been an apprentice of the celebrated Porsini. There was, however, a puppeteer, Flockton, who had a Newfoundland dog that had been taught to attack and overcome the Devil in one of the plays produced, and who exhibited his puppet show at Bartholomew Fair. Others used puppet dogs to take the part of Dog Toby in the traditional version. At Bartholomew Fair a puppet player, Jobson, and others, were prosecuted for having made their puppets talk

and do the business of players in spite of the Licensing Act. When the suppression of "scandalous plays, comedies and farces . . ." took place in 1697 puppet plays were interfered with, but they continued to show till they were eventually prohibited in 1769.

Puppets were used in mystery plays, and in 1570 the priests of Witney, in Oxfordshire, staged a puppet show of "The Resurrection," in which Christ, Mary, and other personages were represented by puppets. Strutt says that he believes Punch to be a descendant of the Iniquity of the mystery plays, which "were acted in churches or chapels upon temporary scaffolds." The stage was of three platforms, one above the other. On the top platform sat God the Father, with angels in attendance; the second was occupied by the saints; on the lowest were those waiting to die. A gaping cavern, from which smoke and flames appeared, represented Hell's Mouth, and to add to the reality of the scene, the shrieks of those in torment in Hell were heard from time to time, occasionally the devils themselves making an appearance on the stage.

The original of Punch is stated to have been a little dwarfed hunchback, Puccio d'Aniello, who lived in the village of Acerro, near Naples. He was in appearance much like the pictures we have of him to-day. Because of his peculiar deformities he was allowed considerable freedom of speech, and his witticisms, usually based on local gossip, were scandalous and indecent. There are references to a Punch-like character who performed in the theatres of ancient Rome, and who, owing to his grossness, was ejected from the theatre and forbidden to return, but whether this was Puccio d'Aniello or not is unknown. Strutt in his *Sports and Pastimes* states: "a facetious performer, well known by the name of Punchinello, supplied the place of the Vice or mirthmaker, a favourite character in the moralities. In modern days this celebrated actor, who has something to say to the greater part of his auditory, is called plain Punch." Other writers believe that Punch and Judy are simply corruptions, both in word and deed, of *Pontius cum Judaëis*, probably a mystery play of the Middle Ages, and that Judy may represent either Guidei (the Jew) or Giada (Judas).

The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild was founded in 1925, before which year there was

not a society or puppet group organized as such in the country. Now, arising out of the initial efforts of the Guild, there are hundreds of enthusiastic puppeteers in the British Isles and the Colonies. Many of these work single-handed as amateurs. There are many puppet groups, and a virile and enterprising professional section stages performances which, from the technical point of view, are notable.

The pioneer work of the Guild influenced education authorities, some of which have recognized in practical manner the value of puppetry, particularly where backward children are concerned. Teachers have expressed the opinion that puppetry should form part of the school curriculum, and not be left to the inclination of masters or mistresses, or to the enthusiasms of pupils who may occasionally, outside school hours, stage a school puppet performance. In the United States of America puppetry is pursued with vigour and imagination. Universities, high schools, and other educational institutions provide generous facilities for the study of puppetry. There are classes for playwriting, scenic design, the making and manipulation of puppets, well-equipped workshops in which to experiment, and performances are given on a stage that is well-equipped with theatrical devices.

A child's first experience of a stage play is often of Punch and Judy. Children in their kindergarten days can be introduced to glove puppets. No elaborate "fit-up" is required. All that is necessary for a start is a simple three-fold screen. The screen may be about four feet long by four to five feet high in the centre fold, with side folds, or pieces, about two feet wide by the same height, or slightly lower than the centre fold. This allows the puppeteer space to sit in comfort and, unseen by the audience, to manipulate the puppets. The proscenium opening may be two feet by fifteen inches, with audience either sitting on low forms or kneeling or sitting on the floor of the schoolroom. There is no need for a scenic backcloth. The usual black cloth, through which the manipulator can watch the behaviour of the puppets, will suffice. If the operator cannot be seen, the backcloth may be dispensed with altogether. Puppets may be bought or made from odds and ends.

The play produced must be simple. There

should be no attempt to subtlety. Stories adapted from popular fairy tales, or a dialogue between two puppets dealing with incidents within the knowledge of the children, are suitable. I have been told of children spellbound by a performance

Puppetry can be introduced with advantage into school lessons. History lessons, written in play form and staged with puppets, particularly if they are dressed in correct period costumes, short excerpts from Shakespeare, and similar items make



MARIONETTE BY I. MAYNARD PARKER, IN "THE THREE WISHS"
Photo—Cortesy of the Lancaster Marionette Theatre

of puppets made from old stockings with the foot portion cut off, sewn together, stuffed with paper to form the head, the neck suggested by tied string, and the features indicated by coloured chalks, the operators squatting out of sight behind a table turned on its side with the top facing the audience. The show was a dialogue on "safety first" and the dangers of crossing a road. Nursery rhymes were sung, the audience joined in, and the show closed with a reminder of the value of orange juice and of keeping teeth clean.

A small child easily and quickly acquires habits of mimicry. Puppetry provides an outlet for imaginative expression. Some children are shy and backward. The shyness of those who take part unseen by the audience in a puppet play often soon passes. The speaking of dialogue aids clear enunciation, tends to eliminate self-consciousness, and, as speech control becomes natural, stammering and similar defects disappear.

lessons vivid and absorbing. Teaching simple words, numbers, or colours, to children is easy when wood blocks suitably marked are placed by Punch on the playing board, and a game of spelling, or counting the blocks used, or picking out the colours is started.

Although there are different kinds of puppets, the most popular is, perhaps, the glove puppet type of Mr. Punch. The term "glove puppet" is used because the foundation of the puppet is a three-fingered glove. The index finger passing through the neck of the puppet supports and manipulates the head, and the thumb and second finger manipulate the arms and hands, the glove being long enough to conceal the operator's arm when performing. The puppet head may be of carved wood, papier mâché baked hard, or a light hollow mask made by modelling the head in "Plasticine" or other suitable material, and then covering it with layers of paper, torn into small



PICCADILLY PUPPETS, FROM "SWEENEY TODD"
Mrs. Lovat, Sweeney Todd and
Hubert, the Apprentice.

pieces and pasted on, or a head made as a mask is made. After being dried thoroughly, it is separated from the modelling material and painted. The costume, which should be of bright material, is secured to a groove on the neck of the puppet. Punch has a complete body so that he can be slung over the playing board to show his legs and feet, which hang loose from the sleeve in order to conceal the operator's arm. Jack Ketch, the Hangsman, has usually, a similar body so that he can be completely seen when Punch lifts down the gibbet after he has hanged him. As one operator can manage only two puppets simultaneously, there must be an additional operator whenever more than two puppets have to be

"put up" before the spectators at the same time.

A marionette is a jointed puppet that is made to work by strings attached to a device called a "control." The ordinary upright type of control is suitable for marionettes that walk or dance; for the animal type of puppet a horizontal control is used. The marionettes of our grandfathers, often crudely carved and poorly dressed, were large, heavy, and clumsy to manipulate. Their movements were restricted to a few traditional tricks that are still to be seen in family shows. The modern marionette is made ingeniously. It can walk and perform difficult feats. Behind the scenes of a modern puppet theatre everything has to be arranged with care. Rehearsals are carefully supervised, the music chosen for varied "turns" has to be appropriate, lighting effects have to be plotted and tried out, the puppets have to be hung systematically in appropriate places, stage properties have to be handy, changes of scenery must be quickly and noiselessly effected, and curtains must be opened and closed with exactitude. Sometimes one operator manages the whole show. The business side must receive attention. Royalties have to be paid for the production of certain plays and for the use of gramophone records for public performances. Advertising and printing have to be arranged for, and Entertainments Tax has to be paid.

Interest in Shadow Shows is increasing, the cult of The Juvenile Drama is growing, and Rod Puppets are developing into Glove-Rod Puppets (a glove puppet is worn on one hand and the puppet's hands are manipulated in the traditional manner by rods held in the other hand). Finally, literature on every aspect of modern puppetry, a delightful form of art, is being made available.

H. W. Whanslaw

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L. DU GARDE PFACH

Regent Portraits

WRITING A RADIO PLAY

L. DU GARDE PEACH, Author of some four hundred plays broadcast by the B.B.C.

AS an art form the radio play is new and raw, without any tradition behind it, and probably without any future in front of it; the almost hourly expected advent of popular television will see to that.

I wrote those words in the preface to a volume of radio plays published in 1931—and television is still “almost hourly expected”! In the meantime, the radio play has held the ether, and I have had the opportunity of writing between three and four hundred radio plays for transmission by the B.B.C. Television is here, but until it is both more efficient and cheaper, it will not rival the popularity of the radio play.

There is, therefore, no reason why many more radio plays should not be written, and the short cut of an article by one who has had considerable experience in the writing of them, may help those who wish to attempt this particular dramatic form. Some sort of help is certainly needed, judging by the unsolicited scripts which unknown authors send me for free criticism and advice. Most of these would-be authors will undoubtedly remain unknown, deservedly; the infinitesimal minority who show some promise have usually never thought for themselves about the rather obvious technique of the radio play. To all of them I wish good luck, but I would also like to say to them, if you want to know whether your play is worth broadcasting, send it to the B.B.C., not to me; I am too busy writing my own radio plays to undertake the job of re-writing yours.

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

But here are a few of the things which I should undoubtedly have to tell you, if you did send me that radio script over which you have spent so much time. They may seem elementary—they *are* elementary to any one who has given the matter ten minute's thought; that, unfortunately, is what so few budding authors will take the trouble to do. The frenzy of authorship comes upon them: in a sort of delirious ecstasy of wishful thinking they seize a pen! Then they send the result to me, usually without even re-reading it to correct the

grammar. However, let us get on to our elementary consideration of the technique of the radio play.

A radio play, like any other play, must tell a story, and tell it in such a way as to seize and hold the attention and interest of the listener. But it will be a better radio play if it is also *about* something. That is to say, a radio play should have a *theme*, as well as a plot. The reason for this is obvious: where there is nothing to look at, there must be some sort of alternative, and the only possible alternative in a radio play, depending entirely on sound, is something to think about. It is, of course, possible to write a good radio play without a theme—I have written plenty of them—but a good radio play is a better one, and is more likely to succeed with its audience if it *has* a theme. But the theme must be interesting and capable of popular understanding: universal peace is a more certain winner than bi-metallism.

ARRESTING ATTENTION

A radio play must start well—and when I say start, I *mean* start. You have got to arrest the attention of a scattered and individually isolated audience, and arrest it at once. It is easy to switch off, and unless something in your play makes people *want* to listen, they *will* switch off. In a theatre it is different. When the curtain goes up, you can be certain of the automatic attention of the audience (slightly disturbed by late arrivals) for at least ten minutes. During that ten minutes you have got to get hold of them. In the case of a radio play, you have got to do the same job in ten seconds, unless you are known to the audience and they are predisposed to listen. Moreover, you are not dealing with an audience gathered in a theatre, and therefore isolated from disturbing distractions; you have got to compete with the daily routine and the family affairs of people who are in the bosom of their families. Always, therefore, try to put something of outstanding interest, or something intentionally provocative, in your opening sentence. A sound may occasionally do equally well. I can imagine a play which opened with the distant sound of a fire-engine bell,

rapidly drawing nearer until it reached maximum volume, and then suddenly stopping, causing quite a lot of people to listen, just to find out what it was all about. It is a *promising* sound. Something, you feel, is certain to come of it, if it is only the insurance money.

CHANGE OF LOCAL

A radio play is not tied by any limitations like the unity of place; no scenic considerations hamper the movement of your plot. Your first scene may be in a London flat and your second in a scraglio in Timbuktu, and so on—but you *must* make the sudden and somewhat surprising change of scene clear to your audience. Moreover, you must do it by dialogue. The voice of an announcer, however golden, which intervenes to inform the audience that “our scene now changes to ‘Timbuktu’” not only breaks the continuity, it is bad art, and unnecessary. He is a poor hand at developing a scene who cannot very quickly inform the audience of a change of *local*. Again, sounds may help. The old familiar B.B.C. seagulls will sufficiently indicate to almost any listener that the scene is no longer in the manager’s room of the Bank of England; they may even suggest to some that we have moved to the seaside. But sounds should be used sparingly, and should constitute an essential part of the scene.

In the same way, a radio play can range through time, past and to come, without the necessity of giving anybody time to change their costume and make-up. But here we are up against a more serious difficulty than in the case of scenery. Voices do not change. A radio production of *When Knights were Bold*, for instance, would not be funny, because the modern characters suddenly transported into the medieval surroundings, and dressed in medieval armour, would only be heard, and not seen. Any such changes must be made clear—and made clear to the least nimble-witted—in the course of the dialogue.

One more word about sound effects before we come to the question of dialogue. I have stated that sounds should be used sparingly, and should be essential to the scene. At the least they should help the atmosphere. But they must be *good* sound effects, they must sound like the thing they are supposed to represent, and they must be such sounds as will be universally recognized and will

inevitably call up a picture—and the same picture—in the minds of every one who hears them. The number of such sounds is limited. Seagulls are pretty safe, but the sound of a camel plodding over the desert would not mean much to an audience of dear old maiden ladies in Buckinghamshire. As it is doubtful whether it would actually sound anything like a camel plodding over the desert, it probably would not mean anything to an audience of Bedouin Arabs either. Therefore, use sounds sparingly and appropriately, remembering that about fifty per cent of them sound like atmospherics anyway, and few of the others cannot be dispensed with, if your dialogue is adequate.

Now the question of dialogue.

Your plot must be explained and developed, your theme (if any) examined and argued, your characters characterized, your scene localized, your atmosphere created, and your suspense generated—all by means of dialogue. But that is not the end of it. Whilst doing all these things, the use of the right words, as epigrams, as what the Americans call wise-cracks, as incidental jokes, and so on, must help to keep the audience awake, interested, and amused, at the same time keeping the epigrams or jokes in character with the person who is saying the lines. Dull passages of dialogue are of no use in any play, but on the stage a producer can distract attention from them by other means; in a radio play there *are* no other means. Therefore, liveliness of dialogue is essential, but it must do half a dozen other jobs at the same time. There is no golden recipe for the writing of it; the most that can be said is that it must be crisp and concise, clear and informative, sufficiently picturesque to compel visual images, and simple enough to be understood by anybody. Long speeches are best avoided, but speeches should not be so short and quick that the audience has no time to decide who is speaking. To avoid any such confusion, names should be used more frequently than in ordinary stage dialogue.

DIFFERENTIATING CHARACTERS

This brings us to another difficulty with which the radio dramatist has to cope, from which the stage or screen writer is free. On the stage or the screen you can *see* who is speaking—particularly on the screen where faces are sometimes ten feet

high; in a radio play the audience has only the voice as a guide. But voices are not always good guides, especially as not all B.B.C. producers seem to realize the necessity of casting over the microphone rather than round a luncheon table. The radio dramatist must bear this in mind. Characters *must* be clearly differentiated, either in what they say, or in how they say it. National or local accents are the easiest way of achieving this, but all plays do not lend themselves to his device. Nor does all dialogue. There is probably not a ha'p'orth of difference in the way in which six characters, all from Eton and Oxford, would ask you to pass the bread and butter. Even sending one of them to Cambridge would not materially help. But at least the radio dramatist can and must see to it that lines essential to the understanding of the plot *could* have been spoken only by the particular character to whom they are given. Do not rely on voices—especially women's voices—being easily distinguishable over the loud-speaker. They are not. And do not rely on casting. Your aim should be to make your play producer-proof, in so far as the casting of the characters is concerned. This can be achieved in other ways, besides the obvious use of dialect; traits of character—selfishness, fretfulness, pomposity, avarice, etc.—can colour practically everything a character may say or do, tricks of speech, the habit of repeating words, the use of

clichés, repetitive phrases—all these things help. The important thing is to see and hear your characters clearly yourself; get them clearly and sharply individualized in your own mind, and then write your dialogue.

No one can tell you how to write a good radio play, any more than he can tell you how to write a smashing success for the London or New York stage. All any one can do is to indicate some of the things which a radio dramatist must remember as he laboriously puts words on paper. There are plenty of them—enough to make the task sufficiently laborious for any one.

And here, to finish with, is one more—so elementary that it would be superfluous, if it were not for the fact that it is ignored by practically all the people who send me their plays to read. It is this: fifty minutes is long enough for a radio play, twenty minutes is about the minimum. A normally typed manuscript plays about one minute a quarto page. Having said which, I hope I shall not receive any more ambitious efforts on anything from three to a hundred and fifty pages.

In fact, I hope I have said enough to indicate that I do not want to receive any more at all. Send your plays to the B.B.C. If they are good, they will use them; if they can be altered so as to be usable, they will tell you how; if they are hopeless, they will decline them politely.

At least you will know where you stand.

Laurence Read

READING A PLAY FOR PRODUCTION

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL, Author of "Quinney's," "Now Came Still Evening On," etc.

YOUR busy, up-to-date manager of a theatre, as a rule, refuses to listen to the reading aloud of a play on the plea that he cannot "take it in," too polite to tell the author that he is terrified of *being taken in himself*—more likely to happen than the outsider might suppose. Two actor managers told me that in their opinion the late Harry Esmond was the best reader aloud in London and "on the index," because, apart from his lovely voice, he exercised uncanny powers of hypnotism. No unknown dramatist can hope to read a play to a manager. But, in this short article, I want to approach my captian from a different angle; I shall try to stand in the shoes of an expert who is reading to himself a script likely to please the public.

What does he look for? What does he want? These two questions should be considered seriously by the dramatist.

Let us assume that the dramatist (or his agent) knows enough *not* to submit a comedy of manners to a purveyor of melodrama and crook plays. And here I would lay stress on the expediency of submitting to any man whom you are asking to back your brains with his money a brief synopsis of your play, enclosing—if you happen to be unknown to the gentleman—a stamped and addressed envelope. Sir Gerald du Maurier assured me that twenty lines would suffice for HIM. Unless a dramatist is in intimate touch with the theatre, he cannot know what is wanted at the moment; he might, unwittingly, submit something already treated by another man. Again, the author probably knows nothing of the manager's commitments. The manager may have engaged the services of a leading actor or actress. In such a case a play, however good in itself, which holds a big part unsuitable for the leading player, is doomed to be rejected.

However, leaving that out of court, it is safe to say that the demand for something new never fails, and fresh treatment of what is old has a good market. It is extremely unlikely that the ordinary dramatist will submit strikingly original wares. And it might be a mistake for a novice to strive

too persistently for originality. Everybody in the profession knows that certain plays, now acclaimed as "winners," have passed from manager to manager because they were deemed to be caviare to the general public. And yet the public gobbled them when enterprise produced them.

In what spirit does a trained reader of plays consider the scripts submitted? First, last, and all the time he keeps an alert eye on the box-office, because a "loser" means the loss of anything between one and five thousand pounds. Probably—it is difficult to dogmatize on such a subject—he considers costs of production first. The London theatre to-day is stricken with creeping paralysis because such high costs, *plus* high rentals, have wrecked dozens of plays which, twenty years ago, would have made good money for all concerned. A play that fails in London *may* do well in the provinces. It is most important, therefore, for the reader to bear in mind the provinces. A play with many settings and a huge cast cannot, with rarest exceptions, be sent on tour.

The reader is sure to blink nervously at a costume play or a tragedy. Laughter in the modern theatre is a greater lure than tears. Rarely indeed does the playgoer go twice to a tragedy. The late Frederick Harrison, of the Haymarket Theatre, said to me: "I want a comedy with a well-told story of cumulative human interest." By "well-told" he meant, of course, freshly told.

In passing judgment on a script the reader will award high marks to what may be called the "twist." I have no space to cite instances, but this twist is the inversion of the obvious, a trick of the trade. It is said that Oscar Wilde's brilliant epigrams were pure Tupper reversed. "Be good and you'll be happy" under such treatment is changed into: "Be happy and you'll be good." Any cliché can be re-presented with a more than sporting chance of getting a laugh from all parts of the house if it be turned upside down. The audience is tickled "pink" when they expect derisively the obvious and are given



HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

instead the mirth-provoking twist. But this twist must come unexpectedly and, if possible, dramatically.

Plot ought to be subsidiary, perhaps, to convincing characterization. Apart from melodramas, credibility is of ever-increasing importance, particularly in London.

Tension and action demand a few words. Tension is a synonym for sustained interest and suspense; action is not necessarily movement. It is, and ought to be, the striking effect of environment and circumstance upon character, the arresting change in the outlook of the players. This exacts the art that conceals art. Paradoxically enough, a play of movement may lack such action. Indeed, unnecessary dashing about the stage is likely to distract the playgoer from what underlies these activities. The appeal is made to the eye rather than the mind.

The experienced reader loathes irrelevancies, so dear, if they are well presented, to the reader of novels. Anything that takes the attention of the playgoer from the actual play is certain to interfere with the tension and may provoke a yawn.

One may assume, in conclusion, that the reader of plays, distressfully aware of his responsibilities, awards marks for the "points" enumerated. When, long ago, I was offered (and refused) this most important position in a London theatre, I decided to employ such methods. The play that gained most marks would then be commended by me for production. To any rule of thumb there must be notable exceptions. An expert reader of plays ought to be a man of many facets with wide experience not only of the theatre but of life itself. Apart from melodrama and plays of fancy, like *Peter Pan*, nearly all the outstanding successes of recent years have appealed to the public as human documents. Generally speaking,

some moral purpose may be discerned in them. This is true of the work of Shaw, Galsworthy, Maugham, Lonsdale, and Coward. The more cleverly the powder is covered with jam, the better. The stage, as a mirror of life, is sadly blurred when this moral purpose is lacking. The playgoer exclaims, or thinks, "What is this all about?" I am the last person to insist that all plays should have happy endings, but I cannot stress too emphatically my conviction that any play which sends the playgoer out of the theatre with a horrid taste in his mouth deserves, even if he does not get, the scarification of our critics.

A last word and a *credo*. I hold the opinion, with many others, that the big theatres on our London Rialto are doomed. They occupy sites too valuable; they exact enormous rentals. More, the screen rather than the stage is better adapted to huge spectacular shows. The Little Theatre has a great future, and it will be built anywhere and everywhere. To-day, playgoers travel swiftly and easily to the Lyric, Hammersmith or to the Mercury.

I believe in the Repertory Theatre because it is a grand school for training actors and actresses; I believe that the Theatre of To-morrow is coming to life in the provinces rather than London because provincial playgoers seek more than light entertainment; I believe in decentralization because centralization has been tried all over the world and found wanting; I believe in plays, whether comedies or tragedies, informed by convincing characterization, plays that radiate credibility. And I believe—with deepest conviction—in plays that present kindness, sympathy for the under-dog, and the saving grace of—HUMOUR.

I am glad that I am not a reader of plays for production.

Horace Annals by Vachell.

PLAY READING

HAROLD DOWNS, Editor, "Theatre and Stage Series," "Anthology of Play Scenes, Verse, and Prose"

A CONCERTO or a symphony does not exist until it is performed. A play is not alive until it is brought to life through production. So run generalizations, usually sound. Acceptance of them, however, sometimes under-rates the imaginative and interpretive power that vitalizes composition or play. Although my purpose is to point out the value of play readings as complementary activities of play-producing societies and as highly important activities of amateurs who are genuinely interested in Drama and the Theatre, I will, for introduction, focus attention on Drama and its influence.

Centuries ago creative artists attracted by the play-form as their appropriate medium of expression would not, or could not, allow it to be known that they were writers of plays. Contemporary playwrights include some of our finest creative artists whose works stir the social conscience, sometimes by the sacrifice of theatrical effectiveness, but invariably with an earnestness of purpose and a persisting sincerity that have significant influence—and practical results: Galsworthy's *Strife*, for example, influenced Authority's attitude towards solitary confinement.

Drama has its roots in religion and didacticism. Dramatists have not always been preachers, but contemporary playwrights have hastened political action that tended to deal too tardily with some of the evil effects of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of workers and their families.

DRAMA AND LITERATURE

The relationship of Drama and Literature is recurrently discussed in literary and art circles. It would be fatuous to deny the relationship with "the plays of William Shakespeare" ever ready for evidential purposes. The character of the relationship, however, perplexes. There are those who contend that (1) Drama is of the theatre, theatrical, and, certainly with a measure of sound justification, it is contended that plays are primarily written to be acted; (2) plays are not vital and pulsating until the words written by the playwright become the words spoken by

the actor or actress. Contentions on these lines are disputatious rather than conclusive. They may be accepted when they are intended to apply to much of the ephemeral writing, cast in play form, which contemporary writers conceive and execute in terms of the theatre, but even then there may be qualification.

THE IDEAL THEATRE

The ideal theatre of Bernard Shaw, one of the literary giants of the Modern Age, would be "A factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armoury against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man." His plays have been, and are, written for the theatre. Yet they both act and read. When they are produced, performance demonstrates theatrical effectiveness, and when they are read, reading confutes those who contend that a play is dead until it is acted. They live by virility of thought and so are not dependent upon interpretation through action. But these remarks do not apply to many plays that are well-made from a creative point of view, and that are deliberately made for the theatre. Plays that come in this category are not written for preservation in book form. Nevertheless, they may rank as literature. I recall a point made by the late Harley Granville-Barker, himself a man of letters and a man of the theatre, in his rather abstruse work *The Exemplary Theatre*. "The theatre today is, as a rule," he stated, "a place of entertainment where plays are produced. A sounder purpose strives to make it an institution where they are kept alive—a library of Drama."

One definition of literature is "the science of letters or what is written." The acted play is the spoken play, and in conceivable circumstances may be smartly improvised, the "lines" not having been written. It is indisputable that, from the days of the liturgical plays of the dimming past to now, many plays have been something more than plays of the theatre. Shakespeare's plays were intended for the playhouse, but they take an important place in the literature of the world.

A play can be written for and acted in the theatre and establish itself as literature in the theatre. It can, too, be thought expressed in play form and be literature although it may never be acted, in which case, it will, in the opinion of some critics, be stillborn. Henry Arthur Jones, through his career as playwright, essayist, and lecturer, revealed keen interest and displayed characteristic vigour in at one time endeavouring to establish the general rule that "the intellectual and art values of any Drama, its permanent influence and renown, are in exact proportion to its literary qualities." More than half a century ago he wrote "It is impossible to imagine a drama of high intellectual excellence that shall not be to some extent 'literary,' as it is impossible to imagine a drama of high 'literary' excellence that shall not be a work of intellect. I am not juggling with words. My only desire is to obtain some recognition and definite status for the art of play-writing . . . Surely the best, perhaps the only, safeguard against the success of all kinds of bunkum and clap-trap on the English stage is the custom of publishing our plays. We may not as yet have written plays with a distinct literary 'note,' but the knowledge that we shall be 'read' as well as 'seen' must tend towards the cultivation of a literary form."

Art, it is well said, is a material creation of man which faithfully reflects the spirit of the age and its experiences, "the very body of the time, . . . its form and pressure," as Shakespeare says of Drama. Play readings bring out art and other values. Drama can teach morals and manners; it can add to human knowledge by the mere presentation of facts; it can formulate public opinion, and it can mislead public opinion. By impartial and serious treatment of serious themes it can stimulate public opinion in a healthy manner; by partiality, prompted and stimulated by selfish motives, it can become a pernicious influence; but great art neither distorts nor suppresses.

VALUES

Effective play readings are easily organized, and are relatively inexpensive. They require little rehearsal. Systematically planned and carried out during the autumn and winter months, they provide facilities for keen students of the theatre to familiarize themselves

with many of the latest plays, some of which are never produced in the ordinary commercial theatre. Moreover, plays that are suitable for reading by amateurs are, in some cases, unsuitable for production by them. Readings can be made so dramatically effective and artistically significant that essential limitations are unobtrusive. They constitute excellent training for actresses and actors in embryo. The use of the voice, understanding of the text, interpretation, a sense of character, the importance of pace, of nuance, of contrast; sharpening of the critical faculty, the relationship of technique to interpretation—these are values that emerge from play readings.

PROCEDURE

The method of procedure is simple. A set of printed plays can be bought or hired from The British Drama League or from specialists who advertise in *Drama*, the official organ of the League, and other periodicals. Casting is carried out on usual lines, although some limitations, such as awkwardness of movement, lack of stage presence, etc., are less noticeable in readings than in productions. When averagely competent readers are available, one rehearsal suffices—but something depends upon the type of reading that is undertaken. If the readers sit or stand in a row with the book in their hands and do not introduce movements, attempt to memorize the lines or to make use of props, etc., a reading is much less trouble than that which is involved in the rehearsal and presentation of a staged reading—a "method of production" that is adopted by some amateur organizations.

Policies and practices vary.

Legal obligations should be ascertained and met. Neither all printed plays nor all produced plays are available for reading. The fees that are payable for readings differ. Agents may try to withhold permission when the authors themselves are willing to allow their plays to be read. In some circumstances play readings are regarded as private: when members of the audience are members of a society, when they do not exceed in number a specific total, when there is no publicity, and so on; and in other circumstances play readings are considered to be public performances for which a full production fee is payable. The

PLAY READING

best plan is to write direct to the author's agent, when the name and address are given in the printed volume; when they are not, an inquiry sent to The British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Emanwye House, Bernard Street, London, W.C.1, affiliation to which bestows practical advantages, or The Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, 84 Drayton Gardens, London, S.W.10., will produce helpful information. The British Drama League publishes *The Players' Library*, and lists of play titles, synopses, etc., are issued by agents and publishers. Publishers' announcements of plays, reviews, and advertisements which appear in *Drama*, British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1; *The Times Literary Supplement*, Times Publishing Co. Ltd., Printing House Square, London,

THEATRE AND STAGE

E.C.4; *John o' London's Weekly*, George Newnes Ltd., Tower House, Southampton Street, London, W.C.2; *The Theatre World*, Practical Press Ltd., 1 Dorset Buildings, London, E.C.4; *Playgoer and Millgate*, Pioneer House, Wicklow Street, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and other periodicals, should be noted.

If school and similar organizations have one keen adolescent or adult who is genuinely interested in Drama and the Theatre, they can, in the majority of cases, safely follow his or her lead. Obstacles may arise. The plays that are considered by the authorities to be suitable for reading, the readers who are available for parts, the time that can be spent on rehearsals—these may be limitations, but even under adverse conditions much that is valuable in the study of Drama and the Theatre, with educational and cultural advantages, can be learned.

REVUE AND AMATEURS

DUMAYNE WARNE, Author (in collaboration with Phil Forsyth) of "The House," "The Ultimate Revue," "Second Thoughts," etc.

BEFORE the Second Great War Revue was rarely attempted by amateurs. This is very curious in view of the wide range of activities that it covers and its usefulness in cases of difficulty, such as an inconvenient theatre or inability to secure performers for a production of the ordinary type.

CHARACTERISTICS

Not that Revue is a makeshift device to which recourse may be had only when it is impossible to stage an ordinary musical play. Revue is a definite form of theatrical expression in the same way as is musical comedy, but having its own technique. But whereas in a musical comedy, unless all the requirements in the way of cast, etc., are available, it cannot be attempted, in a Revue the production can be built up around the available strength of the company and their weaknesses concealed.

Such is the flexibility of Revue that it is just as suitable for the large and opulent society as it is for the small and impecunious one, for it stretches from Sir Charles Cochran's spectacular production at the one end to the intimate little theatre performance at the other. Therefore, the large society with its hundred acting members can introduce singing scenes, which may be as elaborately staged and undressed as the exchequer will allow, while the small society can confine its activities to items of an entirely different kind. Yet each of these productions may be genuine Revue, and both of them first-class entertainment.

An example of the way in which a brilliant effect can be obtained by simple means is shown in the photograph taken from Noel Coward's *Words and Music*. The material of the ladies' dresses was probably expensive, but the point is that the effect is gained without a large number of actresses or great quantities of scenery. The other illustration, from Sir Charles Cochran's *Evergreen*, is included to demonstrate that societies which must appear before their audiences

in lavish settings can also find something for their consideration in Revue. We have here a large cast, costumes, and a built-up set.

Difficulties chiefly affecting the mechanical sides of musical productions are certain to be encountered. When ways of overcoming these have been found, it is possible that some societies which would not otherwise be attracted by revue may decide to experiment with it. Having once staged a successful Revue, they may then occasionally return to it.

There are certain requirements without which it is impossible to construct a Revue, but in the instances when it is attempted by some amateurs these are apparently so much misunderstood that it may be well to consider what Revue is, and how it differs from similar types of entertainment, before proceeding to the more technical matter of how to construct and stage such a work.

The *New Oxford Dictionary* says that Revue is "A dramatic entertainment consisting of a series of more or less connected scenes depicting and often satirizing current events and topics."

There can be no quarrel with this definition, except inasmuch as the word "dramatic" suggests the exclusion of musical items, whereas, in point of fact, the musical part in most Revues preponderates over the purely dramatic. Perhaps "theatrical" would have been better.

Of recent years the tendency has been to include any matter which might appeal to the audience, although it be neither satirical nor topical, while any effort to connect the items by a plot has diminished so much that all pretence of such a thing has become a mere formality. Practically the only attempt that is made to give a suggestion of continuity is the inclusion of an announcer, or *compère* as he is often called, who, besides introducing the items, himself recites, sings, or tells stories between them, in front of the curtain.

Owing to the misconceptions that exist in the minds of some amateurs as to the nature of Revue, when they attempt to perform one, it

may happen that they do not, in fact, actually perform anything of the kind. Provided that they have a success this is unimportant. The difficulty is that if they have a failure they blame Revue for being a poor medium, when the performance in which they were engaged was not a Revue, but a mixed form of entertainment.

this case is that whereas pierrots wear the same costumes throughout, Revue companies change their clothes constantly. There are other differences also, such as that in Revue there is a chorus, whereas in a pierrot troupe usually there is not, but the costume difference alone is a sufficient mark of distinction to separate them at once.



CHILDREN OF THE RITZ
Scene from Noel Coward's Revue "Words and Music"
Photo by Sasha, London, S W 1

Those who are unaware of the real characteristics of Revue confuse it with a number of other forms of entertainment with which it has something in common, but from which it differs considerably, such as:

- Concert Parties.
- Pierrot Troupes.
- Variety.
- Cabaret.

Although each of these is in certain respects similar to Revue, they all have certain features that distinguish them from it.

For example, the most easily recognizable are pierrot troupes. The outstanding difference in

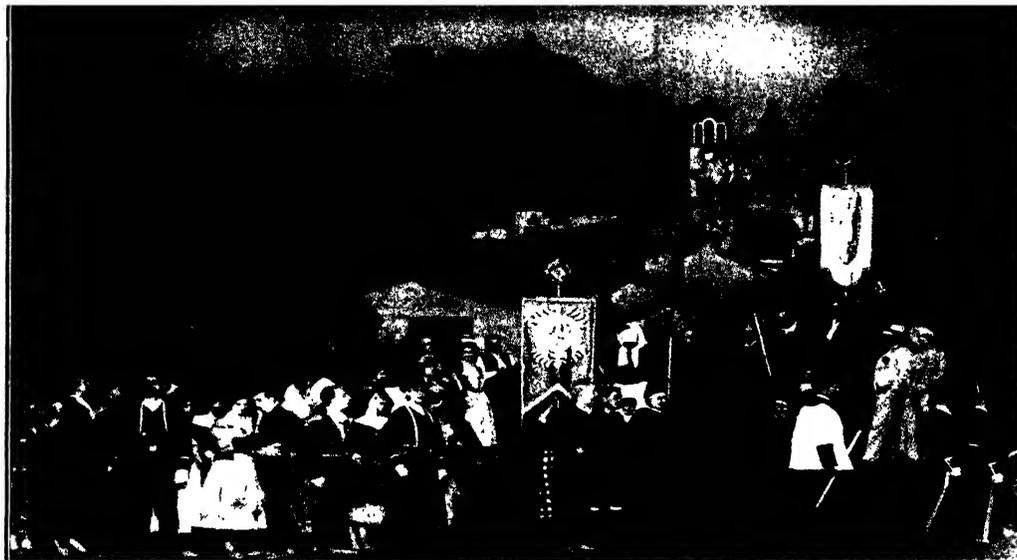
Revue differs from concert party in much the same way as it does from pierrot troupes; that is to say, concert parties usually appear in the same costumes throughout the first half of the show, but they change (often into evening dress) in the second half.

Revue differs from concert parties and pierrot troupes in certain other respects also. For example, Revue is usually a set piece, which does not vary. Concert parties change their programmes constantly in order to attract the same people to their theatres several times during a short season. Also concert parties and pierrots rarely, or never, change their scenery,

if indeed they use any, while the essence of Revue is that there should be a large number of frequently changed scenes. Again, in pierrot troupes and concert parties there is rarely a chorus, while in Revue a troupe of smart and high-kicking dancers is an essential part of the entertainment, and is expected by the audience.

eye or fairly loud musical numbers are effective. It is obviously impossible to include anything which requires much in the way of scenery or properties. Dialogue is useful only when it takes the form of cross-talk between comedians.

Having detailed the forms of theatrical entertainment which are not Revue, I must now



FESTA MAJOR IN CATALONIA, SPAIN
Scene from C. B. Cochrane's Revue 'Fest
Photo by Sasha Gordon S. 1

The production that is most similar to Revue in appearance is Variety. Here almost all the ingredients are similar. It takes place in a theatre, there are scenery and costumes, and a chorus is employed. In fact, generally speaking, there are only two differences: one is that Variety programmes almost invariably change from week to week, and the other is that the performers in each separate item appear only once. In Revue the leading characters reappear from time to time, as though they were playing in a musical comedy.

The entertainment that most resembles Revue in spirit is Cabaret. The difference is that as cabaret is usually devised to take place in a ball-room or a restaurant, only acts that appeal to the

explain that they all tend more and more to copy Revue and therefore to become like one another. For instance, seaside pierrots put on different coats and hats for their sketches. Concert parties dress four or more of their members in uniform costumes and give them simultaneous dances to perform. Some even employ a chorus. In fact, in large holiday towns the entertainments given by concert parties are often nothing more or less than miniature Revues except that the programmes are changed every week. In the variety entertainments provided in London music halls, it became fashionable once for the leading players to reappear in the various items in which they are not ordinarily concerned, and

in these theatres an excellent chorus is sometimes employed.

The fact that other forms of entertainment tend to copy one another in some ways does not make them into Revues. Revue retains its own characteristics which are discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

From the above it appears that there is no reason why amateurs should not experiment, for, skilfully done, anything *may* be a success. Who would have thought that a concert party could run for years in a West End theatre?—But what were the Co-optimists except a concert party?

It is important, however, that where amateurs decide on unorthodoxy that they should understand what they are doing, so that if they make a daring experiment and it fails, they should realize that it is not the fault of Revue. Herein may lie the reason for some amateurs' mistrust of Revue. On the only occasions when they have had an opportunity of seeing it attempted it has perhaps failed, not because Revue itself is an unsuitable medium for amateurs, but because the performance was bad of its kind.

We have reached a point at which we have decided that Revue consists of a number of musical, dancing, and dramatic items, strung together (if at all) by the flimsiest possible plot, in which the scenery and the costumes are constantly changed, in which the leading characters reappear from time to time as in a musical comedy, and for which a chorus who can dance and sing, especially dance, is an essential ingredient; in fact, it appears that Revue is nothing more or less than musical comedy without the plot. And this is to a certain extent true, excepting that certain items can be included in the programme of a Revue that could not be fitted, easily, into the plot of a musical comedy; for example, gymnasts, contortionists, and conjurers.

This sounds an unsatisfying mixture to hold an audience absorbed or even interested, except in the same way as they might be mildly amused by a concert party at the seaside on a wet night during their annual holiday. What, then, is the secret of Revue? Why is it successful, and when?

The person who could answer these questions with certainty would be a very happy (and a very

wealthy) man. But, by those who have taken trouble to record their observations, it has been revealed that the chief secret of the success of a good Revue is its novelty and originality. It must have something about it with which the audience are not familiar and which should strike them as unusual and clever. The items, musical, dancing, or dramatic, must be witty, artistic, or even daring, and they should have that quality which is indescribable in English but which the Americans used to call "pep." The word that they used was "snappy," and it admirably describes what is wanted. "Pep" and "snap" are different from "speed." A Revue must have speed as well, but it also requires snap, for a Revue may contain stately and beautiful items, just as it may hilariously knock-about turns, but they must be suitably presented.

Finally, Revue must be constructed so that it will appeal to the particular audience for whom it is designed. It is true that Sir Charles Cochran and Noel Coward can design Revues that are popular all over the country, but amateurs are not concerned with doing this. All that they require is to please their own public, and so, while a large society *may* put on an intimate Revue, if their audience expect good singing from them, they must be provided with it. It will not suffice that all the singing should be done by second-raters because the show is a small one. This is a difficult subject to treat briefly, as there are so many considerations, but the point to be borne in mind is that Revue must be taken seriously by whomsoever it is performed or it is doomed to failure.

Revue should be witty, and since brevity is the soul of wit it seems desirable that Revue items should be short. Revue audiences do not wish to be obliged to concentrate, at any rate, on the same thing for a long time at a stretch. They are prepared to be thrilled, frightened, hoaxed, and made to laugh, but they are not prepared to be bored, and anything in Revue that is not fairly short may tend to become boring. This, in Revue, is unforgivable.

In the dictionary definition the words "depicting and often satirizing current events and topics" occurred. Those responsible for arranging a Revue might do worse than keep these words before them, for the best praise that a Revue can

have, whatever it contains of melody, colour, beauty, etc., is that it should be "up to the minute."

CHOOSING A REVUE

Even if a society decides that it would like to stage a Revue, it may be prevented from doing so by the difficulty in obtaining one.

In the ordinary way almost every musical play performed by amateur societies is a former West End success. (This applies to the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.) There are, of course, exceptions, but, generally speaking, it is so. Such plays, therefore, have been tried and not found wanting, and if they are procurable at all, they can be obtained simply by paying the requisite royalty to the right owner.

But with Revue this is not so. One cannot go to a right owner, ask for a selection of ready-made Revues, choose one, and perform it. There are various reasons for this, and they form an effective barrier for the prevention of an amateur society reproducing a specific West End revue success.

For example, the rights may belong to a number of people some of whom it may be impossible to find. To perform any item without first making sure of the position with regard to performing rights is madness, and may involve a society in a lawsuit or some equally expensive form of retribution, if the owner should happen to hear of the incident after the production.

Then some of the star members of the cast may have had their own matter and incorporated it in the entertainment. That matter they themselves habitually use in their ordinary stage work. They are not prepared to give permission to anybody to use it, even if such permission were theirs to give (which it is not always), because by so doing they might detract from their own marketable entertainment value.

The programme of Revue often contains performances by contortionist dancers, acrobats, and, especially nowadays, a big dance band. It would be quite impossible to introduce their numbers into an amateur production. A different kind of dancing act, or a different band, might be employed, but it is unlikely that the effect would be the same.

Assuming that all these difficulties could be overcome, there would probably be an enormous number of mechanical obstacles, such as trouble in securing band parts, costumes, etc., which would still make the production impossible.

Complete Revues have been written, composed, and produced by Noel Coward, but even these would no longer be topical by the time they reached the amateur stage.

Since, then, it appears to be out of the question to attempt to stage a former West End success, it is necessary to consider, if Revues are to be presented by amateurs, where they may be acquired.

SOURCES

There are four ordinary sources of Revue that need to be considered.

The first of these is the offer of a Revue complete to a society by a person (or persons) who has either written it specially for them, or who has written it and who is seeking a society to produce it so that he may see his work performed. This is an extremely pleasant situation, which, unfortunately, does not often occur. Even when it does, the quality or the nature of the work usually renders it unsuitable.

A more common method of securing a Revue is to assemble it, not from one former West End success, but from several: to cull from various shows any suitable numbers that can be secured, and to string them together according to a definite plan, and so build up an entertainment of items which have been proved successful and which are suitable to the society and, at the same time, which merit revival.

A less usual method is to assemble the Revue from original matter which may either have been offered to the committee for consideration or solicited by it. Discreetly used, this may be made into a most valuable means of advertising and generating interest in a production and in the society.

When a society announces that it is about to perform a Revue and that it is prepared to consider original contributions from any source, a considerable amount of interest may be aroused and a great number of suggestions received. Many of these will be useless, but some will be of value, and not only will all the contributors and their sisters and their cousins and their aunts attend to

see the fruits of their relatives' labours, however small they may be, but also a great number of those whose efforts were rejected, and their friends and relations, will attend as well, in addition to the society's usual audience.

The field covers such a wide range of activities, for example, musicians, singers, dancers, costume and scene designers, instrumentalists, etc., that some useful new talent may be unearched which will prove of great value to the society when it reverts to the routine of ordinary production.

Unless the society is in the happy position of being able to command the gratuitous services of the contributors, the necessary arrangements will require to be made for fixing a scale of payments and generally taking steps to ensure that this part of the production is properly carried through.

If sufficient original contributions are not forthcoming, or if they are not of the required standard, they may be eked out by matter taken from other sources. And this is the fourth method of finding a Revue, that is to say to make it a blend of old and of new matter in such proportions as the conditions governing the case may determine.

The above, briefly, are the means available to a society of securing a Revue. Which of these is to be adopted the exigencies of the occasion will probably decide.

COMMITTEES

The question of who is to carry out the task of choosing a Revue, assuming that the society is unable to secure a complete work ready for production, is an extremely delicate one.

Most societies are managed by a committee, but there are many reasons why the management committee should not undertake the construction of a Revue, for it is a specialized work that can be undertaken safely only by those who have had previous experience or who possess a special flair. The committee of an ordinary society is extremely unlikely to consist of a number of persons all of whom are gifted with the peculiar ability to build Revue. Apart from this, several of the members will probably take, or hope to take, part in the production, and it is undesirable, from the point of view of the *morale* of the rest of the society, that they should be allowed too

much voice in saying of what the Revue is to consist. Further, it places them in an invidious position, especially if they are honest.

When the Revue *must* be selected by a committee, such committee should be a special one appointed for the purpose. In order to avoid waste of time, it should consist of as few members as possible, but those few should be sufficiently knowledgeable to speak with confidence on singing, acting, dancing, and the mechanics (scenery, costumes, lighting, etc.). Probably three is the best number, and they should be members who are not concerned with securing in the production good parts for themselves or for their friends and relations. If possible, it is desirable that they should neither appear in nor contribute to the entertainment themselves, but this is difficult to enforce as, on account of their knowledge, they are the people most likely to produce something useful either from the pen or on the stage.

Probably the ideal is to detail one person to do the work, but it is a tremendous responsibility to ask any individual to shoulder. Apart from the amount to be done, he has to face the risk that if he makes a mistake the whole production may be an utter failure, and it is one of the characteristics of Revue that there is usually no mean between success and disaster, and so little is required to convert it from one into the other.

Even if a society is able to find someone willing to undertake the work, it is extremely doubtful if he will be competent to carry it out. Technically he must know all those things that are enumerated above as being required for the committee, or, like all good officers, he must be familiar with methods of acquiring knowledge on any subject on which he may need information. Not only this, but he must know how to employ the knowledge that he has secured.

He must be familiar with the company, for he cannot put together a Revue, which is a parade of all their talents, unless he knows of what each member is capable. Equally, he must know the audience, or he may unwittingly offer them an item which they do not like, or even a whole Revue of a type in which they are not interested.

That he should understand the spirit of Revue goes without saying. But if he is to be a faithful

servant of the society for which he is working he must preserve the balance between allowing his imagination to run away with him, and seeing that entertainment (or work) is provided for enough members of the company to keep up their enthusiasm. That is to say if he is a dancer he must not favour the dancers to the detriment of the singers, or, if he is an actor, the sketches to the detriment of both singers and dancers.

If he is personally acquainted with any of the members of the company, that he should be scrupulously fair in the matter of selecting items and making recommendations for casting is another *sine qua non*. This point is important enough when there is a committee all the members of which may hide behind one another, but when there is but one individual to shoulder the entire responsibility for any seeming favouritism it becomes positively vital.

But if an individual can be found who will accept the responsibility (perhaps the gauge of his fitness may be his reluctance to undertake the work), and who seems to have the necessary accomplishments, one is the ideal number, for Revue is a trick and, although one person may have it, three are much less likely to possess it, and for any number above this it becomes practically an impossibility.

Having discussed the sources of Revue and the qualifications desirable in the person(s) to be responsible for making the selections, it is necessary to refer to a twofold difficulty that he will need to overcome in doing his work. Revue items often appear to the ordinary person so intangible, even ridiculous, from their descriptions that until they are presented on the stage, suitably dressed, mounted, and (very important) illuminated, it may be impossible for him to understand how they can be successful. The Revue expert, therefore, may experience a preliminary difficulty in getting a committee to accept some of his ideas, owing to the impossibility of making it clear to a number of lay minds how they will succeed, yet these ideas may turn out, during the production, to be the best items in the programme.

Supposing that this can be overcome, and the director given a free hand to include whatever he thinks fit, he may find the same difficulty continued, in an amateur society, in a way that

does not occur (except among stars of the greatest magnitude) on the professional stage.

REHEARSING

Since any item in a Revue may be among the most successful in its proper place and with its proper *mise en scène*, until it is seen in that place it may appear so absurd as to make the actor(s) to whom it is allotted, and probably with no special flair for Revue, diffident about rehearsing it. In fact, sometimes it is at first difficult to induce amateur actors and actresses to accept parts in numbers that afterwards turn out to be among the most popular in the production.

The members of an amateur company have usually seen most of the works that they perform before they begin their rehearsals. If they have not seen them, they are usually in a position to acquire a good deal of information about them from somebody who has, so that if they are called upon during rehearsal to perform antics that are sufficiently out of the ordinary to cause them to feel self-conscious, they can find out the reason of the necessity for it, whereon they will not mind.

In a Revue, especially in an original work where no information can be gleaned about any particular number except from the author or the director, they may be asked to do certain things which seem stupid to them and which they are not capable of understanding will be successful on the night, however carefully it is explained to them. Since to amateurs rehearsals are definitely part of the pleasure of participating in a production, a difficulty arises at once.

The point need not be laboured, but the Revue producer (or director) with ideas may have some unhappy moments before the curtain rises on his first night. He may be obliged to choose between what seems to him a brilliant idea that will help the success of the production, and a not so good idea that will maintain harmony in the ranks of the company, and in which they are eager to perform.

It is in his discrimination of matters such as these that the ideal Revue director shows himself to be a man apart, and the tact with which he chooses items that will be not only effective but also popular, or who can find members willing to oblige him by undertaking parts in items

in which they themselves cannot see the virtue, singles him out.

As an example of the kind of situation with which the Revue director may be faced can be quoted the case of a certain lady who was given (rather late during the course of rehearsals, it must be admitted) a song to sing in a Revue, accompanied only by a grand piano played on the stage. The song was an original and somewhat peculiar one and the producer had a special setting in his mind for it. Two days before the show opened the lady announced that she could not possibly do the number as she had overheard that the lighting was to include green. There was no one else available capable of singing the song, especially at such short notice, and it could not be cut as the three minutes of time that it occupied were urgently needed to effect a change of scenery at the back, so there was no alternative but to use ordinary lighting and to let her sing the song standing at the piano in the usual way. The unsuitability of this setting was emphasized by the fact that the black tabs, which formed the background and which looked luscious in a half light, were decidedly weary on closer inspection, while, owing to the fact that bare boards were required for a step dance later in the production, it was impossible to use a carpet.

After a suitably depressing dress rehearsal and a flat first night, she went to the producer and asked him if he could not devise something to help her to get her song, which was absolutely unsuitable to be given as she was singing it, across to the audience. He immediately carried into effect the scheme that he had originally intended to use for this scene, which consisted of a baby green spot from the bridge focused on her as she sat on a cushion on the stage, and a further green baby spot shining through a standard lamp on to the face of the pianist. The floor and curtains did not then show; in fact, all that was really visible was the shirt-front of the pianist, the lamp, and the girl on the cushion.

This particular item became a great success, and after it had established itself as one of the features of the entertainment the lady in question asked the producer why he had not thought of that setting for her number at first.

This simple incident has been discussed at

length in order to show that, even if the director has a good idea, however simple it may be, he may have difficulty in staging it, partly because of the inherent difficulty that confronts all Revue producers in getting their actors to understand that a number will be successful, and partly because even when they do understand, they may have a prejudice against carrying out the wishes of the producer.

From the above it will appear that, even if a society seems to have all the requirements for staging a good Revue, there may be many heart-burnings before the curtain rises on the first night, and, although when everything is moving harmoniously towards success it all appears very easy, little is required to stir up a whirlwind of trouble, which nothing but a firm committee, tactful producers, and a loyal company can possibly overcome. But the reward is great, and it is worth the trouble of smoothing out the difficulties when they occur in order to enjoy the fruits of success: if the difficulties do not occur, so much the better.

STAGING THE REVUE

The problems of staging the Revue must be considered along with those of finding the matter and putting it into suitable order. It is waste of time to arrange for an attractive number to be included, only to find that for some mechanical reason it cannot be done. That is why it is important that the Revue Committee should understand stagecraft and something of the Art of the Theatre.

The primary consideration is whether the Revue is to be a spectacular show in a large theatre or an intimate performance in a small one. This will usually be settled by the effect of three factors, namely, the financial resources of the society, the size and talents of the company, and the requirements of the moment; that is to say, a large society may decide to do a small Revue and employ only a limited number of its members, whereas a small society, having suddenly secured an influx of new members, may decide to launch out into a big production, and so on.

Many societies always give their performances in the same theatre, and for a number of them the type of production is settled, as it is practically

impossible to do an intimate Revue in an enormous theatre. Since, on the other hand, the society that usually performs in a large theatre is also usually, from the points of view of financial resource and talent, able to contemplate a lavish production with equanimity, this levels itself out conveniently enough. Although it is not impossible to give a spectacular performance in a small theatre, it is much more difficult to do so, but, of course, it is quite easy to be extravagant, and, consequently, martistic, in any theatre. From this it appears that when a society is in the position to choose a theatre for a particular production, it should prefer a small theatre for an intimate production and a large one for a more ambitious entertainment.

After the subject of the theatre, the most important matter to be decided is that of musical accompaniment. There are several ways of accompanying a Revue. These are—

- (1) Ordinary theatre orchestra.
- (2) Orchestra of the dance-band type.
- (3) Piano.
- (4) Orchestra and piano.

The most satisfactory will depend entirely on the local conditions. For example, a piano would not in any circumstances be a suitable accompaniment for a singing *salon* of the operatic type with a large number of performers in a big theatre, whereas it might be quite the best for use in drawing-room effects in a small theatre.

While on the subject of pianos, reference should be made to a popular method of providing an accompaniment for small Revues. This is to use two grand pianos, either on the stage or in the orchestra-pit. Besides looking extremely attractive, two fair-sized pianos will provide, if they are adequately played, ample volume for the accompaniment of any number of performers that can be squeezed on to the stage of a small theatre. The advantages of such an arrangement are obvious. Besides the effective appearance the cost is low, and it is not as a rule difficult to find performers ready to operate the instruments, while the company have the benefit of being able to rehearse with the orchestra, as it were, through-out.

There are certain difficulties, but they are not, as a rule, insuperable. There must be room for the pianos in the theatre, and in the rehearsal

room, and the two pianists should be available for rehearsals. The music requires to be specially arranged for the purpose so that the two players are, in fact, playing in harmony and not in unison, and this is usually the greatest difficulty that has to be overcome.

When a Revue all ready written and composed has been accepted by the committee, probably the composer will make some suggestions as to the accompaniment. He may even be capable of orchestrating it himself. But when the Revue is to be assembled from a variety of sources, those responsible for the work should have constantly before them the orchestral necessities. No musical numbers should be accepted for which band parts are not available or for which it is not possible to have them written. In numbers in which a great volume of music is not required and where band parts are not obtainable, a pleasing effect may be obtained by having the first eight bars of the tune played on the orchestra, which then fades out to leave the rest of the accompaniment to two pianos, which may also be in the orchestra pit. It should not be difficult to find some musician capable of orchestrating the necessary few bars at the beginning and the end of the items.

When the Revue is to be gathered together by one person and not by a committee, the most satisfactory arrangement is that he should produce it, if he is capable of doing so, for he of all other people will know how each item is intended to appear. When the selecting is done by a committee, or by a person other than the producer, the position becomes exactly like that of the author and the producer in any other musical play.

On any occasion in which the producer of a Revue is not the same as the person responsible for selecting the matter of which it is composed, difficulties are almost certain to arise. In this sense selecting is the same thing as writing. An author may be capable of explaining to a producer how he intends that each item in a Revue should appear. In any case, the producer will probably be able to acquire sufficient knowledge of how the author's brain works to apply it to the treatment of any particular number. When he is faced with a committee of authors, as it were, his difficulties are proportionately increased.

This subject is large enough to require a treatise to itself, but it will be clear that the

producer of a Revue must be a person capable of assimilating the ideas of the constructor(s) of the Revue, and of translating those ideas in terms of acting, singing, and dancing, by means of his company, on to the stage.

Such a person may be one brought in specially for the purpose, or he may be a member of the committee responsible for putting together the Revue. In any case, it is not essential that he should be able to produce the entire programme single-handed. It is much more important that he should realize his own shortcomings and understand the value of securing the proper expert assistance for any item to which he himself is not able to do full justice. So that if he is an expert at dialogue he may bring in somebody to arrange the dances, while if he is a dancer he may require the assistance of another person to produce the sketches.

Such matters as expense and an adequate supply of experts not being insuperable, it is immaterial how many people are brought in to produce a Revue, provided that they are directed by somebody who understands clearly the idea underlying the performance and how it is to be translated on to the stage. In fact, it would be possible, given even tempers, co-operation, and intelligent understanding, for a person to produce a Revue without knowing anything at all of the technicalities of production. It would, of course, require an uncanny stage sense and a tremendous flair for gathering together a retinue of helpers of the right kind.

Having considered the producer, next consider what he will have to produce—in other words, of what sort of turns the Revue is to consist.

Ordinarily one would expect to find in a Revue turns such as—

Chorus dancing (girls only).

Chorus singing (men and/or girls).

Solo singing turns.

Sketches.

Speciality numbers (i.e. musical instrument players, etc.).

If an average of five minutes is allowed for each turn, twelve turns will be required to provide an hour's entertainment, leaving time for changes of scenery, etc., out of account. In practice, twelve ordinary Revue turns will probably take nearer an hour-and-a-half than one hour.

The turns should be arranged to provide the greatest possible variety from the point of view of the audience, and a complete multi-part sequence should be worked out between the acting (sketches), singing, dancing (solo and chorus or both). The sex of the performers should also be taken into consideration, so that a succession of solo turns by men is not followed by several solo turns by girls. The physical difficulties of the performers in changing their clothes quickly must also be taken into account.

Assuming (this is not intended to be arbitrary) that both halves of the programme contain approximately the same sequence of items, the dancing chorus might expect to appear twice in each half. This leaves ten turns of which two or three in each half will probably be sketches. There remain six or seven turns for singers, solo dancers, instrumentalists, and other specialists, such as conjurers, in each half. Again, it will be desirable to arrange these to provide variety.

A further sequence to be woven into the programme is the amount of stage that can be allowed to each turn—referred to under "Scenery."

Last minute gaps sometimes reveal themselves and have to be filled up with extra material hastily introduced. This causes no heart-burnings to the lucky performer who gets something more to do in the show. The obverse situation is much more uncomfortable. It is unpleasant to have to cut a number at the dress-rehearsal because the show will be too long.

If the task falls to the producer (he should be protected by a committee), it merely goes to show what kind of person is required as a producer of Revue.

From the point of view of the actual staging of a Revue, the lighting is one of the most important features. Owing to the numerous changes of scene that are usually required, each having its own properties (i.e. furniture, etc.) and the fact that it is impossible, on account of the speed with which they must be changed to build up a full set for each, it is necessary to suggest scenes by very simple means and, by illuminating them properly, to make them appear different. It should be understood at the outset that the lighting of all the scenes in a Revue is of paramount importance, and that, however limited the resources for the provision of scenery, costumes,

and furniture are, the most widely differing effects may be obtained by judicious use of the lighting plant.

When any doubt arises as to the desirability of expending money on costumes, etc., it is almost invariably wiser to economize on clothes and to spend the extra money on augmenting the lighting facilities.

Scenery takes up a great deal of space and a long time to move and it is heavy to handle. Lights may be altered by the turn of a switch. It would not be too much to say that a Revue is more likely to fail if the lighting is inadequate than for any other mechanical reason.

Scenery is one of those things which, in Revue, depend entirely on the size of the production. With suitable lighting and a few sets of good curtains, scenery need not be used at all, whereas on a revolving stage and with expense no object, a use may be found for tons of it.

In assembling a Revue the following points must be borne in mind or it will be found that drastic alterations will require to be made to the intended programme at the dress rehearsal.

(a) There must be enough room in the wings to house whatever scenery is in use.

(b) There must be enough staff to effect the changes of scene between the items.

(c) There must be enough time for the scene shifters to do their work without holding up the action of the piece.

Revue audiences are notoriously impatient. It is imperative, therefore, that there should be no waits, or, at any rate, as few as possible between the scenes. For this reason it is usually unavoidable that there should be some curtain settings. Many societies dislike these intensely, but one feels that they cannot have had the advantage of seeing curtain or cameo-settings artistically illuminated with suitable apparatus such as are in constant use in Little Theatres up and down the country. A certain number of curtain sets can be avoided when there are enough lines in the grid to use a series of painted cloths, which may be lowered into position in a few seconds, but these are unsatisfying to the audience after a time. The effect of a series of perspectives painted on flat canvas becomes artificial after a short while. A variation may be achieved by means of lacing together three or four flats and hauling them up

as though they were a cloth into the grid, but these are heavy, and this method is hardly ever possible except with counterweights.

When there is no grid provided, curtains must be used, as there is no alternative. In arranging the sequence of the items it is most important that if a full set is required at any time the number immediately preceding it should take place on the front of the stage so that the stage hands may do their work at the back while the earlier item is actually taking place. A regular sequence must be worked out so that the items require first just the front of the stage, then half the stage, and, finally, the full set. In this way it should be possible to have the stage crew at work on one scene while the previous one is already set and the one before that actually in use. There is one point that requires to be mentioned and it applies especially in quiet singing or dialogue items—arrangements must be made so that the scene changing operations are not conducted so noisily that they interfere with the pleasure of the audience at what is actually taking place on the stage. Dragging flats and furniture about is a laborious procedure, and arrangements should be made for it to take place only while there is sufficient noise going on on the stage to deaden the sound.

Furniture in Revue is most important. Assisted by lighting, it can play a large part in obviating the need for a great quantity of scenery by making the same sets look completely different.

The golden rule should be to use as little as possible so that the space in the wings may not be unnecessarily crowded and so prevent the comfortable circulation of the cast. Nevertheless, sufficient should be employed to ensure the changes of scene being adequately realistic, but if at any time it comes to a question of whether to have an extra scene, or two more chairs, it is nearly always better to have the furniture, partly because it is easier to store, and partly because it is easier and quicker to move.

While on the subject of furniture, something must be said regarding the importance of cushions, covers, curtains, and hangings. We know in our own homes how great a transformation in the appearance of a room may be effected by having new chair covers, curtains, and cushions. On the stage this is even more true, and for this

reason the soft furnishings, as they are called, are probably next in importance to the lighting.

The ingenuity of the property master will probably suggest to him a number of devices by which he can change the appearance of actual pieces of furniture, and so save both space and money. A brightly coloured modern cretonne loose cover will convert a kitchen sofa into a drawing-room Chesterfield, while a silk shawl thrown over the top of a grand piano instead of a host of family photographs being placed on it will have a suitable effect. When it is necessary to employ a piano on the stage in any item, one of the best methods of keeping it out of the way, by the by, is to leave it in view of the audience. It will never look out of place unless the scene is out of doors, and not always then, while it may be of the greatest value in dressing empty corners of the stage and avoiding the necessity for introducing pieces of furniture into the theatre that would not otherwise be required.

The word Revue in the minds of most members of amateur societies conjures up visions of miserable little performances in which half a dozen performers wearily sing madrigals. Curiously enough, the same people will be enthusiastic

in their praises of the productions produced by Messrs. Coward and Cochran. They do not seem to believe that a Revue in which they might take part could include items with a large number of performers and a variety of costumes.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Besides the costumes that can be hired in the usual way, a fresh interest in the society may be developed by the institution of a wardrobe department where the costumes for original numbers may be made under suitable supervision.

As an example of the way in which costume numbers can be introduced into Revue may be cited one of which the present author was told. In this case the society was a fairly old-established one with a long record of previous productions. As an item in the Revue they revived certain songs that had been outstanding successes when they were originally produced by the society. These songs were given by the artists who had performed them in the first place, in costume and with chorus. The full stage was used and a great deal of hard work in quick changing of clothes for the chorus was involved, but the idea turned out to be a great success and roused the audience to great heights of enthusiasm.



ANDRÉ CHARLOT

PRODUCING REVUE

ANDRÉ CHARLOT, Manager and Producer. Specialist in the production of revues

REVUE being one of England's youngest forms of entertainment, a survey of its "birth" will help in the study of its method of production.

Years ago the old Gaiety and other theatres used to produce "Burlesques," which, I understand, were a kind of precursor to Revue, but as I never saw any of them I can only mention the fact, and leave it to others to write on the subject. Then came the super concert party, the "Follies," of Harry Pelissier, who were often to be seen at the Apollo; Philip Braham's "March Hares," who played at the Pavilion; Charles Heslop, Harold Montague, and several others ran similar entertainments—they were the forerunners of Intimate Revue.

In my opinion, the real father of Revue in this country was George Grossmith. Although his first Revues were limited in length by existing regulations, they were *real* Revues.

The word Revue has since then been used to cover a multitude of sins. The label, being successful, has been applied to all sorts of entertainments, some of them excellent. It was given to a number of shows that were really musical comedies. It was also applied to many vulgar, naive, twice nightly entertainments that were more akin to the type of Burlesque still to be seen in America. A Revue, however, since the French word is being used to describe it, should be a medley of spectacle, topicalities, sketches, songs, etc., with a full cast, consistent in size with the theatre where it is being produced, and no attempt at a plot of any kind.

Short as they were, Gee-Gee's early Revues answered this description exactly. His first effort was *The Linkman* or *Gaiety Memories*, produced at the old Gaiety on the 21st February, 1903. It lasted only one hour, and was being performed with a condensed version of the *Torreador*. It was the last show produced at the old Gaiety. *The Linkman* himself was a sort of *compère*. For the first time, in this show impersonations of living persons were introduced on the stage, and one of the great features was a quartet representing

Joseph Chamberlain, Lloyd George, Campbell-Bannerman, and Balfour (Gee-Gee playing the latter character). The Lord Chamberlain took great exception to the fact that political personalities were being burlesqued, but the ice was broken, and although the restrictions in this respect have always been greater in England than in other countries, many well known people have since then been caricatured in Revues, sometimes openly, sometimes by inference.

The critics of the time were annoyed by the use of the word "Revue," asking why it was not spelt "Review," and saying that even this spelling would not put matters right as the entertainment was not reviewing anything.

Then from 1905 to 1911, Grossmith wrote a number of short Revues for the Empire; they were only one of the items in the Variety programme, as the ballets were also extremely important at that theatre in those days. First they were allowed to last only twenty-five minutes, and gradually the time was stretched to one hour. The first one was *Rogues and Vagabonds*, in which W. H. Berry made his first appearance, and subsequently there were *Venus* 1906, *Come Inside, By George*, etc., and last but not least *Everybody's Doing It*, the most successful of them all, in which Robert Hale during a tremendously long run impersonated Lord Lonsdale.

It was only in October, 1912, that the first full-fledged Revue was produced in London. Its title was *Kill That Fly*; the book was by George Grossmith and Robert Tharp, the music by Melville Gideon, and it was staged jointly by Grossmith and myself.

Grossmith had been instrumental in getting me appointed, with Monty Leveaux, to the management of the Alhambra, the fortunes of which were flagging terribly at the time. When I arrived in London in July, 1912, I had seen practically all the Revues—hundreds of them—which had been produced in Paris during the preceding twelve or fifteen years. There were many types of Revue in Paris in those days. The spectacular ones, mainly at the Folies Bergère

and Olympia, were produced on a large scale and depended more on the picturesque and the effects than anything else. The "theatrical" ones were produced at the Bouffes Parisiens, the Palais Royal, and especially the Théâtre de Variétés, where greater importance was given to the book. The tiny "café chantants" Revues were played



THE LATE GEORGE GROSSMITH

by half a dozen performers at the Capucines and in the Montmartre district, and even smaller were the "Revue de Salon," especially written for "at homes." The latter were very free in their handling of personalities, and were limited to a cast of two or three.

I had been connected with the staging of about a dozen—of all the different sizes I have just mentioned—the game was not new to me. Gee-Gee and I worked hard together, and the formula we adopted certainly proved to the taste of the public, as it definitely established a craze for a new form of entertainment that was to remain a favourite for years. *Kill That Fly* was in no way a *replica* of a French Revue. It was concocted for a London audience, but we had introduced the only connecting link that is typically French: the *Compère* and the *Commère*.

According to *Larousse's French Encyclopaedia*, Revues started in France about 250 years ago, although it was only round about 1840 that they became really popular in Paris. I daresay the *Compère* and the *Commère* were present in those days. I saw my first French Revue in 1895 or 1896. I have looked at a few old scripts, and until recently, when the French Revue rather altered its formula, I never saw a Revue in France without *Compère* and *Commère*. These two characters used to be introduced to one another in the opening chorus—usually two people meeting for the first time, one ultra-sophisticated, the other less so, to make it possible for one to take the other round the Town, as a sort of guide, explaining the new ideas, the latest topics. They were really two aspects of Public Opinion—and the Greek Chorus is definitely their ancestor. They used to be on the stage from beginning to end, never going off during any sketch or song, but merely drifting apart to the opposite sides of the proscenium, and chipping in where necessary. We introduced them in the first London Revue, and for some time they both survived. Since then the *Commère*, poor girl, has more or less died, but the *Compère* still survives. These two characters were rather retarding the speed of the entertainment, and as the age grew hectic, they became less and less important. Now the *Compère* is taken for granted, and one does not trouble to introduce him in the beginning. He comes on the stage only when his speeches are necessary to explain an idea, to set an atmosphere (or sometimes to cover with a little patter, an impossible change of scenery or costumes . . .).

Kill That Fly was closely followed by Albert de Courville's Revue *Hello Ragtime* at the Hippodrome. In 1914 Alfred Butt joined in the competition at the Palace with the *Passing Show*. The Spectacular Revue was definitely established.

The great drawback in producing shows of this type in theatres as large as the Alhambra, the Hippodrome, the Palace, and the Empire was that it made the exploitation of subtle humour almost impossible. I was aching to do a smaller Revue somewhere, but was prevented by my contract with the Alhambra. Sir Charles Cochran was the first in the field to produce a really Intimate Revue, entitled *Odds and Ends*, at the

Ambassadors' Theatre, in October, 1914. The setting was simplified to practically a set of black velvet curtains. Sir Charles had recruited two French artists, Alice Delysia and Leon Morton, who had previously had experience in Paris Revues. He had an admirable book by Harry Grattan, and a new furor was started. Many Revues of the same type, produced by Sir Charles, myself, and others, followed at many London theatres. This conception, however, was not yet the "perfected" one. It was simply going from extreme spectacle to extreme simplicity, an appeal to the brain instead of an appeal to the eye, and gradually the staging of small Revues became more and more elaborate. In my opinion the best formula was reached with the Revues done by Sir Charles at the Pavilion and myself at the Prince of Wales about 1919 and subsequently.

It would take columns to enumerate the Revues produced in London between 1912 and 1934, but apart from those I have already mentioned, the most successful producers of West End Revues have included Jack Hulbert, Paul Murray, Archie de Bear, Dion Titheradge, Julian Wylie, and, towards the end of that period, William Walker and Robert Nesbitt, whose *Ballyhoo* showed distinctive personality.

Since 1919 Revue has changed very little in its construction, but tremendously in its tone and speed.

The "tone" changes are due to the fact that censorship greatly altered between the wars. The country grew much more sophisticated, the post-War influence had its cynical reactions, and Revue, being topical, was the first to reflect them. Many sketches produced during the First Great War and shortly afterwards would seem so tame to-day that men of the young generation might think they had been originally produced for the benefit of school children.

Speed has also altered the aspect of Revue tremendously. This, I think, is due not only to the fact that the times have become hectic, but mainly to the influence of the cinema (silent or talking), which has reduced words and action to the pith of both. The stage has had to follow suit.

To give an example, I compared the manuscript of a Revue I did in 1918 with the book of *How D' You Do?* which I produced at the

Comedy Theatre in 1933. The first one comprised sixteen items, one of the sketches playing as long as twenty minutes. The second had thirty-two items, exactly double the number, and the longest sketch played seven minutes. Six or seven minutes is the maximum one can expect an audience to sit through one single item in these days—I wonder what the producer of 1960 will have to do to satisfy his public!

Revue has had its ups and downs, but I hope it never goes under as it is the best medium in which to develop theatrical talent. This has been proved by the fact that more than half the actors, authors, and composers who are famous to-day gained their stripes in Revue. So many elements are necessary to build up a successful Revue that it has many times been the stepping-stone for an author with one sketch or one lyric, for a composer with one tune, for a designer with one setting or one costume, for an artist with the successful understudy of one item. It would be ludicrous to substantiate what I mention here, but there is no doubt as to the value of Revue to other entertainments. Think also of the value to the artist, who gets the chance in one evening to show his versatility sometimes with eight or ten parts, whereas it would take him several years of parts in other types of theatrical entertainment.

I was almost forgetting the real purpose of this article. I was asked by the Editor to tell you how to produce Revue. It is quite simple, and I will do my best to give you the recipe as briefly as possible.

Your first problem is to decide whether or not to entrust the task of writing the book, lyrics, and music to one, two, or more authors and composers.

There is only one man who can do the whole thing single-handed and produce the show as well: his name is Noel Coward, but up to the time of writing this article he stands alone.

Some successful Revues have been due to the collaboration of one author and one composer; others have had a number of collaborators almost as large as the number of items on the programme of the entertainment.

Personally, I have an open mind on the subject. I have found both methods successful. It is certainly a simplification of the producer's task if

he can limit the author and the composer to two men, but it is not often possible, and one should remember that a number of contributors helps to make for variety. Revue is to the legitimate stage what the magazine is to the novel, and it is difficult to imagine an attractive magazine being successfully written and illustrated from cover to cover by one individual.

Your decision on this point is, anyway, the beginning of your troubles, as you may be certain if you decide on the multiple authorship that you will be slated by at least one dramatic critic who will make a point of counting the number of collaborators and giving more prominence to this than to the value of the entertainment.

However, having made up your mind, and before you start rehearsals you must—

- (a) Secure a first-rate lot of sketches.
- (b) Secure a first-rate lot of lyrics.
- (c) Secure a first-rate lot of tunes.
- (d) Gather a most competent company of principals, well contrasted in types, and having drawing power at your box office.
- (e) Recruit a chorus of attractive girls who can dance anything from ballet to the most difficult "tap," and sing in the ensembles without spoiling the harmony.
- (f) Engage competent persons to rehearse both the sketches and the dances.
- (g) Get all your scenery models so that you have the maximum variety of pictures with the minimum amount of canvas and timber, being sure that all will fit on the stage where you are ultimately to produce your Revue.
- (h) Get an equally attractive lot of designs for all the costumes, not forgetting shoes, hosiery, hats, haberdashery, wigs, etc. Obtain estimates for these and organize a schedule of fittings that does not clash with your rehearsals.
- (j) Make sure that your orchestra is in the

hands of a competent musical director who will be able to "produce" it with four or five rehearsals—an incompetent one will take a dozen—and be sure that all your musical numbers are scored and copied by experts, so that hours are not wasted correcting mistakes at rehearsals.

(k) Organize your schedule of rehearsals so that you do not waste the time and wages of one category of your employees while others are working—i.e. do not have a "dress rehearsal" until the book, songs, and dances have been staged, the costumes tried, the scenery fitted, the lighting organized, the band rehearsed, *all at separate rehearsals*.

(l) When you get to your last rehearsals be sure that your lighting is well set to show your cast, scenery, and costumes to the best advantage—avoid amber on leading ladies, pink on green dresses, blue on juveniles, etc.

(m) Engage a clever Press agent, so that if anything goes wrong you have someone to take the blame that you cannot throw on your manager, your stage director, or your secretary.

(n) Last, but not least, everything having been thoroughly rehearsed, fitted, tried, and corrected, you must get your proper running order; that is to say the best sequence in which to present the items that go to make your Revue. When you do this you must think not only of the proper contrast between the items, but of the practical side concerning the changes of scenery and costumes. You must also remember that Miss X does not care to follow Mr. Y's comedy scene with her light number, that Mr. Y will be most annoyed if he follows Miss X's duet with the juvenile, which is bound to stop the show, and so on.

Does it not sound all very simple to you?
I wish you luck.

Frank Harris

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SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, PRODUCING

STAGE AS A CAREER, THE

TRAINING
MAKING A START

STAGE FAULTS AND SHORTCOMINGS
HEALTH AND THE STAGE

STAGECRAFT

STAGECRAFT AND THE AMATEUR
DESIGNING STAGE SETTINGS
GROUND PLANS AND MODELS

YOUR OWN SCENERY
FURNITURE, PROPS, AND COSTUMES
STAGE MANAGEMENT

STAGE EFFECTS AND NOISES "OFF"

PAST AND PRESENT
THUNDER
RAIN
WIND
SNOW
THE EFFECTS LANTERN
EXPLOSIONS
FIRES AND CONFLAGRATIONS
BANQUETS
CRASHES

MACHINERY NOISES
TRAIN NOISES AND EFFECTS
EXECUTIONS
SEA EFFECTS AND NOISES
GHOSTS
SCENIC EFFECTS
MASKS
TRAPS AND REVOLVING STAGES
ILLUSIONS

STAGE MOVEMENT AND MIME

BALANCE AND POISE
ARMS AND HANDS
ACTION MIMES AND SHORT SKETCHES
EMOTIONAL MIMES
ACTIONS AND EMOTIONS

WORD-MIMES
THE MIMED FOLK SONG AND BALLAD
PRODUCING A MIME
CONVENTIONAL OR STYLIZED MIMES
STAGING, PROPERTIES, AND MUSIC

STAGE TERMS



HARCOURT WILLIAMS

Hugh Marr

PRODUCING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

HARCOURT WILLIAMS, Actor and Producer; has made some fifty productions at the Old Vic.

WHAT is it that first draws us to Shakespeare—when we are very young, I mean?

I can think of a variety of reasons that send us scuttling away from him. In my own case, I fancy the attraction began when my mother gave me an old copy of the plays which happened to be in the family library. How deep her intention was I cannot say. She knew that from the age of six years I had been obsessed by the theatre because I had given excerpts from Sarah Thorne's touring pantomime with the kitchen table as an extemporized stage—my first introduction to the simple effectiveness of the Elizabethan "platform"! This volume of Shakespeare had been printed in 1827 and the type was small, even for youth's sharp eyes, but it had a musty smell, which I found intriguing. I recall repeated attempts to read the first play in the book, but they never got beyond the first scene. Prospero's life story defeated me. But my desire to know more did not flag. To my great delight, when I was twelve years old, my father took seats for us all to see the Lyceum production of *Henry VIII*, the opulent pageantry of which had just caused a great sensation. On the day of our proposed visit the Duke of Clarence died, and the theatres were closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain.

My elder brothers, who doubtless by this time had had their interest in history killed at school, vetoed the Tudor period, and the tickets, instead of being exchanged for another night at the Lyceum, were taken for another theatre. My disappointment was such that it is no great wonder that I have forgotten whatever frivolous play we witnessed in the end. As a sop my mother took me during the following year to see Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in Tennyson's *Becket*, a circumstance that shaped the course of my life.

INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET

It was not until later that I saw the Lyceum Shakespearean revivals, and my first introduction to the plays on the stage was a performance of *Hamlet* at the Crystal Palace Theatre when Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer essayed the title role. I was

impressed, but resentful. I knew that something was fundamentally wrong, and, oh dear, that feminine hat overflowing with a sheaf of black cock feathers! The point I wish to make is this: there must have been some romantic quality native to the plays, which, in spite of a slow brain, reading difficulties, and indifferent presentation, seized hold of my imagination; and should not the joy that comes to the young in this way be exploited by professors and teachers, rather than emphasis laid on the dreary penance of "notes and anachronisms" that are made so much more important than the text?

SHAKESPEARE AND THE GLOBE

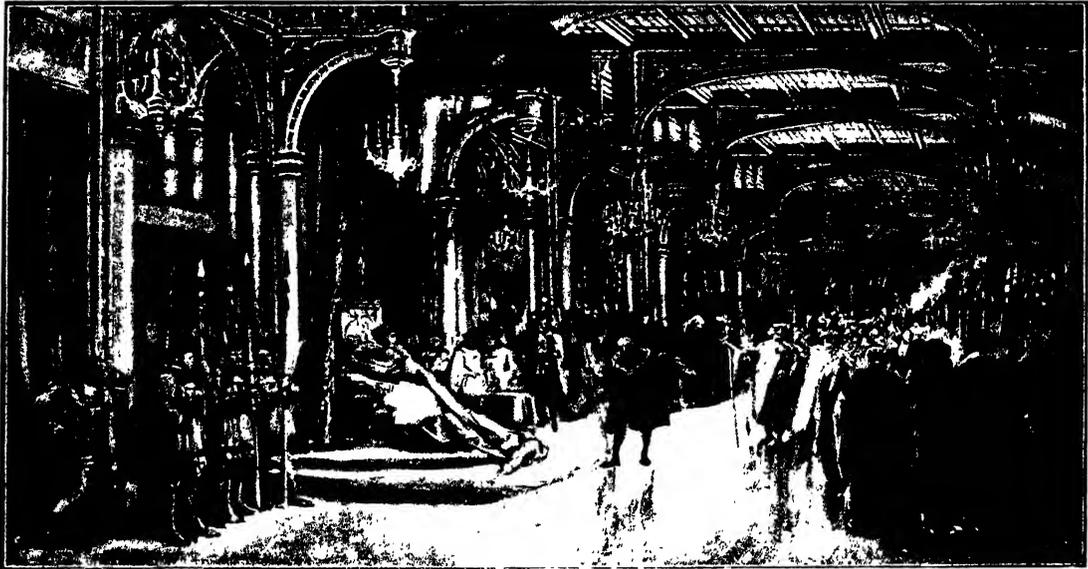
It took me many years of experience and work to realize that Shakespeare's plays had not always been acted on an artificially lighted "picture" stage to an audience plunged in darkness. The effect of Greek tragedy played in a theatre open to the sky and with a background of mountain and distant seascape must have been exhilarating, and no doubt performances at the Globe Theatre by daylight and on a platform stage, which showed the actors "in the round" and brought them into an intimate relation with the audience, must have possessed a quality that is lost for ever.

In 1599 the Globe Theatre was built on the Bankside, London. The year is significant because, as Sir Walter Raleigh points out, "The date of its building coincides with the beginning of Shakespeare's greatest dramatic period, when he set himself to teach English tragedy a higher flight. His tragedies and Roman plays, it is safe to assume, were brought out at this theatre under his own supervision; the actors probably instructed by himself; the very building was possibly designed for his requirements." When we feel inspired to teach Shakespeare his own job, it is well to bear the foregoing words in mind!

The structure of the Globe, Malone tells us, was hexagonal on the outside, but, perhaps, circular within. It was built of oak beams and plaster on a stone foundation. The oak frame work that exists in many Elizabethan houses to-day is as hard

as steel, and had it not been for the disastrous fire that destroyed the theatre during a performance of *Henry VIII*, there is no reason, from an architectural point of view, why it should not be standing now. The building was about forty feet high with roofed galleries for the audience run-

ning round it, and thus make a third division in working the stage, permitting scenes to be acted in front while properties were being cleared or set behind. It is thought that the Inner Stage was also used for a tiring room, but, although this may have been so in early days, it would be an



"KING HENRY VIII," ACT I, SCENE I

ning round it. They were surmounted by a turret, from which a flag flew when a performance was in progress. The stage itself was a bare platform jutting out some distance into the pit, where the "groundlings" could obtain standing room, for there were no seats here, for the sum of one penny. The stage itself had a roof supported on pillars, but the space between this and the galleries was open to the sky. At the back of the stage there was a gallery which was used for such practicabilities as Juliet's balcony, or the battlements in the historical dramas. Beneath the gallery was an "Inner Stage," which could be curtained off. This was used for Prospero's cave, for Lear's tent, or Mad Tom's hovel in the same play. There might also have been a "traverse" curtain that would cut out the gallery and the

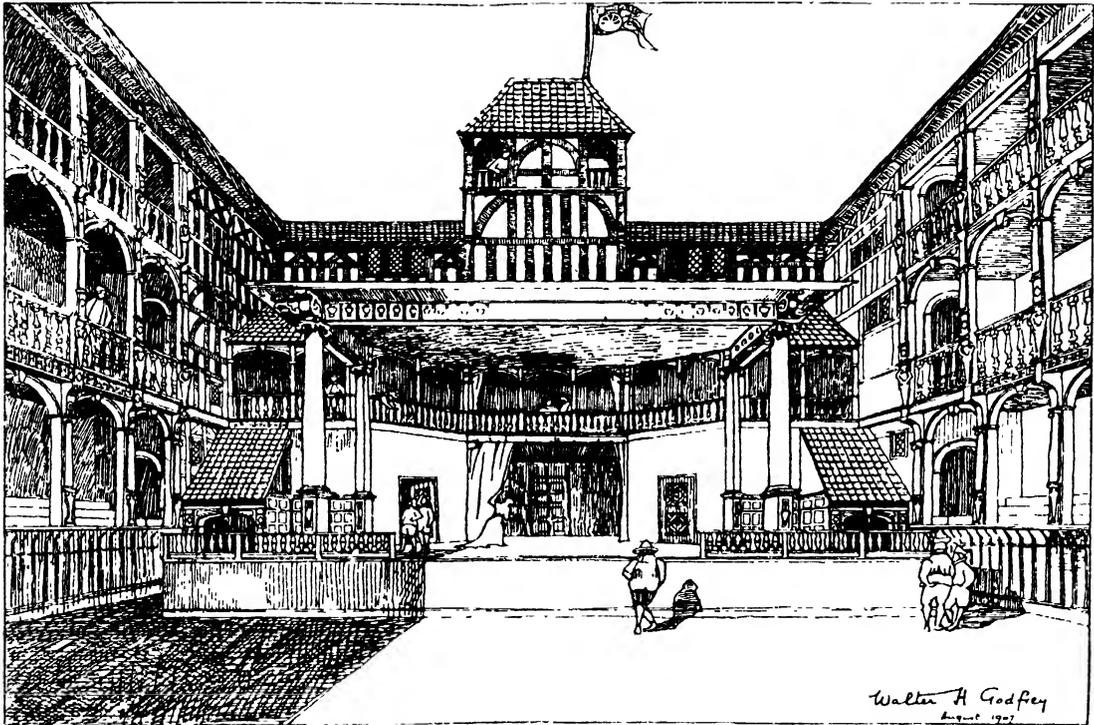
inconvenient arrangement, and it is probable that the tiring room at the new Globe was farther from the stage. Finally, two doors at the back, left and right of the Inner Stage, supplied the entrances for the players.

Of the acting John Mascfield says, "It is likely that this was much quicker than modern acting. The plays were acted swiftly, without hesitation or dawdling over 'business,' and were played straight through, without waits. There was little or no scenery to most plays. The properties, i.e. chairs, beds, etc., were simple and few. The play was the thing. The aim of the play was to give not a picture of life, but a glorified vision of life. The object was not realism, but illusion."

One other short quotation, again from Walter Raleigh, is relevant: "While the Restoration

theatre mangled and parodied the tragic masterpieces, a new generation of readers kept alive the knowledge and heightened the renown of the written word. The readers of Shakespeare took over from the fickle players the trust and inheritance of his fame."

and adapted forms became the "mode." The travesty that Garrick made of the last scene in *Romeo and Juliet* will hang for ever round his neck and make first-rate evidence in the hands of those who plead that good actors are blessed with more emotion than intellect. Irving rescued the



THE FORTUNE THEATRE. INTERIOR

The fickle players indeed have "done their damndest" to betray their master, but I am not sure that the readers have not done their share in building a mountain of editions, annotations, and treatises with which they have succeeded in obscuring the sunrise. There is that monstrous library, too, in which they have attempted to lock the plays away from the theatre, forgetting that love laughs at prison bolts.

In the eighteenth century the plays in truncated

plays from this kind of desecration and presented them with great skill and imagination. However, under the influence of his period, for which he was no more to blame than the public for whom he was catering, he still cut the plays drastically, and altered the continuity of scenes to fit in with the elaborate scenic effects that were then popular. Victorian prudery demanded further abbreviations, which often robbed the plot of its poignancy. Unfortunately, Irving's imitators went one worse

instead of one better, and the productions, lacking Irving's and Ellen Terry's vivid personalities, became cumbersome structures, which bored the public and drove so many from the performance of Shakespeare's plays that we still experience great difficulty in luring them back.

Meanwhile, about fifty years ago, an influence began to make itself felt—in a very small way at first—which eventually revolutionized the Shakespearean theatre almost as completely as the Puritan influence shook the Church. William Poel went back to the fountain head and presented the plays in the same manner as they were acted at the Globe Theatre in Shakespeare's day, that is, as near as he could humanly get to the original. Many caught fire from this flame, notably Harley Granville-Barker, and now it is rather the exception than otherwise to see a production of Shakespeare that is not consciously, or unconsciously, based on Poel's work. No self-respecting producer can slice a play about to fit it in with his "production," and owing to the altered point of view in the public mind, the frankness of Shakespeare, even when it amounts to bawdiness, is no longer an excuse for cutting.

I do not wish to imply that we have found the ideal way of presenting his plays—far from it—but our experiments are at least marking time rather than going backwards. There is, perhaps, too strong a feeling that we must do something outrageous to make Shakespeare interesting. That line of thought will lead to disaster. But fresh points of view (Shakespeare, like a diamond, can give light from many facets), fresh ideas for presentation, and a throwing overboard of traditional clutter, make for a wholesome atmosphere, provided always that we do not offend against the dramatic values set down by the author.

The more I have had to deal with Shakespeare the more difficult I have found him, but always the more enthralling. The initial task is to get some kind of clarity into one's vision, and then to convey that vision to other people, who will persist in demanding the most extraordinary qualities from Shakespeare, all spelt in capital letters. Every honest man knows that such precepts can no more be upheld in capitals than can the moral virtues, and Shakespeare would be the last to desire that he should be so belied.

O, Let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
More than the tongue that more hath more express'd.
O, Learn to read what silent love hath writ;
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

A young and distinguished actor once asked me what I considered to be the difference between our present method of acting Shakespeare and that in vogue in the days of Irving, Frank Benson, and Herbert Tree—that is, about half a century ago.

Taking the best examples of the Irving period, I should say that an actor in studying a part thought first of the rhythm and the swing of the verse, and then of the meaning, whereas modern technique demands that the clear meaning of the words shall be given paramount consideration.

There is something to be said for both methods: I think the ideal was probably found in the acting of Ellen Terry, who cleverly combined the two with satisfying effect.

Shakespeare's verse, both rhythm and accent, is so composed that if it is correctly spoken the sense will look after itself. There are, too, emotional and dramatic values in the actual sound of the words that may well be lost if too much detail be indulged in. During the time that I was producing Shakespeare plays at the Old Vic, Harley Granville-Barker wrote to me in a letter of helpful criticism, "Don't let your actors be so damned explanatory."

The actors, however, must be understood, and, above all, they must be heard, or the audience will soon cease to pay attention, and with the present-day tendency to clip the vowel many of us cannot speak Shakespearean verse without a good deal of hard work. Do we not talk of pallises, miricles, traters, and even pleecemen? That is not good enough for an actor who wants to play Hamlet. First of all, we must acquire correct breathing such as is used by natural singers, and then be sure that each separate syllable (consonants and vowels) in every line is given its true sound value.

An effective exercise is to take a complete phrase and to stretch it out in sound to its utmost limit; then, when you are familiar with every nuance of sound, to close it up again like a concertina.

This exercise brings two other blessings: it improves breath control and teaches the words!

Nijinsky, we are told, held that in drama, music, and the dance the author's idea must be adhered to absolutely; and Arthur Whitby, an actor of rare ability and no little achievement, maintained that an actor's first duty was to know the author's lines accurately: two excellent rocks these to which any production may be anchored.

To give advice on producing Shakespeare is as difficult as it is dangerous, for if one is keen one's ideas are bound to shift and grow; but no harm can be done by going back to the First Folio edition and studying the play as there set out, before the ideas born of realistic scenery have been imposed upon it and the original flow of the drama has been interrupted by emendations. Then visualize the mechanics of the play as it might have been done on the Globe stage. It will be found that the stage management slips into the structure, Inner Stage, Outer Stage, and Traverse, fairly simply. Let us take the example of *Romeo and Juliet*, which after the preliminary "*Actus Primus, Scœna Prima*," has no further division of act or scene.

The opening quarrel scenes, Romeo's entrance, Capulet's scene with Paris and Peter, and Romeo and Benvolio's return, could all take place on the Outer Stage. The first Juliet scene, with her Mother and the Nurse, could also be on the Outer Stage with the addition, perhaps, of the Inner Stage. At the end of the scene the Nurse would probably see to it that the curtains were drawn to close the Inner Stage at the end of her scene. The maskers with their drums and torches would then enter, and during Mercutio's poetic foolish fancies, tables would be set in the Inner Stage. At the end of the Mercutio scene the Folio gives the following direction, "They march about the stage, and the serving men come forth with their napkins." This meant that they would pop out from the Inner Stage, whence sounds of merry-making and feasting would probably be heard. The "march about the stage" of the maskers may have meant that they went out through one door, marched about, that is round the back of the stage, and in at the other door on their cue. After the Potpan scene the curtains would be drawn, and Capulet would lead the way forward with his guests. At the end of the scene it is possible that the traverse was closed for the

Chorus to speak his lines, and this would allow an opportunity for clearing such furniture as was used in the preceding scene.

The Balcony scene would be played on the real balcony over the Inner Stage, and I fancy that Romeo's "Can I go forward when my heart is here?" and the little Mercutio and Benvolio scene should be played without any scene change. Undoubtedly, Romeo should not leave the stage as is usual during Mercutio's coarse quips on love, but should hear them, otherwise Romeo's "He jests at scars that never felt a wound" has no meaning.

The Friar's cell scene, which follows, would be placed in the Inner Stage.

The scene that begins "Where the devil should this Romeo be?" and leads through a delicious chatter of idle wit not so far removed from the gayer efforts of bright young things to-day, to the coming of the Nurse and the subsequent plot of the marriage and the scaling of the ladder to the high top gallant of Romeo's joy, could be played in front of the Traverse. Juliet's scene with the Nurse would take place on the Outer Stage and the marriage ceremony on the Inner Stage. This would leave the Outer Stage free for the quarrel between Mercutio and Tybalt that leads to the death of both, the entrance of the Prince, with the animated, quick-tempered Italian populace, and the subsequent banishment of Romeo.

Here, if the modern audience must have a pause, a break can be made. But it is unnecessary, and spoils the swing of the play. There are only three legitimate reasons for intervals in Shakespeare's plays. (1) When a change of mood in the spectator is advisable; occasioned, for instance, by a definite change of place. (2) Physical fatigue, as when the full version of Hamlet is given. (Those who have seen such a performance can never be satisfied with any truncated hotch-potch.) (3) Rest for the actors. I think this last can almost be eliminated, for Shakespeare shows his usual stagecraft by giving the actors, who are carrying the heaviest burden, a reasonable wait in the text before they have their final big scene.

It is scarcely necessary to detail the rest of the changes. The principle is so simple that it is easily applied. There is a slight difficulty in the scene

where Romeo says farewell to Juliet. The Folio says, "Enter Romeo and Juliet aloft," which means, of course, on the balcony. This is an admirable place for the scene, and Romeo's descent by his rope ladder becomes a practicable arrangement. But five lines after he has left the stage the Mother enters. The question is: Does



A PORTRAIT, BY PROFESSOR HENRY TONKS,
OF WILLIAM POFF.

Presented to him on the occasion of his 80th birthday.
It is at present in the Tate Gallery.

she enter "aloft" where Juliet is, or below in what a moment ago we have imagined to be a part of Capulet's orchard? Obviously the succeeding scene between Capulet, Lady Capulet, Juliet, and the Nurse could hardly take place in the confined space of the balcony and so far removed from the audience, so one must conjecture that the Mother did not really enter until her line, "Why, how now Juliet?" and that Juliet had time to reach the stage proper after she had spoken, "What unaccustom'd cause procures her hither?"

For the last scene of all, if the convention is accepted that the curtains of the Inner Stage are the heavy portals to the charnel house, all the difficulties that are created by the realistic theatre

disappear as though by magic: the magic of imagination indeed! There is no doubt that the playgoer of Elizabeth's day was meant to bring his imagination with him to the theatre, and we gather from the exhortations in the Chorus of *Henry V* that there was a danger the mental process might not work! On the evidence of the text I think that the use of the "Traverse Curtain" that I have suggested was not used in *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is obvious that the scenes followed each other in rapid succession without any appreciable interruption. There is no doubt that Shakespeare relied upon a swiftness of speech and action whereby to hold his mixed audience, which ranged from a cultured few to a rough but not unintelligent crowd.

The verse should be spoken smoothly and without too much explanation, and the thoughts therein translated in the actor's mind into their modern application. We are too often misled into thinking that because certain words in the plays have fallen into disuse (more's the pity) that the ideas, emotions, and, what we to-day call psychological reactions, are necessarily archaic. Nothing is further from the truth. These are like the Cleopatra of Enobarbus's description, age cannot wither, nor custom stale, their infinite variety; and provided we do not let go the anchor that holds us to the author's conception, we should, I think, let in the flood of modern conditions and reactions to the extent of allowing them to influence our work, just as we should avail ourselves of the convenience of such modern lighting and decorative effect as will help to set off the play without detracting from its dramatic value. But do not let us attempt to "paint" the scenery that the author himself has provided with such consummate skill in the imagination. And even the *décor* should not be permitted to distract. Ivor Brown, writing of a classical production, rejoiced that the tiresome word "stylize" had blessedly been forgotten, and that the performance was not an ambitious producer's attempt to cut capers round about the play.

When choosing players it is not a bad notion to think of an orchestra. The voices and personalities should be well balanced. The actors should be encouraged to create characters; that is to bring colour and background into their interpretations, but the producer should watch for

laboured delivery, unnatural voices (the "Shakespearean voice!"), meaningless gesture, or any elaboration that holds up the action for one moment, and, finally, shun "traditional business" like the foul fiend. Tradition should always be considered, for there is much to be learned from it, and the spirit that informed it was more likely

to cry out against the crueller bondage of sloppiness." It is sloppiness that so easily flourishes in the emotional atmosphere of theatrical enterprise, and no man has fought against this more strenuously than William Poel.

There is an austerity about his work that makes for intellectual clarity, and although he became



A SCENE, DESIGNED BY EDWARD CARRICK, FOR A PRODUCTION OF "MACBETH" AT THE OLD VIC THEATRE

Photo by J. W. Debenham

to be right than not, but it must not be imitated. It is a grammar, not an exercise. St. John Ervine has uttered wise remarks upon this subject: "No one can so quickly rouse my wrath and provoke my contempt as a rule-ridden man, the fool who says 'A rule's a rule; as long as I'm a member of this society, a rule will continue to be a rule!' But to despise a man who thinks that people are made for rules when rules are made for convenience and have no value or virtue apart from their convenience, is one thing, and to plead for the abolition of all rules is another. It is well for us to cry out at regular intervals against the bondage of technique, but we must be more ready

more experimental he never abandoned his original conception of Shakespeare as a consummate craftsman of the practical theatre. His book *Shakespeare in the Theatre* should be read by all intending producers, together with Harley Granville-Barker's invaluable volumes, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. Here we are privileged to see the mind of a superb producer illuminating some of the plays with understanding and a perfect grasp of the technical detail.

There are two vexed questions with which I have no space to deal as fully as they deserve to be dealt with: Costume and Music. For the first it is best to keep an eye on the costume of the

time as far as possible; this will save us from many a sartorial pitfall laid for the unwary in the text.

The archæological exactitude on which we are apt to pride ourselves to-day probably troubled the Elizabethans but little. Their familiar doublet and hose appear to have formed the basis of their stage costume, with crowns, cloaks, and armour, added as occasion demanded. Plays of a more masque-like character, intended for nuptial celebrations, and so forth, may have called for a more elaborate "dressing-up," such as is indicated in the designs of Inigo Jones. The touch of modernism (as it then was) in the actor's appearance no doubt helped to preserve a reality in the plays that our period-conscious trappings too often obscure. The lesson of Sir Barry Jackson's presentation of *Hamlet* in the clothes of the twentieth century was sharp and salutary, and for my part I should like to see a play such as *Julius Caesar* produced in a similar manner, jolted out of its cold pseudo-Roman bathtub toggery, and given a new perspective.

Paul Veronese knew how to create the feeling of a classical atmosphere out of his own period and a skilled designer might well achieve satisfactory results on the same principle.

When dealing with the music in Shakespeare's plays, let us remember that the author, from textual evidence alone, must have been a sound musician, and give him what he asks for—as closely as we can—and no more.

A grave misuse of music in production is the introduction of songs and dances between the dialogue, tending to slow down the tempo of the drama. An example of this occurred in a performance of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Now this, plainly, is an early and experimental work, but it has two essential qualities, extreme passionate youth and swiftness of action. (Whether it is entirely Shakespeare's does not matter here.)

There is a point where Sylvia's father unmasks Valentine's plot to steal his daughter. In a heated speech the Duke banishes Valentine and leaves him alone on the stage to express his reaction to the preceding scene. On the occasion in mind a song was inserted between the Duke's exit and Valentine's emotional soliloquy, thus nullifying the dramatic situation. This brings me back to my original dictum, that the spirit of the play must not be frustrated—a divinity, I add, that must sanctify auditors as well as actors.

There can be no question that among other important things that we have lost in this business of producing Elizabethan plays is the specific attitude of the audience. The darkened auditorium and the picture-stage straining after a naturalistic realism have succeeded in putting a barrier between players and public that is often hard to surmount, and the latest developments of the film theatre have created an audience which, however appreciative they may be in their silence, are completely unresponsive so far as outward expression is concerned. This non-committal attitude, besides retarding the growth of film art itself, is poor training for the living theatre, where a generous interchange of emotion is essential.

Finally, I offer a word of encouragement to the amateur to tackle Shakespeare. Fools rush in, they say, where angels fear to tread. But professional actors are not always angelic, and the non-professional are not always foolish. I have seen more than one dramatic performance of Shakespeare given by children and young people (who did not know too much!) that were admirable. There is a quality in Shakespeare which the initiated are too apt to disregard and which may be brought to light with great profit by the simple of heart.

Harcourt Williams

THE STAGE AS A CAREER

A RECOGNIZED PROFESSIONAL, Author and Critic

IN former days it would have been thought absurd to talk of the Stage as a career to be definitely chosen. You were either born to it or you were not. Or, if you were not, you drifted on to it, either by force of circumstances, or, in the case of a few, as the result of an irresistible urge that overcame all obstacles. But, usually, in those days it was an hereditary calling that was followed as a matter of course. Sir Cedric Hardwicke has remarked that so many of the old players of the past seem to have been born in a circus that even now he never visits one of those entertainments without a certain amount of trepidation!

But though hereditary talent still plays an important part in the matter, as is illustrated by such cases as those of Phyllis Neilson-Terry, Mary Brough, Joyce Carey (daughter of the late Lillian Braithwaite), Margaret Webster (daughter of the late Dame May Whitty), John Gielgud (another Terry), and many more, circumstances in general have entirely changed, so that, as often as not, the leading performers to-day will be found to have had no previous associations with the Stage at all. Thus, the late Sir Gerald du Maurier was, of course, the son of the famous *Punch* artist, while Sir Seymour Hicks, Henry Ainley, Dame Sybil Thorndike, and hosts of others, all furnish further instances.

In other words, the Stage as a career has now become one of the recognized professions, in line with the Law, Medicine, the Church, or any of the other more ordinary callings, and offering rewards not less attractive than any of them. True, like its sister arts of the brush and the chisel, it demands initial gifts of a more highly specialized kind than those required by the more everyday professions, while it has further a special atmosphere of its own that puts it in a more frivolous category than any of them. But, otherwise, its social respectability may now be regarded as unimpeachable—to its artistic loss in the opinion of not a few—so that there no longer seems anything incongruous in having such related “pairs” as His Grace Dr. Cosmo Gordon

Lang, late Archbishop of Canterbury, and his cousin, the late Matheson Lang, one of the former heads of the Stage; the late Lord Allenby, a famous soldier, and his kinsman, Mr. Frank Allenby, a well-known actor of to-day; the late Lady Maud Warrender and her son, Lt.-Comd. Harold Warrender; and so on. As the late Lord Houghton once remarked—“To-day we are putting our sons and daughters on the stage.”

But this question of social status need not be taken too seriously, and the mere fact that actors and actresses are now accepted as ladies and gentlemen, and no longer classed as rogues and vagabonds, is not of great importance. It has, however, had one consequence which is undoubtedly important, as bearing on my subject, and that is the enormous resulting increase in the number of candidates for the profession. As someone put it, whereas formerly the Stage wanted to get into Society, to-day it is Society which wants to go upon the Stage. It is not overstating the fact indeed to say that the Stage is now an overcrowded profession. Nor is there any difficulty in understanding this.

The superficial attractions of the Stage, at least to those inclined that way, are obvious enough. To girls and young women especially it is easy to understand its appeal. To be in the limelight, to wear pretty clothes, play attractive parts, be admired and petted by the public, and to be paid handsomely at the same time for doing these things—no wonder that such possibilities attract. Certainly they are vastly more alluring than those offered by hospital nursing, or work in the City, or any of the relatively limited number of other callings open to women. Wherefore it is not surprising that the dramatic academies are crowded with feminine students, of whom, however, probably about 10 per cent only are destined to stay the course and ultimately establish themselves as actual working actresses.

And to men also, with a leaning in that direction, the attractions of the Stage are equally evident, though antecedent gifts and abilities, real

or supposed, probably play a larger part in the matter in their case. But for those possessed of the requisite qualifications what career could be more tempting? No hard grinding for years at dreary textbooks (as in the case of Medicine, say, or the Law), to be followed by troublesome examinations and a subsequent wait of further years before anything worth while can be earned, but merely a brief course of a year or two at a dramatic academy (itself in the nature of play more than work) and then, with luck, an immediate start.

There is no reason why such expectations should not be realized by some. For there have undoubtedly been plenty of instances of promising boys and girls making £20 and £30 and £40 a week—and a great deal more in some cases—within a few years of leaving their academies, and naturally each aspirant in turn hopes that he or she may be equally fortunate. But in reality, of course, such success is only for the lucky few, and of the rest the tale is different. Hence, if bitter disappointment is to be avoided, it is of the first importance to be absolutely sure that one has really outstanding gifts for it before embarking on this fascinating but perilous profession.

Unfortunately, this precaution is too often neglected. Because Gertrude has found such favour in her local dramatic society it is rashly assumed by herself and her fond parents that she has all the qualifications to take the place of Edith Evans or Fay Compton on the professional stage, while Jack's parents are equally convinced, on the strength of his performances in amateur charades, that he has all the makings of a future Leslie Henson or George Robey. And, of course, the dear children, both Gertrude and Jack, may be quite talented up to a point. But the question is whether they are sufficiently good to hold their own with the best forthcoming from other quarters—as they realize only too soon when, having started their training, they come up against the pick of their rivals, whom they find to be, not merely talented, but possessed of altogether exceptional gifts in the way of looks, talents, personality, and everything else.

In a word, to succeed on the Stage it is not sufficient to be endowed merely moderately. There must be altogether exceptional powers if

success is to be won in these fiercely competitive days, and this is the point that should be most anxiously considered before the young aspirants take the plunge.

It is true that it is not always possible to say with certainty beforehand who is qualified to make good and who is not, as the records of all the academies show. Again and again it has happened that students of whom little was expected have gone right ahead, while others who carried off all the prizes have come to nothing at all. One of the most popular young actors on the London stage to-day was earnestly advised when undergoing his training to adopt some other profession, and equally striking instances could be cited of brilliant students failing utterly to fulfil the hopes reposed in them. But such cases are exceptional, and, in a general way, there is not much difficulty in distinguishing the sheep from the goats.

It is not by any means a case of "roses, roses, all the way" even for those who have the "goods." It is very much the contrary. Rather may it be said of even the best of them that, like young puppies, they have all their troubles before them. For, speaking generally, even for the best endowed the Stage is a heart-breaking profession that should only be embarked on by those possessed of unlimited grit and courage. I well remember hearing one of the most famous of living English actresses addressing a promising young girl who was about to begin her studies.

"Are you prepared," she asked in effect, "for every sort of heartache and disappointment, to endure all the pangs of hope deferred, to exercise boundless patience, to wait long years perhaps before your talents are recognized, possibly never to get them recognized at all, to see inferior rivals going ahead while you are eating your heart out in obscurity and never getting a chance, in short to endure all the ills of the most trying and nerve-wracking profession in existence? If so, go ahead and become an actress, and may good luck attend you! But if not, become a nurse, or a typist, or a shop-assistant, or anything else in preference."

That was sufficiently discouraging, it must be admitted, but it was sound advice all the same. For the Stage is indeed a heart-breaking profession, even for the most gifted, and all the

more so in these days when it has become so definitely overcrowded. At any given moment, it is safe to say, there are scores and scores, not to say hundreds, of trained and capable performers, including many highly gifted, seeking in vain for employment—not a few of them indeed artists who have long since proved their powers and made their names.

A well-known and most popular actor informed me that in the previous twelve months he had had only six weeks' employment; and his case was only one of many. Tragic indeed is the lot of such performers who, after years of successful work, when they might be supposed to have every reason to regard themselves as securely established at last, suddenly find themselves no longer in demand. For some reason they will have lost ground—perhaps for not being quite so good as usual in a given part, perhaps because their style is thought to be getting old-fashioned, or possibly because some younger and more attractive rival has come along and captured the managers' favour—and in the result they find themselves completely dropped.

And they can do nothing whatever to help matters, except wait and hope. Then at last, perhaps, a part turns up for which such an actor is particularly suited, or for which he is the only one available at the moment, and he gets another chance and, with luck, may make a fresh start and continue swimmingly again. But at what a cost in the matter of the anxiety and suffering previously endured! Truly it must be reckoned a precarious profession, not to say a "dangerous trade," in which such experiences are possible.

In former days the situation was met to some extent by the actor-manager system. The actor who had established his position made himself secure by running his own theatre, whereby he ensured being always in employment. But nowadays that system has disappeared. Formerly, too, there were always the provinces, where any actor or actress with a name could count on being engaged. But that resource has also diminished considerably, though not entirely, with the coming of the cinema.

On the other hand, the films themselves have provided an invaluable second string, which furnishes sometimes the most lucrative and reliable resource of the modern player. There are, indeed,

scores of performers drawing comfortable incomes from the films to-day who would starve if they were dependent on the theatre proper. This is a consideration certainly to be borne in mind.

At the same time, film engagements are also highly precarious, of course, and fiercely competed for, while it has also to be remembered that not every stage player, even though quite good in the theatre, is suited to cinema requirements. Your features may not film satisfactorily, your voice may not come through well, and so on, and therefore this again must be borne in mind.

In short, there is no disguising the fact that, even taking the most favourable view of it, the Stage is a most hazardous profession, with rich prizes certainly for the lucky few, secure of almost constant employment at £100 or £200 a week, or more, but with an appalling number of blanks for the rank and file.

It must be remembered, too, that the Stage differs from most other callings in that its votaries must be constantly finding fresh work. It is not a case here, as in an ordinary business or profession, of getting a position and keeping it, subject to one's good behaviour, without further worry or anxiety, but of constantly coming to the end of one job and then having to find another one elsewhere. This is an important consideration to bear in mind, since it necessarily means constant periods of unemployment, with nothing coming in.

Even in the case of those fortunate enough to go straight from one engagement into another there will be a break of three or four weeks at least without pay, while the new piece is being rehearsed—unless you are very small fry indeed, in which case you will get a minimum salary—and when this happens frequently, as it probably will in days of short runs and incessant withdrawals, it naturally makes a big difference in the year's earnings.

This may be considered one of the justifications of the generous scale on which stage performers are paid when they are in work, since this is necessary in order to provide also for those all too frequent periods when they are not. Those who are wise will remember this and act accordingly, bearing in mind that if they are in paid employment for six months out of the year they may think themselves lucky.

or supposed, probably play a larger part in the matter in their case. But for those possessed of the requisite qualifications what career could be more tempting? No hard grinding for years at dreary textbooks (as in the case of Medicine, say, or the Law), to be followed by troublesome examinations and a subsequent wait of further years before anything worth while can be earned, but merely a brief course of a year or two at a dramatic academy (itself in the nature of play more than work) and then, with luck, an immediate start.

There is no reason why such expectations should not be realized by some. For there have undoubtedly been plenty of instances of promising boys and girls making £20 and £30 and £40 a week—and a great deal more in some cases—within a few years of leaving their academics, and naturally each aspirant in turn hopes that he or she may be equally fortunate. But in reality, of course, such success is only for the lucky few, and of the rest the tale is different. Hence, if bitter disappointment is to be avoided, it is of the first importance to be absolutely sure that one has really outstanding gifts for it before embarking on this fascinating but perilous profession.

Unfortunately, this precaution is too often neglected. Because Gertrude has found such favour in her local dramatic society it is rashly assumed by herself and her fond parents that she has all the qualifications to take the place of Edith Evans or Fay Compton on the professional stage, while Jack's parents are equally convinced, on the strength of his performances in amateur charades, that he has all the makings of a future Leslie Henson or George Robey. And, of course, the dear children, both Gertrude and Jack, may be quite talented up to a point. But the question is whether they are sufficiently good to hold their own with the best forthcoming from other quarters—as they realize only too soon when, having started their training, they come up against the pick of their rivals, whom they find to be, not merely talented, but possessed of altogether exceptional gifts in the way of looks, talents, personality, and everything else.

In a word, to succeed on the Stage it is not sufficient to be endowed merely moderately. There must be altogether exceptional powers if

success is to be won in these fiercely competitive days, and this is the point that should be most anxiously considered before the young aspirants take the plunge.

It is true that it is not always possible to say with certainty beforehand who is qualified to make good and who is not, as the records of all the academics show. Again and again it has happened that students of whom little was expected have gone right ahead, while others who carried off all the prizes have come to nothing at all. One of the most popular young actors on the London stage to-day was earnestly advised when undergoing his training to adopt some other profession, and equally striking instances could be cited of brilliant students failing utterly to fulfil the hopes reposed in them. But such cases are exceptional, and, in a general way, there is not much difficulty in distinguishing the sheep from the goats.

It is not by any means a case of "roses, roses, all the way" even for those who have the "goods." It is very much the contrary. Rather may it be said of even the best of them that, like young puppies, they have all their troubles before them. For, speaking generally, even for the best endowed the Stage is a heart-breaking profession that should only be embarked on by those possessed of unlimited grit and courage. I well remember hearing one of the most famous of living English actresses addressing a promising young girl who was about to begin her studies.

"Are you prepared," she asked in effect, "for every sort of heartache and disappointment, to endure all the pangs of hope deferred, to exercise boundless patience, to wait long years perhaps before your talents are recognized, possibly never to get them recognized at all, to see inferior rivals going ahead while you are eating your heart out in obscurity and never getting a chance, in short to endure all the ills of the most trying and nerve-wracking profession in existence? If so, go ahead and become an actress, and may good luck attend you! But if not, become a nurse, or a typist, or a shop-assistant, or anything else in preference."

That was sufficiently discouraging, it must be admitted, but it was sound advice all the same. For the Stage is indeed a heart-breaking profession, even for the most gifted, and all the

more so in these days when it has become so definitely overcrowded. At any given moment, it is safe to say, there are scores and scores, not to say hundreds, of trained and capable performers, including many highly gifted, seeking in vain for employment—not a few of them indeed artists who have long since proved their powers and made their names.

A well-known and most popular actor informed me that in the previous twelve months he had had only six weeks' employment; and his case was only one of many. Tragic indeed is the lot of such performers who, after years of successful work, when they might be supposed to have every reason to regard themselves as securely established at last, suddenly find themselves no longer in demand. For some reason they will have lost ground—perhaps for not being quite so good as usual in a given part, perhaps because their style is thought to be getting old-fashioned, or possibly because some younger and more attractive rival has come along and captured the managers' favour—and in the result they find themselves completely dropped.

And they can do nothing whatever to help matters, except wait and hope. Then at last, perhaps, a part turns up for which such an actor is particularly suited, or for which he is the only one available at the moment, and he gets another chance and, with luck, may make a fresh start and continue swimmingly again. But at what a cost in the matter of the anxiety and suffering previously endured! Truly it must be reckoned a precarious profession, not to say a "dangerous trade," in which such experiences are possible.

In former days the situation was met to some extent by the actor-manager system. The actor who had established his position made himself secure by running his own theatre, whereby he ensured being always in employment. But nowadays that system has disappeared. Formerly, too, there were always the provinces, where any actor or actress with a name could count on being engaged. But that resource has also diminished considerably, though not entirely, with the coming of the cinema.

On the other hand, the films themselves have provided an invaluable second string, which furnishes sometimes the most lucrative and reliable resource of the modern player. There are, indeed,

scores of performers drawing comfortable incomes from the films to-day who would starve if they were dependent on the theatre proper. This is a consideration certainly to be borne in mind.

At the same time, film engagements are also highly precarious, of course, and fiercely competed for, while it has also to be remembered that not every stage player, even though quite good in the theatre, is suited to cinema requirements. Your features may not film satisfactorily, your voice may not come through well, and so on, and therefore this again must be borne in mind.

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As to the salaries paid nowadays they are certainly handsome enough in the case of the big names—the Tommy Trinders, Diana Wynyards, and the rest, who may get anything from £500 a week, and even more, downwards, while even artists far less famous who are established favourites may get £60 or £100 a week without much difficulty. For younger performers, on the other hand, with their names still in the making, £20 or £30 a week may be reckoned very good pay, even though they may be playing leading parts, and very often they may have to be content with a good deal less—£15, £12, £10, and so on, down to the statutory £3 received now by even the humblest walker-on under the provisions of the Equity contract.

Of course, if you are fortunate enough to be the possessor of private means, sufficient at least to keep you going when nothing else is coming in, matters are enormously simplified, since you can then afford to wait if necessary for a suitable part and will no longer find yourself compelled, from sheer necessity, to accept any part and any terms that may be offered you. The eminently undesirable thing is to be completely dependent for one's existence on one of the most precarious of all professions, in which, with every qualification, one may none the less find it impossible to obtain employment.

All this may sound pessimistic and discouraging, but when such a supremely important matter as the choice of a profession is in question one cannot be too careful to tell the truth, and I doubt if anyone acquainted with the facts as they actually are would be disposed to think that I have exaggerated them or said too much.

Undoubtedly for those possessed of the right abilities the stage is in many ways a delightful calling, but even for the best equipped it means any amount of hard work, enthusiasm, grit, determination, and patience if a success is to be made of it—to realize which it is necessary only to read the memoirs of even the most brilliant and to note the "painful steps and slow" with which, almost without exception, they have made their way to the top, and the anxieties and discouragements that have attended them throughout.

Immediately after the Second Great War theatres were exceptionally popular. But in the ordinary way conditions are nowadays very

different, making the outlook of the individual performer still more precarious. Partly owing to the competition of the films, in conjunction with other adverse factors, such as inflated rents, crushing taxes, wireless, dancing, and so on, which were non-existent formerly, the struggle for life in the theatrical world has never been harder than of late, one result being the appalling uncertainty that prevails as to the fate of even the best-accredited productions.

The late George Grossmith once recalled that in former times when a new Gaiety piece was not going too well at the outset the company used to say ruefully that it looked as if it wouldn't run more than a year. In these times it has more often been a question whether a new production will run more than a month, or even a week—giving point to the sardonic remark of the actor who observed that he would not mind having no pay for the performances if only he were paid for the rehearsals! Really it has hardly been exaggeration sometimes to say in these days when plays have such fleeting existences that the leading performers would do positively better as a rule if they were paid for the three weeks' rehearsals than for the subsequent brief "runs." As things are, however, they give their services without payment during the rehearsals, fondly hoping to reap their reward in due course, only to see too often the depressing "notice" on the board at the end of the first week or fortnight.

Yet when the worst has been said, how idle to suppose that your heaven-storming aspirant, with the ardour of a Garrick or a Kean burning within him, is likely to be influenced in the least by such "mean and grovelling" considerations as I have dwelt on! "Such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple." And who shall regret that this is so. "The world must be peopled," said Benedick, and likewise we must have actors and actresses—otherwise the lot of the theatre-lover would be sad indeed. So perhaps it is just as well that those who prate "If youth but knew!" are not always listened to.

TRAINING

The training of young players raises a question which formerly would never have been thought of. Originally young players got their training

anywhere, principally on the stage itself, and certainly without the thought of having it provided for them in any orderly and systematic manner. To-day things are very different, and the ordinary young artist contemplating a stage career would never dream of offering his service to any one unless he had previously undergone a course of instruction somewhere where at least he had been taught the rudiments of his business. In a few instances he may have picked up a certain amount of useful information through having acted for love in an amateur company, but solid technical training will almost certainly be considered indispensable as well. This nowadays is provided by one of the recognized schools and academies.

One knows the story of the ancient "screever" (or pavement artist) who, asked once by a genial R.A. where he had learnt his art and craft, replied "Learnt it? You can't learn it. It's a *gift!*" And much the same applies to the art of acting. Thus the late Sir Seymour Hicks has written—"The art of acting cannot be taught. A man can either act or he can't—and that ends it."

Some remarks of another famous actor, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, on the same subject may also be recalled: "Formerly the one way of achieving experience was to join a touring company and go into the provinces. . . . Things are different to-day and to my mind the change is for the worse. Now young actors gain their experience at the expense of West End productions, one result being that they fail to lay secure foundations for their work and tend to become all finish and no beginning."

But this argument is not quite easy to follow. Whether actors gain their experience at the expense of London or provincial audiences seems immaterial. The point is that, under the existing condition of things, they can go to training academies first and there acquire knowledge of at least the rudiments of their art, whereas formerly these had to be picked up from the very beginning on the stage itself.

That good results could be so achieved may be agreed, since all the great artists of the past learned their business in this manner, though helped also in a good many instances by preliminary experiences as amateurs. But it stands to reason that better results still are likely to be achieved by

going to a well-equipped training school and there learning as much of the business as can be taught from properly qualified instructors.

A young musician *might* conceivably "pick up" the art of playing the violin and become a Paganini, but the chances are decidedly against it, and the average student, however gifted, takes lessons from a master as a matter of course; and the student of acting will do well to follow the same procedure nowadays, when the necessary facilities are available.

No one would be so foolish as to suggest that training academies can make actors when the requisite talent does not exist beforehand, any more than a musical academy can make pianists and violinists in corresponding circumstances. But, given the necessary talent to begin with, such institutions can be of the utmost service in supplying systematically that instruction and training in the fundamentals of the art which formerly could be acquired as a rule only haphazard, in a vastly less satisfactory manner, on the boards themselves.

Hence, though these establishments are sometimes criticized by those who have not thought the matter out, they really stand in need of no defence—the best proof of which is to be found not only in the admirable results which they have achieved, but also in the whole-hearted support which they enjoy of those best qualified to judge, to wit, the leading members of the profession itself.

As most people interested in such matters will be aware, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, was actually founded by a distinguished actor, the late Sir Herbert Tree, and was known originally as "Tree's Academy."

At the same time it may be of interest to mention in this connexion that training academies for the stage are not quite such new things as some people seem to suppose. In various foreign countries they have, of course, long existed, while in England Sarah Thorne had a school at Margate which trained many famous players some fifty years ago, and long earlier than this, right back in the eighteenth century, Theophilus Cibber ran in London what he called an Histrionic Academy. But none of these earlier establishments could be compared in any way with the R.A.D.A.

Founded at His Majesty's Theatre by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, in 1904, this training academy was moved in the same year to Gower Street, where it now occupies handsome premises capable of accommodating hundreds of pupils. As teaching for the stage is given for the most part collectively, i.e. either in classes or in the course of stage performances, there is less need for a large staff than in the case of institutions—musical academies, for instance—where the teaching is nearly all individual.

The subjects taught include Diction, Gesture, Dancing, Fencing, and so on, but the bulk of the time is given to acting itself in performances of actual plays under the direction of the teachers, and this fact it is that constitutes the strength of the Academy and the strongest possible argument in favour of all such institutions.

Only by means of such establishments could such opportunities be found—opportunities that are actually essential for the purposes of training in the case of the stage. Music and painting can be studied and practised alone, but you cannot act alone, and herein lies, therefore, the strongest justification for dramatic schools and academies, suggesting, indeed, that such establishments are even more essential here than in the case of other arts.

The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, which evolved from the old Guildhall Orchestral Society, was founded in 1880 in Aldermanbury by the Corporation of London, and since its foundation has been governed and controlled by the Music Committee. The original premises proved to be inadequate and the School was moved to the present site on the Thames Embankment. Opened in December, 1886, the building contained forty-two classrooms with a hall for orchestral practice.

By 1889 the number of students had increased appreciably. An extension of the School building was erected on land in John Carpenter Street, adjoining the old building, and the School theatre, seating approximately five hundred people, was built.

Although the School was originally primarily for the training of musicians, the Drama side, from very small beginnings, developed into an important aspect of the School's work, and now claims equal recognition. Of the two thousand

students who attend the School, at least a third study Drama.

It is considered essential that all students should attend private lessons in order that their respective professors may watch their individual progress, in addition to the many classes on dramatic subjects including Play-reading, Stage Make-up, Dancing, Stage Technique, English Literature, Shakespeare and Verse-speaking, Production and *Décor* and Costume Design.

An important aspect of the School's work is the provision through the institution of the *Décor* class, for students to build and paint their own scenery, and also to make the numerous costumes that are used for School productions.

During each year many plays, varied in type, are presented by students in the School theatre. In addition to public performances, many private class performances are given.

All students of sufficient attainment are eligible to take part in the performances given by the Students' Repertory Club, the students themselves being responsible for the selection, rehearsal, and production of the works performed, also for the lighting and stage management.

One criticism sometimes passed on these schools is that their standard of admission is too low and that they take anyone and everyone who will pay their fees, to the prejudice of the better qualified students.

It is, of course, extremely difficult where beginners are concerned to spot the future "winners"—as countless instances attest.

Read the memoirs of the greatest players and it will be found again and again that they were pronounced hopeless at first, and in the case of the training academies, too, it has been found over and over again that pupils who made the poorest show at first have ultimately gone right to the top of the profession, while others, of whom the highest hopes were entertained, have afterwards failed.

Many examples of this could be given. In one case within my own personal knowledge a boy who is now one of the most successful actors on the London stage was emphatically advised as a student that he would never make an actor and had far better try his hand at something else. In another case, also known to me, a young actress

who has likewise done exceedingly well since obtained so little recognition as a student that she had as nearly as possible decided to abandon the stage before, at the last moment, a lucky accident made her change her mind.

These are only two instances of many that could be cited. Therefore it is easy to understand those concerned being chary of turning down anyone on the strength of early impressions—although, of course, a preliminary test of some sort is in fact always imposed.

Apropos of these preliminary tests an amusing story is told of the early days of "Tree's Academy." The pupil then (as now) paid an entrance fee of a guinea, but if he failed this was handed back to him. On the occasion in question, Tree, to stimulate some of the candidates, had been persuaded to recite for their benefit some lines from Shakespeare—upon the conclusion of which one of the judges, an eminent fellow-actor, affecting to mistake him for one of the candidates, informed him in mournful tones that he was unfortunately not up to the required standard and gravely handed him a guinea! Tree's ripost is not recorded, but he was doubtless equal to the occasion.

There is also the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, formerly directed by the late Elsie Fogerty but now in the hands of Gwynneth Thurburn.

Another is the Webber-Douglas School of Singing and Dramatic Art. This, while concentrating more particularly on singing, and claiming especially to be the depository of the methods of Jean de Reszke (with whom its directors studied and worked), gives attention also to the drama.

There were also formerly one or two other schools and academies of the smaller kind.

Most of the big music schools, such as the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, also include Stage Training in their courses, but with special reference naturally to the requirements of Opera, Light Opera, and the like.

Before the Second Great War, training facilities were also provided at the Old Vic and at Sadler's Wells, where instruction was combined with public appearances in the various performances given. Parts were not guaranteed, but promising

students were given the opportunity of understudying and of playing such parts as were considered suitable, while all had the advantage of "walking on" in the classical plays and of attending the rehearsals. The season lasted about eight months and the fee charged was fifty guineas, in return for which the student doubtless obtained a lot of useful experience. Training was resumed after the war.

In preparing for the stage the wise student, in addition to working hard at his academy, will do a great deal also on his own account. In particular, he should go to see as many plays as possible, whereby he cannot fail to gain enormously if he makes full use of his opportunities by following the performances attentively and with a real determination to learn from them.

Also he should read and study in the same spirit as many plays as he can, together with the history of the drama, and other works bearing on the subject—criticism, biographies, reminiscences, and so on. From the memoirs of the great players of the past much useful information of a practical and technical kind may often be gathered, while the critical writings of such men as Hazlitt, Lamb, and Lewes, and, among more modern authorities, Archer, Walkley, and Shaw, can also be read with profit.

Nor should general literature, and other opportunities of self-culture—picture galleries, museums, and so on—be neglected, since the modern player cannot be too highly educated, though I do not suggest that everything can be done in this way while the student is actually undergoing his technical training, which alone will take up most of his time. But these are the kinds of studies from which he is most likely to benefit and the aims that he will keep before him if he is wise. The young student should also seize every possible opportunity that presents itself of appearing himself—and if he (or she) is really talented, such occasions come along quite frequently in the way of charity performances and other productions of various kinds, pastoral plays, Christmas pieces, and the like, which do not offer any attractions to the full-fledged professional, but which afford invaluable occasions to the neophyte to test his powers, to gain experience, and, by no means least, to be seen and heard, possibly with the most valuable after results. Let

the student never neglect any possible chance, therefore, of exhibiting his talents, even in the humblest capacity or in what may appear to be the most unpromising circumstances.

MAKING A START

Making a start on the stage is, rather curiously perhaps, not so difficult as it used to be. For at one time there was no recognized means by which this could be managed and it was largely a matter of luck and chance—of knowing, perhaps, someone already on the stage who would help, or otherwise finding a friendly hand—before one could get an opportunity to appear. Nowadays, thanks largely to academies, things are different, and I should be disposed to say that it is not so much in making a start that difficulties are likely to occur as in keeping oneself going satisfactorily after the initial step has once been achieved. That, indeed, is when the real test comes.

"Beginners, please!" At length the young artist awaits his "call"—a joyous but apprehensive stage in the career of every aspirant. Training has had its thrills—and probably its rubs and reverses too—but now all that is over and the neophyte is to taste the fiercer delights of the "real thing." Filled with the hope and enthusiasm of youth, he burns to put in practice the lessons he has assimilated as a student and to display his powers as a full-fledged "pro."

A cynic has said that at every theatrical performance there is always one delightful moment at least, namely, that immediately *preceding* the rising of the curtain; and the remark is capable of wider application. Delightful, too, is the moment before the curtain rises on the young player's career. For the time at least the prospect is unclouded and the page unsullied.

How then to get that opportunity and make that start? *Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte* says the French proverb, but, in the case of the stage I am inclined to think, as I have said, that it is not so much the "first step" which presents the greatest difficulty as the task of "keeping it up" afterwards. With a reasonable amount of luck it is not so difficult to get a footing on the stage; it is usually later that the hardest struggles are encountered.

But the earlier problem is our subject for the

moment, and it is certainly not one to be over-rated.

Those who start with theatrical connexions—with parents or relatives already on the stage, will naturally have a great advantage. For not only will the doors be opened more readily to them but also their earliest efforts will be watched from the outset with sympathetic interest and attention—a great gain indeed.

How are young actors and actresses brought to the notice of managers nowadays? In nine cases out of ten through the agency of their training academies. They have been seen and noted by a discerning manager (or managerial "spy") in one of the school performances; or report has got abroad of their promising achievements as students; or they have been recommended as worth considering in response to an inquiry. And so, in one way or another, they have gained managerial attention, and if favourably regarded, got their chance.

Hence the enormous advantage, at this stage, of being connected with an institution of this kind. For, apart altogether from the question of training, its help is no less invaluable when training has been completed.

One thinks, of course, primarily in this connexion of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the list of ex-students of which comprises many of the most prominent members of the profession (together with many more less prominent of course) before the public to-day. Looking over this truly astonishing list, there is no difficulty in realizing how successful this establishment has been, not only in training such a vast array of distinguished pupils, but also in "placing" them subsequently. But this is quite easy to understand, of course.

The director of a provincial repertory theatre is in London, for instance, getting together his company for a season, and he wants some young people among them who will know their business and not cost too much.

"Can you recommend anyone?" he asks.

"Most certainly," is the answer. "There are two girls and a boy just leaving us who would suit you perfectly, I think. Come along and see them. The boy and one of the girls are taking part in *Quality Street* to-night and the other girl is playing *Rosalind* to-morrow afternoon."

"Good! I'll come along."

He goes, sees, and is impressed, and all three are engaged.

Sometimes, perhaps, the course of events takes a different turn.

"Yes, I liked the boy and the fair girl, but the dark one—the gold medallist—didn't appeal to me so much. Not quite what I want. I liked the little fluffy girl who played the lodging-house slavey better. What's her name?"

In that case Miss Fluffy gets the job, to her inexpressible delight, and the proud gold medallist, to her astonishment and indignation doubtless, is rejected.

Not all can hope to make a sensational start, of course. Usually it is a case of beginning very modestly, but opportunities of one sort and another are always coming along—to be turned to account or not as the event may prove. In which connexion it may be noted that, while a striking *début* in an important part may have its advantages, it is also not without its risks. For there is always the danger of a premature success that cannot be maintained. Let the beginner be content to go quietly at first therefore, while developing and gaining experience.

Young artists may easily be tried too high at first, and have often suffered from this cause afterwards. Who goes slowly will usually go farthest in the end and for this reason twelve months' grinding in a provincial repertory company may well prove of infinitely greater value in the long run than half a dozen flash-in-the-pan appearances in fashionable West End productions, of probably fleeting duration.

If a young artist is exceptionally promising, he or she may be offered a permanent contract by a manager and this will raise a question demanding careful consideration, since there is so much to be said both *pro* and *con*.

On the one hand, there will be the advantage of certain employment and an assured salary (even though only a small one) for a definite period, plus the further enormous advantage that it will be to the manager's direct interest to push her and advance her (I am assuming a girl) in every possible way throughout that time. On the other hand, she may realize when too late, if genuinely outstanding, that she might have done just as well (or even better) "on her own," with

the galling consciousness in addition that as things are she is earning only a fraction of what she might otherwise have been making. But on the whole, the young artist who is lucky enough to get such an offer from a responsible management will usually be well advised, I think, to take it.

Another question not easy to decide is as to the expediency or not of employing an agent. Undoubtedly, these people have their uses. Though they do not usually profess to find parts for their clients, they are often helpful none the less in doing this, being frequently consulted by managers when casting a new production, while their services are valuable also in arranging terms, enforcing claims, and generally protecting their clients' interests. It is true that they take a percentage of the first few weeks of the artist's salary in return, and when engagements have been obtained quite independently of any exertions on their part there is frequently a sense of annoyance in having to pay this toll. But, again, I am disposed to think that on the whole the money is well expended.

Germane to this question of agents is that of salaries, and herein young artists who are doing well sometimes go wrong in asking too much at first. Having had a little success and one or two good notices, they think they have "arrived," and, stimulated by the salaries being received by those better established, demand preposterous terms on their own account. Then, when offered less, they decline to give way—arguing that they must "keep up their price"—and possibly find themselves "at liberty" for months in consequence.

This is a foolish policy that has done many young players much harm. Compared with those paid in most other professions, stage salaries are extravagantly generous—helping in large measure to account for the difficulty that so many productions experience in making a profit—and it is a pity that this is not more generally remembered—by the old hands no less than the younger. The mischief is, unfortunately, that salaries do, undoubtedly, indicate more surely than anything the status of an artist, with the result that it is quite as often pride as avarice that prompts exorbitant demands.

This applies only to the more successful. The others are not likely to err in this way. They will

be thankful to take what they can get, in the way of both parts and salaries, but they may have to wait long and patiently notwithstanding—and this even though highly talented. One of the most famous actresses on the London stage had definitely decided to throw up the sponge in sheer despair when, just in time to prevent her, the right opportunity came along at last.

Let that be a warning—and an encouragement—to those who are still waiting.

STAGE FAULTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

A great philosopher once remarked that human nature appeared to be so oddly constituted that it seemed disposed to try every conceivable way of going wrong before finally trying to go right—the cussedness of human nature, I suppose—though whether all the faults and failings committed on the stage which vex the souls of those concerned are to be ascribed to this cause, I won't pretend to say. Certainly, however, they are numerous enough, and it will not do any harm—it may conceivably even do some good—to point out just a few of them for the benefit of those who are inexperienced in the routine of the professional theatre.

Stage faults and shortcomings are indeed of many kinds, some of which are avoidable and others not. In this connexion an amusing story is told of a young actor who was once pulled up by Phelps for an inadequate rendering of his lines. "That is not the way to say them," said Phelps; "you should deliver them like this"—and he proceeded to roll them out in magnificent style.

"I quite agree," replied the neophyte, "but then if I could say them like that I should not be receiving £2 10s. a week!"

It is with sins and omissions of the other kind, that is of the more or less avoidable order, that I am here concerned.

Take, for a beginning, that gravest of all stage crimes—missing an entrance. It is the worst of all, for the obvious reason that none other has such absolutely devastating consequences upon the players involved.

Miss Fay Compton tells of one such occasion when she was the offender, the part which she was playing being that of Anise in *Who's the Lady?* Oddly enough, too, she was perfectly

ready to go on, being quietly seated in her dressing-room sewing, and actually heard all the agitation outside without realizing that it was she for whom the stage was waiting!

The only thing to be done when such things happen is, of course, for those on the stage to gag desperately until the absentee arrives, and some wonderful feats have been accomplished in this way by old hands. Let the beginner be always prepared, therefore, to do the like if similarly called on, by keeping a cool head and remembering that the most surprising remarks will often pass unnoticed on the stage if uttered with sufficient confidence and assurance.

Sir Cedric Hardwicke tells, for instance, of a performance of *Julius Caesar* when the Soothsayer who warns Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March!" failed to appear. It was a paralysing moment, but one of the supers rose superbly to the occasion and saved the situation, even though he did "improve" slightly on Shakespeare by shouting, instead of the correct words, "Beware the shades of night!"

Only a degree less disconcerting than a missed entrance is the less disconcerting of an actor forgetting his lines. Yet this may happen to anyone—wherefore perhaps it is hardly to be classed as a fault that is wholly avoidable. Elderly players whose memories are beginning to go awry, of course, especially liable to fail in this way, and many will remember how common an occurrence it was with Ellen Terry in her declining years, so that it was necessary to have her lines put often surreptitiously all over the stage for her use. But younger artists may fail also in the same way equally readily. Curiously enough, forgetfulness is apt to happen not so much in new parts as in those with which the actor is most familiar.

Thus Charles Kean once, when playing Othello, actually could not remember the lines of "Most potent, grave, and reverend signors." His mind went a complete blank and after vainly striving to recall the words he "cut" the whole speech and went straight to the last line, which fortunately he remembered, "Here comes the lady; let her witness it."

In the same way Sarah Bernhardt once, when playing in *L'Etrangère* of Alexandre Dumas, at the Gaiety Theatre in London, likewise came

to a dead stop and as the only way out of the difficulty—the prompter being presumably asleep!—also omitted the entire scene.

Much more wonderful, however, was the way in which she solved the problem on another occasion when the same thing happened. She was playing in *Gabrielle* at the Comédie Française. The lines in question were those in which she had to describe the influence of Spring and, failing to recapture them, she had the astonishing inspiration of presenting their purport in dumb show, and she did this so marvellously that the delighted audience rewarded her with a prolonged round of applause.

The prompter is supposed to provide against such emergencies, but it too often happens that that functionary is not there just when he is wanted and many amusing, if agonizing, situations have resulted in consequence. It is on record, for example, how once, during the run of *The Farmer's Wife*, Colin Keith Johnson "dried up" completely, and, as the only way out of the difficulty—the prompter being "otherwise engaged"—calmly walked over to the Prompt Box, turned up the line required, and resumed his part with apparent nonchalance!

But even this procedure, if less resourceful than that of Sarah Bernhardt, already mentioned, was better perhaps than that of another performer, recalled by the late Sir Seymour Hicks, who, being similarly "gravelled," exclaimed, "What you say appals me. Indeed words fail me. I must go"—and went!

Better, too, was the procedure adopted on another occasion reported by the late George Arliss. Someone had completely "dried up," and there was the resulting "awful pause," when one of the other characters nobly dashed into the breach, and beginning "What So-and-So means to say is," supplied the wanted lines.

In other cases the prompter may be at his post, but hardly as helpful as he might be, and it is Seymour Hicks again who told the story of one such who, on one occasion, when called upon by an actor in distress, looked blankly at him and inquired, "Which line do you want?"

Sir Seymour Hicks's own advice to young players who find themselves in such a situation is, in effect, say anything, talk absolute gibberish, if necessary, do anything rather than come to an

absolute stop. And no doubt this is sound—though not all have Sir Seymour's enviable facility in improvising.

Akin to "drys," though certainly less embarrassing in its consequences, is the sin of making verbal slips—otherwise "fluffing," though to this again everyone is liable at times, with results often amusing enough, more especially to the other performers who are far more sensitive to this type of slip than are the audience.

Sometimes the consequences are decidedly awkward, as, for instance, when in a performance of *Macbeth* once Charles Kean received from Lennox, in reply to his question "Saw you the weird sisters?" the wholly unexpected answer, "Yes, my lord," instead of "No, my lord." The story continues that, quite thrown off his balance, Kean gasped in reply, "The devil you did! Where are they?" To which the wretched Lennox answered, with scant regard for grammar, "I'll show your Majesty if you'll deign to step round the corner."!

Another *Macbeth* story of a similar order was told by Phelps who related how in one performance, when Macbeth asked the question, "Where gott'st thou that goose look?" the "cream-faced loon" replied "My lord, there are ten thousand geese without."

And still another *Macbeth* anecdote is related of an actor who, playing the part of Duncan, when he came to the famous lines "This castle hath a pleasant seat," looked about him approvingly and observed colloquially, "Nice little place you've got here."!

Of a different order was the slip, recorded by Dame Madge Kendal, of the actress who, playing Lady Smerwell in *School for Scandal*, when she came to the line "Have you inserted those paragraphs, Mr. Snake?" inquired instead "Have you inserted those snakes, Mr. Paragraph?"—an emendation, Dame Madge adds, which so upset Mr. Snake that he replied, "Yes, your majesty."!

Another typical instance of "fluffing" was that of Eva Moore when, in *Caesar's Wife* once, she upset her fellow-players by saying "Ronnie was always a bird of paradise" when she meant to say "bird of passage." And, similarly, in *Mary Rose* the late Mr. Norman Forbes greatly amused his hearers once by saying "There was nothing

living on the island—no fish," when he should have said "no trees."

There is, of course, "fluffing" and "fluffing," and some, so far from being reprehensible in any degree, is merely a consequence of the player having been called on to do the impossible by taking up at short notice a part that he has had no time to learn. Truly astonishing are some of the feats that have been accomplished in this way.

Thus the famous old actor, Benjamin Webster (grandfather of his namesake of to-day), once had to play the part of Pompey in *Measure for Measure* at a moment's notice, without knowing a single line of it, and did it so successfully by what is known as "winging"—that is, hastily memorizing it piecemeal from the book in the wings as he went on—that he made quite a hit by his performance.

Another story exists of an actor who, faced with a similar situation, contrived to perform the whole part of Prospero—in this case with the aid of his magic book, which he consulted whenever necessary.

Allied to "fluffing" is "gagging," which, again, may sometimes be a misdemeanour of the first order and sometimes highly meritorious—as when it is skilfully resorted to in the case of a "missed entrance" or a "dry." Even when done gratuitously, though this is generally accounted a grave offence, the result may sometimes be so happy that the new line will be retained and permanently incorporated in the text.

A classical instance of this is the famous line in *School for Scandal* in reply to Sir Peter Teazle's remark, "I leave my character behind me"—"You had better take it with you, Sir Peter, or it will be damnably mauled." And another is the well-known line in *A Scrap of Paper*, when the gentleman replies to the lady's inquiry if she may come in, "Yes, if you don't mind; I'm in my bearskin."

An instance of another kind was furnished by Dame Madge Kendal's father, William Robertson, when he was playing the Banished Duke in *As You Like It* with Macready as Jaques. There was a very poor house and accordingly when he came to the lines

This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in,

he wickedly changed the words to "This wide and almost empty theatre." What Macready said to him afterwards we are not told!

It is hardly necessary to add that "gagging" should never be indulged in by young artists (unless called for by emergencies), but when a past master of the art is in question, such as the late Sir Scymour Hicks or Mr. Arthur Roberts, it is another matter, of course! "That in the captain's but a choleric word," etc.!

An offence of another kind is that known as "killing laughs"—otherwise preventing a line from securing the laugh that it would otherwise obtain by going on too quickly with the next line or doing something else to distract the attention of the audience at the moment.

That anyone should be capable of behaving in such a contemptible way might be thought almost incredible. Actually it is constantly done by malicious and jealous performers, and is responsible probably for more ill-feeling than all other kinds of stage transgressions put together. Nor is it confined by any means to the rank and file, principals being often just as great offenders, and showing themselves in this way jealous sometimes of even their humblest fellow-artists.

Sometimes, of course, the thing may be the result of mere inexperience and bad technique on the part of a young performer, in which event the offender will not be likely to make the mistake again, for his or her victim will certainly see to that! Outsiders indeed have no notion of the importance which stage folk attach to this matter of their "laughs," so that one might think at times their very existence depended on them, in conjunction with their "rounds." But such being the case, it is easy to understand the intensity of the feeling aroused when, from this cause or that, they are robbed of either the one or the other.

Hardly less is the annoyance felt when by something lacking on their own part—by faulty "timing" or perhaps some little detail of delivery—they fail to get laughs on lines that have always obtained them at the hands of other performers. Such an experience is undoubtedly mortifying, although it frequently occurs. Certainly it is a fact that some players will get laughs night after night on lines that go for nothing at the hands

of others—illustrating once again what a subtle business acting is.

Another odious trick, also the outcome of selfishness, all too frequently practised, is that known as “up-staging”—otherwise appropriating the most favourable position on the stage—usually as far “up” as possible, so that the other characters will have to turn their backs more or less on the audience in order to address the offender.

Old hands especially will do this whenever they can, experience having taught them that they attract more attention to themselves in this way, and the most amusing contests often result when Greek meets Greek and a contest for supremacy ensues. But it is all pitifully paltry and inartistic, and the practice is certainly one that will be avoided by any intelligent and self-respecting young player.

The like applies also to the kindred trick of “crowding” or “blanketing,” which is another form of the same kind of selfishness—that is, refusing to give another player sufficient “room and verge” to take up his proper position and do justice to his lines. This, again, it might be thought, is an almost incredible procedure, but it is one that is none the less all too common, either as the result of deliberate intention which is inexcusable, or because of a lack of thought and consideration that is almost as bad.

Equally deplorable is the selfishness displayed at times by even the most eminent performers—some at least, though happily not most—in spoiling, not only the laughs of their fellow-players, but also their speeches, by doing uncalled-for things at critical moments; and nothing is more surprising than the trifling movements—such as taking out a handkerchief or shifting a cushion—which will suffice at such moments to break the delicate tension by distracting the attention of the audience and thus to accomplish the delinquent’s odious purpose.

In other cases the same result may be due simply to ignorance and inexperience, when it will be less blameworthy though equally annoying. Thus the late George Arliss told of some wicked things that he did in this way in his younger days. As he put it. “I did not realize then that any bad actor can queer a good actor’s scene by distracting the attention of the audience.

. . . I was attempting to attract attention to myself at the expense of the play, an unforgivable sin on the stage.”

A mode of stage misbehaviour of yet another kind is that known as “codding”—otherwise doing unexpected and humorous things for the purpose of embarrassing your fellow-players, making them laugh, and so on. Of this form of humour a great deal more goes on than many suppose, though they may suspect something of the kind sometimes when they notice the performers struggling in vain to suppress uncontrollable amusement.

That was a typical piece of “codding” which Beerbohm Tree once perpetrated, for instance, when, playing in *Money*, and having to use a mourning handkerchief with a deep black border, he convulsed his fellow-performers on one occasion by producing instead a miniature Union Jack—to the inexpressible horror of Bancroft, who was playing with him.

A classic trick of another kind is to slip an egg into the hand of an actor about to play an important scene, the resulting embarrassment caused thereby being easy to imagine.

A practical joke of a different description was once perpetrated on an actor playing Old Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*. At a certain point, it may be remembered, Old Gobbo advances towards Bassanio with the lines “I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship,” and presents the offering with the purpose of persuading Bassanio to take Launcelot into his service. At this point, though, the actor found that the dish in question, which was in fact a basket, had been so heavily loaded with leaden weights that he could scarcely lift it.

Still more wicked was a trick once played on the late Henry Ainley in his younger days. He was appearing in an Arthurian play and at one of the most impressive moments of the action had to raise from the altar before him the cup of the Holy Grail. When the time came, however, he found it quite impossible to do this since the sacred cup had been securely nailed to the table!

Another instance of the same sort of thing was furnished by an irresponsible joker who once, when two actors of exceedingly diverse girths and figures had to make a lightning change from morning wear to evening dress, privily transposed

their trousers—with results that reduced their fellow-players to hysterics when, willy-nilly, they appeared in them.

These are only some of the manifold sins and transgressions, of varying degrees of turpitude, of which stage players are sometimes guilty.

HEALTH AND THE STAGE

Nothing is more surprising about that curious being Man (who here includes Woman too!) than the fact that it is sometimes so extraordinarily difficult to induce him to take sufficient trouble to look after what any sensible person would admit to be the most valuable and precious of all his possessions—to wit, his good health. Yet who can deny the truth of this? It is because, I suppose, of the simple fact that Nature works slowly, with the result that the penalties of indiscretions are often long deferred, and, in the meantime, those indiscretions are to some so very tempting. Nature, however, though slow is also terribly sure, and indiscretions all have to be paid for in the end.

In virtue of the strain which it imposes on the physical and nervous system the stage is a most arduous calling, and no one who is wise will go in for it unless possessed of good health. Wretched, indeed, is the lot of the actor or actress who, in addition to all the other anxieties of the profession, is haunted always by the fear of some recurring physical weakness or ailment, and no consideration whatever should induce anyone whose health is an uncertain quantity to contemplate the stage as a career.

Sir Henry Irving used to say that his nightmares always took the form of being unable to appear in his part, and doubtless many other performers could say the same; nor is there any difficulty in understanding this. There can, indeed, hardly be any other profession where to “go sick” is likely to entail more inconvenience and annoyance than this of the player.

I repeat, then, that no one should think of going on the stage unless possessed of good—I would even say exceptionally good—health. For even if actual break-downs be avoided, the result can only be misery, with work performed against the grain, under adverse physical conditions, and even at the best under the strain of constant anxiety and apprehension.

Even for the fortunately endowed in this respect it is one of the most trying features of stage work that, however one may be feeling—whether “up” or “down,” in good spirits or bad—one must always appear night after night with the regularity of a machine, unless actually physically incapable, so that what it means when there is constant uncertainty of health in addition needs no telling. Let no one entertain the stage as a career, therefore, who does not comply with what Herbert Spencer long ago defined as the primary requisite of every human being desiring a happy existence—that of being a “good animal.”

Nor is it merely a question of starting with good health. For there is afterwards the equally important matter of keeping it; and the conditions of stage life, unfortunately, make it as difficult as possible to do this. “Early to bed and early to rise,” says the old proverb, but this is an ideal that is quite impossible of attainment by the working player. On the contrary, the circumstances of his calling compel him to defy this and most of the other dictates of the doctors.

Late hours, stuffy dressing-rooms, sandwich lunches, hurried dinners, suppers in the small hours, few opportunities for exercise and incessant stress and strain—these are the normal conditions of a stage player’s existence, and hardly to be avoided or modified even with the best intentions, although those who are wise will certainly do all that is possible in this way. But, unfortunately, this is one of those counsels of perfection more easily preached than practised, and too many, it is to be feared, do not even make the attempt.

They just accept things as they are, cast prudential counsels to the winds, have a good time, and let the future take care of itself—with disastrous consequences only too often when that future arrives. For Nature is a strict accountant, and not to be defied with impunity, even by the most charming young actress or dashing young actor.

For a time no doubt they can carry on gaily enough—living on their nerves, patching themselves up when necessary, scoffing at warnings, and damning the consequences. But a day of reckoning will surely come unless they pull up in time—cut down those cocktail parties, cry off some of those suppers, get to bed as early as they

can whenever possible, take more exercise, and generally watch their steps.

There is no need to exaggerate, of course. Undoubtedly stage folk in general live much healthier lives nowadays than they used to. They motor, they ride, they golf, they play cricket and tennis, and in various other ways order their existences much more rationally than formerly—some of them. But too many do nothing of the kind, and for one and all the essential conditions of the profession remain, and are not to be wholly escaped or circumvented by any. Yet those who are prudent will assuredly make every possible effort in this way, considering how much is at stake.

If only in the immediate interests of their professional careers, apart from graver considerations, they will certainly find it to their advantage to do this. Players' looks are among their most important assets, and these will speedily suffer if the laws of health are disregarded, with serious effects probably on their fortunes. A *jeune premier* beginning to get fat and bloated as a consequence of drink and dissipation will soon find himself losing favour with managers, while the actress who neglects her figure and relies exclusively on artificial aids for her looks will also certainly have to pay the penalty in the end.

The stage is as merciless as it is exacting, the passing years take toll remorselessly, younger and fresher rivals are always coming along, and those who cannot hold their own will soon find themselves displaced—possibly, if they have been foolish enough not to look after themselves properly, long before there was any real necessity. "A gay life, yet a terrible one!" wrote Henri Murger in his *Vie de Bohème*, and in some cases at least the words are almost as true to-day as when he wrote them.

Health being of such supreme importance, then, in the case of Stage folk, what is the conclusion? How is it to be secured—and retained? I will not attempt to lay down anything in the nature of detailed rules of living, for this would be hardly practicable and in any case quite futile. But one or two matters of outstanding importance may be touched on.

Exercise, for instance. How many take enough? Very few I fear. The ladies especially are inclined to sin in this respect. They haven't

the time, they will tell you. What with shopping and social engagements and rehearsals and performances (including *matinées* twice a week) every minute of the day, they say, is taken up; and in a sense it is often quite true. It is, indeed, probably no exaggeration to say that the majority of actresses take actually no exercise worth mentioning from year's end to year's end. Which being so, how can they fail to suffer ultimately?

Some, perhaps, try physical exercises and begin them bravely enough. But how many keep them up? Mark Twain, it will be remembered, once determined to fast, but broke down at lunch. Physical exercises are kept up by most people about as long. Yet it hardly needs saying, of course, what enormous benefit would result from ten minutes spent regularly in this way every day. An hour's open-air exercise would be better still no doubt—and by this I do not mean merely getting in and out of taxis! But "physical jerks" are an invaluable substitute when outdoor exercise cannot be managed.

Hours of rest again. Admittedly, late hours are unavoidable by professionals. The late George Grossmith once observed that the happiest hour of the actor's life is that of the supper after his show, and this is quite easily understood. But it need not necessarily entail going to bed regularly at two or three o'clock in the morning—even when rehearsals may require attendance at the theatre again at ten o'clock the next day. It is a fact, however, that the "sitting up" habit is, unfortunately, a most insidious one and one which should, therefore, be most carefully guarded against from the first. As things are, professionals too often get into the habit of staying up without the least necessity night after night and, of course, they have to pay for it in the end.

Those who are wiser not only go to bed betimes whenever possible, but also contrive to get an hour's rest in the afternoon before their evening meal. This used to be the late Marie Tempest's practice, for instance, for many years, and a very good one it is, though scarcely an attainable ideal, it is to be feared, so far as most are concerned.

If a succession of late nights becomes unavoidable, which sometimes happens, it should be remembered that fresh air will compensate to some extent for rest, and that actors who have

slept too little will derive considerable refreshment from a period of time spent in the open air. However, this is to be regarded as an emergency measure only, for fresh air is by no means an alternative to sleep.

As to eating and drinking it would be idle to say much. All know what they ought to do in these respects and the only thing that need be said is that the more closely they conform to the promptings of their inward monitors—both physical and moral!—in this matter the better it will be for them.

A word of caution may be added, however, as to the particular undesirability of getting into the habit of taking scratch meals at all hours. Occasionally they may be unavoidable and do no great harm, but to contract the habit, as some do, of having their meals at any irregular time is the height of folly, since nothing plays greater havoc with the digestion or is more certain to entail trouble in the long run.

Makeshift meals should be compensated at the earliest possible opportunity by extra nourishment followed with a period of rest. Occasionally though, for reasons beyond their control, actors may find themselves faced with an unbroken sequence of scratch meals, and in these circumstances they should try to select and vary their diet to ensure for themselves the maximum food value attainable. Here again, it is difficult to

impose hard and fast rules, and all must seek to acquire the foods they need most and which suit them best, if necessary in consultation with a dietician.

In choosing a way of life, actors would do well to follow the example of ballet dancers, whose vocation is so exacting that they are compelled to lead a life in and for their art. The discipline imposed on ballet dancers is very severe. Perhaps the fact that Nature as an accountant is less patient with dancers than with actors may have something to do with this. Certainly, the results of insufficient rest and irregular and unsuitable meals are discernible more quickly in dancers than in actors, as the quality of their performances is soon affected, and so keen is competition that wayward dancers tend to find themselves replaced by talented and more disciplined rivals. Nevertheless, Nature is as relentless in her demands from actors as from dancers, although the day of reckoning is sometimes deferred.

Whatever the conduct of actors, they will find that their vocation inevitably involves great stress and strain, and yet they will seem to pass through life like a flash. Within the short space of an evening actors can live a lifetime, or more than a lifetime, and they can run through the whole gamut of human experience. Let them therefore be prepared to make sacrifices in keeping with these potentialities.



NORMAN MARSHALL

Angus McBean

STAGECRAFT

HAL D. STEWART, Author of "Rizzio's Boots," "The Nineteenth Hole," etc.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN we go back to the origin of English Drama we find that Drama was the instrument by means of which the Church sought to enlighten the masses. And when the smouldering embers of Puritanism are inclined to burst into flame, when aesthetic purists denounce propaganda plays, it is well to remember that English Drama had its roots in the Church, and that the Church deliberately used the English Drama of its day for propaganda purposes. In some respects those parents of English Drama had a keener appreciation of its value to the masses than have some of to-day's leaders of the masses. And yet those parents were autocrats breathing the spirit of autocracy and wielding autocratic weapons. They were the people of light and learning whose task it was to teach the illiterates. Then Drama became secularized. Shakespeare, with his immediate predecessors and successors, gave us the wealthiest period in the history of English literature, and the world, if not bad, Restorationists, allowing licence to outstrip freedom, gave us much that we willingly remember and much that we cannot very well forget. Next there were the dramatists of the transitional period—Pincero, Jones, Robertson—whose works link Restoration Drama with Modern Drama which did much to create and to intensify the social conscience.

These varying and evolving aims and attainments have their reflections in the theatre. The creative artists throughout the ages have provided the raw material for theatrical presentation. Opinion as to who have been the creative artists of primary importance in any epoch and those who were born, nurtured, and killed by tastes and fashions of the moment, are, to some extent, decided by personal prejudices and convictions. Broad

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outlines of development, are, however, easily discernible.

When we think of the Drama of To day, we realize that it is, or may be, at the parting of the ways. Somerset Maugham, for example, in his autobiography "The Summing Up," states his belief that the prose drama of his day and generation will soon be dead. Further, he thinks the drama took a wrong turning when the demand for realism led it to abandon the ornament of verse. During the period between the First and Second Great Wars experimentalists were busy and many new developments took place. A quarter of a century ago a critic contributing to "The Observer" dealt with the then eccentricities of German Drama and explained: "The great aim of the modern school of so-called 'expressionists' of the drama that is running parallel with that of the brush is to portray, not an individual, but a type. There are other extravagances of form peculiar to different authors, but the groups are dividing off into Neo-Impressionists, Acternists, Symbolists which include the Ecstasies and the Explosionists." Subsequently, there were Socialist Realism, the Flexible, the Mass, the Proletcult, the Trade Union Dramatic Theatres, the Theatre of Revolution, Bio-mechanics, and Materialistic Ideology related to the Theatre and the Drama of post-revolutionary Russia. In short, the literature of the theatre of the 20th century has reflected groping after new methods of dealing with material in play form. Years ago Ashley Dukes in his "The Youngest Drama" (much of it now mature and passing "into the Scare, the yellow Leaf") pointed out the distinction between drama that "mirrors" and drama that "expresses" its age. He contended: "The culture of a weary

and sceptical age was mirrored in the plays of the Parisian boulevards; the restless spirit of a culture shaken to its foundations is expressed in the drama of Prague . . . The theatre of the hundred thousand has no more to say to us, and the theatre of the million does not yet exist." From a different angle Mr. Halcott Glover in "Drama and Mankind" wrote of the actor-manager of the old school who told him "The first thing you have to get into your head is that the public is an ass," and went on: "I am laying down as my guiding principle that just as, in the words of Lincoln, the one thing aimed at in politics is government of the people, by the people, for the people, so the aim of drama, the particular art we are considering, is expression of the public, by the public, for the public.

I have dwelt upon the evolution of drama because the twists and turns that characterize the work of the playwrights are mirrored in the practical work of the theatre, and have a bearing on stagecraft. So, too, have the theories and practices of the experimental rebels, the directors, producers, actors, technicians and scientists, enthusiasts and fanatics. They in their turn are superseded by others who, beginning at the same starting-point seek to reach the same destination by a different route. Mr. Terence Gray was right when he asserted that "the ultimate performance alone will constitute 'the play' and not the author's text nor any other component part. Stagecraft then becomes the Technique whereby these diverse elements, the author's verbal material, the artist's plastic material, the actor's emotional material, are translated into visual aural performance." Mr. Hal D. Stewart convinc-

ingly supports this assertion in his eminently practical survey in which he deals with sets, models, scenery, properties, and all the other essentials of stagecraft, and appropriately illustrates his points.

Production methods and auxiliaries need to be woven into a harmonious pattern. Nothing should be obtrusive. On the first night of a production, and afterwards, there should be no trace that at any time was the producer — he or she bent upon exhibitionism. The audience should never be reminded that a producer has been at work, although the quality of his contribution will be inherent in the quality of the performance as a whole. Similarly, the aim of the scene designer should be to use scenery that helps the players to create the right mood and atmosphere of the play. It should never distract or make concerning interpretation more difficult. Modern stage lighting should not achieve effects at the expense of visibility, as it concerns the players. They, not the scenery, should be "lit." There is a legitimate place for the Little or Intimate Theatre, notwithstanding the emphasis, right in certain circumstances, which is placed on the contention that drama is a popular art. Audiences of the minority, interested and intelligent alike, require to be taken into serious consideration, for they are the forerunners of the majority audiences of to-morrow.

These and other points are of relative importance, especially in view of the tendency of theatres to become larger and larger, thus influencing play-writing. Moreover, they are points that have bearings, direct or indirect, on the theory and practice of Stagecraft.

Roman Marsh

STAGECRAFT AND THE AMATEUR

Progress of the Amateur Dramatic Movement was arrested by the Second Great War, but not killed by it. The new amateur theatre, whose growth started somewhere in the twenties, was fortunately too hardy to be killed. It is now evident that six years of restricted activity resulted in greatly accelerated progress.

The circumstances of war forced professional companies to tour to an extent unknown before. Many towns that had previously not been known to the theatre enjoyed first-class theatrical fare. Men and women in the Services, who previously knew little or nothing of the theatre, found themselves going to see a play because a performance had been "laid on" for them. They often liked it, and asked for more. Straight plays, well done, were popular with all ranks.

There is a greater demand for the theatre than there has been for years. It is being met by a healthy increase in the number of professional repertory companies and by amateurs. The expansion of the commercial theatre does not mean a contraction of the Amateur Movement, far from it.

The amateur theatre to-day commands an attention that is probably unique in the theatrical history of this island. Press and public are alive to the fact that the new movement in amateur drama differs from previous waves of enthusiasm in this direction, and are beginning to realize that serious artistic efforts are being made.

The amateur audience is now composed not only of the friends and relations of the actors, but of many who have no personal interest in the cast but are genuinely interested in this new development and in the type of play that is being performed by the better non-professional societies.

Therein lies the hope and the danger of the enterprise. The hope, because it foreshadows the day when a regular audience for the more serious theatre will exist in every town and village. The danger, because this audience will, before long,

demand more finished productions than ninety per cent of those it attends at present. The ultimate outcome rests with the play-producing societies themselves. It is within their power to bring about a complete change in the attitude of the British people to the theatre, but it will mean a great deal of study and solid hard work in order to make what is at present the average standard of the better groups, the average of the amateur theatre as a whole. Unless this is done it is doubtful whether the interest that has been awakened will be maintained.

Generally speaking, amateur productions suffer less by reason of bad acting than by weak production and an almost complete lack of consideration for stagecraft. Perhaps this is not altogether surprising. Amateur dramatic groups are generally formed by people who wish to act, and are often ignorant or impatient of what they regard as a subsidiary part of the business. This is a most mistaken point of view.

Stagecraft in its widest sense embraces all the business of putting a play on the stage. It includes the arts of the designer, the carpenter, and the electrician, amongst a host of others. All

these arts, which may contribute materially to the success of a production, are too often neglected or despised. Times without number good acting is marred by failure to attend to the most elementary details.

The set is badly erected. Flats do not join. The set is not masked in. There is an unfortunate hiatus in the ceiling, through which one can see the roof of the building between the borders. Those sitting at one side of the theatre can see the back wall, or another scene, because the window backing does not stretch far enough. If you have never noticed these faults in any amateur production you are fortunate—or unobservant.

Fig. 1, overleaf, shows a striking example of the effectiveness of modern stagecraft methods. It is reproduced from a photograph of the Gate



HALD STEWART

Theatre's production of *Let Sleeping Gods Lie*, by Wilfred Walter.

The play was produced on a stage considerably smaller than many on which amateurs are accustomed to work.

Apart from the actual setting, the whole management of the stage is an art: or rather, it

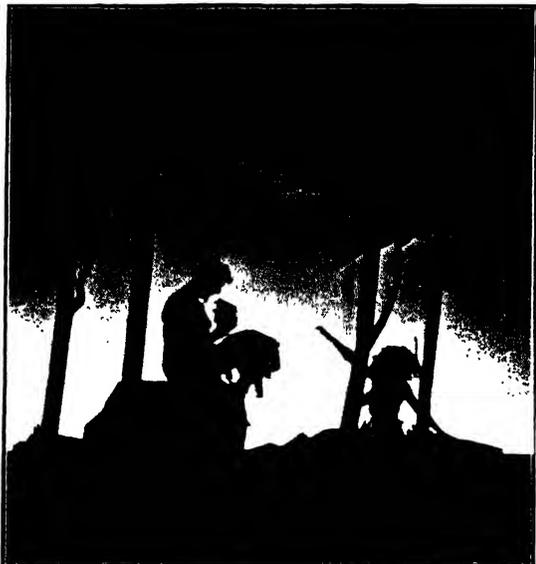


FIG. 1. "LET SLEEPING GODS LIE"
Gate Theatre Production

comprises many arts. Even the efficient handling of scenery is an art, and has a direct bearing on the audience. Long intervals, which are usually occasioned by inefficient stage hands and lack of organization, try the temper, and the audience must be maintained in a good temper at all costs.

Badly timed effects may wreck a scene. An actor turns an electric switch, and nothing happens. Then, when he walks away, a lamp lights suddenly, as if by magic. Thunder and wind are so unlike the real thing that they cause a laugh. A prompter does not know the play and gives a prompt during a legitimate pause. All these things are fairly common

accidents, the responsibility for which rests with the stage management.

I have heard it argued that these mistakes are not confined to amateurs, but that they occur also in the commercial theatre. To a certain extent this is true, but in the commercial theatre they occur rarely, and are usually a matter of considerable comment. In the amateur theatre they are too often a commonplace.

I believe that stagecraft is one department of the theatre where the amateur may compete with the professional on advantageous terms; for, while he may not have all the mechanical devices that exist in the commercial playhouse, he can give more or less unlimited time to a single production, and can therefore study each department in great detail.

Time spent in this way will not be wasted. All the various people who spend their time helping the production "behind the scenes," can, by making themselves efficient at their particular job, not only make a direct contribution towards the success of the play, but derive much satisfaction and entertainment for themselves in the process.

Stage management, taken seriously, is not dull work. It is extraordinarily fascinating; and as the whole science of stagecraft is constantly changing, as new discoveries are made and new ideas are introduced, the keen amateur will find considerable interest in endeavouring to keep pace with the various developments.

There is another aspect of a proper attention to stagecraft on the part of a play-producing group. It is capable of adding considerably to the number of those taking a practical interest in its affairs. The duties of the stage manager and his assistants are often performed by unfortunates who have not been cast, and who would much prefer to act. If this be the case, it is not surprising that the work is done in rather a half-hearted manner. But if you are able to demonstrate the interest that lies in stagecraft, you may attract to your group people who have no desire to act, but who are, or who may become, interested in one or other of the branches of theatrical work where no histrionic ability is required.

By spreading the work in this manner you may achieve perfection in each department, and thus reach perfection as a whole. You will find

also that by increasing the number of those directly interested in the performance, you will almost certainly increase the size of the audience—a point worth considering in itself.

There are exceptions to every rule. I know that there are groups throughout the country to which my remarks do not apply. These are already taking stagecraft seriously, and are reaching a high standard of artistic achievement.

It is common knowledge that in a theatrical production there are many people who work "behind the scenes." What comprises the duties of these people is less widely known. Any amateur group, however, which aims at giving artistic productions, must organize these auxiliaries and see that they are as proficient in their own duties as the actors are in theirs.

Apart from the producer and stage manager, a well organized group should employ one or more assistant stage managers, an electrician, a property master, a wardrobe mistress, and about four stage hands. These all have duties on the stage, and are necessary whether scenery and costumes are made or hired. If you are enterprising enough to make your own scenery and costumes, you will require also the services of a designer, carpenters, scene painters, and dressmakers. All these can be amateurs.

Not actually on the stage, but of great importance to the entertainment, are the musical director, the business manager, and the front of house staff, which includes ushers and programme sellers. Of these, the musical director alone possibly comes within the scope of stagecraft, but the smooth working of the front of the house is an important factor, for a well run auditorium keeps the audience in a contented frame of mind.

Most societies realize the value of capable direction. I wish here to emphasize, however, that everything which takes place behind the curtain must be subject to the approval of the producer. He must be a complete autocrat and have the final word in any discussion. All the other members of the stage staff are technical advisors or executives, but it is essential that the authority of the producer should be paramount. Obviously, therefore, the producer must have some knowledge of every aspect of stagecraft.

Next to the producer, the most important man is the stage manager. This position is vitally

important, and carries many varied duties. The stage manager is the producer's second in command, and a wise producer will do everything in his power to see that the authority of the stage manager is maintained. The ideal stage manager is one of those people who get things done quickly and with a minimum of fuss. In the amateur theatre, he is extremely rare.

The assistant stage manager, or as he is usually termed in this age of abbreviations, the A.S.M., is the next in order of seniority. He may be employed in any way that the stage manager requires, but normally it is his duty to hold the book and to prompt the performance. The stage manager, or his assistant, or both should be present at every rehearsal. In a difficult production, more than one A.S.M. may be necessary. In that case it is important that their duties should be clearly defined in order to avoid overlapping and contradictory orders, which have a demoralizing effect on subordinates.

Next is the electrician. The duty of the electrician, who may also have several assistants, is to arrange and control the stage lighting. It should not be difficult to find someone to take an interest in this most fascinating science. Your electrician should know, or be prepared to learn, how to handle electrical apparatus, how to wire lighting battens, lamps, bells, and any properties, or stage effect machines which may require to be driven by electricity; the principles of colour mixing; the effect of coloured light on coloured fabric, and, in short, everything bearing on the use of light in a production. He must also be methodical and exact, for he must work to a lighting plot, making alterations to the lighting on exact cues, and must so mark his apparatus that the correct check is given whenever a circuit is dimmed, to prevent the amount of dimming varying.

If your group is accustomed to working in a particular theatre, your electrician must familiarize himself with its lighting equipment, and know the load that the various circuits will carry with safety. Obviously, the greater knowledge of electricity, both theoretical and practical, which your electrician has to start with, the better. If you can find one who is capable of fitting up temporary and portable lighting sets, hold on to him, for he may prove to be the most valuable man in your society.

This does not pretend to be more than a sketchy indication of what is required of the stage electrician. Stage lighting, as I have already said, is a science in itself.

The work of the property master, or "Props," is often performed by the stage manager. This is a mistake. The stage manager has many people to supervise, and he cannot do this properly, particularly during a change of scene, if he has things to see to himself. "Props" should be made responsible in the first place for seeing that the necessary properties are brought to the theatre, and in the second that they reach their correct destination on the stage. It is by no means an easy job, and it is essential that you should choose for it someone who is both methodical and conscientious.

The wardrobe mistress should have some knowledge of period costume. If your society proposes to make its own costumes, she should take complete charge of this branch. But even if your costumes are hired, it is valuable to have a wardrobe mistress to check them and to see that the correct costumes are sent (to see, for instance, that the costumier has not made a palpable anachronism); to collect them from the cast and pack them for return at the end of the run. She should also take charge of minor repairs that may have to be executed from night to night. Societies that make their own costumes soon accumulate a considerable wardrobe, and it is essential that someone should be definitely in charge of this all the year round.

The main duty of the stage hands is to set and strike scenery and furniture. There is a mistaken idea abroad that scene shifting is an utterly unskilled job that anyone can perform. The result of this is that in nine productions out of ten, the scene shifting is left in the hands of anyone who cares to turn up. Actually the reverse is the case. Scene shifting does not call for particular skill, but it is, quite definitely, a job that must be learned. An average person can learn it quickly, which is all the more reason for training as many members of your society as possible to handle flats.

Haphazard scene shifting means periods of chaos behind the curtain during protracted intervals. Light-hearted cries from the scene shifters, who are enjoying themselves, and deep throated oaths from the stage manager, who is

not, frequently assail the ears of the audience. This may amuse them, but it does not increase their respect for amateur drama.

It is obvious that helpers who know neither what they are expected to do nor how to do it when it is explained to them, are almost worse than useless: and yet such helpers are the most common. It is curious how dense otherwise sensible people become when they turn their attention to moving furniture and scenery in the theatre. I have actually seen two apparently sane and normal individuals carry a heavy table through a doorway that was being moved across the stage! They evidently saw the doorway and made for it, without pausing to notice that there was nothing on either side of it, or that it was actually in motion!

Stage hands frequently, of course, have other jobs. One must always operate the curtain, and others will often be required to work effects and noises off. None of their duties is difficult to learn but all of them do require to be learned.

Some knowledge of carpentry is required if you are to make your own scenery, but it is no more than is known by the average man who is "handy about the house." Similarly, knowledge of dress-making is necessary for those who are to make the costumes, but what club has not many women members who are handy with a needle?

Scene painting is rather a different matter. To become a skilled scenic artist certainly does require years of study and practice, but here the modern tendency towards simplicity is on the side of the amateur. While you may never be able to paint a backcloth that faithfully depicts an alpine scene, or Piccadilly Circus, you will almost certainly be able to find someone who will quickly learn sufficient about the art of scene painting to produce striking and efficient interiors, and simple and bold effects for exterior scenes. Fussy backcloths are no longer encouraged, and whatever our views are regarding the artistic advantage or disadvantage of the present fashion, there is no doubt that it is of great assistance to the amateur.

The designer must obviously have an eye for colour and design, and it is almost essential that he should be able to produce reasonably efficient sketches and plans. If he is not able to do so, he must collaborate with someone whose talents lie in this direction, and the originality of the one

combined with the technical skill of the other should produce satisfactory results. This should not be beyond the resources of any society.

And so, you see, there are many outlets for the activities of those who are interested in your work but who do not wish to act. The theatre is an

Glasgow." This is a type of performance in which the importance of the stage staff cannot be exaggerated. It was given not in a regular theatre, but in St. Andrew's Hall, an old-fashioned building with an open platform and an organ behind. The organ pipes can be seen



FIG. 2. THE CORONATION OF ROBERT THE BRUCE—A SCENE FROM "A MASQUE OF GLASGOW"
Photo by courtesy of "The Bulletin" Glasgow, block by courtesy of "The Scottish Stage"

all-embracing art, and it is worth while taking advantage of this, if only for the reason that the more people who take an active part in an amateur dramatic club, the larger its audience is likely to be. The employment of amateur specialists in all the various branches of stagecraft will result in a degree of finish and perfection that few amateur societies, at the moment, reach.

Fig. 2 illustrates a scene from "A Masque of

behind the scenery, which, however, by the simplicity of its design—Constance Herbert was the producer—overcame the disability of the background, which was further minimized by an intelligent use of lighting. This reproduction serves to illustrate an economical design, useful as a background against which many different scenes can be played, the correct atmosphere being obtained by the use of properties, as for

example, the altar in this scene, which is the Coronation of Robert the Bruce.

Fig. 3, which is taken from the play *Once in a Lifetime*, a clever skit on Hollywood produced at the Queen's Theatre in 1933, shows a scene in which a film is being shot and the staff of the studio is at work. Those who feel that the number of auxiliaries necessary for the smooth production of a stage play is large may find some comfort in the knowledge that the film is even more exacting!

So far I have dealt only with those whose duties are concerned with the stage itself. There



FIG. 3 "ONCE IN A LIFETIME"

Photo by Pollard Coother

is, however, another band of workers on the other side of the curtain, and it is extremely important that they, too, should carry out their duties efficiently. I refer to the front of house staff.

First of all, there is the front of house manager. Like the stage manager, his duty is supervision. He, too, must be a man of tact and resource, and know when to be firm and when to give way. He must take control in an emergency. Under him are all the various people required to look after the auditorium. First the ushers, whose duty it is to show the members of the audience to their seats. They must know how the theatre is seated. They must know whether the letter on the back of an end seat refers to the row in front or the row behind. They must know the approximate number of seats in each row, and from which end the numbering starts, so as to be able to show latecomers to their seats with the

least possible annoyance to those who have arrived in time. They must know *all* the exits from the theatre and direct the audience to them at the end of the performance. "The man in the street," for some unexplained reason, always prefers to get there by the same door through which he left it! Although there may be ten exits from a theatre, probably only two of these are ever used to any extent. The ushers should do their best to overcome this desire of the audience to press through one door.

The programme and chocolate sellers must remember that they have definite duties to perform beyond standing in the gangways. To have attractive programme sellers, if they are also competent, is sound business. Those who sell chocolates and sweets must know the prices of the various boxes, and what they contain, and anybody who sells anything *must* have change. It is the duty of the front of house manager to see that change is provided for all who require it. It is wise, if chocolates are being sold, for the manager to appoint a deputy to look after the sellers both of these and of the programmes. It is a great advantage to have someone definitely in charge to tell the sellers to which part of the house they are to go and to instruct them in their duties if necessary. The most efficient sellers should sell chocolates, as these are obviously more difficult to dispose of than programmes. The manager has usually too much to do to attend to this himself.

It is of the utmost importance that *every* member of the front of house staff should be in the building at least ten minutes before the doors are due to open.

If all the positions I have mentioned, on both sides of the curtain, are filled, the ranks of the members of your society will probably be considerably swelled. It may take time and a good deal of persuasion to reach the point when, all the various jobs are done regularly by the same people at each performance, but if you can reach it the benefit will be a double one. The performances themselves will be more efficient and the increased number of those taking an active interest—however small—will almost certainly result in a larger regular audience.

With regard to the question of cost, I am well aware that the cost of production is important for most societies. Those that do not consider

it specially are either financed by a wealthy patron or they do not function for long. It is useless to advocate methods which while practicable for a professional company that produces continuously are not a paying proposition for a non-commercial group that gives infrequent productions. Prices of all commodities fluctuate. Societies that produced during the Second Great War had to pay high prices and to submit to controls that made many things unobtainable. All learned to make-do. In the theatre, as elsewhere, it is necessary to use considerable ingenuity to overcome difficulties.

I have stated that stagecraft is a wide term that embraces really the whole business of putting a play on the stage. Each aspect of it, lighting, costumes, design, etc., is dealt with in *THEATRE AND STAGE* by experts on the various subjects. My special concern is with the practical point of view of the stage manager and his assistants. The difficulties that face almost any play-producing society are numerous. Therein lies half the fascination of stagecraft. There is no royal road. Each problem must be tackled on its own merits. Common sense is even more important than great technical knowledge. Basic principles and the many things that have been learned by others by trial and error should be applied.

A workshop is a great help. The ideal is for the group to have a theatre with a workshop attached when this is possible. Attempts should be made to rent a small shed where scenery and props can be made and stored. It should be as near as possible to the hall in which plays are produced.

If a choice can be made, the place chosen should be able to accommodate flats of the height that are used in the theatre or hall in which plays are produced. This will simplify both storage and scene painting. There should be a carpenter's bench, and, if possible, a cupboard or chest in which tools can be locked up. There should also be a table.

The work room, well-lit and well-heated, should be tidy and as attractive as possible. It may become a sort of club room which will serve to interest others in the problem of stagecraft. From these may be drawn recruits for the staff, in which case they will be interested in the work for its own sake and not merely disgruntled actors.

DESIGNING STAGE SETTINGS

A good picture deserves a decent frame. Good acting demands an appropriate setting. I give two examples of interior sets used at the Liverpool Repertory Company's theatre—the Playhouse, Liverpool. Fig. 4, overleaf, was designed for *Donna Clarines* (the Quintero Brothers) by William Armstrong, who produced the play.

Notice how the flats all join perfectly, how the ceiling rests snugly on the top of the flats, and how the design is carried out as a whole, so that the ornamental door in the back wall, the tapestry hanging on the left, the steps, the window with the verandah and sun blind, and the furniture, all blend. There is evidence of the same care in Fig. 5, which illustrates the set used in *By Candlelight*, and which was designed by R. Pearce S. Hubbard.

This was not achieved without the expenditure of much thought and energy, and it is safe to say that had this trouble not been taken the plays as a whole would have left a much less satisfactory impression on the mind of the audience than was the case.

The amateur too often leaves the choice of set to the tender mercies of a purveyor of costumes and scenery. The inexperienced have a touching faith in such firms—a faith that is too often misplaced. But while it is true that hiring firms seldom take much interest in the artistic success of a production, they are rarely supplied with sufficient information to enable them to do so. It is no exaggeration to say that a bald statement regarding the number of doors and windows required, and the fact that the scene is interior or exterior, is often all the information that such a firm is given. In these circumstances it is unreasonable for a producer to expect that he will get what he wants—if he even has a clear idea of this himself, which is not always the case.

As a rule, it is quite possible to hire suitable scenery, but it is necessary to go to a good deal of trouble to ensure that the set, properties, and furniture that are hired, are the best obtainable.

The remedy for this state of affairs is simple. Appoint someone to act as designer for the production, and make him, or her, responsible not only for designing the sets, costumes, etc., but also for seeing that the design is carried out.

Many art schools flourish throughout the

country, and it may be assumed that some of the students who attend these schools are interested in the theatre, and would be glad of the opportunity that it offers for experiment in design. Amateur dramatic societies in Great Britain are numbered in thousands, but few art students ever

societies, and through such bodies every amateur enthusiast in the theatre may one day find his niche.

The second difficulty is real. It is generally more expensive in the first instance to buy or to make scenery than it is to hire it. But only in

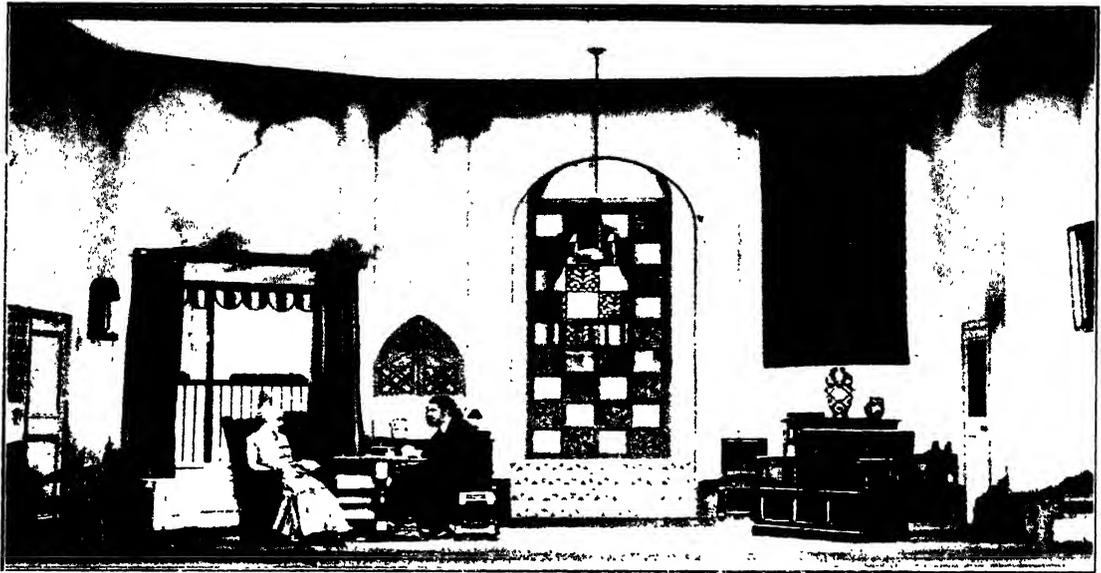


FIG. 4. SETTING FOR "DONNA CHIARINA," BY THE QUINTERO BROTHERS
Produced at The Playhouse, Liverpool, by William Armstrong, who also designed the
Photo by courtesy of William Armstrong

receive the opportunity that an amateur dramatic society might give them.

There are several reasons why this is so. In the first place, there is the difficulty of the student getting in touch with the dramatic group. Secondly, many amateur societies are afraid to build their own scenery because of the expense that is involved. And, thirdly, many societies are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the advantages that they would derive from a proper attention to *décor*.

The first of these difficulties may ultimately be met by the increasing organization of the amateur stage. Bodies like the British Drama League and the Scottish Community Drama Association are constantly working for a closer co-operation of

the first instance. It would definitely not be worth while for a mushroom club, which exists for a season and is then disbanded, to spend money on the acquisition of expensive scenery and properties. On the other hand, a society that is playing regularly may well find that in the long run it saves a considerable sum by having workshops of its own. Moreover, the services of a designer may be most usefully employed, although no new scenery is being built. He can search the scenery stores for the most appropriate sets, and can carry out a homogeneous design although material is hired, and not specially constructed.

The third difficulty is probably the most serious, but fortunately it is decreasing. Summer schools of drama, lectures, and classes, and the

work of many repertory companies, are combining to increase the interest that the amateur takes in this side of his work, although it is still the aspect of the theatre where he falls notably short of professional standards.

The design of a production must be studied

modern dress. Therefore, it follows that sets should be designed, and the general colour and lighting scheme arranged before rehearsals start—even before the producer starts to work on the script, as this kind of decision is fundamental.

The first thing to be borne in mind when



FIG. 5. SETTING FOR "BY CANDLELIGHT," BY HARRY GRAHAM, FROM THE GERMAN OF SILGERIÐ GEYER
Produced at The Playhouse, Liverpool, by William Armstrong. The set designed by R. Pearce S. Hubbard
Photo by courtesy of William Armstrong

seriously from the beginning. It may be evolved by the producer himself. It may be evolved by the society's designer—perhaps an art student—or it may be evolved by the two together. But the production, from the point of view of design, must be considered as a whole, and if the producer has no hand in it, it must obviously be subject to his veto. No competent producer will work with scenery or costumes of which he disapproves. It is important that he should bear in mind the design of sets, the costumes, and the colour scheme, from the beginning of his work on the production. The reasons for this are obvious. For instance, movements that are correct and natural for an orthodox production of *Hamlet* may be ridiculous for a production of the same play in

designing a stage setting is that its function is to help the producer and actors to interpret correctly the author's ideas. The setting is the background against which the play takes place. The importance of this background varies according to the nature of the play, but the fact that it *is* a background must never be forgotten. There is a danger that a keen designer who takes a great interest in his work may in his own mind regard the setting as the most important feature of the production. Should this be the case, he must never allow this opinion to become apparent, or it may ruin the production by causing the audience to pay too much attention to the scenery and too little to the action. The design then becomes not a help but a hindrance, and the general effect is

marred. The designer must, therefore, learn at the outset that while his role is important, it is not paramount, and that over-obtrusive scenery may spoil a production.

To preserve balance and to avoid this error, the designer must fully realize the spirit of the play. He must read the play, not once, but many times, so as to be completely conversant with it; and he must discuss it with the producer. It is unusual for the author's intentions to be so clear that two people will interpret them in exactly the same way. Therefore, this consultation between the producer and the designer is essential so that the latter may learn what lines the production will follow and what fundamental points are to be stressed. These may conflict with his own ideas. Should this be the case, it must be remembered that the producer is an autocrat and has the final word in any argument.

There is no play that cannot be helped by intelligent design. Often the designer will get no public credit for his work. The theatre-going public is, on the whole, lamentably unintelligent and ignorant of the most elementary details of theatrical technique. If the design is unobtrusive the audience will probably take little conscious notice of it, but if it is successful it will contribute materially to appreciation of the whole production. With this knowledge the designer will have to be content.

Some plays are called "producer's plays" because they afford the producer ample scope for imagination and originality. Such plays, as a rule, afford ample opportunities to the designer also. But there are other plays, which are commoner, especially with amateurs, where at first sight it may not seem possible for the design to play more than an unimportant part, but where, as a matter of fact, it may have a considerable bearing on the ultimate result.

Take, for instance, a play that depicts the life of an ordinary middle-class family, where the action takes place in the living room. A middle-class living room may not appear to afford any opportunities to the designer. Vivid effects with primary colours would be out of place. Yet it is possible to make such a set both interesting and attractive, to design walls, hangings, and furniture, so that whenever the curtain rises the audience is immediately aware of the class of

society to which the inhabitants of the room belong. The advantage of this to the actor is obvious, and whatever type of play he is handling it is the effect at which the designer must always aim.

The design of a production must be considered as a whole. Setting, hangings, furniture, properties, and costumes must blend into one pattern. In one London production I noticed a set of particularly attractive design. Back centre, there was a large scarlet bureau that was extremely effective. The effect was lessened, however, by a scarlet cushion, down right, and finally, in my opinion, marred by the appearance of first one and then another actress in scarlet. This was a case where it seemed that the set had been designed first, and the impression was spoiled because the costumes did not conform to the design.

I saw this play on tour, before its production in the West End, and in all probability matters were adjusted before the company opened in London. The play was modern and the costumes were of the present day. In such a case the designer for an amateur company has to contend with a real difficulty. Amateurs usually provide their own costumes when these are modern, and it is often out of the question for actresses to provide new dresses. At the same time, it is almost always possible by judicious borrowing to find a costume that will conform to the designer's ideas, and if new dresses are being procured, the necessity that they must conform to the general design must be impressed on the wearer. Actresses are sometimes more concerned that their clothes should enhance their personal charms than that they should carry out any particular scheme of *décor*. When this is the case it is necessary to take a firm stand.

Period costumes present different problems. When these are being made, designs for all the costumes should first be drawn, and when the costumes are being designed the general colour scheme of the sets and the producer's probable grouping must be remembered. Similarly, when costumes are being hired, they must be of a colour and design that will fit in with the general scheme.

All that I have said about costume applies equally to properties and furniture. A grand

piano, however decorative, would be out of place in a kitchen. Blatant examples of inappropriate furniture occur regularly in amateur productions. These would always have been avoided by a little trouble and a little thought.

Furniture may be either hired or borrowed. It is usually possible to borrow the furniture necessary for a modern play from members of the

If you are unable to borrow the furniture you require from private individuals, you may be able to do so from a warehouse in exchange for an acknowledgment in the programme.

Remember, too, that odd pieces of furniture may often be made for the occasion without much difficulty. Do not hesitate to design some curiously shaped and brightly coloured stool for an



FIG. 6 THE LONDON PRODUCTION OF "GRAND HOTEL"

The Entrance Hall

The Stage Photo Co.

cast and their friends, but it is essential that the designer should *see* himself the articles that are being provided, and not rely on a description of them. Descriptions are usually vague, and often inaccurate. Unless the furniture has been seen it may be found to be quite unsuitable when it arrives at the theatre on the day of the dress rehearsal. This will mean a hurried, last minute search for what is required, and the result will probably be a makeshift; whereas the desired article might easily have been procured if the inquiries had been made more carefully in the first instance.

The furniture should be accurately measured. Do not rely on your eye to estimate the size of a sofa. It may look much larger, or smaller, when transplanted from its accustomed surroundings to your stage.

ultra-modern set. A handyman may possibly be able to make it from a few old boxes.

Success in stage design depends to a great extent on common sense and good taste. The average man or woman, if he or she will give the matter thought and energy, can produce attractive settings with appropriate costumes and furniture.

The time and energy will not be wasted.

ADAPTING SETS TO CIRCUMSTANCE

Artists are often idealists. They have the reputation of being rather unpractical, of being too immersed in the poetry of their art to trouble much about mundane, everyday matters. This may or may not be the case, but it is essential that the artist in the theatre should be severely practical.

It is a waste of time to draw designs, however beautiful, if they cannot be realized in practice. The stage designer should be able not only to design scenery, but also to give practical suggestions as to how his design is to be carried out on the stage. It follows, therefore, that he must be thoroughly conversant with the working of a

lighting, will be of little use to a society that gives a production in a hall where the sole means of illumination is oil lamps. Nor is this illustration by any means far-fetched. There are many halls in which electric light has not been installed.

The problems of setting and striking the set, of storing scenery and furniture, and of off-stage

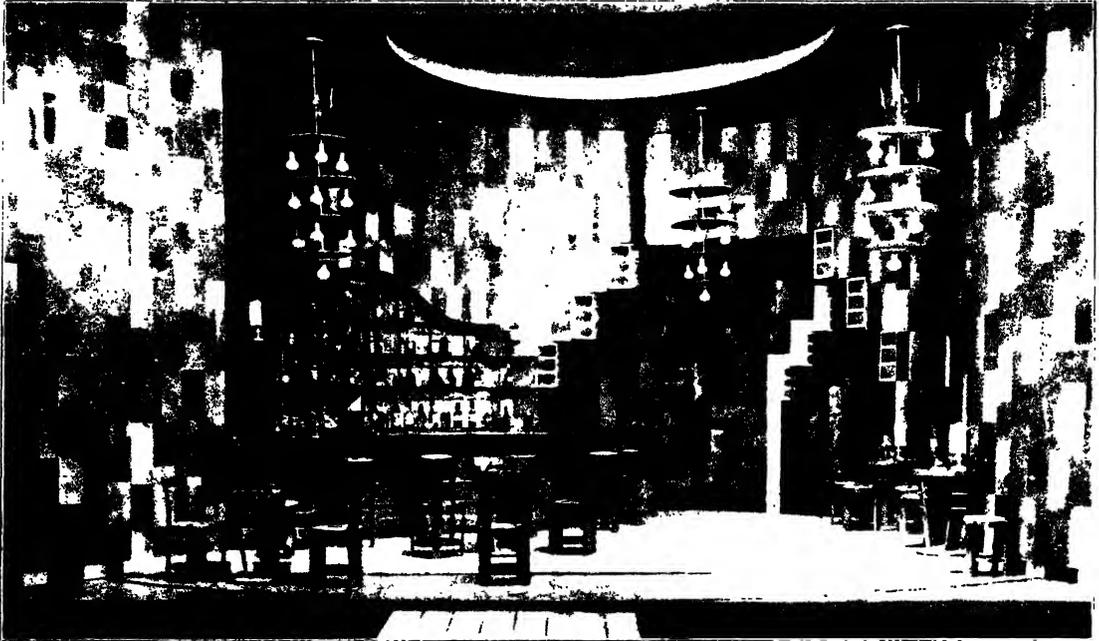


FIG. 7. THE LONDON PRODUCTION OF "GRAND HOTEL"

The Cocktail Bar
The Stage Photo Co.

production. He must know what can, and what cannot, be done in the theatre where his design is to be used. This principle applies generally throughout the theatre, but it concerns the amateur more closely than the professional, because there are certain facilities that one may assume to be present in any commercial theatre, while, in an amateur production, it is never safe to assume that there will be any facilities at all!

A setting that depends for effect on the careful placing of floods and spots, and skilfully balanced

room must always be kept in mind. A set which is to be used throughout the evening, and a set which is only one of several in a production, present the designer with different problems. The first is a comparatively simple matter. If a set has to stand throughout a production it can be solidly built, and any amount of refinement and elaboration can be introduced. If the set has to be struck, or set, or both, during the play, the case is different, because the time that it will take to set and strike the scenery must be remembered. This

becomes even more important when changes have to be made during an act. Most changes, unless elaborate or difficult scenery is concerned, can be made in an interval of twelve minutes, provided that there is an efficient stage staff. Twelve minutes is not an unusual interval between acts, and this may even be slightly prolonged. When

production of *Grand Hotel* at the Adelphi Theatre. In this play there are many elaborate scenes, which take time to erect, even with a professional stage staff. The play was produced, however, on a revolving stage, and thus there were no waits between the scenes, the stage simply being turned to the required point, and



FIG. 8. KOMISARJEVSKY'S SET FOR HIS PRODUCTION OF "GRAND HOTEL" FOR THE MASQUE THEATRE

Photo by Guttenberg, Ltd., Manchester

the acts are split up into several scenes, however, intervals of about this length are out of the question, except at the end of an act, and the cinematograph technique employing a long succession of short scenes—presents rather an acute problem to most amateur groups. In such plays the designer must use all his ingenuity to evolve sets that can be set and struck with great rapidity. Long waits would wreck the production.

Figs. 6 and 7 show settings used in the original

fresh sets being erected while other scenes were being played before the audience.

When Komisarjevsky produced this play for the Masque Theatre he had no revolving stage, and as the production was toured in a number of different theatres the elaborate sets used in London would have been impracticable.

Fig. 8 shows how the difficulty was overcome. This one permanent setting was used throughout. It was set well back from the front tabs, and

another set of black velvet curtains was used immediately in front of the set. One of these was drawn to the central pillar when only half of the stage was in use. When only the set above the bedroom was being used it was lit, and the bedroom was blacked out. Similarly, when the bedroom was in use, the set on the rostrum was kept in darkness. Several scenes, including the cocktail bar scene, were played in front of the black curtains, under a spot light, with the properties necessary to indicate the scene. These were most effective in spite of the fact that no scenery was used.

Both these productions of *Grand Hotel* were excellent and Komisarjevsky's production lost nothing by reason of the less elaborate scenery. In fact, it is possible that in many ways the play gained by the simplicity of set. The point that is of interest to the amateur, however, is that the less elaborate setting is much less costly, and something on these lines is often possible in amateur productions.

Elaborate, built-up rostrums such as were used in this particular instance may be beyond the resources of most societies, and their use presupposes a fairly large stage, but it is often possible to evolve something on similar lines, where the stage is divided, and where lighting and properties are relied on for effect rather than scenery. Moreover, it should be remembered that scenery such as was used in the London production of this play must be very good indeed. If you set out to give an exact reproduction it must be exact. Attention in this case is inevitably drawn to the scenery, and the audience is apt to look for faults that would not trouble them in less pretentious productions.

In some cases naturalistic scenery is necessary to the play. Komisarjevsky also produced for the Masque Theatre Edward Knoblock's dramatization of Cronin's novel—*Hatter's Castle*. He again used the same type of permanent set that he used in *Grand Hotel* and in this case the effect was less satisfactory. *Hatter's Castle* is a somewhat melodramatic play about a middle class family. The scene is laid in a small Scottish town towards the end of last century. In my opinion, it is a play that definitely demands naturalistic scenery, and the effect was spoiled for me by the bizarre nature of the set that was used.

It is most important to remember that when

the setting is impressionistic rather than realistic lighting plays an important part. An even glare of white light may rob the most carefully designed set of all its charm and interest, while soft and studied lighting will often make a poor set attractive.

When quick changes of scenery are unavoidable, remember that weight is an important factor. Do not use flats that are sixteen feet in height if fourteen feet will do. It may often be necessary to sacrifice some feature that you would like to incorporate in your design because it is unwieldy and difficult to handle.

The designer should always be able to say how the problems of scene shifting that he presents can be overcome. If he is thoroughly conversant with the stage, his ingenuity will usually be equal to the occasion. Each different problem must be met as it arises. It is impossible to lay down any rules.

Apart from the actual scenery, furniture and properties are important factors when a change is being made. It frequently happens that a scene is set, but that the curtain cannot rise because all the furniture is not in position. Where quick changes are essential, the amount of furniture on the stage should be reduced, both in the number of pieces and their weight, as far as is practicable.

When a society is in the habit of producing new plays by new authors, as is often the case, the designer should remember that it is common for inexperienced dramatists to write plays that are quite impracticable to stage. Often a slight alteration to the script will make the designer's work a great deal easier and enable him to produce a more satisfactory result. This must be pointed out to the producer so that he may try to persuade the author to modify his play. This is not always easy.

There is one other most important point that must be remembered. The whole scene must, as far as possible, be visible from every part of the auditorium. It is, of course, sometimes a physical impossibility to attain this ideal owing to the structure of the building, but every effort should be made to realize attainment. In any case, the designer should ensure that all important features, and places where important action will take place, will be seen by the whole audience.

Some commercial theatres have two painted lines, running back at an angle from the corners of the proscenium arch, on the stage. These indicate what is called the line of sight; that is, they mark the boundaries of that portion of the stage which is visible to the whole house. To have these lines is helpful, because by their aid it can be seen at a glance when a flat is being set whether or not it will be visible. Unfortunately these lines cannot always be depended upon.

Because of the line of sight the side walls of a set are normally set at an obtuse angle to the back wall, and not at right angles to it, as would be the case in an ordinary room.

DESIGNING THE INTERIOR

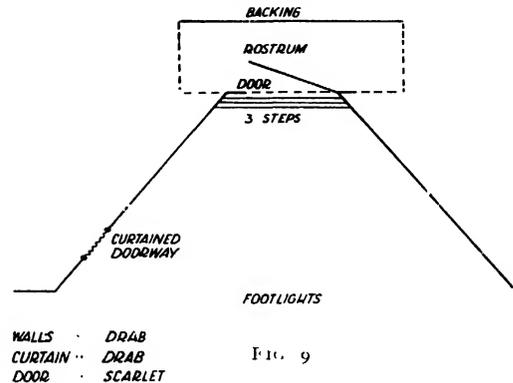
Broadly speaking, there are two types of stage design—realistic and non-realistic. The realistic school endeavours to hold the mirror up to nature and to give an actual reproduction on the stage of the locality that the scene is intended to portray. The non-realistic school indicates what it portrays by broad effects, and creates an impression of the desired locality without actually reproducing it. The former may be compared to a photograph, and the latter to a modern oil painting; and as modern paintings vary so that some are readily appreciated by the layman, and others, of an extreme impressionistic nature, cannot be understood except by an artist, so do non-realistic settings vary in manner and degree.

Art students are, as a rule, drawn towards the non-realistic school, and may be tempted to design impressionistic scenery whether such a design would be in key with the spirit of the play or not. The temptation must be resisted. The set is not a work of art in itself. It has no meaning apart from the play, and however clever the design may be, if it is at odds with the spirit of the play, it is a bad design.

The ambitious art student, starting his career as designer for an amateur dramatic group, may be discouraged at first because the majority of the plays that amateurs produce call for realistic treatment. This should not be so. The idea that realistic scenery requires little skill or imagination on the part of the designer is quite mistaken. There is a real art in designing quite ordinary interior settings, and there are many different

ways in which a realistic interior may be made fresh and attractive.

To begin with, it must be remembered that photographic accuracy is not always called for, and is often not desirable. Stagecraft is an art of exaggeration. The average stage is larger than the average room. The actor must talk in a louder voice than is usual in conversation, and use gestures that are more decided than the normal. This is even the case in the modern "intimate" school of acting round which so much controversy rages. Faces must be painted to accentuate the features and to counteract the heavy shadows cast by lighting that is abnormally



bright. All this has to be done so that everything may appear natural to the audience.

Similarly, exaggeration is necessary to make a realistic set appear natural. A backcloth, for instance, might appear to be excellent when viewed from a distance of a few feet, but prove to be quite inadequate when seen from the auditorium. At this distance small details will be lost, and only bold lines will be effective.

The realistic interior should be designed so that it will immediately appear to the audience to be the appropriate room for the scene that is to be played within it. Do not use the leaded diamond shaped panes that one sees in country cottages for the window of a London flat. The leaded panes may be much more artistic and pleasanter to look at, but they will strike the wrong note. If the room belongs to an old-fashioned family with Victorian views, do not have the bright green

walls and scarlet doors that one might find in an ultra-modern apartment. This may sound obvious, but similar, if less glaring, errors are by no means infrequent in plays produced by amateurs.

One method of doing this is to concentrate on one or two salient features that give the key to the whole scene. This method, which was used by Reinhardt, is tending away from realism, but

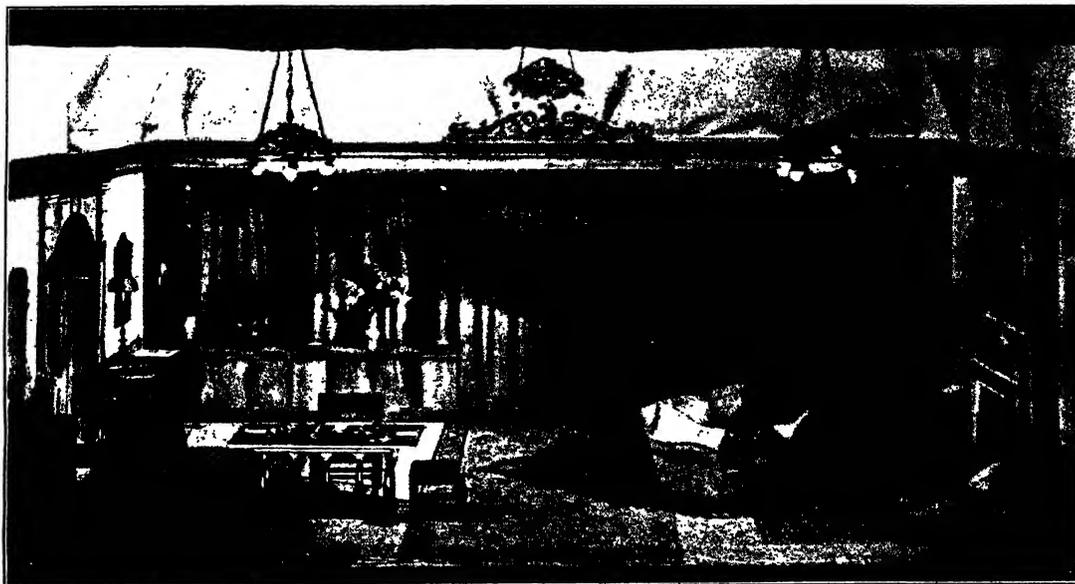
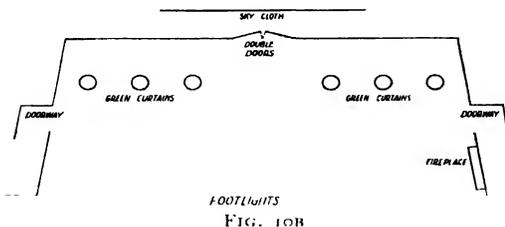


FIG. 10A. "THE DOVER ROAD"

By courtesy of the Management of the Haymarket Theatre

In a naturalistic setting it is extremely important to pay attention to the smallest detail, always provided that it is one that can be seen by



the audience. At the same time, avoid being fussy. It is a mistake to have so many details that the audience cannot take them in. The aim of the designer should always be to strike a certain note that will be appreciated whenever the curtain rises.

it can be used with great effect in many cases where a more or less realistic setting is necessary. It is particularly useful in a play where there are many scenes and quick changes.

Fig. 9 shows the ground plan of a set that was designed in this manner. The play was *The House with the Twisty Windows* by Mary Pakington. The scene is laid in the cellar of a house in Moscow during the terror. The cellar is used as a prison for a number of English political prisoners, who, throughout the play, are keyed up to a very high pitch.

The important feature in the room was the door, behind which much took place and which was constantly being opened to admit one or other of the characters. Each opening of the door was significant.

The walls of the set were painted a drab colour, and the door a bright scarlet. The facts that the

door was placed at the apex of a triangle, that it was on a rostrum, with steps leading up to it, and that it was of such a conspicuous colour, tended to rivet the attention of the audience upon it from the moment the play started. This was the effect that the producer wished to make.

Fig. 10A, which shows the stage of the Haymarket Theatre set for the performance of *The*

may be treated realistically or otherwise. To point the difference between the two methods, Fig. 10B shows the ground plan of a different setting for the same play.

This design has purple draperies for walls (the purple being a rich, deep, reddish shade), a large, rather fantastic green fireplace, and a line of bunched green draperies, which give the

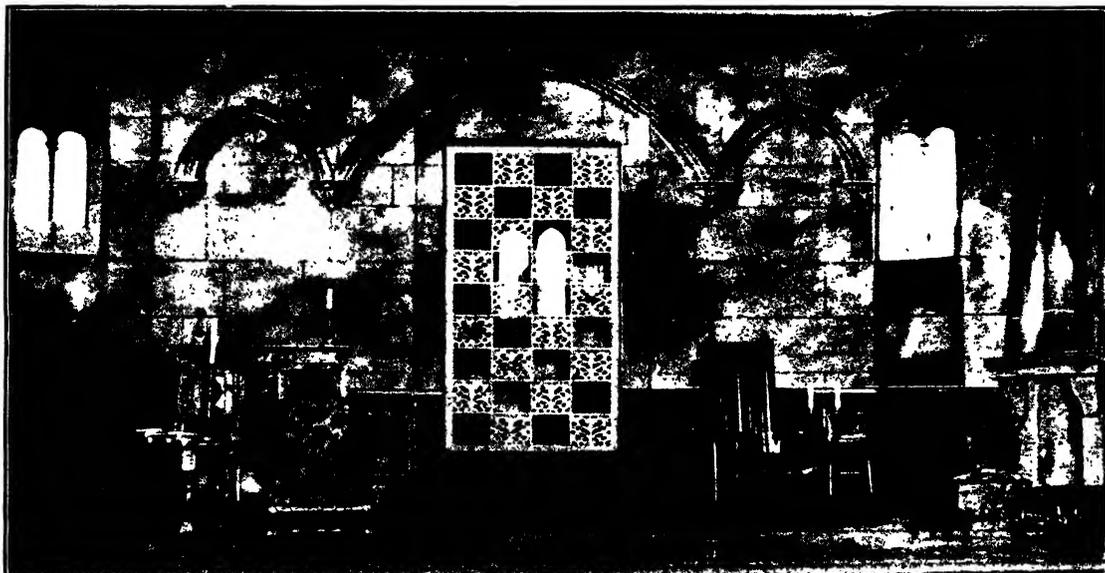


FIG. 11. "COUNT ALBANY"

Designed by William Armstrong and Augustus L. ...

Photo kindly lent by William Armst

Dover Road, by A. A. Milne, is a fairly typical example of a realistic interior setting. For those who do not know the play it is sufficient to say that it deals with the vagaries of a certain Mr. Latimer, a rich old gentleman with the eccentric hobby of enticing eloping couples to his house and holding them prisoner there until they have had an opportunity to discover whether or not they really wish to elope after all. The whole play takes place in this room—the entrance hall of Mr. Latimer's house. While the play is a comedy there is an almost sinister atmosphere at times, and the whole story is fantastic and whimsical. It is thus a case in which the setting

impression of pillars, and are hung about three feet downstage from the back wall.

It is a matter of opinion as to which is the more effective setting, but both are appropriate to the whimsical and fantastic spirit of the play.

Fig. 11 is an interesting example of a realistic interior where a particular feature is stressed. In this case it is again the door, but here the whole setting is entirely realistic and the door achieves prominence by reason of a design that is striking but absolutely in keeping with the rest of the scene. This prominence is again accentuated by its position and by the steps leading up to it. This photograph is the setting for *Count Albany* by

Donald Carswell, produced by the Liverpool Repertory Company. The set was designed by William Armstrong and Augustus Trout.

Fig. 12, which shows another design from the same theatre, affords a complete contrast. This setting for Quince's House in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was designed by Philip Gough,

Fortunately for the amateur, realistic exteriors are rather out of fashion in the artistic theatre. In the days of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree the audience was regaled with settings of gardens, woods, and meadows, where everything possible was done to make these exact reproductions of the originals. Backcloths painted in clever



FIG. 12. QUINCE'S HOUSE FROM "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Designed by Philip Gough

Photo kindly lent by William Armstrong

and is frankly non-realistic. It demonstrates admirably the effectiveness of bold and economical design.

The important point to notice, however, about all these illustrations is that each set was in harmony with the spirit of the play in which it was used. This is the absolute essential of successful stage design.

DESIGNING EXTERIORS

Generally speaking, the exterior scene offers the designer more scope than the interior. It is, on the whole, more difficult to produce a satisfactory exterior, and, therefore, when this is achieved greater satisfaction accrues to the creator.

perspective, painted wings, borders of network with painted foliage, tree trunks of skilfully contrived bark, mossy banks, and even real rabbits delighted the eyes of the Edwardian audience.

Nowadays this type of exterior is rarely seen, except in musical comedy, and seldom, if ever, in the more artistic type of play in which exterior scenes are common. This may be because the present generation of playgoer, in spite of greater sophistication, uses more imagination in the theatre, and does not insist that every *i* shall be dotted and every *t* crossed. The cinema has taught us to think quickly, and made us a little impatient of too much detail. It has also created an appetite for scenes that are interesting and not

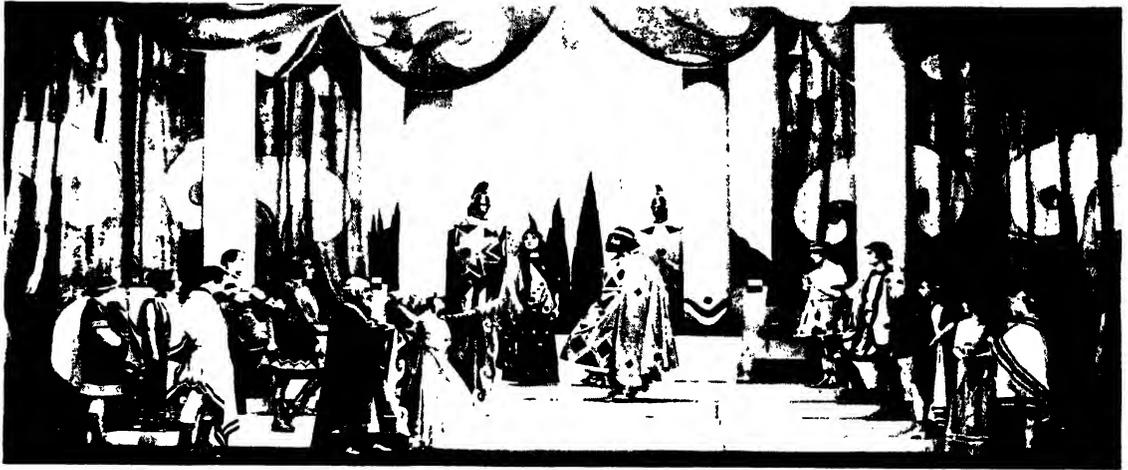


FIG. 13 THESEUS'S PALACE IN "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"
 Liverpool Repertory Theatre Production, 1928
 Designed by Philip Gough

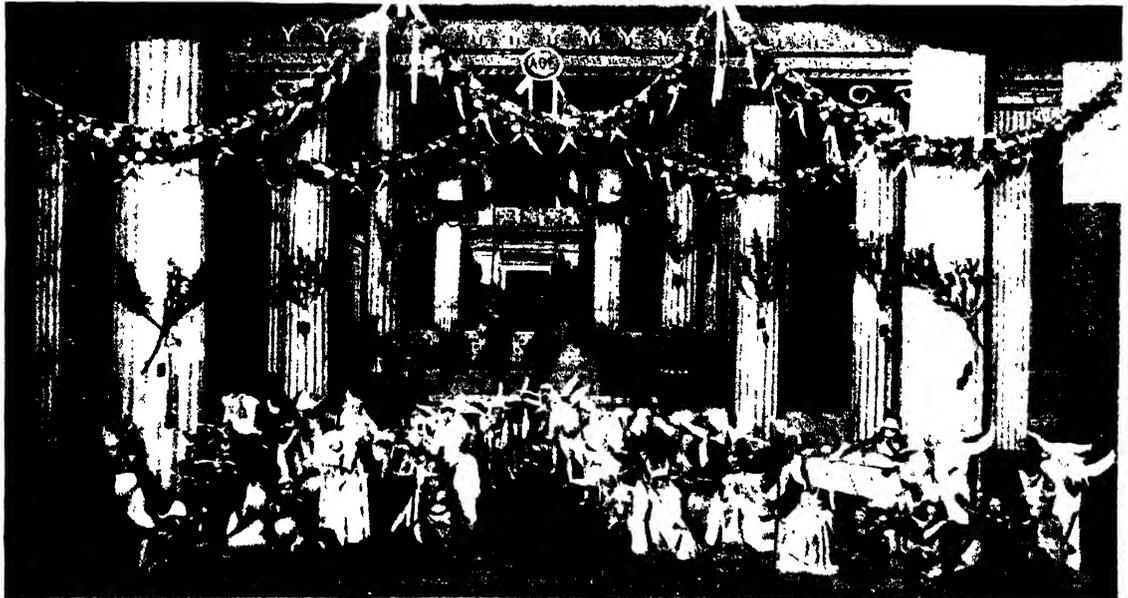


FIG. 14 THESEUS'S PALACE IN "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"
 Sir Herbert Tree's Production, 1900
Reproduced by permission from the Gabrielle Fethoven Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



FIG. 15. THE WOOD SCENE IN "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Oscar Asche's Production, 1905

Reproduced by permission from the Gabrielle Enthoven Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



FIG. 16. THE WOOD SCENE IN "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Liverpool Repertory Theatre Production, 1928

Designed by Philip Gough

merely life-like. Modern cinema photography displays great ingenuity in this respect, but modern stagecraft with an extra dimension at its command can do even more.

The modern type of play lends itself to more artistic treatment, especially where out-of-door scenes are concerned, than the play of pre-war days. Again, the cinema may have, and almost certainly has, something to do with this. The camera can give an exact reproduction of an out-of-door scene—the stage at its best can do no more than produce a clever makeshift. Possibly for that reason, therefore, out-of-door scenes that demand realistic treatment are not usual in modern plays. The outside scene occurs mostly in plays where the treatment on artistic as opposed to naturalistic lines is the most satisfactory method.

It is fortunate for the amateur that the pendulum has swung in this direction. The modern setting demands study and any amount of ingenuity. But ingenuity is not the prerogative of the professional. It does not demand the years of training and inherent talent required to paint elaborate landscape backcloths. The result, too, is more satisfying. The use of perspective in the theatre dates from early times, but it has never been entirely satisfactory. One reason for this is that there is only one point in the auditorium from which true perspective is seen. From all other points there is distortion in a greater or lesser degree. A painted scene, however fine the artistry, remains a painted scene, and does not deceive the audience. Probably the audience is never completely deceived by a setting. By "deceived," I mean, of course, deceived momentarily into accepting the setting as being the actual scene that it portrays. But there is little doubt that modern methods, which have simplicity as their key-note, more nearly achieve this deception than the old-fashioned elaborate methods that depended so greatly on the art of the scene painter.

It is difficult to generalize about stage design. Plays vary greatly, and it follows, therefore, that settings also vary. I advise the beginner, however, to avoid painted backcloths, wherever possible, and to use, instead, a plain sky cloth, that is, a cloth that is painted a uniform pale blue. The ideal is, of course, a cyclorama. This is a plaster covered dome, which, appropriately lit, gives an astonishing impression of distance that has not so

far been achieved by other means. The cyclorama has certain practical disadvantages, but as there are only a few theatres in the country that are equipped with one, it is not worth while discussing its merits and demerits at this stage, for it may be assumed that it will be some considerable time before amateur companies have cycloramas at their disposal.

The next best method is to have the backcloth curved instead of flat. This is often possible, but presents difficulties, as it is essential that the cloth should be without crease or wrinkle. It is by no means easy to get rid of creases, even with a flat cloth. With a curved cloth, it is more difficult still. On the whole, it is probably more satisfactory to have a flat cloth unwrinkled than a curved cloth that is creased.

The cloth may be masked at the sides by draperies, or by scenery, but the latter should be simple and stylized. In front of the cloth are used stylized trees, hills, bridges, or whatever is necessary for the scene; too little is a great deal better than too much.

This simple stylized scenery must be appropriately lit. An even, glaring light can make the most artistic scenery look absurd. Stage lighting has made enormous strides, and the designer who can make an intelligent use of lighting has a powerful additional weapon in his armoury. But it is a two-edged weapon, and may wound the man who uses it unskillfully. It is, therefore, essential that the designer should have a working knowledge of stage lighting, and know what equipment is available for a particular production. In designing both costumes and scenery it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind the effect that the lighting which is to be used will have on the colours that are employed. Coloured light has the effect of altering completely the colour of costumes and scenery. The designer should study the principles of colour mixing. He must ascertain from the producer what lighting he proposes to use, and suggest to him the lighting that he would prefer. If the producer wishes to use colours that are likely to interfere with the general design, he must plead with him to make some modification. If the producer proves adamant, as he sometimes will, then the design must be altered to conform to the lighting that is to be used. The important point is that this must be

done *before* work on the scenery or costumes has actually started. Any standard book on stage lighting gives information about the changes that coloured materials undergo when they are displayed in a coloured light. A green light, for instance, turns red to black, and a red light turns green to black,

problems that seem, at first sight, to be well nigh insoluble. But difficulties are made to be overcome, and it is the duty of the designer to eliminate these difficulties as they arise. Although you are an expert draughtsman, although you can produce designs that are both original and beautiful



FIG. 17. "ROMEO AND JULIET"

Photo by Pollard Crowther

green and red being complementary colours. The effects are produced, however, only when the dyes and the coloured media for the lights are pure, and they vary according to the purity in relation to the spectrum.

Apart from the question of colour, the skilful employment of light and shade may in itself make a set interesting.

PERMANENT SETS

It frequently happens that a society wishes to produce a play which presents scenic

although you are painstaking to the last degree, you are of little use to the amateur theatre unless you can produce designs that are practical and that overcome the limitations of the stage on which the play is to be produced.

It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules because the halls and theatres in which amateurs play vary to an extraordinary extent, and each stage presents its own problems. There are, however, some defects that are fairly common. One of these is the smallness of the stage itself, and, another, lack of accommodation off stage.

Frequently, however, there is very little space on the stage, apart from the actual acting area.

When it is required to produce on such a stage a play having a variety of scenes, a way out of the difficulty may be found by making use of a permanent setting. Figs. 17 to 20 demonstrate this method.

Fig. 17 shows a photograph of a setting used for a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. It will be seen that this consists of a plain backcloth in front of which are two rows of arches with three arches in each row. There are also curtains that can be drawn behind the arches. It will be appreciated that by filling in these arches with different pieces of scenery a great variety

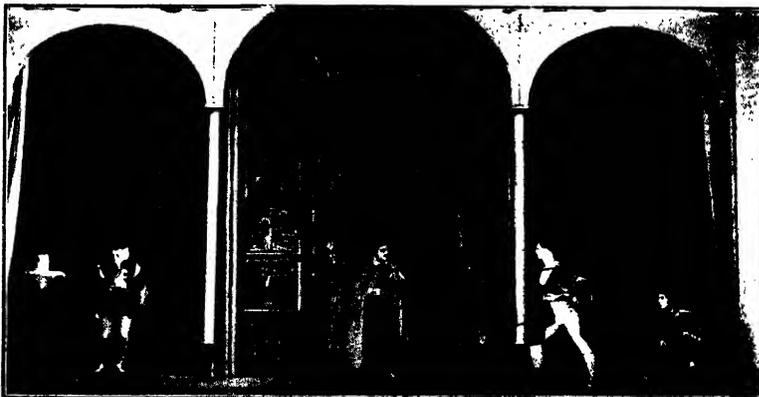


FIG. 19 "ROMEO AND JULIET"
Photo by Pollard Crowther

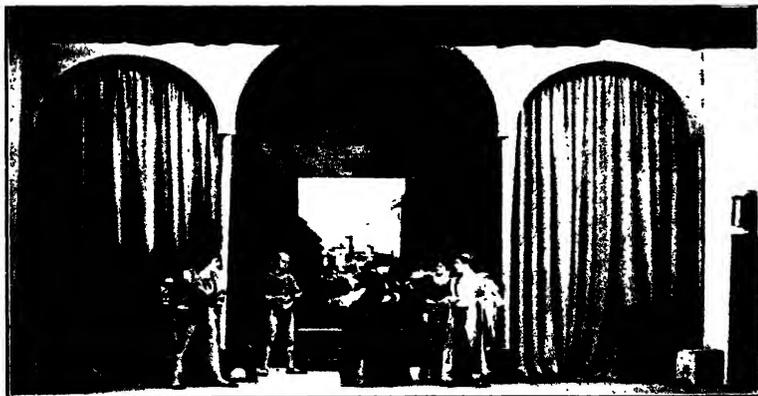


FIG. 18. "ROMEO AND JULIET"
Photo by Pollard Crowther

of scenes can be produced in one permanent setting. Figs. 18 and 19 demonstrate this variety. In Fig. 18 the curtains are drawn behind the two front side arches, while the rear arches are covered by a wall piece, giving an impression of depth. Fig. 19 shows another variation of the same fundamental design.

While these three photographs, however, demonstrate the way in which a permanent setting may be employed, they do not solve the problem of

lack of off-stage space. The arches are wide, and the scenery used in conjunction with them must have been comparatively cumbersome. This will be appreciated by comparing the scenery with the figures in the photographs.

Fig. 20 shows a permanent setting that is likely to be of greater interest to the amateur society working on a small stage. This photograph is a scene from *Scott of Abbotsford*, by W. E. Gunn, which was produced for the Scottish National Players by W. G. Fay, very successfully.

Scott of Abbotsford, an episodic play dealing with the life of Sir Walter Scott, is in six scenes. These are, a drawing room in a country mansion; a library in Scott's house in Edinburgh; the breakfast room at Abbotsford; a room in rather a humble house in Edinburgh; an Edinburgh street; and a banquetting hall. It will probably be agreed, therefore, that an ideal

presentation of this play would call for six different sets of scenery. This was out of the question owing to the rather unusual limitations of the stage on which the play was produced, and it was decided that the solution lay in working with one permanent set.

It will be noticed, however, that the scenes, by their nature, present two problems to the designer of a permanent set for this play. It would seem at first sight difficult to execute a design equally suitable for two such dissimilar scenes as a street and a banqueting hall. At the same time, three of the other scenes present a further problem by reason of their similarity. How is it possible without change of scenery to make a sufficient difference to show that three interiors of much the same class belong to three different houses?

Actually, the solution was both simple and ingenious. The set used was an ordinary box set, silver grey in colour, with three arched openings at the back, and one in each side wall. A photograph does not give a wholly satisfactory impression, but Fig. 20 shows that the arches in this case were relatively small, and therefore the flats used to fill them were light and easily handled, compared with the flats used in the *Romeo and Juliet* production.

So far as the scenery was concerned, the character of the scene was established by means of the flats used to fill the rear arches. The side arches were filled by solid wooden doors throughout. In spite of this, the character of the scene was completely altered by these differences in the back wall.

For example, for the first scene—the drawing room of a country mansion—the centre arch was filled with a practical french window, and the side arches also with windows, through which a garden backcloth was seen. For the town house the french window gave place to a smaller window with blind and heavy curtains, while the arches on either side were backed by flats with painted bookshelves, and in the thickness of the arches, below these bookshelves, were cupboards, about thirty inches in height, on the top of which lay books and other small properties.

For the exterior scene the centre arch was again a window, with drawn blind, seen this time from the outside, and the door at the right was the exterior of the front door of the house. Above

it was a hanging lamp. This, with the light shining through the blind, was almost the only lighting used, as the scene was short, and took place at night.

Lighting, of course, played an important part in establishing the necessary variations, which the difference in the furniture completed.

A great deal of furniture was necessary, and this admittedly took some time to set and strike, but this was more than compensated by the ease and speed with which the alterations to the scenery were effected, none of the flats being more than seven feet in height, and all being easily handled. Actually, the changes were made well within the allotted time, which was by no means liberal.

I have described this setting for *Scott of Abbotsford* in detail, because I believe that it affords an excellent example of one way in which the amateur society can overcome the difficulties of presenting a play with many different scenes on a small stage.

There are, of course, many different varieties of permanent settings, some of them extremely elaborate and expensive, and some, such as those used by Komisarjevsky in *Grand Hotel* and *Hatter's Castle*, involving the use of a solidly-built structure with scenes set above each other. These are of little interest to the society playing on a small stage with possibly little head room, but the description of the scenery for *Scott of Abbotsford* shows the possibility of making use of quite a simple type of permanent set, which is possible on almost any stage.

Another difficulty that frequently arises occurs whenever a change has to be made from an interior to an exterior set, or vice versa. There is no doubt that an actual ceiling cloth is the best way of masking the top of an interior set. The use of borders for this purpose is, or at least was, an accepted convention, but borders are now rarely used in conjunction with an interior set in a West End production, and audiences are, therefore, not so ready to accept this convention as they used to be.

In exterior settings borders must still be used, unless the theatre possesses a cyclorama.

Here, then, is the problem. The designer wishes to use a ceiling cloth for his interior scene and borders for his exterior: how is this change to

be effected? Borders are hung from battens, which are suspended across the stage parallel to the footlights. The ceiling cloth is nailed to a rectangular frame, which is lowered on to the top of the set. Obviously, therefore, before the

from the top of the proscenium arch to the roof, or grid, must be greater than the width of the ceiling from back to front. If this is not the case, the best plan is to remove the front set of lines and allow the ceiling to hang down, covering the



FIG. 20. SETTING FOR "SCOTT OF ABBOTSFORD," BY W. E. GUNN, PRODUCED BY W. G. FAY FOR THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PLAYERS

By kind permission of "The Bulletin," Glasgow.

borders can be lowered into position the ceiling must be removed. How can this feat be achieved?

To take it down and dismantle it is out of the question. This would be a long and tedious process. If there is sufficient height, however, the ceiling can be lowered, the lines on the front edge, or the back edge, removed, and the ceiling hauled up out of sight to hang perpendicularly from one set of lines. To do this, however, the distance

back wall of the stage, and, in front of this, to lower the backcloth. This takes time, however, and the designer must consider whether, taking all factors into consideration, it is worth doing this, or whether it would be better to dispense with the ceiling altogether, and use borders for both sets.

In a permanent set it is generally advisable to use borders if there are exterior and interior

scenes. In the case of *Scott of Abbotsford*, it was possible to use a ceiling because the one exterior scene was dimly lit.

Obviously, there can be no change from borders to ceiling with a permanent set.

THE CURTAIN SETTING

Draperies are used extensively in amateur productions. This is not surprising, for the



FIG. 21. A SCENE FROM "THE WHITE CHALK"
BY CAPT. REGINALD BIRKELLY
Produced in the Athenaeum Theatre, Glasgow, by the Glas-
Community Drama Federation
Photo by J. Home Dickson, Glasgow

curtain setting has many advantages to offer the amateur society.

In the first place it is comparatively cheap to hire. A set of curtains can, as a rule, be hired for less than a full box set costs, and if there are several changes of scene the amount saved by using curtains is considerable. Changes can be indicated by using a few different flats in conjunction with the same set of draperies.

Secondly, draperies reduce the difficulty of scene shifting. They are most useful on small stages where it would be impossible to store several different sets owing to lack of off-stage accommodation.

Thirdly, while the curtain setting is, as a rule,

definitely conventional, and demands the use of imagination by the audience, there is no doubt that good drapery is preferable to bad scenery. Draperies are pleasing to the eye, and, being conventional, make no attempt at realism. It is comparatively easy to achieve the maximum success possible within the limits that a curtain setting imposes.

These advantages are particularly noticeable when a society produces a triple or quadruple bill of one-act plays. This is a form of programme that is popular, for various reasons, with new societies. Such a society by using curtains avoids many of the problems connected with scenery.

Amateurs are rapidly becoming adept in the use of draperies, partly because many societies realize their advantages, and partly because they are largely used in drama festivals. In many festivals there is a rule that competing teams must play within the draperies provided by the committee, although they are allowed, as a rule, to provide for themselves such flats as are necessary to supplement the curtain set. One reason for this rule is probably that it limits to some extent the

amount that a team can spend on the mounting of its play, thus discounting the advantage that a wealthy club has over one less fortunately placed.

Nevertheless, those who have attended such festivals know that an astonishing variety in scenic effect can be produced, although the same curtains form the major portion of the setting for all the plays. It is much easier for a single club to introduce the same variety in a programme of short plays. The whole programme is under one control, and the plays can be arranged so that they produce the maximum amount of scenic effect with the minimum amount of trouble for the stage staff.

There are other occasions, however, when draperies are chosen not from the point of view of expediency but because the designer considers them to be the most suitable form of scenery for a particular play. Good draperies, well lit, have great depth and richness, which not infrequently make them more appropriate than canvas scenery. A well-lung and artistically designed curtain setting is indeed beautiful and dignified.

It is not as a rule wise to alternate box sets and curtain settings in the same production, although, like most rules of stagecraft, this is one that is sometimes successfully broken. Generally speaking, an audience will accept the convention of curtains throughout a production, but it will be irritated if curtains are used for some scenes and flats for others. There is apt to be an impression that the curtains are being used for expediency, and are a makeshift. This may not be the case. The curtain sets may be difficult and elaborate. Such impressions, however, are damaging to a production and difficult to eradicate, no matter how unfounded they may be.

The audience is often quite illogical in drawing conclusions of this character, but you cannot reason with it. All you can do is to avoid giving the impression. It should be borne in mind that the audience at an amateur production is on the whole more inclined to look for faults in setting than the audience at a professional performance. It is unreasonable that this should be so, but it is unfortunately the case, and must be regarded as one of the difficulties that the amateur has to face. In course of time, when the general standard of amateur stagecraft is as high as that of more advanced groups, this attitude of mind of the audience will ultimately disappear. At present there are many amateur groups that reach a higher standard in setting and lighting than the average touring company.

Although the use of two conventions in one production is undesirable, it is permissible to use draperies for the purpose of masking the sides of an exterior set, although they may not be used elsewhere in the play. On a small stage curtains or painted wings are, as a rule, the only alternatives for the sides of an exterior, and in many cases curtains are preferable. Fig. 21, a scene reproduced from *The White Chateau*, illustrates a

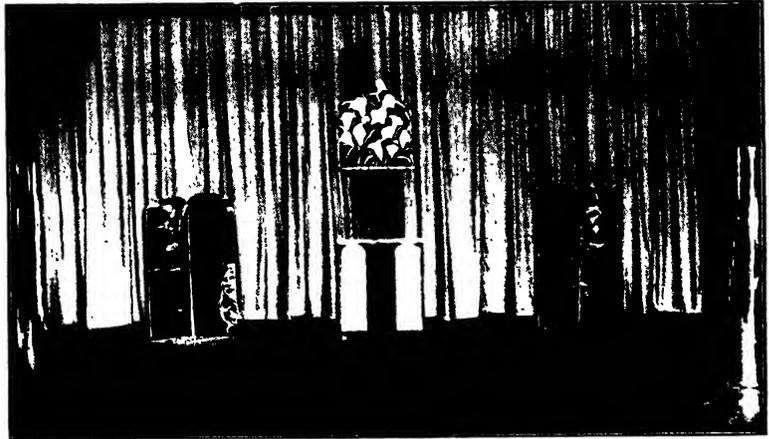


FIG. 22. A CURTAIN SETTING FROM "THE LITTLE REVIEW"
 (due to the "March Hares" in the LATIC Theatre, Glasgow)
 Photo by J. Home Dickson, Glasgow

case in point. The trench scene is realistic, but there was no possible method of masking the sides realistically. The stage was too small to permit the use of a curved backcloth or cyclorama. Hence the use of the draperies that can be seen at the side. This photograph was taken at a rehearsal, and the creases in the backcloth had not been straightened out, but when this was done, and the cloth was properly lit, the draperies at the side were perfectly acceptable as a part of the frame of the picture.

I have stated that draperies can be hired comparatively cheaply. This is the case. Nevertheless, any society that is producing frequently will be well advised to consider purchasing a set of draperies. Capital outlay is necessary, but unless the curtains purchased are of exceptionally good quality, and the occasions when they are used are

few, it should not be long before the purchase price is written off by debiting the cost of hiring against each production in which they are used, and ultimately striking a balance.

Societies that are in the habit of touring will find a set of draperies particularly useful. The flexible nature of the curtain setting makes it

can, if required, be conveyed by carrier. It is frequently difficult to arrange for a carrier to take flats, as these are inclined to be unwieldy.

Curtains properly looked after last for a long time. It is, therefore, important when purchasing draperies to give the matter considerable thought, and to take pains to ensure that the material



FIG. 23. THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF THE PRODUCTION OF "THE GATES OF UR" ILLUSTRATES THE USE OF A COMBINATION OF DRAPERIES AND FLATS IN AN EXTERIOR SCENE

Photo by Pollard Crowther

particularly adaptable for use on stages of varying size. The curtains themselves are easily transported in hampers, and the battens on which they are hung can often be hired or borrowed locally. If this is done the cost of transport is much less than for flats, unless the company travelling is large enough for the railway company to provide a special scenery wagon without extra cost. In the case of road transport curtains will always be cheaper to convey than flats. They take up comparatively little space in a lorry, and they

purchased is the most suitable that can be obtained for the price.

The price varies greatly according to the character and quality of the material. Hessian is the cheapest material that is suitable for draperies. Hessian draperies, 16 ft. in height, for a stage depth of 12 ft., and a proscenium opening of 24 ft. might, therefore, be purchased for a reasonable figure. On the other hand, good quality velour curtains for the same size of stage might easily cost more than the average group could afford.

And there are other materials which are still more expensive than are often used on the professional stage. There is, of course, a great variety of material of wool and cotton, and it is one of the medium-priced materials, a heavy all-cotton repp, which is frequently used, and which is very suitable.

Hessian, which is, in fact, sacking, has disadvantages. It is an open material, and light shows through it. It is hard, and does not fall in the graceful folds that are desirable, and when it is new it has a rather unpleasant smell. On the other hand, a hessian setting looks fairly solid. It is not as flimsy as cheap cotton. Its natural colour is quite suitable without dyeing.

Cotton is, as a rule, too light. A flimsy material that is blown about by any draught is not desirable. Light shows through it almost as readily as it does through hessian. On the other hand, cotton curtains hang gracefully, and are cheaper than wool.

Wool, or a mixture of wool and cotton, is probably the best medium-priced material. It hangs well, and while it does not obscure light it is denser than either hessian or cotton. It is heavy enough not to be blown about.

Velour curtains, if you can afford them, are preferable to any others, except, of course, velvet. Silk and velvet are beyond the means of most societies. Velour is a heavy material that hangs particularly well, and responds admirably to light, which it tends to reflect rather than to absorb.

Even velour curtains, however, are not light-proof, and they must be lined if you wish to guard absolutely against the possibility of any light shining through. They are, however, if of good quality, sufficiently thick to be proof against any but a bright, direct light.

Borders of the same material as the draperies should be used. These should be fluted. The number of borders necessary and their length and depth will be governed by conditions prevailing on the stage on which they are to be used.

Curtains of light shades are more generally useful than darker ones. Greys and fawns are good colours for draperies that have to be used for many productions. Light blue is a fairly popular shade, but unless it is a strong and definite colour it tends to go grey in amber lighting.

Dark blue or green, or any definite bright colour, is not suitable for general use. Black, or navy blue which will look black under stage lighting, is often extremely effective, but it is not a wise colour to choose for your only set of draperies.

If you decide to invest in a set of draperies, you may save a little money and give employment to a number of club members by making the curtains yourselves. The saving in cost is small, however, because there is comparatively little work involved, the bulk of the purchase price being the cost of the material. But whether you decide to make your own curtains, or to have them made for you, there are points that must be borne in mind.

Always order at least a third more width of material than the width you wish to cover. For instance, you will require material at least 8 ft. wide to make a finished curtain 6 ft. wide. This extra width allows the curtain to be gathered in at the top so that it hangs in folds. A tightly stretched curtain is at once unsightly and unreal looking. It should always be avoided. You can achieve a similar result, to a certain extent, by having the whole curtain wider than is necessary, and drawing it in so that it is bunched. But it is preferable to allow for this fluting when the curtain is made. This ensures that the curtain will always hang as desired, and its appearance will not be dependent on the stage staff, who may not have sufficient time at their disposal to ensure that the curtains hang neatly. The extra third is a minimum. An extra 50 per cent is desirable, and in the case of thin material essential.

Stout webbing, about 2 in. wide, should be sewn to the back of the curtain, a few inches from the top. To this the hooks or rings from which the curtain is to hang should be sewn. Stout spring hooks—known as dog hooks—are best for this purpose. They allow the curtain to be hung without removing the supporting wire and threading it through rings. At the same time, they will not slip off the wire when the curtain is drawn from one position to another.

The curtains should, of course, be hemmed; otherwise, there is no construction involved in the curtains themselves.

It is advisable that the draperies should be in

panels. If the back of your curtain set is 20 ft., do not sew up your material so that you have two large curtains 10 ft. wide. Preferably, have four curtains 5 ft. wide. This is preferable for several reasons; the main one is that four curtains increase the flexibility of the set, and allow you to insert a flat at practically any point. If

The *exact* width of the curtains is not important, and will be determined by the widths in which the material can be obtained. Thus, if the material is a yard wide, the curtains can be 6 ft., which is a useful average width for a panel. In such a case three widths of the material would be used, leaving 50 per cent for fluting. Hessian



FIG. 24. CURTAIN SETTING USED FOR A PRODUCTION OF "HAMLET" AT THE CROYDON REPERTORY THEATRE

Photo by Pollard & Coether

you have only two curtains a flat can be inserted only where the curtains meet, i.e. in the centre, and the position of the flat cannot vary more than twice its width. With five curtains, covering a width of 20 ft., there is no point where a flat cannot be inserted. Unless you are able to place your flats exactly where you wish them, flexibility, one of the principal advantages of the curtain setting, is lost.

Narrow curtains have other practical advantages. They are more easily folded than wide ones, they are more easily pulled about on their wires, and they cost less to replace.

is obtainable in 72-in. widths, a single width of the material gives a curtain 4 ft. wide, and leaves 50 per cent fullness, or one 4 ft. 6 in. wide, allowing for $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent fullness.

Your borders should be of the same material as the curtains, and their number and size should depend on the dimensions of the stage. They should also be fluted. If flats are being used in conjunction with the draperies it is a good plan to have one border, or frill, running round the whole set. This will hang in front of the draperies, but be attached to the same batten. The tops of the flats are slipped between the

draperies and this frill, and are thus completely masked. The depth of this frill will depend on the height of the flats that are being used.

It is most important that flats used with a curtain setting should be carefully chosen. As the curtains are completely conventional, you are dependent on probably not more than two or

by making violent contrasts. White flats in conjunction with black draperies, for instance, make an arresting set.

If several plays are being presented in the same curtain setting in the same programme, it is desirable to use different flats for each play. Unless there is any particular practical reason,



FIG. 25 SETTING FOR OLIVIA'S GARDEN IN THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PLAYERS' PRODUCTION OF "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Photo by "The Bulletin," Glasgow

three flats to give the atmosphere you require, in conjunction, of course, with the furniture, dresses, and other mounting of the play. On the whole, I believe that it is wise to have flats that match the colour of the curtains and that are, therefore, as unobtrusive as possible. The door, window, fireplace, or whatever feature the flat contains should be designed and painted to indicate whatever you wish to bring out. The flat itself should be neutral and sink into the draperies. This is, of course, a matter of opinion, and there is no doubt that effective settings can be produced

never use a plain flat with curtains. Use only such flats as are essential; for example, door, window, or possibly fireplace flats, although the latter are rarely necessary, as the fireplace can usually stand against the curtains and be perfectly convincing.

It is unwise to attempt to draw the curtains across above a door or window, as in Fig. 26. This is often done with the object of hiding as much of the flat as possible. I have never seen this done successfully. It merely draws attention to the defects that a curtain setting possesses.

The curtains should simply be drawn so as to mask the edges of the flat, as in Fig. 27. An audience will accept a flat that is used like this in a frankly conventional manner.

Sometimes in order to hide the top of a flat a short curtain is hung to the top of the door or

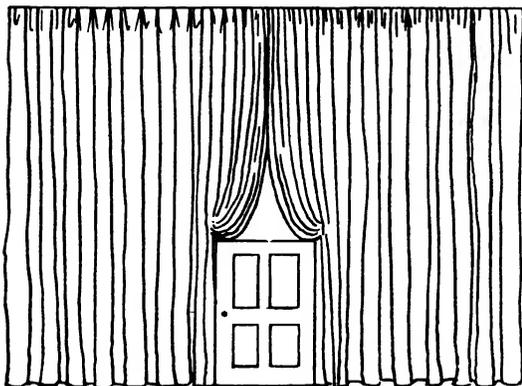


FIG. 26

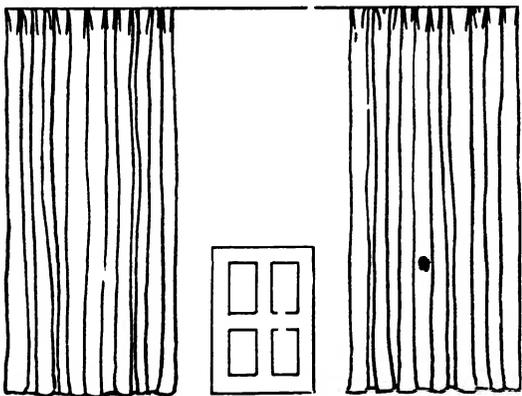


FIG. 27

window, thus hiding the portion of the flat above it. While this certainly looks better than curtains draped partially across the flat, the method has practical disadvantages.

Unless the doors and windows are all the same height, it will be necessary to have various short curtains of different lengths, and, what is more

important, these curtains will have to be hung after the door is in position. This will probably necessitate the use of a ladder or pair of steps, and will certainly add greatly to the difficulties of the stage staff.

With an ordinary curtain setting of the usual

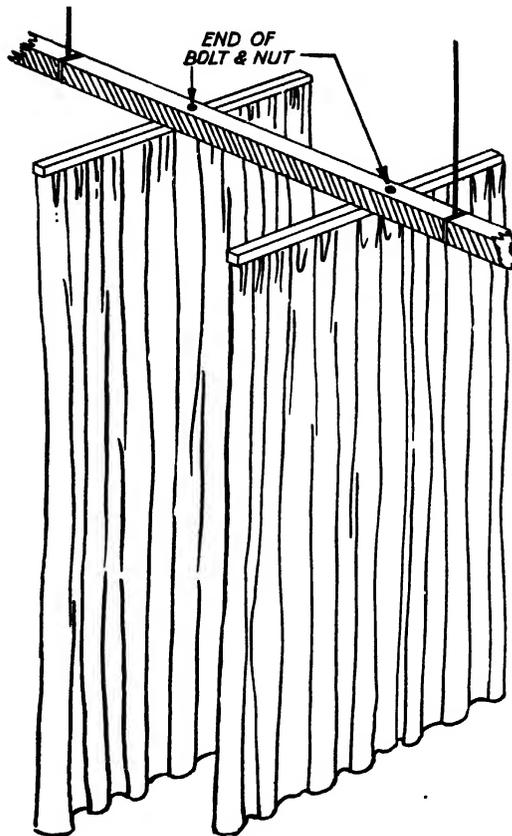


FIG. 28

shape, flats can be inserted at any point extremely quickly and easily if this is done in the way I have advocated, and if the curtains are in comparatively narrow panels.

The curtains should hang on wire stretched taut to battens. Three battens are required; two for the sides, and one for the back. With

draperies, a plain sky cloth should always be used. Cut outs can be employed when necessary in front of this cloth.

Another method of hanging curtains is sometimes used. This is shown in Fig. 28. Each curtain is hung on a separate short batten, which pivots on the centre, so that the curtain can be swung to any position. As a rule, this method is employed for the sides only, and not for the back of the set. The advantage of this method is that the curtains can be angled, as shown in the drawing, and can act as wings. This is useful for exterior scenes. Also, a second set of curtains can be hung behind the first and brought into use by simply reversing the battens.

This method is not altogether satisfactory, however. The battens are apt to swing when they are not intended to do so, and the effect is not particularly convincing in interior scenes, especially when flats have to be inserted in the side walls.

It is possible to do without flats altogether in a curtain setting, and to use door and window units by themselves. The door or window frame employed for such a purpose should have a groove running along the top. The door or window is placed in front of a curtain, which is drawn so that it is as nearly as possible the width of the frame. A short batten or stick, the length of the width of the curtain, is used to roll it up from the bottom. It is then placed in the groove on the top of the flat. Exactly the same method is employed in the case of a fireplace, except that a few large hooks screwed to the back of the mantelpiece take the place of the groove. The adjacent curtains are, of course, drawn so as to mask the sides. This is a practical and perfectly satisfactory method, and it has the great advantages of simplicity and cheapness.

GROUND PLANS AND MODELS

After it has been decided to produce a play, one of the first things that is required is a ground plan of the set or sets that are to be used. Preparation of the ground plan must always be the first step in designing scenery. After the designer has studied the play, and decided what style his designs shall take, his next task is to commit his ideas to paper, so that they may be handed to the producer for his approval,

and so that they may finally be passed on to the carpenters and scenic artists, whose job it is to make the scenery to the designs that are supplied.

The ground plan enables the designer to see whether his ideas are practical, and whether the stage is large enough for him to carry out his intentions. It will often enable him at the outset to eliminate impracticable ideas and to prevent the waste of valuable time.

The ground plan is also necessary for the producer. He requires it to write up the moves of the play. He may object to the first plan that is submitted because it conflicts with his own ideas and prevents him carrying out the production as he wishes. If he sees the plan before the scenery is designed, time and work are often saved.

The ground plan should be drawn to scale: a plan not to scale may be worse than useless. This may sound obvious, but rough plans are often sketched out in a hurry, perhaps on an odd piece of paper or the back of an envelope, merely to demonstrate a particular point. As the plan is not to scale the point is frequently either not demonstrated or demonstrated wrongly, and a false impression is given.

Start with a plan of the stage on which the play is to be produced. This may sound unnecessary. You may say that you can easily carry in your head the dimensions of the stage, and ensure that your setting comes within the limits prescribed. This may be so, but it may not, and the time spent in drawing in the plan of the bare stage is well spent.

To draw the plan, you require a few ordinary drawing instruments and materials. You should have a drawing board, drawing paper, a T square, set squares, compasses, dividers, a scale, and a *sharp* pencil. The end of the T square resting on the side of the drawing board enables you to draw parallel horizontal lines. The set square resting on the T square enables you to draw parallel vertical lines. The set squares also enable you to set off angles of 30, 45, and 60 degrees. The dividers are necessary to measure distances on the scale, and to transfer these to your paper. These are the instruments that would be required by a draughtsman. You, however, may not be a draughtsman, and may yet be interested in and capable of designing scenery. Should this be so, I commend the use of squared paper as an easy,

quick, and sufficiently accurate method of drawing the plan.

Ordinary squared paper ruled in inches and tenths of inches may be obtained from most stationers. Fig. 29 shows a piece of this paper for the benefit of those who are not already familiar with it. The large squares are inches; the

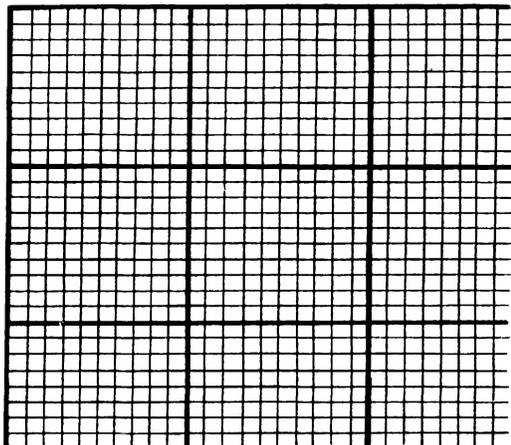


FIG. 29

smaller squares, tenths of inches. When using this paper your scale must be some multiple of a tenth of an inch.

In Figs. 30 to 33 the scale shown is the scale that was used for the original plan. This has, of course, been reduced and the squares of the paper have been omitted for reproduction.

Fig. 30 shows the plan of a bare stage. The scale is taken as one fifth of an inch (that is two small squares) to the foot. Thus, were the plan drawn on squared paper it could be seen at a glance that the footlights occupy one foot in breadth, and that the proscenium opening is twenty-two feet. The shaded portion represents the walls of the proscenium arch, and the dotted line the position of the curtain. The thickness of the walls that surround the stage is not shown because this is unnecessary.

If you are not familiar with the theatre, it is worth while also to draw the entrances to the stage from the dressing rooms. If there are any

obstructions, such as pillars, these must be shown, whether they are likely to interfere with the acting area or not. They may interfere with backing or with the opening of a door.

Fig. 31 shows the plan of a stage that presents some of these difficulties. Amateur societies have frequently to contend with structural problems

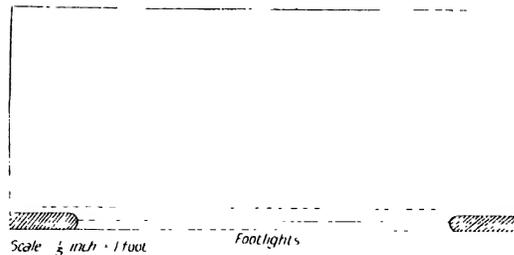


FIG. 30

that are far greater than those that are shown on this plan. Probably many more amateur productions take place on such stages than on the more orthodox stage that is free from these defects. The stage in Fig. 31 has a proscenium opening of 22 ft. and a depth of 16 ft. from the curtain line to the back wall. The width from wall to wall is 35 ft. However, 16 ft. is not the effective practical depth, because a step, 1 ft. high by 3 ft. wide, runs along the length of the back wall. Further, the total width of the stage is ineffective because there are four structural pillars, two on either side. These pillars are 1 ft. square.

Assume that you have been told to design an interior set for this stage. The room is a modern lounge hall, with a practical french window about the centre of the back wall. Doors are required in the right and left walls. The script says that the room is bright and sunny. To give this impression, you decide that the french window must be a prominent feature. The door on the actor's right is to be a double door: this is important as most of the entrances are made through it. You decide, therefore, that it must be upstage—that is, towards the back of the stage. A large number of characters appears, and the producer has told you that he wishes as much stage room as possible.

The first problem that confronts you is the step at the back. The fact that there is a french

window in the back wall means that there must be a backcloth behind it. The step might be eliminated by hanging the backcloth immediately in front of it. This would mean, however, that the french window, and therefore the back wall of the set, would have to be at least three feet still farther forward, and this would only ten feet from the footlights to the back of the set. As the producer has asked for as much room as possible, you decide that this arrangement will not meet requirements.

Now it must be considered whether there is a means of communication behind, between the two doors to the stage. If there is, the scenery may be set to the back wall of the stage and players who require to go out on one side and to enter on another can go round behind. If not, it will be necessary to find out whether such entrances and exits occur in the play, and if they do, whether they can be altered.

Let us assume that, as is usually the case, there is communication between the two doors. You decide, therefore, to hang the backcloth against the back wall, and to have the back of the set in front of, and hard against, the step. The french window will be on the step, so that the players who enter by it will step down into the room. This is both permissible and effective. A step of 12 in., however, is rather high, so you decide to place another step, 6 in. high, in front of the existing step. There will now be two steps leading up to the window. This arrangement will finally remove any impression that the step is there by accident or force of circumstance. It may not occur, even to those who know of the existence of the step on the stage, that there has been any ulterior motive.

You decide to make the window 6 ft. wide, each of its doors being 3 ft., in order that it will be as impressive as possible. (I assume, of course, that there is sufficient height to allow of the height of the design being sufficient to carry this width.) The set, you decide, shall be an ordinary three-sided set in order that there shall be as much

stage room as possible. For the same reason you decide to have the angle between the back and side walls as small as possible, and to make all the doors open off-stage. You then draw the ground plan as shown in Fig. 32.

This design, it is quickly seen, is not practical. The doors are shown in their position when open,

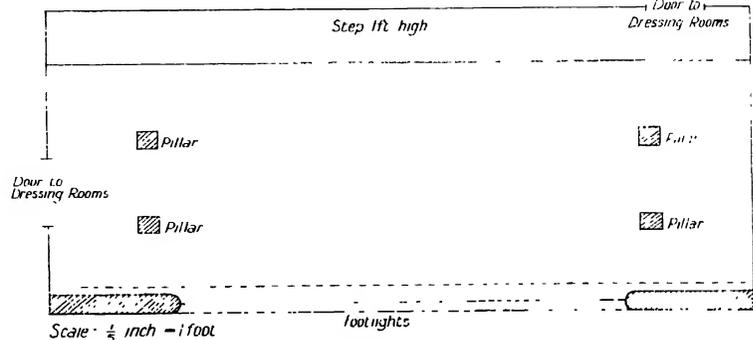


FIG. 31

and it will be observed that the single door and the lower half of the double door cannot be opened because of the pillars. Also, the french window, when it is fully open, fouls the backcloth, and does not allow a player to pass. Further, the double doors are probably invisible to many people who are at the left of the auditorium. If you wish to verify this, it is a good plan to draw in the line of sight in pencil. It can be rubbed out afterwards to prevent confusion.

Fig. 33 shows one solution of the problem. By placing the double door across the corner, both halves can be opened as wide as is likely to be necessary. It is in a prominent position, and entrances made there will be effective. The acting area is necessarily reduced, but not considerably. The french window has been made slightly smaller, so that its doors, when open, clear the backcloth. It has been moved towards the left to balance the new position of the double door. The single door has been moved slightly upstage, between the pillars, which it clears when open.

There is no absolute criterion in stage design. It is bound to be to a great extent a matter of personal opinion, but most people will agree that the less symmetrical design of Fig. 33 is more

interesting than that of Fig. 32. The important point, however, is that Fig. 33 is practical, and that Fig. 32 is not.

The advantage of drawing these plans on squared paper will be readily appreciated. It is

goes astray. While he may draw the outline of the plan accurately to scale, he is apt to fill in the furniture in a rough and ready manner. It is essential that the plan of the furniture should also be to scale, as it is only in this way that the

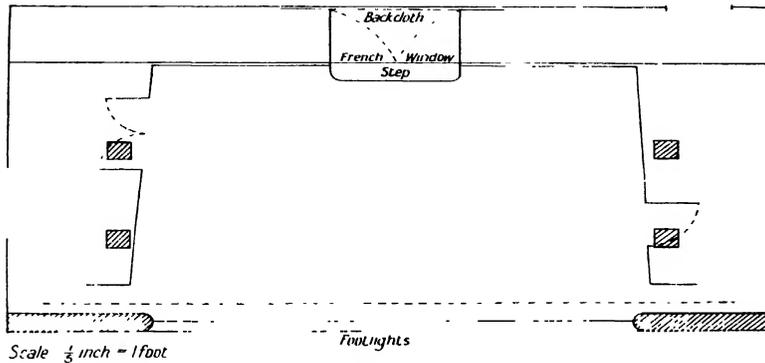


FIG. 32

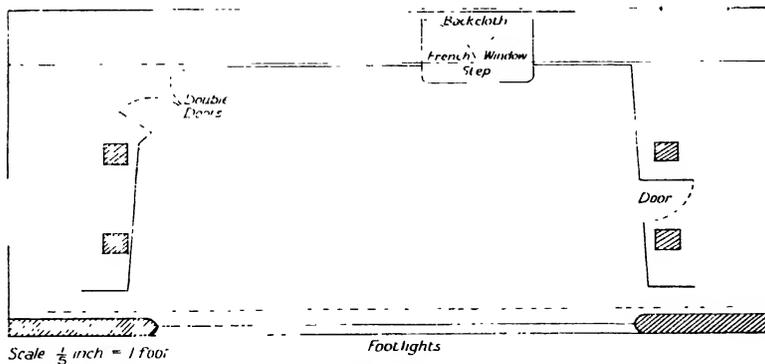


FIG. 33

quicker, and mistakes are less likely to be made. Distances do not require to be measured off a scale, but may be ascertained by simply counting the squares. If it is required to measure a distance across the squares, this may be done by using the edge of another piece of squared paper.

When it comes to the next step—adding to the plan, furniture, and properties that occupy floor space—the use of squared paper saves a great deal of time. It is here that the beginner frequently

producer can know what parts of the acting area are free for the movement of his characters.

The first plan should be submitted to the producer for his approval, and the position of the furniture definitely decided. After this, it will probably be necessary to draw a fresh plan for the designer's own use, and it will be necessary to provide the producer with a duplicate from which he can work out his production. The producer's plan will require to be a fair size, possibly larger

than the original. Here, again, if squared paper has been used, it is a simple matter to enlarge the original, but if the plan has been made on ordinary drawing paper the enlargement will take some time, as each distance will, of course, have to be measured and transferred to the new plan after making the necessary alteration for the difference in scale. This is not really difficult, but it may be a little tedious, particularly to those who are unaccustomed to the use of drawing instruments. I suggest, therefore, that if you do not use squared paper, you should make a point of making your original plan large enough for the producer's requirements. Any number of copies of this can then easily be made by placing a blank sheet of drawing paper on the drawing board, and laying your plan on top of it. By pricking both sheets with a pin at all the necessary points and joining up these pin pricks on the blank sheet with pencil lines, a duplicate may be made quickly.

The reason why the producer's plan requires to be fairly large is that he will use it to work out the moves in the production, and on the plan itself will probably move about small blocks of wood or pieces of paper representing the various characters in the play.

After the ground plan of a set has been decided, there are two methods of demonstrating the design. You may make a sketch in perspective, or you may make a model of the set in cardboard. The latter method has many advantages.

In the first place, it gives an infinitely more satisfactory idea of your requirements for the finished set than is possible with any two dimensional drawings. It is probably for this reason that it is the method that is now generally employed in the professional theatre.

The coloured plate facing page 966 shows two excellent sketches for stage settings. Both are good sketches, yet neither gives any real idea of the set that was ultimately produced. This is shown to some extent by comparing the first sketch with Fig. 39, which is a photograph of the set as it was used in the production. As a matter of fact, this particular set was not made from a sketch, but from a model by Gwen Carlier for the Crescent Theatre's production in Birmingham, March, 1933.

I have been unable to obtain a photograph of the setting used in *Blood Royal*. The sketch was

designed by Gordon R. Archibald for the Touch Theatre Club's production in the Athenaeum Theatre, Glasgow, January, 1933. In this case also the finished article was a great deal more artistic and arresting than the sketch suggests. One reason for this is that this production depended to a great extent on skilful and artistic lighting. In addition to the obvious advantages of a three dimensional model, there is an added one that it is possible to light it in approximately the same way as the stage will itself be lit. It is almost impossible to show the effect of lighting in a sketch with any degree of accuracy.

The second great advantage which a model possesses is that comparatively little skill in drawing or painting is necessary to produce quite satisfactory results. To draw a sketch of a stage setting, which is to be of any practical value, one must be able to draw at least reasonably well, and while many amateur dramatic societies could probably find someone with the necessary qualifications, it often happens that there may be a member interested in design, who has a flair for this, and an eye for colour, without the ability to draw.

Thirdly, the making of models is a most fascinating pursuit, and the models themselves can be used in many different ways.

Their principal use is, of course, as models, that is, as miniatures from which the actual set will be built. In addition, however, they are useful for showing the cast before rehearsals start what the stage will look like. Few societies have an opportunity to rehearse on their stage until the dress rehearsal, and unless the producer has unusual descriptive powers, it is difficult for them to visualize with any accuracy the scene in which they are to play. If they are shown a model, however, they will form a correct impression at once, and they will not have to play in strange surroundings at the dress rehearsal.

Further, the model may be used for publicity and advertisement purposes.

Before starting to make your model, it is advisable to have a model theatre in which to display it when it is finished. The model stage should have the same proportions as the stage that you will use. If the model is made accurately to scale the size of the scale is not of great importance. Do not, however, make your model too

small, or you will find your work is more difficult than it need be. On the other hand, do not make it cumbersome. Do not choose a scale that carpenters will find complicated. Half an inch to a foot is a useful scale, and usually makes a finished model of a size convenient in every respect.

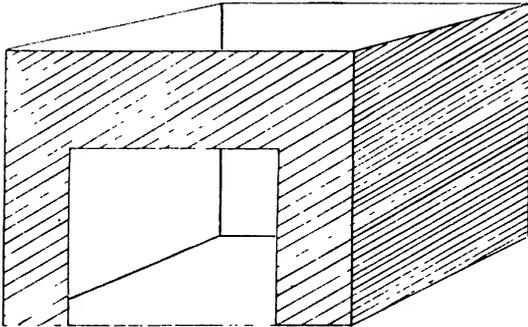


FIG. 34

The model theatre may be simple or elaborate. Probably the simplest method of any is to use a square hat box, and, on one side, to cut out the proscenium opening, as shown in Fig. 34. The



FIG. 35

size of the actual box is not important, provided that the opening is correct to scale, in each direction. Next, mark off, on the bottom of the box, the ground plan of the stage. Then paint the surrounding part black, leaving the stage itself white (Fig. 35). You will thus obviate making use of a part of the stage that is not there! You will also be able to check the dimensions of the model when you come to put it in the box.

The principal drawback of the cardboard box is that it is difficult to show the lighting that is to be used. The best and easiest way to illuminate the model is to paint the inside of the lid white, and to cut in the middle a circular hole, through which an ordinary electric lamp with a reflector can be hung. The box should be deep enough to allow you to hang the lamp so that the bulb is not seen. This method illuminates the model but it does not give an idea of how the finished set will look under the proper stage lighting.

Apart from the question of lighting, the cardboard box is all that is really required, but if

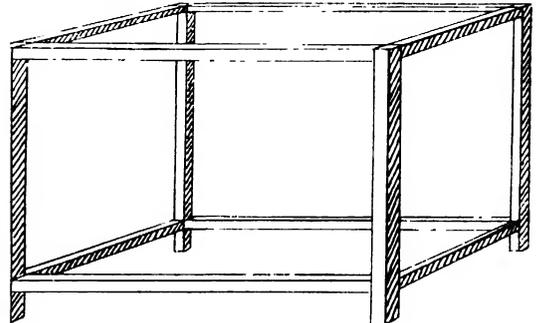


FIG. 36

you propose to make models at all frequently, or to use them, as I have suggested, for publicity and advertisement purposes, then something rather more substantial is desirable.

Fig. 36 shows the first step that has to be taken in the construction of a model theatre that will stand wear and tear. It is easy to make, and it embodies all essentials. It consists of a framework of square upright posts, held together, top and bottom, by cross pieces of the same dimensions, the whole forming the framework of a box. Notice that the lateral pieces at the bottom do not come to the foot of the box, but are nailed some inches from the bottom of the uprights. The lateral pieces should be cut short in order to come within the uprights to which they are nailed. A carpenter would, of course, joint these but to do so is not really necessary.

Fig. 37 shows the next process. A sheet of thin plywood is cut so that it can rest on the lower part of the frame, to which it may be either glued or nailed. The reason for the legs at the foot is

now seen—there must be space underneath the stage if miniature footlights are to be used, and the opening *A* is the trough to take these. If your stage has trapdoors, these should be cut in the plywood before it is fitted to the frame.

Next, the proscenium (Fig. 38) is cut out of plywood, and nailed or glued to the front of the box, and the sides are covered by miniature curtains of black velvet to enclose the light.

This theatre may, of course, be illuminated by means of a single electric bulb, but a much better method is to use strip lights for footlights and battens. These strip lights are tubular in shape, and can be obtained about eight inches in length. By placing them where the battens themselves would come, and by covering them with the appropriate coloured media, you can get a fair approximation of the actual stage lighting.

When installing the lighting system in your model, you should observe the same principle as in the construction of the theatre itself; that is to say, you should attempt to reproduce in miniature the actual lighting that you will use.

It is not necessary, however, to reproduce the lighting system, although this can be done. It would be possible to have miniature lighting battens with the same number of circuits as in your theatre and a switchboard by means of which each circuit could be separately controlled. This would not only be difficult but also extremely expensive. By using strip lights instead of battens, you can get as good results as by the more elaborate and expensive method.

Each strip should be connected to a resistance so that the amount of light can be regulated. The required colour is obtained by covering the strip with an ordinary gelatine medium, and if it is proposed to use circuits of different colours in the same batten you can demonstrate the effect of this by having media of these various colours on your strip. If the lighting in your theatre is sectional, that is to say, if all the lights on the prompt side of a batten can be switched off, leaving those on the O.P. side on, use two short strips instead of one long one.

A strip light should also be used for the footlights in exactly the same way. Care should be taken here to see that it is placed so that the light will strike the model stage at the same angle as the footlights do in the actual theatre.

A piece of tin, or other bright metal, should be used as a reflector behind all lights.

These strip lights have the great advantage that they can be plugged into any ordinary domestic lighting circuit. Plugging avoids the

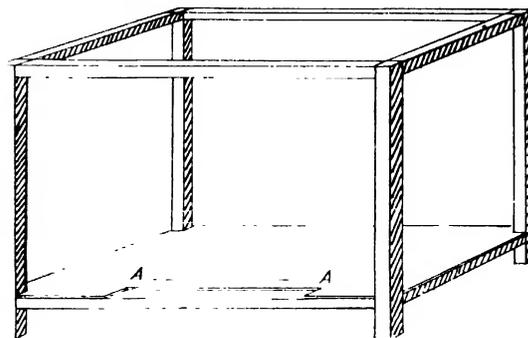


FIG. 37

necessity for batteries that require constant renewal or recharging, and cause inconvenience.

Batteries are necessary, however, when using miniature spots and floods, which play an important part in modern stage lighting. It is probably

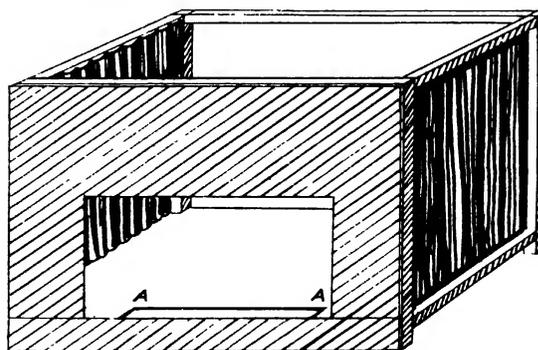


FIG. 38

simplest to use electric torches or low voltage bulbs connected to an accumulator or dry battery.

In the case of floods, a bulb and reflector are necessary. It is a fairly simple matter to arrange these where required, and to take the current from a dry battery elsewhere. The battery can usually be kept under the stage and out of the way.

A spot is rather different. The easiest thing to use is a focusing torch. The beam can then be directed where required.

The designer may learn a great deal from watching the effect of spots on a model. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that, where lighting is concerned, the model theatre

lighting. Lighting that suits a set admirably has frequently to be altered because its effect on a particular dress is unsuitable. Patterns of the materials from which the dresses are to be made can be held under the lights of the model theatre, and thus much information can be gained.

When the model is wanted for display purposes



FIG. 39 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ACTUAL SETTING USED BY THE CRESCENT THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM, IN THE PRODUCTION OF "LA MALQUERIDA"

Designed by Gwen Cahill

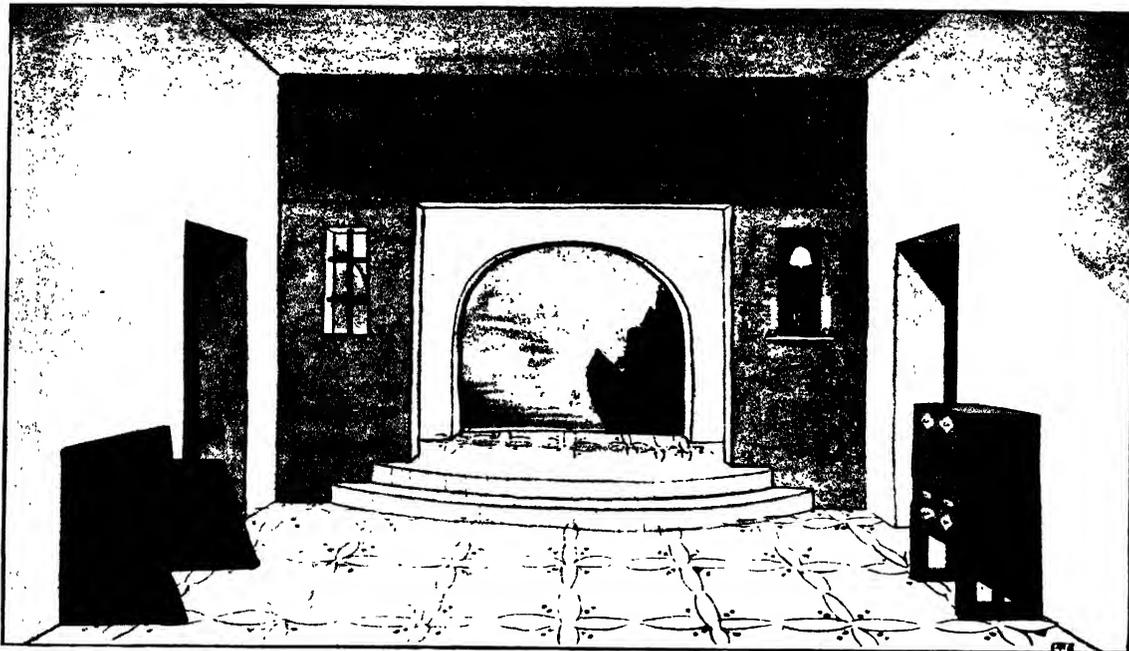
By kind permission of The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

gives only an approximation. The effect on the actual stage will probably be similar, but not necessarily the same. One reason for this is that it is impossible to scale down the lighting in the same way that you can scale down the set.

The designer will learn more from watching the effect of different coloured lights. A well-lit model is a real help. In a costume play, or in any play where the colour scheme of the dresses is likely to play an important part, the model should be used to ascertain the effect of the

in a shop window it is rarely worth while to use complicated lighting. The main thing is that the model should be brightly lit so that it will attract attention. For this purpose, therefore, choose a scene that lends itself to bright lighting, and dispense with spots or any lighting that cannot be taken from the mains.

Remember also that the model theatre will be twice as effective if you can persuade the proprietor of the shop to turn out any other lights in the window where the model is exhibited.



SKETCH FOR THE SETTING OF "LA MALQUERIDA"



SKETCH FOR THE SETTING OF "BLOOD ROYAL" BY JAMES KEITH

Some sheets of cardboard, drawing materials, a sharp knife, a box of water colours, and a roll of adhesive tape, are all the materials you require to make a model set. It is as well, however, to experiment with paper before making your cardboard model.

First, fix your scale. Then cut a long strip of stiff paper, the width of the strip being the height of the set to scale. Measure the maximum width of the set at the back, and the length of each side wall. Add these measurements together, and then cut the strip of paper in order to leave it rather longer than the total measurements. Then place the strip in the model box or theatre, and fold it to the shape required. Fig. 40 shows the strip folded for a conventional three-sided box set. Notice that the return pieces are much wider than is necessary. This is accounted for by the extra length allowed for when the strip was cut. It may be required if you decide, as you well may, that this shape is too severe and unattractive. You may then decide to break the wall at various

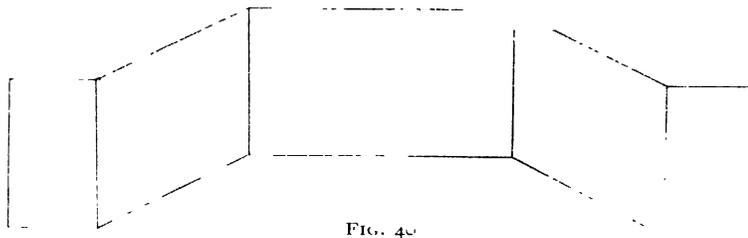


FIG. 40

points. Fig. 41 shows such a break in the back wall, which, it is seen, uses some of this surplus paper.

The paper can be folded easily, and various shapes tried out. Several paper models may be made quite quickly, and their shapes compared. By having the model stage correctly to scale, or by having a stage on which the size of the stage for which the set is being designed is clearly marked, it will be seen at a glance whether the set will come within the required compass.

Next sketch in roughly on the paper the posi-

tion of your doors, windows, and fireplace. Then mark off the set into the flats of which it will ultimately be comprised, taking care, wherever possible, to keep the width of the flats in even feet.

It is an advantage to have as few joints showing as possible, but, on the other hand, wide flats are

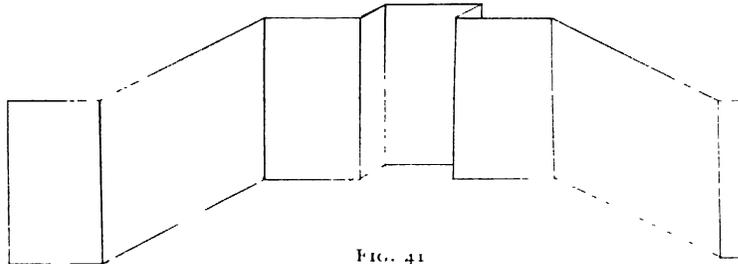


FIG. 41

awkward to handle. Six feet is a good width, but 5 ft., 4 ft., or 3 ft. may be required. Flats narrower than 3 ft. are not generally used, except for return pieces. Always avoid odd inches, if you can.

Fig. 42 shows the completion of the first stage of your model—in this case a simple set. The paper model is complete with doors, window, etc., roughly indicated, and the flats are marked off. All that remains to be done so far as this experimental model is concerned is to cut out the doors and fold them back so that they are fully open. If you are satisfied that this can be done without fouling the wall or a piece of scenery, and if you are satisfied with the shape and general design of your set, you can proceed to make the model itself in cardboard.

Use cardboard of a medium weight, and, again, cut a strip equal in width to the scale height of the set, and in length to the sum of the back and side walls, being careful to include any return pieces used. This time, however, the length can be determined exactly, because the shape has been decided.

A *sharp* knife should be used for cutting the cardboard, and a sheet of glass forms a useful and an inexpensive cutting surface.

Draw in the doors, windows, and fireplaces. The position of these has been determined on the paper model, and they can be quickly transferred by means of a pair of dividers. The paper model and the finished cardboard model must be made to the same scale, for obvious reasons.

The doors, windows, and fireplace must be

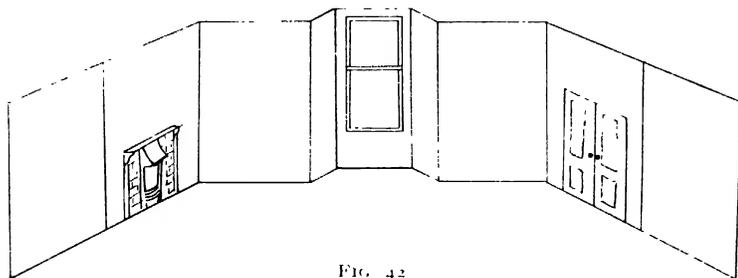


FIG. 42

drawn, not roughly, but accurately. Mouldings, panels, etc., must be shown. Do not, however, draw anything in perspective. Where any feature projects from the wall, as, for example, a mantel-shelf, draw a line to indicate where the shelf will come, cut out the shelf to scale from another piece of cardboard, and fix it in position with adhesive tape. Draw in the picture moulding, and skirting, or dado, if there is one, and then colour the model with water-colour paint.

When using water colours, first mix the colours you require with plenty of water, in a dish, and then, with a sable or camel-hair brush, flout the colour on, and allow it to dry. Never dip your brush in the colour and apply it to the paper or cardboard. This method shows brush marks, and makes it impossible to get an even wash of colour. Wait until the colour dries, and if you require a darker shade, add another coat, but never add a second coat until the first is dry. Similarly, if your doors, for instance, are a different colour from your walls, do not attempt to paint them until the colour on the walls is dry, or the one will run into the other.

It is advisable to decide the colour in the first instance by experiment on a spare piece of cardboard. By painting a sample and allowing it to

dry you can mix the colour to the required depth, and obviate the necessity of having to apply a second coat to the model itself.

All the foregoing work should be done before the model is cut or bent in any way. Fig. 43 shows the appearance at this stage of a finished model for a set of which Fig. 42 is the preliminary paper pattern.

When all your colour is dry, rule faint pencil lines to show where the flats join. This is necessary for the carpenters who are to make the set. Then turn the cardboard face down, and, on the back, rule a line at every corner of the set. (It will be noticed that the set in the illustrations has six corners.) Draw a sharp knife lightly along each of these lines. This ensures bending the cardboard at the proper place and prevents a ragged corner when the model is bent into the required position. Treat the hinge side of your doors in the same manner, and cut round the rest of the doors, so that they may be opened. Cut out the glass portion of your windows, leaving the frames and astragals.

All that remains to be done, now, is to bend

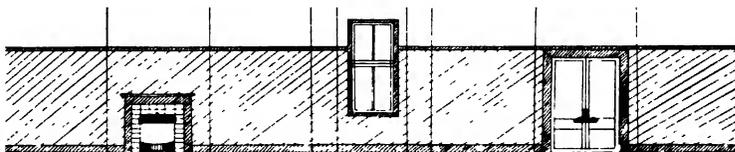
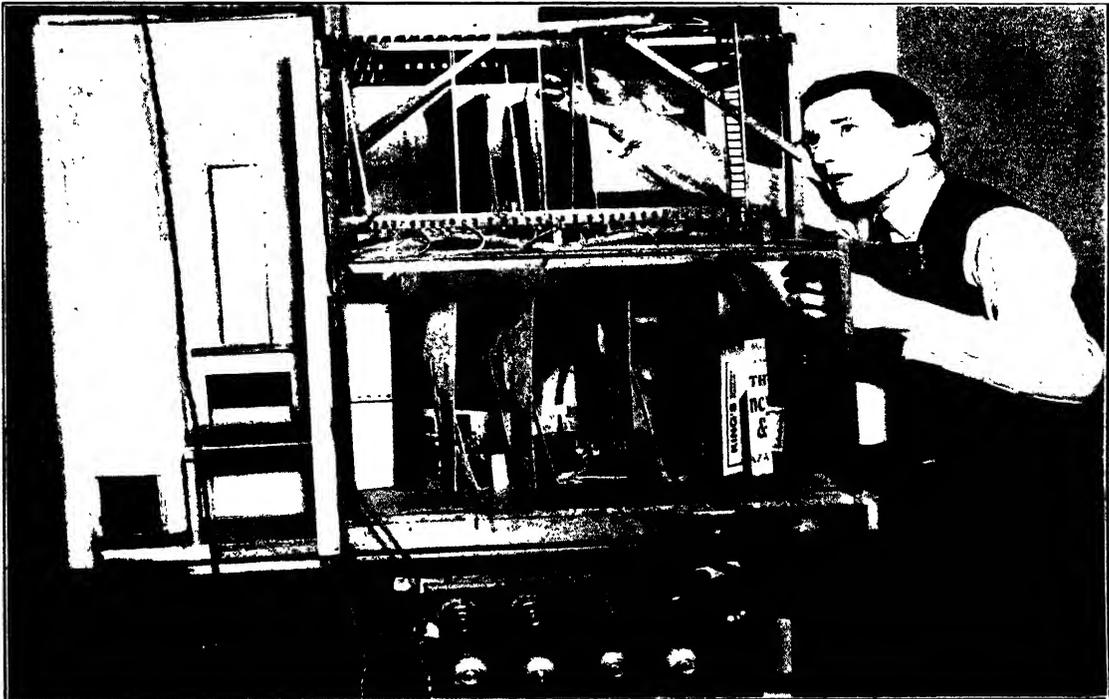


FIG.

the model into position and to place it in the model theatre, fixing it to the stage by means of adhesive tape. Adhesive tape should also be used on the back of the model to strengthen the corners, as in Fig. 46.

Fig. 47 shows the model complete, as far as the walls are concerned, and bent into position.

A ceiling can be added simply by cutting a piece of cardboard the same shape as, and rather larger than, the floor of the model, and laying it on the top. Finally, add the necessary backing—in this case for the window and door. If the



FIGS. 44 AND 45. COMPLETE MODEL THEATRE
Photos by Gibson, Glasgow

STAGECRAFT

door backing is of the folding type (Fig. 46) it will stand by itself. The window backing will require a strut, which, again, is fixed by means of adhesive tape (Fig. 48).

This simple interior model is now complete,

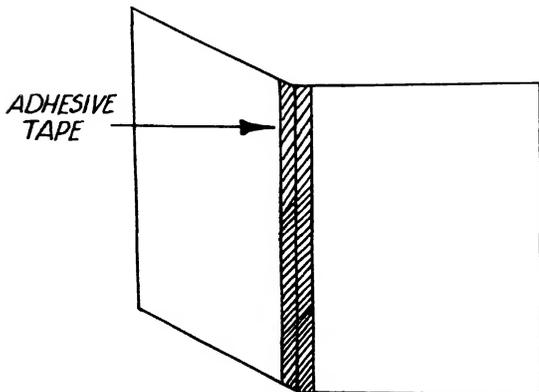


FIG. 46

but it has still to be furnished. The work involved gives considerable rein to the ingenuity of the designer. Cardboard, stout paper, and

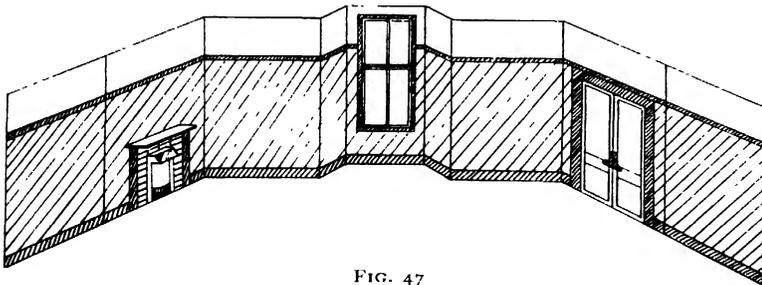


FIG. 47

matches are invaluable for making model furniture. As the furniture will probably not be made, but will be hired or borrowed, the same necessity for accuracy does not apply as in the case of scenery. Avoid, however, making model furniture that will give a false impression.

The top illustration on page 969 shows a particularly complete model theatre. The photograph might well have been taken from the front of the circle of a theatre. By looking at the lower

THEATRE AND STAGE

one you will see the size of the model in comparison with Mr. Lawrence Anderson, a Glasgow designer, who made it in his spare time. This photograph also shows how complete the theatre is in every detail, and how well it is equipped for

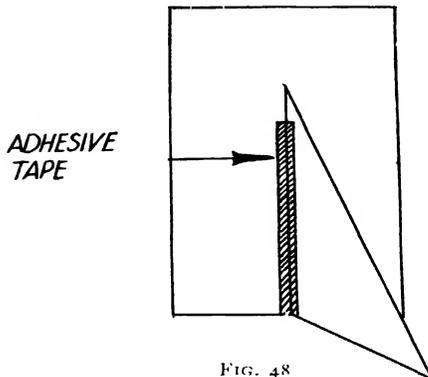


FIG. 48

displaying model sets. Notice the grid, with twelve sets of lines, and the switchboard, by means of which each circuit is separately controlled. The circuits can be dimmed, and the current for the lighting is taken from the mains. I hope that this photograph may prove an incentive to amateurs to devote attention to this branch of stagecraft.

While most of the units of model interior sets can be cut quite simply out of cardboard, sometimes an occasion arises when this method is troublesome, and time can be saved by the exercise of a little ingenuity. It is impossible to discuss here every possible occasion on which this may arise, but there are two common features of an interior that are worth discussion. These are (1) windows and (2) staircases.

Windows do not present a great problem as a rule, but it is often difficult to cut out the panes and leave the astragals. With a small scale model, the astragals will, as a rule, be narrow, and apt to bend or break. A useful method of overcoming this difficulty is shown in Fig. 49. The whole

window is cut out and the astragals are added afterwards. For this method use narrow tape, twine, or stout thread, and fasten it to the reverse side of the model.

There are many ways in which the astragals

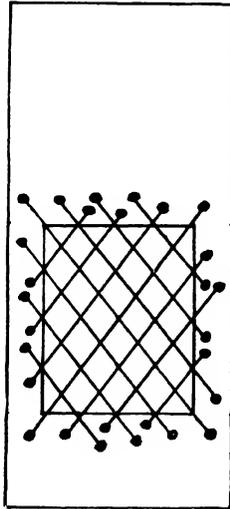


FIG. 49
REVERSE SIDE OF
MODEL FLAT
Showing astragals of
thread fixed with
sealing wax

can be fixed. One of the simplest is to use ordinary sealing wax. Sealing wax has the advantage over gum or paste that it is clean and pleasant to use. If the model is to be in use for a short time only Plasticine will serve the purpose equally well.

When the panes are as small as those shown in Fig. 49, it is difficult to make the model in any other way.

There are, of course, many different varieties of staircases. Generally speaking, however, it is best to make the actual steps of stiff paper, and to cut the balustrade, and the side of the staircase, out of cardboard.

The slope of the stair should be correct. The steps themselves must be carefully made to scale. Cut a strip of stiff paper to the width of the stair,

and rule parallel lines across it for each riser and tread. Treads are the portions of a stair on which you step. Risers are the perpendicular pieces between these. Fig. 50 shows the paper cut and ruled in this manner. Fold the paper at each of

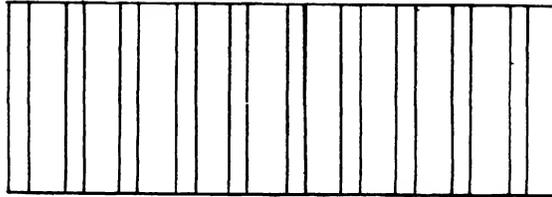


FIG. 50

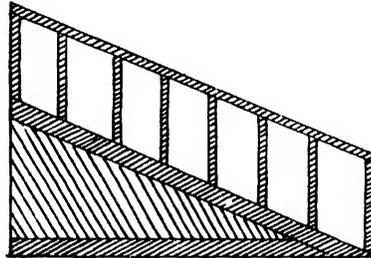


FIG. 51

the lines you have drawn, and make a right angle at each fold. Next cut out the side pieces of the staircase, each side being one unit (Fig. 51), and fix the steps to these by means of adhesive tape.

The newel post or posts should be made separately, with cardboard and adhesive tape, and added afterwards.

When the set is complete, it should be furnished in order to give an indication of how it will appear in its final form. The furniture should be as nearly as possible to scale. The material used for furniture and hangings should show the colours that you wish these to be. You will probably be able to buy toy furniture that will be approximately the right size. If not, you must make it. In addition to the materials that you have already used, a few boxes of matches will be helpful. The

matches are useful for making chairs, table legs, etc., and you will probably find a use for the boxes.

Fig. 52 is a photograph of a scene in the London production of *Grand Hotel*. It will be understood that the set is a small one, and that the furniture occupies a considerable amount of floor space. This is a case where model furniture should be

of backcloth. If you are lucky enough to have a cyclorama in your theatre, or if you are able to have a curved cloth at the back, this can be shown on the model by bending a piece of cardboard to the required shape and fixing it in position on the model stage. Make certain that you fix it in the correct position. Then cut out each piece of



FIG. 52 A SCENE FROM THE LONDON PRODUCTION OF "GRAND HOTEL"
A play by Vicki Baum, adapted by Edward Knoblock
The Stage Photo Co

carefully made to scale. The furniture is an essential part of the setting, and the position of the bed in relation to that of the doors is important.

When modelling an exterior scene, the principles for an interior apply. The set must be to scale, and the actual pieces of scenery that require to be made must be indicated. The borders must be hung where they can be hung in the theatre.

The first thing for you to decide is the type

scenery—walls, trees, railings, etc.—which you require. Paint the pieces with water colour, and place them in position.

Fig. 53 serves to show how the model theatre may be used to experiment with stage lighting. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* takes place on a bare stage. It may be thought that it will be impossible in these circumstances to make the scene look attractive. Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, who produced the play, solved the problem, in a most

ingenious way, by a skilful use of lighting. The shadows cast by the ladder and furniture, on a plain backcloth, give an effect that is arresting and macabre, and which is much in keeping with the spirit of the play.

This effect might have been arrived at beforehand by using a model theatre and noting the

masking—always a problem with an exterior set.

Notice the tree trunk, the cactus plant in the centre, the foliage in the foreground, and the foliage at the back. All these are separate pieces of scenery. If you were making a model of this scene, these would have to be cut out of separate pieces of cardboard. The foliage of the large tree



FIG. 53. SET FOR "SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR," BY LUIGI PIRANDILLO
Produced at the Westminster Theatre, London, by Tatone Guthrie
Photo by Pollard Crowther

effect of the shadows cast by an electric torch held in different positions, as an experiment.

Fig. 54 shows an exterior set—the Garden of Eden scene from the Masque Theatre's production of *Back to Methuselah*. You will gather that it is a small set—there is little movement in the scene—and that the size of the stage has been reduced by making use of a front cloth with a circular opening. This also reduces the quantity of scenery required, and gets over the difficulty of

is shown effectively by an irregularly cut border.

It is always a good plan to have two lines on the model stage to show the line of sight. These are particularly helpful when you are working with an exterior scene. With a box set, the problem of masking obviously does not arise to the same extent. It occurs only with windows and other openings. With an exterior, it is present all the time.

Amateurs are wise to use a plain backcloth

wherever possible. If the nature of the play allows, keep the backcloth as simple as possible. The painting should suggest the scene rather than depict it photographically. This applies also to a great deal of the painted scenery, such as trees, foliage, and flowers, which is used in exterior scenes. To reproduce such scenery realistically



FIG. 54. A SCENE FROM THE MASQUE THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF "BACK TO MITHUSIAH"
"The Bulletin," Glasgow

requires a degree of skill and experience in scene painting that few amateur societies command.

Always remember that it is a great deal easier to make a model of an exterior scene look realistic than to make the scene itself look realistic on the stage. You may be able to paint a most convincing backcloth on the cardboard of your model theatre, but it by no means follows that your scenic artist will have the skill to reproduce this on canvas.

The reader will, I hope, have gathered from what I have stated about models that the principal qualifications required by the model maker are moderately skilful fingers, a certain amount of ingenuity, and a great deal of common sense. It would be ridiculous to assert that there is one correct way to make a model. There may be a

hundred ways. The methods I have described are methods that may be adopted and that will help the beginner, but when you start to make models you will almost certainly discover devices of your own. Discovery is one of the attractions of model-making which gives initiative great scope.

There are not many amateur societies that make models of their sets as a matter of course. I believe that an appreciable increase in the number would considerably improve the general standard of amateur stage *décor*.

YOUR OWN SCENERY

Most amateur dramatic societies that survive their first adventurous productions and become established on a permanent basis decide to acquire scenery of their own. It is impossible to state dogmatically that this is advisable or that it is not. A great deal depends on the circumstances of the particular organization.

A society in a remote village will probably benefit greatly by having its own scenery made locally. The cost of carriage, added to the hiring charges, makes hired scenery expensive for such a society. Moreover, the producer, designer, or some other official, will probably incur expenses in going to select the scenery in the first instance. If the matter is arranged only by correspondence it is unlikely that the scenery that is sent will give satisfaction.

In the country, it is, as a rule, easy to arrange for the use of a shed or barn in which to make scenery, and it is equally easy to arrange to have it stored, free of charge, after it is made. Furthermore, the chances are that a country club has in its ranks handy men who are well qualified to make a good job of scenery construction.

A society in a city is rather differently circumstanced. In most large cities there are firms that let amateurs have scenery at reasonable prices. Some of them are prepared to make scenery to requirements, and allow it to be hired still at reasonable prices. The extra amount charged for making scenery specially will depend to some extent on whether the pieces made are suitable for stock—i.e. whether they are likely to be hired for other productions. Delivery charges within the city boundaries are not high, and with motor transport are cheap over a considerable radius.

The city society that makes its own scenery usually finds that it is confronted with a problem when it starts to look for workshop and storage accommodation. Suitable accommodation is scarce and rents are high.

These are arguments against home-made scenery as far as a city society is concerned. But

is amazing how few amateurs have any knowledge of this work: how few can explain, say, by what means flats are joined. There are books that deal with the subject, and if you are interested you should study them. I will give here the normal methods of construction as far as they are applicable to the work of amateurs.



FIG. 55 THE CRESCENT THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF "CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA," BY BERNARD SHAW
By kind permission of the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

although these arguments are sound, and there are more that might be adduced to support them, the fact remains that the society that is so seriously interested in the theatre that it develops into a well organized and efficient group, will eventually make its own scenery, whether its headquarters are in Golders Green or Golspie. The societies in more remote parts will probably be forced, for economic reasons, to make their own scenery.

It follows that the amateur actor should learn something about the construction of scenery. It

To begin with, you must have a workshop. There would be no practical point in describing the ideal workshop. There is, however, one essential that must not be overlooked. The door must be large enough to get the scenery out when it has been made. This is so obvious that it may appear absurd even to mention it, but it is, nevertheless, a point that is sometimes overlooked.

Next, there is the question of materials. You will need a set of carpenters' tools—hammer, saw, chisel, plane, screwdriver, etc., a foot-rule, and a

set-square, a glue-pot and brush, nails and screw nails, timber, canvas, paint, and brushes.

The most suitable timber to use is good quality white or red pine. It is sufficiently strong for all ordinary purposes. For making rostrums, ceiling frames, fit-ups, and anything that has to carry weight or that is subjected to a considerable strain, it is advisable to use a stronger timber.

by planing. To attempt to remedy it will make the upright too narrow at some point to carry the strain to which it will be subjected. This trouble will be avoided if you make sure that the timber you use is perfectly seasoned.

The timber should be ordered in strips three inches wide by seven-eighths of an inch thick. It should be dressed both sides, and be seven-eighths

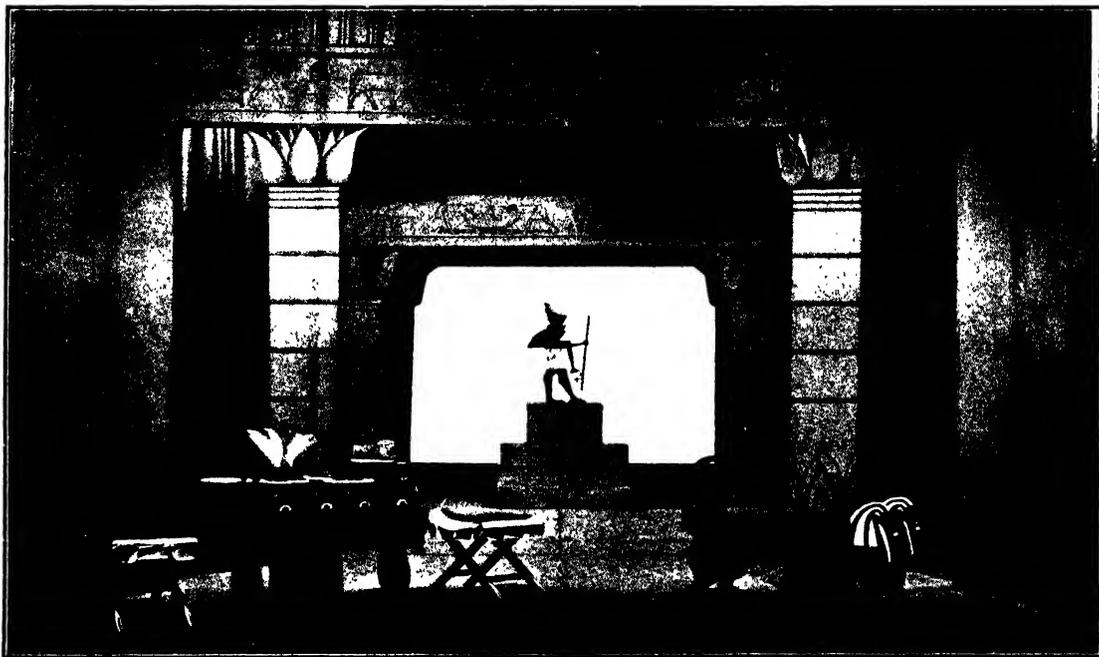


FIG. 56. THE CRESCENT THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF "CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA," BY BERNARD SHAW
By kind permission of the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Pitch pine is excellent for this purpose, but is inclined to be expensive and difficult to obtain.

Make sure that the timber is dry. Dryness is essential. Flats that are made of green wood will warp, and gaps will show between the flats after the scene is set. This defect can be eliminated only by planing the edge that has twisted until it is straight again. It may involve removing the canvas from the flat, and in any case the process is tedious. Sometimes a flat will become so badly twisted that it will be impossible to straighten it

of an inch after dressing. It is comparatively expensive to have the timber dressed (i.e. planed) at the saw mill. Preferably, the battens should be dressed all round. It is disproportionately expensive to have the edges dressed, and comparatively simple to do this work with a hand plane.

Order these strips in convenient lengths. For instance, if your set is sixteen feet in height, and your flats are all to be four feet wide, the timber might all be in sixteen and fourteen feet lengths. One length sixteen feet will give one upright, and

one fourteen feet four cross pieces of three feet six inches each. The balance of the width is made up by the width of the two uprights—three inches each—making four feet in all.

These dimensions are suitable for fairly general use. If the scenery that is wanted must be small—say, ten feet or under in height—material two and a half inches can be safely used. Amateurs

built scenery. All three sets were used by the Crescent Theatre, a "Little Theatre" in Birmingham. Figs. 55 and 56 were for a production of Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, a play that gives the designer considerable scope, of which Gwen Carher, who designed these settings, took full advantage. Fig. 57 illustrates the set for A. A. Milne's *Ariadne*, a play that does



FIG. 57. THE CRESCENT THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF "ARIADNE," BY A. A. MILNE
By kind permission of the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

rarely use scenery that is greater than sixteen feet in height. Eighteen feet is the standard height for flats in the professional theatre, and these are usually tapered in thickness to make them easier to handle by lowering the centre of gravity. This is rather difficult work for the amateur carpenter to undertake. Sixteen feet flats can be used quite well in practically any theatre.

Flax sheeting is a satisfactory canvas with which to cover the flats. It is sold in sheets six feet wide.

Figs. 55, 56 and 57 give three examples of well

not suggest the same possibilities for interesting treatment in the setting. Yet in its way this set, also designed by Gwen Carher, is as interesting as the other two. But no matter how clever the designer may be, the result will not be satisfactory unless the scenery is well constructed.

PLAIN FLATS

An ordinary flat is simply a rectangular frame covered with canvas, which is painted to represent whatever is required. Fig. 58

shows such a frame. It will be noticed that it has two additional cross pieces, or rails. These are required to strengthen the frame, and to ensure that it keeps its shape. The number required depends on the height of the flat. With a flat, 16 ft., it is advisable to have two. In the case of flats under 10 ft. high, it is possible to dispense with these rails altogether. It is not

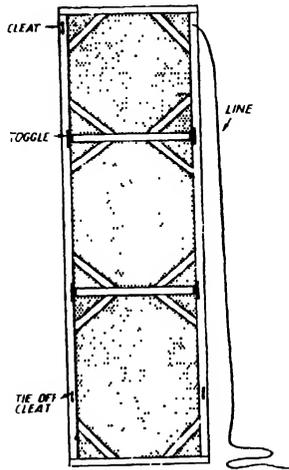


FIG. 58

advisable to do so, however, because they also serve a secondary purpose. They are used to carry nails or hooks for hanging pictures, mirrors, or other properties, on the walls. It is, therefore, wise to have at least one supporting rail, whatever the height of the flat. When the flat is being constructed, this secondary purpose should be remembered, and one rail should be placed at a height that is suitable for carrying whatever properties may be required.

I have already suggested that the timber for your flats should be ordered dry, from a sawmill, and dressed on two faces. In this case, all that will remain for you to do, in preparation, will be to dress the edges. This can be done with a hand plane in a few minutes.

Next, the timber must be cut into the lengths required. For the flat shown in Fig. 58, two long upright pieces and four short rails are necessary. The uprights are 16 ft. in length, but before

considering the length of the rails you must decide how these are to be jointed to the uprights.

Figs. 59, 60 and 61 show three different methods of jointing. In the case of the mortise and tenon joint (Fig. 59), a mortise, or socket, is cut in the upright, and a tenon, or projecting tongue, is cut on the end of the rail. The tenon must fit tightly into the mortise, in which position it is then

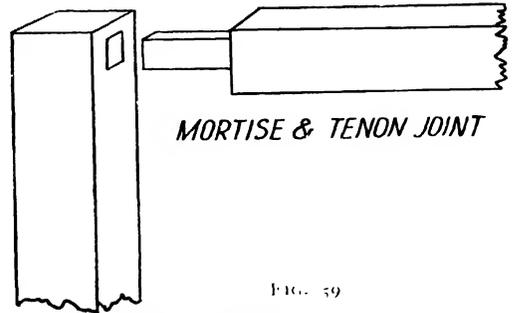


FIG. 59

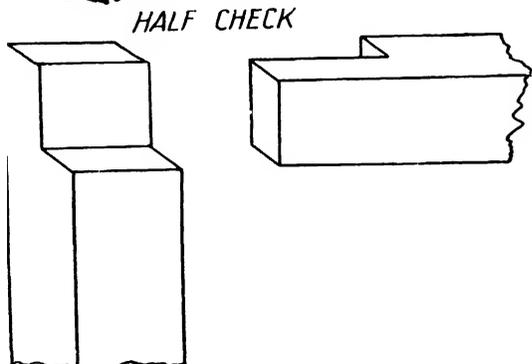


FIG. 60

glued. The length of the tenon must be the same as the width of the upright. There is no doubt that this is the most workmanlike joint, and it is almost always used in professionally made scenery, but it demands a certain amount of skill in carpentry, and also a good deal of patience. Therefore, I recommend the second method, or half check, as shown in Fig. 60. This joint is so simple that a glance at the figure will explain it. The two pieces must fit snugly together. They can then be fastened, preferably by gluing and nailing, or, alternatively, by means of screw nails.

The butt joint (Fig. 61) is simpler still. The ends are squared off, placed together, and fastened by a metal corner plate, which is screwed in position on the reverse side of the flat. This third method is the simplest for the amateur carpenter, and quite satisfactory results can be obtained by using corner plates in this way, if the scenery is small. If your scenery is 16 ft.

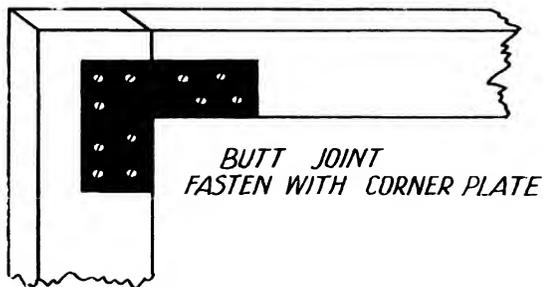


FIG. 61

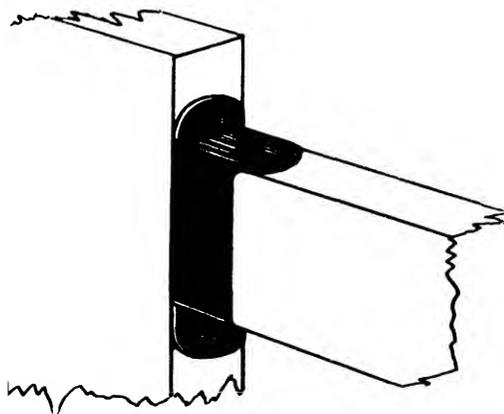


FIG. 62

high, however, there are objections to this method. The larger the frame, the greater are the strains on the joints, and the butt joint is weaker than either of the other two I have mentioned. Consequently, I recommend the half check for scenery over, say, 10 ft. or 11 ft. in height.

If your joints are half checked, or mortised, your rails will require to be cut the full breadth of the flat; that is to say, they will require to be 4 ft.

long for a flat that is 4 ft. wide. With a butt joint, however, they will be 4 ft., less the width of the two uprights. In this case the uprights will be 3 in. wide; therefore, if you are using butt joints, the rails will require to be cut in lengths of 3 ft. 6 in.

The inside rails are best fixed by means of toggles. A toggle is an iron attachment that is screwed to the rail and the upright (Fig. 63).

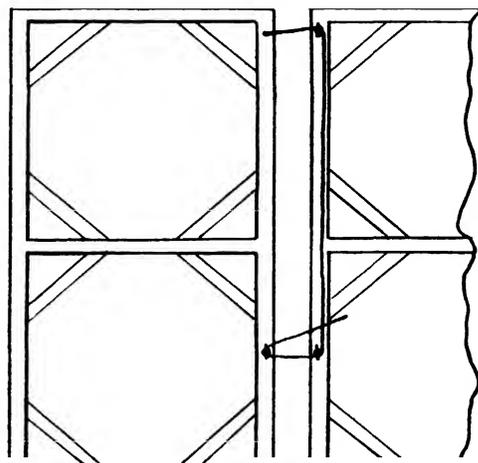


FIG. 63

Corner braces can be used to strengthen the frame and to ensure that it keeps its shape. These can also be fixed with toggles, which are comparatively inexpensive and easy to use.

The frame must be canvased. This step in the construction of the flat is not one that calls for any specialized skill. The canvas is cut to the required size, and glued and nailed to the frame, on which it must be tightly stretched. This work must, however, be done with great care. It is essential that the canvas be properly stretched, and that there be no creases or wrinkles.

Two things remain to be added—the line and cleats. The line, or rope, is a stout cord, of good quality and about the thickness of a clothes-line. It should be securely nailed to the back of the right-hand upright. The cleat is screwed to the back of the left-hand upright. The centre of the cleat should be exactly level with the point where

the line is fixed. A tie-off cleat is screwed—also, of course, on the back—about 2 ft. from the bottom of each upright. These cleats are used in conjunction with the line for tying the flats together. Fig. 63 shows how this is done. The line is passed over the cleat at the top of the next flat, and brought down, under and round the tie-off

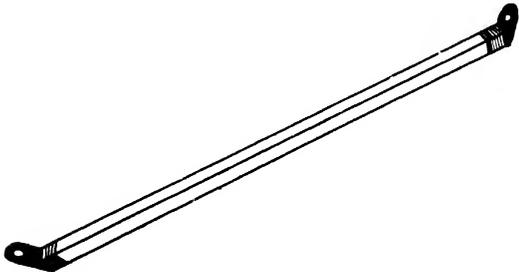


FIG. 64

cleats, where it is made fast. The two flats are thus held closely together.

With all the flats held securely in this manner, an ordinary three-sided box set will stand by itself, but not sufficiently firmly. The aim of the scenery constructor must be to give an impression of solidity and permanence. This impression is destroyed whenever there is any movement of the flats.

Movement occurs in two ways: (1) The canvas may billow out from the frame. This will not happen if the canvas is properly stretched in the first place. (2) The flats themselves may move or sway, even when they are tightly laced together. To counteract movement or swaying, it is necessary to use braces to support a number of the flats at the back.

These braces may be of wood or iron, and they are usually from 4 ft. to 6 ft. in length. There is a metal attachment at either end of a wooden brace. Each has a hole through which a screw eye is passed. The brace is screwed to the flat at one end, and to the stage at the other (Fig. 64). If the brace is of iron, the holes to take the screw eyes are in the brace itself.

Wooden braces can be made without much difficulty. The metal attachments that are fastened to each end can be made by a local blacksmith or bought at a small cost. I suggest, however,

that as these braces can be purchased cheaply, most amateur societies would do well to buy a few from the makers.

A better brace than either of the two I have mentioned is the wooden extension brace. This is made in two pieces, which are clamped together. The length of the brace can, therefore, be adjusted after it is fixed in position, and the angle of the flat it is supporting can be altered by this means. These extension braces are rather more expensive, but it is a great advantage to have at least two braces of this description.

The brace is secured to the flat by means of a metal screw eye. This can easily be screwed in with the fingers. A screw eye is not, however, suitable for screwing to the stage. Most stages are made of hardwood, and a substantial, specially made screw is necessary, if it is to be screwed in with the fingers. The screw eye does not give sufficient purchase, and what is known as a stage screw should be used.

In some cases the management of the theatre will not allow screws of any description to be driven into the stage. The brace must then be held in position by a weight. Weights specially shaped for this purpose can be bought.

It is preferable, and much quicker, to have a hook instead of a hole on the top end of the brace. The screw eye is then screwed into the flat, first of all, and the brace is hooked to it.

The method I have described is the normal method of securing scenery. Flats should never be nailed together, either at the top or at the bottom, unless the set is permanent and has not to be changed. Then, of course, the set may be built as substantially as time and finances permit. Each side may be built in one unit, in which case joints will be eliminated. To do this, however, is expensive. Few societies would build a set that had to be scrapped after one production.

Even when stock scenery is being used, if the set is to remain up for a whole production it is possible to exercise much greater care in setting, and refinements that would not otherwise be possible can be introduced. For instance, a narrow piece of canvas should be glued over each joint, and then painted the same colour as the rest of the set. This work hides the joint; if it is well done it makes it impossible for the audience to detect where one flat ends and another begins,

and it adds greatly to the appearance of reality. An actual plastic picture moulding can be added. This should be carefully mitred at the corners. It can be placed at any height—not necessarily the height of a rail—because it will be sufficient to nail it where the uprights of the flats occur. If lights have to be switched on or off, the light can be wired to the actual switch used by the players. This will ensure perfect timing, and ease the task of the electrician, who has probably got to bring up several circuits at the same time as the light is switched on. It is often difficult to do this with one pair of hands.

There is another type of plain flat—quite different from that which I have described. It is extremely easy to make, and although suitable only for small scenery, it is an ideal type for many societies. This is a flat made of Beaver boarding, or any similar material of this type, which is used extensively in modern buildings. The flat consists simply of a piece of Beaver boarding cut to the required size, and strengthened by a wooden strap down each side. The boarding should be screwed to the strap, which need not be more than 2 in. by $\frac{7}{8}$ in. after dressing. The cleats and line should be fixed to these straps in the usual way. It is unnecessary to have any cross nails. No canvas is used, the boarding itself offering an ideal surface for painting. These flats, however, have the disadvantage of being heavy, and for various reasons it is impracticable to use Beaver boarding except for small scenery—say about 10 ft. high.

I have dealt at length with the plain flat because it is the standard unit of a set. Other types, required for doors, windows, fireplaces, etc., are variations, and if the construction of the plain frame is thoroughly understood it is a simple matter to grasp the differences necessary for flats that are to be used for special purposes.

DOORS

Doors are often an extremely important feature of a set. A door may be the focus point of a scene. It is, therefore, important that doors should be well made and realistic.

There are two distinct types of doors from the scene-builder's point of view. There is the painted canvas door, which forms part of the flat on which it is hung; and there is the solid

wooden door, hung on its own frame, which is placed behind an opening in the flat.

The first type, which is shown in Fig. 65, is, undoubtedly, the easier to make, from the carpenter's viewpoint. The door flat is made in exactly the same way as an ordinary plain flat, but an additional framework is required to carry

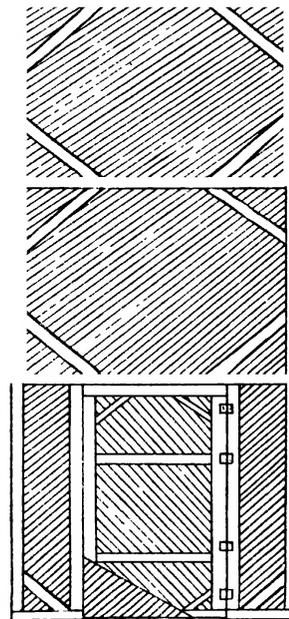


FIG. 65. DOOR FLAT

FIG. 100 is, of course, canvased on both sides. The canvas on the back has been omitted to show the construction of the door frame.

the door. The first cross rail is placed at the height of the top of the door—say, 6 ft.—and forms the lintel. From this, downwards, run two additional uprights. These form the door jambs. Their distance apart is, of course, regulated by the width of the door. These uprights are joined by short rails to the main uprights at the bottom, an opening, which allows the door to open and shut, being left.

Sometimes the flat is completed by an ordinary rail that runs the full width of the flat, and the door is shortened so that it swings clear. This

practice is fairly common with scenery that is being hired out and is required to withstand hard usage. A bottom rail, which runs the full width of the flat, gives solidity, and enables the door to stand more violent treatment. It is quite definitely,

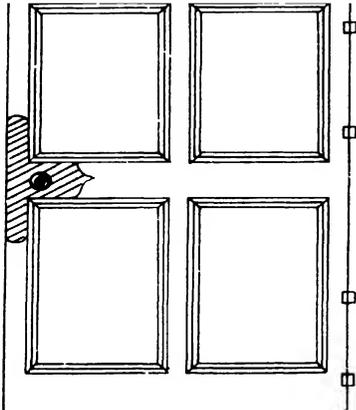


FIG. 66. TYPICAL TYPE OF ROOM DOOR

however, a bad type of door flat, and is to be avoided. It is obviously impossible for a player to make a satisfactory entrance or exit if he has to step over an obstacle as he opens the door.

The flat shown in Fig. 65 is perfectly satisfactory, and when it is used it is not necessary to join the door jambs at the bottom. There is no doubt, however, that to do so strengthens the frame and lengthens its life if it has to be moved about much by road or rail. If this is a point that you must consider, use a piece of iron, instead of a wooden rail, below the door. The iron can be quite thin; it will lie flat on the floor, and will subject the players to much less embarrassment.

The door itself is simply another frame, which fits the opening. The door and the flat should be made separately, and canvased in the same way as a plain flat, except that in the case of the door flat the canvas must, of course, be cut to the appropriate shape. The piece of canvas that is cut out can be used for one side of the door itself. The door must be canvased on both sides.

The door is then hinged to the flat. Remember that it is essential to know *how* your door is

required to open. This must be ascertained before the door is hung. If it is required to open off stage, the hinges will be on the back of the flat; if on stage, on the face of it.

The advantage of this type of door is that it is light and is easily handled. Further, it can be repainted many times to represent different types of door, i.e. a room door, a front door, a barn door, etc.

It has, however, many disadvantages. No matter how well it is painted, and how tightly the canvas is stretched, the door never has the same verisimilitude as that of a wooden door. There is always liable to be a certain amount of movement of the canvas, and this destroys realism.

From the point of view of the amateur, the painting of a canvas door is a task to be avoided unless there is someone available who is willing to devote a great deal of time to learning the art

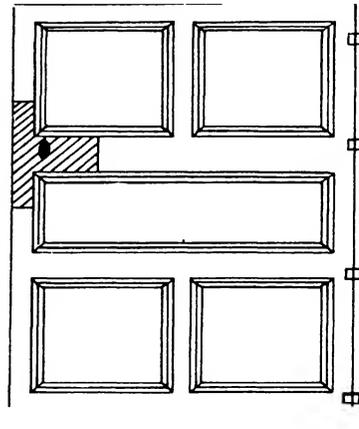


FIG. 67. A MORE ELABORATE TYPE OF ROOM DOOR

of scene painting. The painting of a door is not difficult for an experienced professional scene painter, but it is not an easy task for the amateur, and even with professionally-made scenery a painted canvas door is never completely convincing. The type of door shown in Fig. 68 which is made of lining boards, and which is common in barns and outhouses, is almost the only one that the comparatively inexperienced might with complete success paint on canvas.

The solid wooden door is usually hung on its own frame, which is set behind a flat similar in every way to that shown in Fig. 65—except that the door is absent. It is possible to hang a wooden door on the flat itself, but the weight of the door places a great strain on the framework of the flat, which must, therefore, be substantially constructed. As a result, when the flat is completed and the door is hung, the unit is heavy and difficult to move.

A door hung on a separate frame is comparatively light and portable. It has another advantage—the canvas of the flat is not so liable to move when the door is opened and closed, as the door and door frame are not actually in contact with the flat. It is this movement of the canvas that destroys the impression of solidity which the scene builder and designer try to create.

An ordinary door consists of a frame with a varying number of panels according to the design.

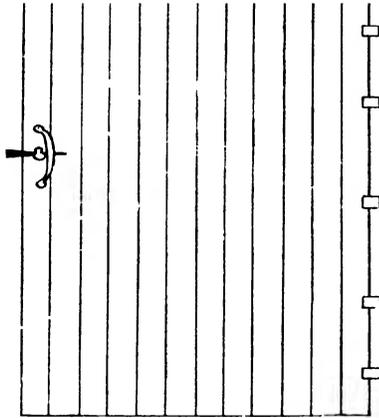


FIG. 68. TYPE OF BARN DOOR

Fig. 66 shows the simplest type of room door. The broad rail in the centre is called the lock rail because it carries the lock. In an ordinary door the panels are, as a rule, sunk, i.e. they are fitted into grooves in the centre of the thickness of the frame. The join is hidden by a moulding. It is not necessary to make a theatrical door in this way. The frame itself can be made in the same way as the frame for an ordinary flat, the centre rail being the height of the handle of the door.

Both sides of the frame are then covered with thin plywood, and the moulding that surrounds the panels is nailed on the top of the plywood. By "planting" the moulding in this way the panels are suggested, and the moulding casts

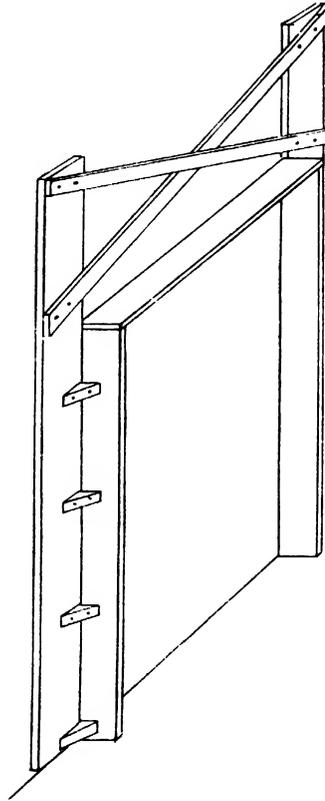


FIG. 69. FRAME FOR A DOOR

natural shadows. A door that is made in this manner may appear, in the distance and under stage lighting, to be actually more realistic than a genuine joiner-made door.

As an alternative it is often possible to buy old doors very cheaply. As a rule, however, these have the disadvantage of being heavy, and therefore of requiring a proportionately heavy frame.

Fig. 67 shows another variation of an interior door. There are many different designs for doors,

as you will discover if you look carefully at the doors in your own house and the houses of your friends. By planting your mouldings in different positions you can, with ease, suggest any type. You can also remove the mouldings and alter their position for a new design in another production.

Fig. 69 shows the frame on which the door is

for strength. The frame should be carried up several feet above the lintel. Small triangular blocks of wood are used to fasten the thicknesses to the rest of the frame. This frame, when it is completed, should either be separately braced or fastened to the door flat in front of it in the same way that one flat is fastened to another. It is



FIG. 70. AN INTERESTING SET

At the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, production of *Shakespeare*, by H. I. Rubenstein and Clifford Bax. This set was designed by Gwyneth Carher. Note the thickness of the wall shown in the opening stage right. By kind permission of The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham.

hung. The construction of this frame is simple, and requires little explanation. The illustration shows one of a number of ways in which the frame can be made. It should be strongly constructed. One inch, or an inch and an eighth, timber should be used. The width may vary, but it should not be less than 2 in. The width of the timber used for the thickness will depend on how much thickness you wish to show. The greater the width here, the greater will be the apparent thickness of the wall of your scene. Normally 6 in. will be sufficient, but this can be increased. If the scene is an old castle, for instance, the thickness can be 2 ft., or even more. The cross braces above the door lintel are added

preferable, but not always possible, to have the door frame close to the flat without being actually fastened to it, but it is essential that no light should show between the frame and the flat.

The principal disadvantage of this type is that the door can open off stage only. On the other hand, the thickness of the frame gives a valuable impression of solidity. As a matter of fact, this thickness is not usually seen in a room, because, normally, a room door is flush with the wall inside, and opens inwards. For accuracy, if the set is in a room, the door should be hinged to the flat and the thickness, nailed to the back of the flat, will show when the door is opened.

Double doors are constructed on exactly the

same lines as single doors. Barn doors are sometimes divided horizontally so that the top or bottom half can be opened independently. A glass panel is suggested by simply leaving the panel blank.

It is not as a rule necessary to fit a real lock, but if the door has to be locked during the play a lock should be fitted. Handles, door plates, etc., can be purchased cheaply and the real articles

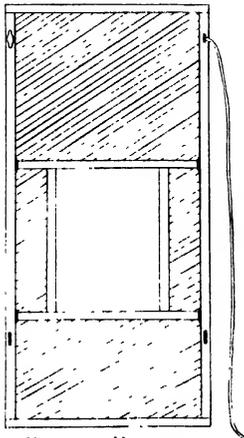


FIG. 71 WINDOW
FLAT
Back view

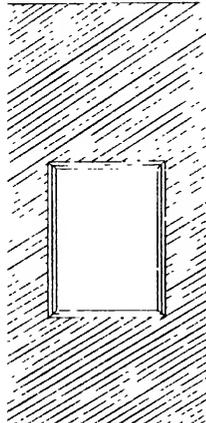


FIG. 72 WINDOW
FLAT

should always be used. A painted door plate is less satisfactory. Handles should be on both sides of the door. Even if the back of the door is not seen, some kind of handle is necessary for the players to open the door, when it opens off stage. A screw eye can be used for this purpose, but a handle is better.

WINDOWS AND FIREPLACES

The construction of an ordinary window flat does not present any serious problem. You will see from Fig. 71 that the framework differs from that of an ordinary flat only in so far as the additional framework to carry the window is concerned. Two rails are necessary for the top and bottom of the window, and these are joined by two uprights for the sides. The flat is canvased, the space for the window being left blank. Afterwards a broad, simple moulding

to surround the window opening should be nailed on the face of the flat. Suitable moulding can usually be bought cheaply from a saw mill or a joiner, and if you state the purpose for which it is required you will probably have little difficulty in getting what you want. In this case the moulding is to represent the window facings. Failing a moulding, use lengths of plain, dressed timber, two to three inches by half an inch. The width of the moulding or the plain facing, as the case may be, will vary according to the size of the window opening. The smaller the opening, the narrower the facing.

Now make a simple window frame as shown in Fig. 73. This frame should fit tightly into the opening in the flat. The advantage of making the window frame separately

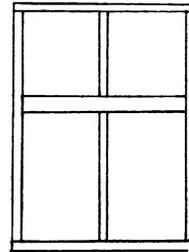


FIG. 73 WINDOW
FRAME TO FIT INTO
WINDOW FLAT

is that you can use the same flat for different types of window in different productions. Windows vary greatly, and of a room may be expressed by its window, it is important that you should be able to alter the type of window from production to production with a minimum amount of trouble and expense.

A simple, cheap, and quite satisfactory type of window is shown in Fig. 74, where ordinary black or brown tape is used to indicate the astragals. Tape may be used in this way for almost any variety of window. It is stretched tightly across the back of the frame, and fixed to it by means of strong drawing pins. The type of mullioned window shown in the figure is troublesome to make in the ordinary way. With tape, it can be made in a few minutes. In this case, of course, no separate window frame is necessary, the tape being fixed to the window flat itself.

So far I have dealt with non-practical or impractical windows only; that is to say, with windows that cannot be opened. If you wish to suggest an open window, which is to remain open all the time, it can be done by making a frame as shown in Fig. 75. An open space is left under the frame, which is supported by a wire nail driven in under the frame on either side. (See

A in Fig. 75.) These nails are easily removed when another frame has to be used in the flat. Such an open window is also non-practical,

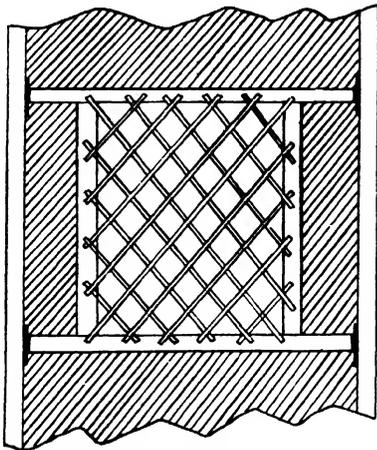


FIG. 74. PART OF THE BACK OF A WINDOW FLAT

Showing the use of tape instead of a wooden window frame

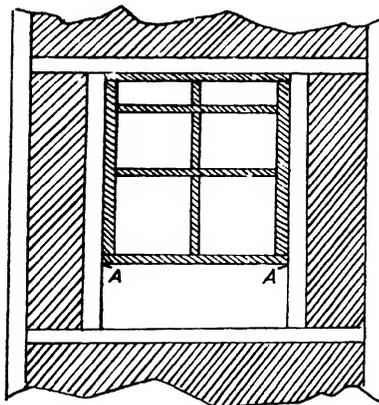


FIG. 75. PART OF THE BACK OF A WINDOW FLAT

With frame of an open window fitted
A -- nails supporting window frame

of course. A practical window is one that is made so that it can be opened or shut during the action of the play. Windows are made to open in two dif-

ferent ways. There is the french window, hinged at one side, and opening outwards or inwards. As this type is exactly the same as a door—it is, in fact, a glass door—it need not be described here.

The other is the commoner type of window, and is to be seen in most private houses. It is made in two parts so that it can be pushed up from the bottom or pulled down from the top.

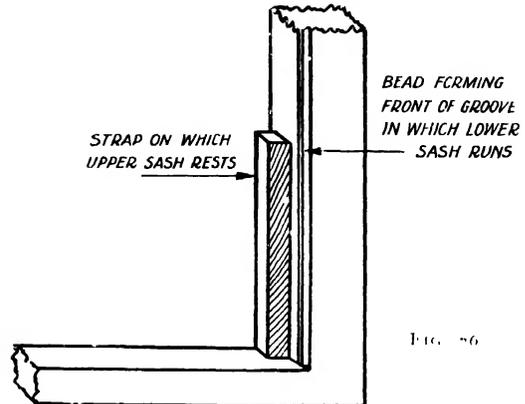


FIG. 76

It is only rarely on the stage that a window has to be opened from the top. As a rule the bottom sash has to be pushed up. In this case the window is made in two halves, and the top half is a fixture. It is fitted into the flat and held in position by two wooden straps nailed to the side of the framework of the flat (Fig. 76). These straps serve a double purpose. In addition to supporting the upper sash, they form one side of a groove in which the lower sash runs. A narrow strip of wood, or beading, nailed to the front edge of the framework forms the other side of the groove. The groove should be greased with tallow, or candle grease, so that the sash will move easily. It can be jammed in position at the required height by forcing one side up and the other down. As a rule this arrangement is quite satisfactory. A normal window is hung on lines that pass over pulleys and that have attached to them weights which equal the weight of the sash. Thus the window is counterweighted, and will remain stationary at any height. To achieve this, however, involves considerable carpentry.

The windows described are all normal types that are frequently wanted. Every designer has his own ideas, and there is almost no limit to the

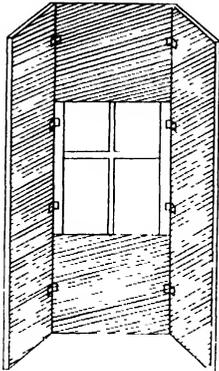


FIG. 77. WINDOW UNIT

The shaded portion represents plywood nailed to the frame. The hinges are painted over.

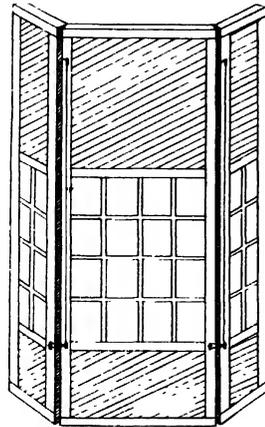


FIG. 78

number of varieties that may be produced. If the financial resources of your society are limited, I suggest that you make one or two of the window flats that I have described, and insist that your designer shall have windows that will fit them. It is possible to have a great deal of variety without altering the actual window flat itself.

There is another type of window that is extremely useful. The whole window may be built as a separate unit, and, placed behind an opening in a flat, it gives the effect of a recessed window. The flat may be exactly the same as a door flat for use with a separate door frame. By this method your door and window flats are made interchangeable, and expense is reduced.

Fig. 77 shows a separate window unit. It is made in

three pieces hinged together. It must be tall enough to prevent the audience seated in the front row seeing over the top of the unit. The height will be governed by the height of the opening of the flat and the depth of the side pieces.

There remains the built out, or bow, window. This is a feature that is common in the settings for what are called "West End comedies." An actual bow window is troublesome to make, and from the point of view of storage and expense I would advise the use, wherever possible, of a three-sided built out window. Fig. 78 shows such a window. It consists simply of three flats roped together in the usual way. Nothing new in construction is involved.

Fig. 79 shows a fireplace flat. It is a plain flat with a space left for the grate. The fire may be placed behind the opening with a fireplace backing behind the fire. This indicates the large open chimney that is seen in old country houses. This arrangement is shown in Fig. 80. On the other hand, the ordinary grate seen in a small house may be shown by making a unit consisting of the grate and tiles. This is placed in front of the flat, and the mantelpiece is placed in front of the grate unit (Fig. 81).

The frame, canopy, and grate are made of

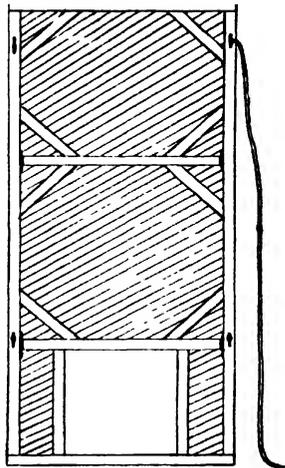
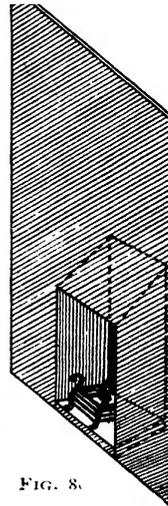
FIG. 79. BACK OF
FIREPLACE FLAT

FIG. 80

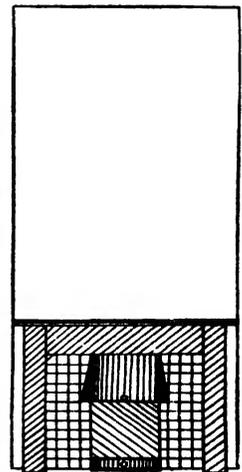


FIG. 81

wood. Plywood can be used for the canopy and the grate. The sides of the frame are canvased and the tiles are painted.

The mantelpiece is a separate unit. It stands by itself, but is held hard against the flat by means of a line attached to the back, and fastened to a screw eye in the rail at the back of the flat. Fig. 81 shows the simplest type of mantelpiece. There are many varieties, and planed mouldings may be used effectively to relieve the bareness of the simple type shown in the illustration.

There are various ways in which the fire itself may be indicated, but no matter how this is done, a satisfactory effect is produced only by using an electric bulb to supply the light that shows the fire to be burning. I have seen various attempts made to indicate a fire without using electricity. Coloured tinsel is sometimes employed, and as it sparkles to a certain extent in the light of the stage, it does produce something akin to the effect of a fire, but it is at best a makeshift.

The electric bulb may lie on the bottom of the grate, or, preferably, one or more lamp holders may be screwed to the back of the grate piece, inside. If this is done the bulb itself will not be in contact with any other part of the unit. This is important. When an electric bulb is lighted, it generates considerable heat and any flimsy material, such as paper or thin canvas, which is in contact with it, is liable to take fire. If the bulb is allowed to lie on the bottom of the unit the grate should be lined with asbestos, or a thin sheet of metal (a tin lid will serve the purpose) to obviate the risk of fire.

The front and top of the unit should have wire netting fitted so that the material used to represent the fire is held clear of the light.

The old-fashioned method of representing a fire was to paint a piece of canvas with patches of red and yellow and black. The light shining through this gave an approximation of a coal fire, but was not realistic. Almost the only advantage that this type possesses is that it is easy to make.

Pieces of red, yellow, and black crêpe paper, squeezed into tight balls, and allowed to expand so that they are irregular in size and shape are more satisfactory than painted canvas, and quite easy to prepare. They should be laid on the wire netting so that it is completely covered, and they may be supplemented by actual lumps of coal.

Probably the most satisfactory fire, however, is made by covering the wire netting with a foundation of thin black gauze on to which are glued pieces of amber glass, red mica, and charcoal. Various shades of red and yellow glass may be used. Old bottles form an excellent source of supply. This type of fire takes a certain amount of trouble to prepare, but it is satisfactory and realistic when it is finished. It absorbs more light than the paper or canvas types, and it is, therefore, necessary to have a strong light inside the fire.

Doors, windows, and fireplaces all require some form of backing. A backing is a piece of scenery that represents whatever is on the other side of the door or window, and is placed so that the audience cannot see into the wings through the door or window opening.

I have already mentioned the fireplace backing. It is the simplest of all backings, and is made in either two or three pieces that are hinged together. It is painted to represent the back of the chimney, and as a rule is either black or grey. Its only function is to "mask" the fire opening. The question of masking is all-important where backings are concerned. The backing must be large enough, and must be so placed that no member of the audience can see round or over it. If the fireplace is in one of the side walls, a two-piece backing will be sufficient. This will stand at right angles so that one half will screen the back, and the other the upstage side of the fireplace. It will not normally be possible to see through the downstage side. If, however, the fireplace is in the back wall, the back and both sides must be screened, and the backing will have to consist of three leaves.

The simplest type of door backing is the same as a two-leaf fireplace backing, but, of course, much larger. It consists of two small flats hinged together, or rather of one flat made in two pieces, as the canvas on the face of the flat is stretched across both leaves. This type of backing has two great advantages. It is easy to handle, and it does not require to be braced. It will not usually require to be more than eight feet high. Four feet is a normal width for each leaf, but sometimes one leaf is made broader than the other.

A window backing can be made in exactly the same way, and painted an egg-shell blue. The

door backing should be painted a neutral colour if it is to be used for different productions.

EXTERIORS

Exterior scenery varies greatly. It is, therefore, not possible to generalize on the construction of exterior sets. Generally speaking, an exterior

Fig. 82, taken from the production of *The Gates of Ur*, by W. G. Hole, illustrates this point. This play was produced by Evan John at the Arts Theatre in 1932. The entrance to the house on the left (stage right) was made of two ordinary flats, one containing the door opening, and the construction was quite simple.



FIG. 82 SETTING FROM "THE GATES OF UR," BY W. G. HOLE

Photo by Pollard Crowther

set consists of a backcloth or cyclorama in front of which various pieces of scenery are set. The sides are masked by curtains, wings, or flats representing a feature of the scene.

For the construction of these flats the same principles apply as for the construction of interior scenery. The unit is the same, but it is painted differently. Flats can be painted, for instance, to show the outside of a house instead of the inside of a room. There may be a door into the house. There may be windows, seen from the outside instead of the inside. The construction of all these flats, however, is the same in every way as that of flats for an interior box set (pages 977 to 981).

Backcloths do not involve construction, and wings, not now in general use, are constructed on exactly the same lines as flats, the only difference that is likely to occur being that the edge may require to be shaped to conform to the design. For instance, the wing may be painted to represent trees or shrubs. A straight edge would destroy the reality of the most skilled scene painting. This difficulty is most easily met by adding to the flat an edging of plywood cut to the required shape. This edging should be quite narrow: only broad enough to allow the design to be cut out, and to leave a couple of inches, clear of this, with the purpose of strength.

Plywood is a most useful material for scenery construction. It is particularly useful for exterior sets because these frequently involve the construction of many comparatively small pieces, and the weight of the plywood, which prevents its more general use, is not a serious disadvantage.

As a rule, it is more difficult to produce a

The "cut out" is a piece of scenery that is in general use. I have already stated that plain backcloths are now more often used than the old-fashioned painted cloth. This is more particularly the case where the more artistic and experimental forms of play are concerned, and the new amateur movement is largely concerned with these forms.

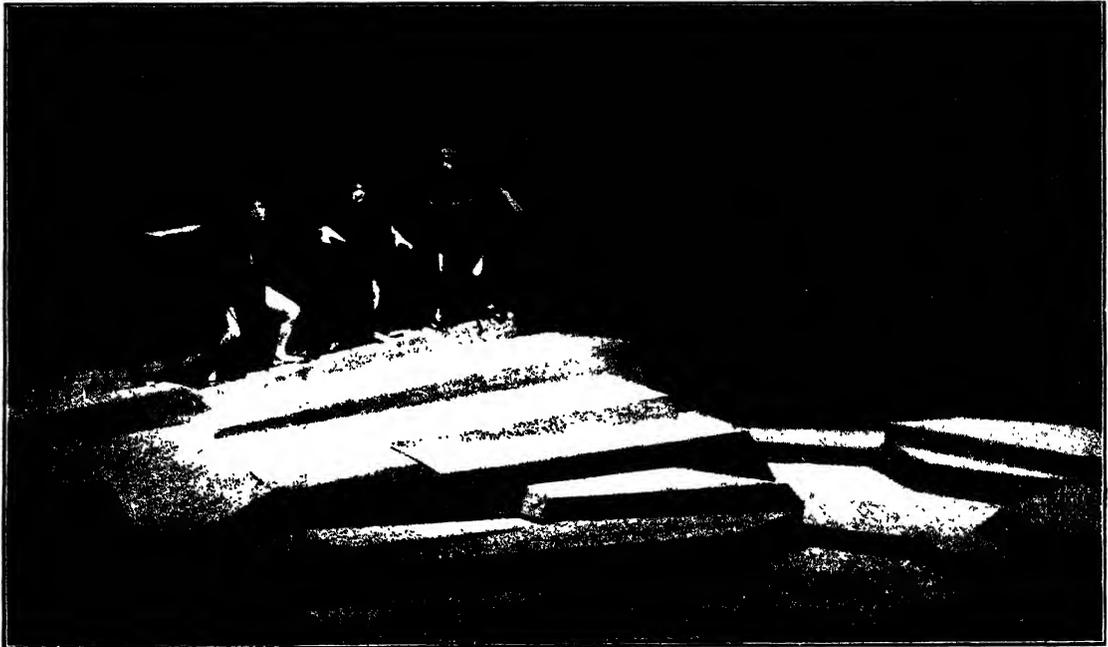


FIG. 83. SETTING FROM "MACBETH," BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Photo by Pollard Crocker

convincing exterior than an interior set, and it is necessary that care should be taken to make the scenery appear to be solid. To achieve this end plywood, instead of canvas, should be used wherever possible. For instance, wall pieces can be made of canvas-covered frames. Amateurs will not find the painting of an ordinary brick wall difficult, but if the canvas is not perfectly stretched the illusion of solidity is immediately dispelled, no matter how skilful the painting may be. A light frame covered with thin plywood, instead of canvas, is much more satisfactory and durable.

It is a common practice to place in front of the plain cloth one or more "cut outs," which, in addition to indicating the type of scene, give a greater impression of depth and distance than can be achieved by a painted cloth. Moreover, the "cut out" hides the point where the backcloth touches the stage. If this can be seen it tends to destroy realism, more particularly if the backcloth is rolled from the bottom. A "cut out" is also sometimes used in conjunction with a painted backcloth.

The "cut out" is made of one or more sheets

of plywood nailed to a light frame. The frame need be strong enough to support only the plywood and prevent it from sagging, and its shape must, of course, conform to the shape of the design to which the plywood is cut. In the case of a small "cut out," a frame is not absolutely necessary if the plywood is fairly stout, but it is

Fig. 82, from *The Gates of U* production, demonstrates the use of a "cut out." You will see a "cut out" stage left. Notice how it hides the base of the backcloth and gives an impression of distance.

Several "cut outs" can be placed one in front of the other to increase the effect of distance.



FIG. 84. SETTING FROM "JUDAS," BY F. V. RATTL, TRANSLATED BY F. O'DEMPSEY

Photo by Pollard Crowther

always advisable to have one or two $\frac{3}{8}$ in. straps at the back, to which the braces can be screwed, even if they serve no other purpose. It is a good plan to have a similar strap running along the base of the "cut out." This portion is most apt to suffer damage.

The plywood is painted as required, the shape of the design being cut out with a fret saw. The design should always be painted first, and the plywood cut afterwards, so that the top of the design appears in silhouette against the cloth. It is a mistake to cut the plywood before the design has been painted. Some alteration to the painting may be required, and this is made difficult if the shape at the top is unalterable, as it is if the plywood has already been cut into a design.

Each "cut out" should have a ground row of lights behind it; otherwise it tends to sink into the backcloth and it will not give that stereoscopic effect that is so valuable.

The "cut out" can also be used effectively for backing a window, or other opening, in an interior set. Here it is used either against a cloth or against an ordinary window backing.

There is a great variety of plastic units, such as trees, pillars, banks, walls, etc., which may have to be constructed for an exterior set. When these are formal and stylized, as I have suggested they should be wherever possible, their construction is simpler, and the effect more convincing in its own manner than when realism is attempted.

Formal trees, such as those shown in Fig. 85,

may consist either of a light wooden frame, on which canvas is stretched, or of a piece of plywood cut to the required shape and strengthened on the back with wooden straps.

A unit like this may be braced in the ordinary way, or, if speed in setting is an important factor,

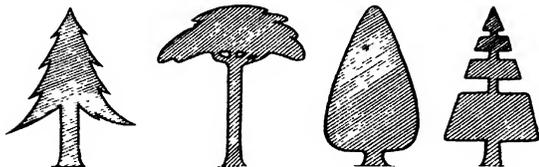


FIG. 85. FORMAL TREES

it can be made so that it will stand by itself. Fig. 86 shows such a tree piece made of plywood. It is important, if the piece is heavy, and carries its own stand, to make certain that the centre of gravity is low; otherwise it is liable to be knocked over. It is also important that no portion of the stand can be seen from the auditorium; that is to say, the trunk of the tree must be wide enough to mask the stand. If you are cramped for room on the stage, and there is any danger of a player brushing against a unit, that unit should, in any case, be braced.

A realistic plastic tree is much more difficult to construct. It is necessary to make a semi-

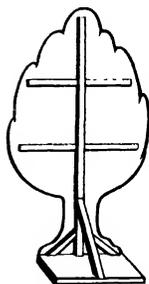


FIG. 86

circular frame, which is covered with canvas and painted to represent the trunk. Short branches can be cut out of plywood and nailed to the frame, or miniature frames can be covered with canvas and added to the main trunk. Large branches are impossible unless they can be supported in some manner. Foliage can be represented by a border painted and cut to represent the leaves, or by a border of netting to which the canvas leaves are glued.

This is seldom convincing, and is now rarely seen, even on the commercial stage, except in musical comedy and pantomime.

When you are making a plastic unit, no matter what it represents, remember that it is necessary to construct only that portion of it that will be seen by the audience. For instance, a tree trunk or a pillar requires only a semi-circular, not a

circular, unit. At the same time, remember that any portion of the unit that is seen by the audience must be represented.

You may have a high wall, say a wall 10 ft. in height, and it will be quite impossible for the players on the stage, or the audience in the stalls, to see the top of the wall, but the top may well be seen by the audience in the gallery. If this is the case, then you must show the thickness of the wall along the top; otherwise it will appear simply as a piece of painted scenery to those members of the audience who are in the gallery.

Figs. 83 and 84, from *Macbeth* and *Judas*, show the manner in which units of irregular or formal shape can be used in modern exteriors. It will be seen that striking effects can be obtained in this way. It is a style of design that should appeal strongly to the amateur society for two reasons. Firstly, because a maximum effect can be obtained in this way on a small stage, and, secondly, the same units can be used many times in different positions, producing totally different effects.

The units themselves are easy to construct. The irregular slabs in the *Macbeth* scene require a solid framework, which is necessary whenever a player has to walk on the unit. The framework is covered with strong plywood, or with $\frac{3}{4}$ in. flooring boards, which are, in turn, covered with plywood.

When the units are being used for effect only, and do not require to be walked or sat upon, as in the case of the *Judas* production, then they can be quite light. They should, in fact, be as light as possible, so long as there is no doubt that they will retain their shape and appear to be solid at all times.

Thin plywood that is, in fact, little thicker than stout paper can be obtained. This is useful for bending round a frame to produce rounded effects like the pillars in the photograph.

SCENE PAINTING

My advice to amateurs who propose to paint their own scenery is a little like Mr. Punch's famous advice to those about to marry. It is, however, less sweeping. I would not advocate that they should do no scene painting at all, but I would suggest definitely that they should confine their activities in this direction within narrow bounds, and realize their limitations at the outset.

The painting of the flat surfaces of an ordinary interior set is well within the scope of the talent possessed by any amateur club, but elaborate painting, such as that required for a backcloth depicting a landscape scene, should not be

At the same time, the scenery you use must be painted. Even a plain backcloth must be painted with a flat wash of colour. Scenery is always painted in water colour. Oil is expensive, and an oil surface is apt to cause reflections of light.



FIG. 87 A SCENE FROM "SOCRATES," BY CLIFFORD BAX, PRODUCED IN THE PRINCE OF WALES'S THEATRE BY A. E. FILMER FOR THE STAGE SOCIETY AND THREE HUNDRED CLUB

Photo by Pollard Crother

attempted unless the society has in its ranks someone who is skilled in the art of scene painting.

By imposing this limitation on their scenic work, I do not believe that the members of any society will limit their scope as far as play production is concerned. Painted backcloths are out of date, and there is seldom an occasion when a plain backcloth, supplemented by suitable cut outs, is not quite as convincing as a cloth painted by an expert designer. It is certainly more artistic.

Before painting a new canvas it must be primed. The priming coat is composed of a solution of size and white paint, in water. A quarter of a pound of size and a quarter of a stone of white dissolved in a pail of water makes a good priming coat. Size is really powdered glue, and is sold in packets under that trade name. Paint your canvas with an even surface of this priming coat, and allow it to dry completely. It will then be ready to paint to whatever colour you require.

Mix your paint in exactly the same manner as for the priming, except that in place of white use whatever pigment or pigments you require. Paint for scene painting is sold dry in the form

start. If you run out of colour before your set is finished it will be difficult to mix the second supply to exactly the same shade as the first. It is advisable to experiment on a small piece of canvas until you have mixed the paint to the exact shade that you require, and it is a good plan to keep a supply of gelatine mediums in your workshop so that you can see the effect of the proposed stage lighting on your canvas. Even if this is not possible, it is in any case wise to paint by artificial light rather than daylight, which gives to your colours a value that is quite different from that which they will have under stage lighting.

When you are experimenting with your colour, do not judge it until it is perfectly dry. This type of water paint dries many shades lighter than it appears when first applied. A second coat should not be added until the first is dry, and it is absolutely essential that when a second colour is being applied, as is the case, for instance, when you paint the skirting board round the base of a set, that the first colour should be dry before you touch the canvas with the second. Otherwise the two will, of course, run into each other.

It is not necessary, and in fact not usually desirable, that your surface should be particularly even and smooth when finished. Remember that your handiwork is to be seen at a distance, and that at a distance irregularities blend, and actually give a greater impression of body and solidity than a smooth plane.

Wield your brush vigorously, therefore, with strong strokes. Boldness should be the keynote of the scenic artist.

A still better effect is often achieved by using



FIG. 88 BACKCLOTH USED IN A CANADIAN TOUR OF "QUALITY STREET" BY J. M. BARRIE

Photo by Pollard Crowther

of powder. It is mixed with the size solution because the size is necessary to bind it to the canvas. If the paint were mixed with water alone it would rub off when dry.

It will save considerable trouble if you make certain that you mix sufficient colour to finish the particular job you have in hand before you

two colours, one superimposed on the other. Your set could, for instance, be painted in two shades of green. It could be painted first with the lighter shade, and stippled with the second. That is to say, the second would be applied with a rag or sponge all over in small, irregular patches. The effect at a distance would be a blend of the two

Wherever it is possible, mouldings, skirtings, etc., should be plastic. Actual wooden mouldings should be used. If this is done they need only be painted with a flat wash of the required colour. If, however, the moulding itself is painted, then the shadow it will cast must be painted also in order to throw it up and make it appear to stand out.



FIG. 89 A SCENE FROM "A SLEEPING CLERGYMAN," BY JAMES BRIDGES, IN THE PICCADILLY THEATRE BY H. K. AYTHY FOR SIR BARBY JAC

Photo by Pollard Crowther

shades. The result is more lifelike and solid than if the flats are painted with a flat wash of the resulting shade.

The same thing can be done with two or more contrasting colours, and this will be particularly useful if the set has to be used in different productions because the colours will change and the whole character of the walls will alter under different stage lighting.

When you wish to paint some feature, such as the skirting board already mentioned, outline it first in charcoal. If it is a question of drawing a straight line, a short batten can be used as a straight edge.

When you have to paint shadows remember that all the shadows in the set must be painted on the same side of the feature that casts them. If your light comes from the top, the shadows will be below. A point should be decided on as the imaginary source of light, and all shadows painted as they would be cast were the light coming from that point.

It is a mistake to paint your walls too dark a colour. The lighter shades respond better to lighting and are more attractive.

Fig. 87, from *Socrates*, illustrates the type of scene painting that is within the scope of most

amateurs. The formal Greek key pattern round the door presents no problem, and while it must be neat and well done it does not call for any particular artistic talent. Similarly, the stylized tree can be made effective without the employment of a professional scenic artist. It is attractive and amusing, but not in the least like a tree. At the same time, it suggests a tree, and suggestion is all that this style requires.

Fig. 88, from *Quality Street*, demonstrates the type of painting I referred to at the beginning of this section, a type that the amateur would be well advised to avoid until he has acquired considerable experience. Greater photographic accuracy is aimed at here, and the amateur will not, as a rule, achieve this—certainly not on a large canvas. On a small canvas, such as a window backing, it may be more successful, and there are times when it is necessary.

When you have to paint a particular scene in this manner on a cloth or backing, work from the miniature that you have sketched for your model. On your sketch rule equidistant parallel lines, first from left to right, and then from top to bottom, so that the sketch is covered with squares. Each side of the square should represent a foot of the finished canvas. Thus, if the scale of your model is a quarter inch to the foot, then each square will be a quarter inch. Next rule your canvas in the same manner, using a piece of charcoal and a straight edge, so that it is divided into squares of one foot. This should be done lightly, for the charcoal must be erased afterwards. It will now be a comparatively simple matter to enlarge your sketch on the canvas. The outline is drawn in lightly with charcoal. The position of each part of the picture with reference to a particular square on the sketch should be noted, and transferred to the corresponding square on the canvas.

Fig. 89, a scene reproduced from James Bridie's *A Sleeping Clergyman*, shows a style of painting that is to some extent a compromise between the stylized and the realistic methods. The scene is decorative, but not completely stylized. My personal opinion is that it falls rather between two stools. I include it to show that there are any number of "styles" in scene painting and to maintain that it is impossible to lay down any absolute rules where art is concerned.

When you begin to paint, be bold. Remember, again, that your work will be seen from a distance, and that you are concerned with bold outline rather than minute detail. Be bold also in the use of your colour. It is easier to make an effect on the stage with primary colours than with pastelle shades.

For the rest—study and constant practice will in the end produce pleasing results, but unless you have natural talent, or already possess some knowledge of draughtsmanship and painting, you will be well advised in the first instance to confine yourself to the simpler forms of painting.

FURNITURE, PROPS, AND COSTUMES

It should be unnecessary to say that furniture and properties play an important part in dressing the stage. Nevertheless, this truism is not always appreciated, and one frequently sees performances where this matter has obviously received scant attention.

The choice of carpets, window curtains, table covers, cushions, chintzes, and anything that strikes a predominant colour note must be governed by the wishes of the designer. These must fit in with the general scheme of decoration, and cannot be considered apart from the other factors that unite to make the picture required by the designer and the producer.

In an amateur production, however, where funds are limited, the designer will be lucky if he gets exactly what he requires. Many of the items I have mentioned are expensive, and it would be out of the question to buy them for a single production. A carpet large enough to cover an average stage, for instance, might cost several hundred pounds. Therefore, the designer must not be unreasonable. He must realize that compromise is necessary in many departments of amateur production. At the same time, this fact should not be allowed to damp the enthusiasm of those who are searching for furnishings. No pains should be spared to have these as nearly as possible to the requirements of the designer. It is usually easy to distinguish a production where real efforts have been made in this direction from one that has been put on with little care or thought.

In the case of a modern play, it is often possible to persuade the management of a local

warehouse to lend all the necessary furnishings—if a suitable acknowledgment is made in the programme. The alternative is to hire or borrow the furnishings. This takes much time, and must not be left until the last minute. Each item must be seen. Descriptions of colour and design are not to be relied upon.

Some items will probably have to be bought. When you are buying material for window curtains, covers, etc., remember that they are to be seen at a distance and that quite a cheap material will look effective. You can save a good deal of money by spending a little time in finding out where material can be bought to the best advantage.

Much of the foregoing applies to furniture as well as to coloured hangings or carpets. While unsuitable furniture can interfere with the designer's ideas, and militate against the play, it will not have such an immediate effect on the audience as an ill-balanced or jarring scheme of colour.

Nevertheless, it is important that the furniture should be carefully chosen. In a modern play the furniture can assist the production greatly by indicating at the outset the type of person with

which the play deals, but absolute accuracy is not as essential as it is in the case of costume. Furniture, on the whole, varies less than dress, and the variation is less obvious to the man in the street. It is, therefore, as a rule, sufficient if the furniture is approximately that of the period.

Fashions in furniture last longer than in



FIG. 91. ANOTHER SETTING USED IN "SHAKESPIARE" AT THE CRESCENT THEATRE

By kind permission of the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

clothes. Thus the same type of furniture may be correct over a long period of years. As an example, horsehair, and heavy, massive mahogany or walnut furniture is the hall-mark of the Victorian era. Large circular or oval mahogany tables, supported by a single central pillar, were common then. This furniture, however, exists to the present day, although it is out of fashion. It would, therefore, be equally correct in a play dealing with a well-to-do family in, say, the eighteen eighties, or in one dealing with a Bloomsbury boarding-house or an old-fashioned family of the present day.

The various periods of furniture should be studied. Some historical periods had furniture of a distinctive design, made commonly of a particular timber that was popular at the time. Other periods had little to distinguish them. Thus in the days of Stuart England the furniture was nearly all oak, and was as a rule substantial. Twisted spiral legs are characteristic of this Jacobean furniture. It is still well known because it is still popular and frequently copied to-day. The Queen Anne chair legs were distinctive and characteristic. They are of a design that is still in everyday use. When, as in the two instances I have cited, the same design of furniture is still

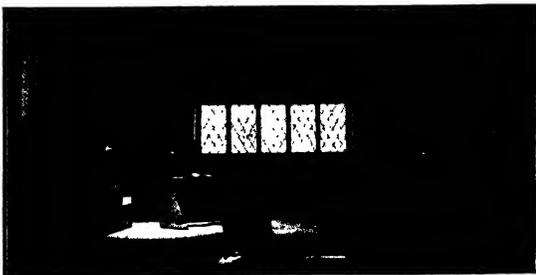


FIG. 90. SETTING FOR "SHAKESPIARE"

By H. F. Rubenstein and Clifford Bax, designed by Gwen Cadher for a production at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

By kind permission of the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

which the play deals. The position in the social scale of the family that lives in the house, its taste, its idiosyncrasies, and even the sex of the person responsible for the planning of the room, can all be shown by the furniture.

In a period play it is, of course, important that the furniture should be correct for the period

reproduced, it is comparatively easy to get modern furniture that is correct to period, and it is worth remembering that although you are presenting a play dealing, say, with the time of Cromwell the furniture should not look three hundred years old. It was presumably more or less new at the time. Therefore, new furniture of the old design is exactly what is required. There are

lighting. Small defects in workmanship will not be noticed, and a coat of paint will cover defects. Such pieces can be simple, but have some feature that is characteristic of the period.

Home-made furniture has one great advantage: it can be made to appear solid and still be light. It is pieces for early periods that are the most difficult to procure, and it is these that will often



FIG. 91. SETTING FOR THE COCHESTER REPERTORY PRODUCTION OF 'YES AND NO'

Courtesy Dr. H. S. L. SULLIVAN

many cases where this can be used, and it is always advisable to take advantage of this when you can. Genuine antique furniture is valuable, and, therefore, unsuitable because of the heavy financial responsibility that the society that uses it must shoulder. There is always a risk of damage to furniture, even under the best stage management. Moreover, antique furniture is often frail because of its age, and the cost of replacement of a piece damaged beyond repair might be considerable.

If you find it impossible to get furniture of the period or type that you require, remember that it is possible to make convincing furniture in your own workshop. A handyman who is a moderately good carpenter will not find great difficulty in making simple furniture, such as chests, chairs, or tables. Remember that these are to be seen at a distance and under stage

lighting. Figs. 90 and 91 illustrate examples of the furniture of Elizabethan times. It can be seen that it is heavy. Even if genuine furniture of this period were used, it would be extremely difficult to handle. The designs are simple, and, therefore, easy to reproduce.

The question of weight should always be borne in mind when selecting any furniture. If it has not to be moved during the play the weight can be ignored, but if there are frequent changes of scene it is preferable that the furniture should be easily handled.

When one set is being used for two different scenes and the furniture alone is used to indicate the difference, it assumes a paramount importance. In such a case it is essential that the two sets of furniture should be completely different, and that both should be distinctive, to achieve the maximum contrast.

As with furniture, so with props. Great care should be taken in selecting all the odds and ends that go to dress the stage. I do not refer to props that are actually used for business, or props that are indicated in the dialogue. These are usually chosen with care, and are related to their purpose.

friends. I do not suggest that a room should be littered, but it should appear furnished, and look like a room that is actually used. This is not merely a matter of chairs and tables. It concerns books, pipes, papers, pictures, and so forth.

When choosing and placing these props, always



FIG. 93. SETTING USED IN THE GALT THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF "WHICH"
By Antonio Bibesco
Photo by Pollard Crockett

What is not always realized is that properties contribute to a great extent both to the scheme of decoration and to the atmosphere of the set. A vase of a wrong colour can upset a carefully balanced scheme, and the effect of a well-designed interior can be lost because the room looks bare and un-lived in.

Generally speaking, stage living rooms are a great deal tidier than our own, or those of our

remember the nature of the play and the character of the owners of the various articles. The properties must always be appropriate.

Book cases are common in modern plays, and always present a problem. A book case filled with real books is too heavy to move if it is large, and if there is a quick change there will not be time to remove the books and replace them. A good plan is to cut a sheet of plywood and fit it with struts so

that it will stand upright on the shelf, and either to paint this to represent the backs of books, or, preferably, to remove the covers from old books and glue these to the plywood. The portion above the covers of the books should be painted black. Remember if you use the former method that all the



FIG. 94. COSTUMES USED IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF "RIZZIO'S BOOTS"

By kind permission of "The Bulletin," Glasgow

books will not be the same height. It is a common mistake to see rows and rows of painted books all of the same size.

The set in Fig. 92 reveals the significance of stage dressing and how important props can be in the general scheme. This set is an ordinary room. The effect is produced by the odds and ends which show that the room was inhabited by a rather haphazard and untidy family and indicate the various activities of the different members of it.

The room shown in Fig. 93 also illustrates the effectiveness of properties and furniture—in this case in an *ultra*-modern setting. The set here is, of course, also of great importance, but it is the combined effect of set, furniture, and properties, or in this case the scarcity of properties, which creates a definite impression and makes the audience aware of the exact type of room before a word of the text of the play has been uttered.

Only the more discriminating members of the audience will realize such an impression. The average theatregoer, while he may be a keen judge of a production, is not usually aware *why* one succeeds and another fails in his eyes.

I believe that good acting tells more with an audience than anything else. This is natural. Bad acting will not be redeemed by careful attention to properties and decoration. But this attention will enhance good acting and may lessen the bad impression made by an indifferent cast. Without it perfection is impossible, and it is only by striving after perfection in every department that an amateur society succeeds.

Although it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of good scenery, the scenery itself is only part of the mounting of a play. It is equally important that your hangings, furniture, carpets, cushions, and all the furnishing of the stage should harmonize and form, with the scenery, an artistic whole. This is obvious if you consider the

matter. Window curtains and cushions that clash with each other or with the walls will destroy the effect of the most artistically designed and carefully built scenery. Furniture inappropriate to the type of room will strike a disturbing note. As a rule, producers realize this, and do their best to make the stage both artistic and correct. But amateur producers do not always remember that the costumes of the cast are also a part of the scheme of *décor*. It is quite as important that attention should be paid to these as to scenery and furnishings. The production should be one artistic whole, and the costumes are an important part of that whole.

This must be appreciated at the beginning, and the arrangements for the costumes and scenery made at the same time. All too often the producer does not see the clothes of the cast until the dress rehearsal—usually the evening

before the first night. The scenery is arranged. The lighting rehearsal has been held. The producer has got the stage as he wishes it. Suddenly the whole effect is marred by the appearance of a character in a costume that is entirely out of key with the whole scheme of *décor*.

In all probability it is too late to get another costume, or at least to get the kind that is required. By a little foresight such a situation can easily be avoided.

If it is possible, the costumes should, of course, be designed at the same time as the scenery, and should be made either by members of the club or by a dressmaker. This is the only way in which the designer can hope to get exactly what he wants. The design for "Malcolm," by Gwen Carlier for a production of *Macbeth*, (facing page 1004) could not be picked up easily in a theatrical wardrobe. Such a costume would require to be specially made. It is obvious that while it is extremely effective simply as a single costume, it must fit into a particular pattern. The costumes and scenery used with it must be appropriate. The lighting must be such that the colours are preserved.

Societies are often scared by the difficulty of having costumes specially designed and made, and this often militates against the choice of a costume play. While, generally speaking, a costume play is more expensive than a play that is produced in modern dress, there is often no reason why the cost of costumes should be prohibitive. Many period costumes can be made, without great difficulty or great expense, by an enterprising and well-organized society. Even if some of the more elaborate costumes have to be made professionally, this is often by no means as expensive a matter as many imagine.

Fig. 94, a scene from the first production of *Rizzio's Boots*, illustrates a case in point. It was extremely important in this case that the cos-

tumes should be good. The scene is laid in the Palace of Holyroodhouse, but as the play was one of four produced on the same evening a curtain setting had to be used. Therefore, the atmosphere that was all important to the play could be got only by the costumes and the furniture selected. The costumes were all designed by Ethel Lewis,



FIG. 95. A SCENE FROM SIR NIGEL PLAYFAIR'S PRODUCTION OF "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST" BY OSCAR WILDE, AT THE LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH

Photo by Dollard Crowther

who was aware that they were to be used against black draperies, and the play was greatly assisted by the fact that the costumes were designed to blend into an artistic whole. The elaborate costumes of the Elizabethan period are probably the most difficult that an amateur society will be called upon to make. In this case, the society was unable to make the costumes, and they were made by a professional dressmaker, but in spite of this the cost of the five costumes in the production was written off against performances of this play within a year.

Simple scenery is often effective in a costume play, and the scenery bill can thus be lower than usual, and more money will be available for costumes.

If the costumes have to be hired—and there is often no alternative—make certain that you see them well before the date of the production.

If you hire the costumes from a firm in the same town this is a simple matter. By far the best way in this case is for each member of the cast to go to have his or her measurements taken by the hiring firm, and then to try on the costume that it is proposed to supply as being the nearest in stock to the producer's requirements. Then



FIG. 96. COSTUMES USED IN SIR NIGHT PLAYLAIR'S PRODUCTION OF "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

Photo by Pollard Crowther

to arrange to have the costumes delivered some days before the dress rehearsal. This will allow the cast to try them on at a rehearsal. The producer will see them, pass those of which he approves, and arrange for others to be supplied, when necessary.

If the costumes have to be ordered from a distance, great care is essential in sending the order. Self-measurement forms will be supplied, and these must be carefully filled up. Send also the fullest possible particulars of the colours and design required, giving, if you can, alternative colour schemes. This will enable the firm to send those costumes that are nearest your requirements. Water-colour sketches of the principal costumes should be sent. These are much less likely to lead to confusion than a written description. Even a rough sketch will give a better idea

of what you wish than a long and detailed description. It will also be grasped much more readily by whoever is looking out the costumes. As a rule, you will find that the more trouble you yourself take, the more trouble will be taken by the supplying firm.

But it is not only in costume plays that costumes are important. They are important in every play, and it is noticeable that while in plays of a definite historical period the costumes do, as a rule, receive attention, in modern plays they are frequently much neglected.

Figs. 95 and 96 show illustrations of the costumes of a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, by Oscar Wilde. This has been treated as a costume play and dressed according to the fashions of the nineties, when it was written. Notice the accuracy with which this has been carried out, and how the stylized scenery fits into the general scheme.

Fig. 97 serves to emphasize how costumes and props can be of paramount importance in a modern play. *Men in White* is, as the photograph suggests, a play about a hospital. In the scene of the photograph the scenery is of little or no importance compared with the dresses and props. It is by means of these that the whole atmosphere is suggested, and would be suggested were no scenery used. This scene would be perfectly effective if played in curtains. The whole attention is riveted on a central point, and lighting, costumes, and grouping combine to make this the case.

It is, however, in the more ordinary play of the present day, when the dresses are the ordinary clothes worn by people of our time, that least attention is paid by amateur societies to this side of the production. By far the greatest number of amateur productions are in this category.

It is quite as important that such plays should

be as suitably costumed as plays dealing with a definite period.

In a modern comedy, wherein the members of the cast supply their own clothes, there is no sound reason why the producer should not see them at an early rehearsal. Yet they are frequently not produced until the dress rehearsal.

Guard against the selfish actress who wishes to appear smart whether such smartness is in keeping with the character or not.

Make certain that as far as possible all details are accurate. If you are playing a gardener, find out the kind of clothes that a gardener wears. If you are wearing a uniform, make sure that



FIG. 97 THE OPERATION SCENE FROM "MEN IN WHITE" BY SIDNEY KINGSLEY presented by the Group Theatre and Sidney Harmon and James R. O'Hman at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York. The production was directed by Lee Strasburg

The producer should insist on seeing during the first week of rehearsals all the dresses that the cast propose to wear. He should never rely on a description. This is most important where the women are concerned. Men's clothes do not vary to the same extent; they are not so brightly coloured, and thus they are not liable to interfere with a colour scheme. Nevertheless, they, too, should be seen. The suit suggested may be of the wrong description, or it may not be smart enough, or it may be too smart. Two suits may be similar in appearance. It may be necessary for an actress to borrow a dress. This may take time, and if borrowing is left until after the dress rehearsal it will probably not be done in the end.

it is correct and that it is worn in the proper manner. Care taken in this way will be amply rewarded.

If you are in doubt about costumes it is a good plan to consult the *Play Pictorial*, *Theatre World*, or *The Playgoer*. Most of the important London productions during many years are to be found in their files.

If you wish to ascertain the fashions in this country at any period within the past hundred years you cannot do better than consult *Punch*.

A society that makes its own costumes soon finds that it accumulates a considerable wardrobe. Costumes can often be used many times in different productions, sometimes as they are, sometimes

with slight alteration. The more expert the members are in dress making, the more useful will the wardrobe be. An ingenious dressmaker can often, by making a simple alteration, completely alter the character of a costume.

Costumes must be properly looked after. A wardrobe is a valuable asset, and should be regarded as such. Precautions should be taken against moth and dust. The costumes should be accessible, and should be stored systematically so that a costume can be looked out immediately without going through many cupboards. It is a good plan to keep together all the costumes for each play.

A well-kept wardrobe may prove not only a means of saving money on future productions, but also an actual source of revenue, for costumes can often be hired to other clubs.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

After the producer, the stage manager is, perhaps, the most important man in a production. His duties are manifold and harassing. He must be methodical and able to think quickly. He must have the ability to appreciate at once an unforeseen situation, and to act immediately. He must be even-tempered. He must be tactful. He must be prepared to work hard for love of his club or for sheer love of his work, because he will seldom receive any public recognition. His knowledge of every aspect of stagecraft should be complete. A competent stage manager is invaluable; an incompetent one can nullify with devastating completeness the efforts of both producer and cast.

For some reason the importance of the stage manager and of stage management generally is not appreciated by most amateur societies. Certainly there are few programmes on which the name of a stage manager does not appear, but on inquiry one too often finds that this is mere window dressing, and that the individual named, while probably assisting the production in some way, is not stage manager, except in name.

I have named some of the qualifications that a stage manager should possess. Let us examine these in more detail, beginning with the last—a complete knowledge of stagecraft. To demand this literally would, of course, be to demand the

impossible. There is possibly no stage manager, and certainly no amateur stage manager, whose knowledge of stagecraft could be said to be actually complete. But it should be as complete as possible. Your stage manager should be one of the members of your society who knows most about the stage—not, as often happens, a beginner.

He should have had considerable experience in acting, and, if possible, in production. That proviso, as a rule, gives rise to trouble. The actor wants to act. That is why he joined the club. And he cannot play and stage manage at the same time, unless his part is small—and the experienced actor is not, as a rule, cast for small parts.

Strictly speaking, the stage manager should not have a part, but it is not possible to lay down a definite rule in this respect. If the production is an easy one from the stage management point of view, then the stage manager could play a small part without damaging the performance. Quite definitely, however, the part should be small, and should be concerned, if possible, with only one scene. A butler is often a small part, but if it is one with frequent exits and entrances throughout the play it is not a suitable part for the stage manager.

If the stage management is at all difficult, the stage manager will not be able to play without neglecting his own duties. Some allowance must, however, be made for the individual. Obviously, a stage manager who is experienced will find less difficulty in taking a part than a beginner would.

The fact that the stage manager does not, as a rule, act, greatly decreases the popularity of the post. Thus we find that the position is frequently filled by a good-natured member of the club who is an indifferent player and knows little about the stage. He cannot fill the position in actuality, but he does so in name. In effect, there is then no stage manager. I believe this to be the reason for the comparative failure of many amateur productions.

The remedy that I suggest is that the stage manager should be appointed for each play when it is cast. The duties will thus go round if the stage manager is changed for each production. In this way you will, in a year or two, train half a dozen stage managers, and you will give your



COSTUME DESIGN FOR "MALCOLM" IN "MACBETH" BY GWEN CARLIER

club members no cause for complaint. An actor who has played lead in one show should not grumble if he is asked to stage manage the next. Your most experienced actors—and actresses, for there is no reason why the stage manager should not be a woman—are usually the members

to make his authority felt without being “bossy” or by making himself unnecessarily unpopular.

He must be even-tempered because many trying circumstances are bound to arise, and it is essential that he should be at all times cool and level-headed. A fussy stage manager, as a rule,



FIG. 98. A FINE EXAMPLE OF A STYLIZED SETTING, FROM "JUPITER TRANSLATED," PRODUCED AT THE BALLET CLUB

Photo by Pollard Crowther

of the club who know most about stagecraft. They will, therefore, require less training to become efficient in stage management.

Do not, however, choose someone who is temperamentally unsuited to fill the post. The qualifications of tact, evenness of temper, and ability to think quickly are important.

Tact is important because the stage manager is ultimately in charge of the production. He may have to reprimand a player or to settle a dispute. He must control the whole cast as well as the stage staff, and he must, therefore, be able

affects the cast. The players work at a high, nervous pitch, and nervousness on the part of the stage staff spreads to the players.

Ability to think quickly is essential because it is impossible to foresee accidents. The stage manager must be able to make quick decisions and to act upon them promptly, so that he can control each situation whenever it arises, and keep the ship of the production on an even keel.

The authority of the stage manager is a difficult question. Often, unless he has an extremely strong personality, the stage manager

cannot maintain his authority because it is not recognized by the rest of the company, who regard him merely as a glorified stage hand. If the stage manager is accustomed to playing leading parts for the club, this is less likely to be

should supervise the construction of the sets. If the scenery is hired, he should be present when it is chosen. This applies to properties and effects. It is the stage manager who is responsible for handling the former, and working the latter.



FIG. 99 AN EXAMPLE OF STYLIZED SCENERY FROM THE GAIL THAYER'S PRODUCTION OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN"

Photo by Pollard Coates

the case, but the committee and the producer are to blame if it ever does occur.

The stage manager's duties should start before the play is in rehearsal, and not, as sometimes happens, at the dress rehearsal. It is impossible efficiently to stage manage a play with which you are not conversant. The stage manager should always be consulted about the scenery, properties, and effects. If the scenery is to be specially designed, the producer should discuss points with the stage manager before the designs are finally approved, and the stage manager

He may often be able to suggest improvements to the producer, as well as simplifications.

If he is accustomed to production, the stage manager should be encouraged to take any rehearsals that the producer himself cannot attend. If he is to do this, however, he must be present at most of the other rehearsals, so that he knows the lines on which the producer is working. He should be allowed to appoint his own stage staff.

At the dress rehearsal, the producer should never give any instruction to a stage hand or to

the electrician. The whole stage staff is under the control of the stage manager, and it is he alone who should receive instructions about the working of the stage. To give an instruction direct to a subordinate is a breach of etiquette and

ignorant of much that goes on "behind the scenes." They have no idea that a smooth performance is due to hours of planning many weeks before the production. But if the performance *is* a smooth one the stage manager will



FIG. 150. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF STYLIZED SCENERY FROM THE GALE THEATRE'S PRODUCTION "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN"

Photo by Pollard Coother

courtesy on the part of the producer, and it is bound to weaken the authority of the stage manager.

I have said that the stage manager must be prepared to work hard without recognition or reward. A stage manager who is not keen is not likely to be a good stage manager. A great deal of solid, hard work is necessary if the production is to run smoothly, and it is not work that is likely to be mentioned in the local Press.

The Press and the public are on the whole

know that some of the credit belongs to him, and with this knowledge, which will be shared by the rest of the company, he must rest content.

THE REHEARSAL PERIOD

The duties of the stage manager fall into two divisions, Preparation and Performance. The first starts when the play is chosen and the stage manager is appointed, and continues up to the dress rehearsal; the dress rehearsal and the

run of the play constitute the second. The first has considerable bearing on the second. The more thorough the preparatory work, the easier will it be to carry out the stage management of the dress rehearsal and the play. If the first is neglected, the second is almost bound to suffer.

The first thing that the stage manager must do is to read the play and note the points in it that may be troublesome from the stage management point of view. He should then decide what staff he will require, and see that they are asked to keep themselves free, both for the evenings of the performance and for the dress rehearsal. The latter is essential. Refuse the services of anyone who cannot attend the dress rehearsal and every performance. In the case of a long run, it is sometimes necessary to work to some extent with a duplicate stage staff, but in that case anyone who is not used at the dress rehearsal should attend at least one performance before he is actually required, so that he may find out exactly what he will have to do, by watching the man who is doing his particular job.

The Assistant Stage Manager (A.S.M.) must be appointed at the outset, because it is he or she who will prompt the play. The A.S.M. must, therefore, attend most of the rehearsals. The stage manager must be present, and hold the book himself at any rehearsal that the A.S.M. cannot attend.

The prompt copy of the play is prepared by the producer. The stage manager may make up his own working script from the prompt copy, or, more often, the stage manager uses the prompt copy itself. There is not, usually, any reason against this in connexion with an amateur production. It saves much work and is not expensive. It is important, however, that in this case the prompt copy should be properly prepared. Producers vary greatly. Some are neat and methodical and mark all the moves carefully; others scribble illegible hieroglyphics in the margins.

The prompt copy should be interleaved. If it is in typescript, every alternate sheet should be blank. It is a simple matter to have this done before the copy is bound. If the play is published, the following is a satisfactory method of interleaving.

Buy an ordinary exercise book with stiff covers.

Ordinary quarto is usually a satisfactory size, but the exercise book must be greater both in length and breadth than the published copy of the play. It should be at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. broader. Also, it must contain at least twice the number of leaves.

With a straight edge and a sharp knife cut off every second page in the exercise book, leaving a stub of paper about 1 in. or $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. broad. Undo the play at the binding, separate the leaves, and paste them to these stubs. Number the pages of the exercise book to correspond to the numbers of the printed pages facing them. You will thus have a blank sheet of paper opposite each printed page of the play. The book will be easy to handle and substantially bound.

Now rule the blank pages so that they are divided into three columns. Rule one line down the middle of the page from top to bottom, and another to divide in two the half-page farthest from the text. Thus you have one broad column next to the text, and two narrower columns. The broad column is for noting the moves in the play, the other two for effects and lighting cues respectively. If the players are to be called during the performance, a fourth column is necessary, but the calling of the cast, except at the beginning of an act, is not a common practice in the amateur theatre: I do not think it is one that need be encouraged. I believe that amateur players should be responsible for watching their own cues.

Fig. 101 shows exactly how these columns are used. The first column (moves), that is the one next to the text, may be filled in to a certain extent before the book comes into the stage manager's hands. Producers vary the number of moves that are worked out before rehearsals start, but, as a rule, only the main moves will be written in. Small turns, steps, gestures, etc., will be added during rehearsals.

The word or line on which a move takes place should be numbered in the text, and the move described under the same number in the broad column on the opposite page. The numbering starts afresh with a new page.

The A.S.M. or the stage manager himself will hold the book at every rehearsal. It is his duty to see that every move is written in, and that whenever an alteration is made at rehearsal the prompt copy is altered correspondingly.

Because alterations occur in every production, the book should be written up in pencil in the first instance. Later—after the dress rehearsal—it should be inked in. It will then serve as a permanent record of the production, and will prove of great service if the play is revived.

word should always be underlined in coloured ink in the text, and the effect written opposite in the appropriate column in ink of the same colour. If the effects are numerous, it may be necessary to number them.

Similar remarks apply to the lighting column.

<i>MRS. WATSON'S WINDOW</i>		
MISS SIMPSON—If you want to know, what Miss Campbell started by saying this afternoon was "Have you heard Mrs. Window Watson's latest?"		<i>WARN DOOR SLAM</i>
MRS. WATSON—The besom! And she drank it all in.		
MEG—I'm sure my mother's sorry, Miss Simpson. She meant no harm.		
MRS. WATSON (<i>now flattered</i>)—I— ucha — you see—		
MEG—Say you're sorry, Mother.		
MRS. WATSON—Aye. I'm sorry richt enough.		
MISS SIMPSON (<i>rising</i>)—Well I'll say no more, ¹ but I may as well tell you Mrs. Watson that I was in two minds whether to come here and have this out or to take the first train to Glasgow and see my lawyer.	¹ <i>V to Meg.</i>	
MRS. WATSON—My gracious, you'd never have done that. ²	² <i>Rises.</i>	
MISS SIMPSON—I assure you I would, but for two things. I've got a sense of humour, and I'm fond of Nan. ³	³ <i>X to door.</i>	<i>WARN CUE 1.</i>
JANET—Aye. Mind you, Martha, it doesna do to go miscalling folk like that.		
GEORGINA—Deed no. ⁴	⁴ <i>Miss Simpson stops and turns.</i>	
MISS SIMPSON (<i>to the MACKAYS</i>) --I wouldn't say much about it, if I were you.		
JANET—And what way no'?		
MISS SIMPSON—Do you know what they call <i>you</i> in the town?		
GEORGINA—Call us?		
JANET—What do they call us?		
MISS SIMPSON—I think I'll leave you to find that out. ⁵ <i>(She goes out followed by MEG. There is a long uncomfortable pause. The front door is heard to close and the three women turn instinctively to the window, and self-consciously turn back again.)</i>	⁵ <i>Exit. Meg X to door and Exit.</i>	<i>DOOR SLAM</i>
JANET (<i>at length</i>) Did you ever?		<i>WARN BELL</i>
GEORGINA—Aye.		<i>WARN CURTAIN</i>

FIG. 101. PROMPT COPY OF A PLAY

If this system is carried out methodically, there need never be any argument about a player's moves. Often a player thinks that he has been told to do something at a previous rehearsal, and the producer, or another player, thinks he has been told to do something different. If the prompt copy is properly written up reference to it will settle any such point immediately.

The next column, for effects, can be filled in at any time during rehearsals. Again, it should be written up in pencil, as the cues may have to be altered at the dress rehearsal. The cue

Use ink of a different colour so that there can be no confusion between lighting and effects cues. Only the number of the lighting cue need appear in the lighting column. This number refers to the lighting plot from which the electrician works, but it is a good plan, if there is space, to note also the actual change in lighting that takes place on the cue, so that the electrician can be checked without reference to the lighting plot.

In both the lighting and effects columns note a "warning" about half a page to a page before the actual cue. Thus, "Warn Cue No. 3" would

appear in the lighting column about half a page before "Cue No. 3," and "Warn Door Bell" about half a page before "Door Bell" in the effects column. The Curtain and Curtain Warning should be in the effects column. During the period of rehearsals there are many other duties

board that requires four men to lift is not, for instance, a suitable article of furniture if there is a quick change. At the same time, he must remember the producer's point of view, and must always be alert to devise schemes that will enable the producer to get the effect he wants, and, at



FIG. 152 THE LONDON PRODUCTION OF "THE LAKE" BY DOROTHY MASSINGHAM AND MURRAY MACDONALD

Photo by Pollard Crocker

for which the stage manager must find time. He must supervise the construction of the scenery; that is to say, he must keep an eye on the carpenter and scenic artist, and see that the scenery is being constructed according to the designs. If any doubtful point arises, he should call in the producer and have the matter settled so that no alteration has to be made at the last minute.

He must arrange for the furniture and hangings, and should always bear in mind, when these are being chosen, the practical considerations that producers are sometimes apt to forget. A side-

the same time, allow the stage arrangements to go forward smoothly.

Instructions for the delivery of furniture should always be given. It is wise to have furniture at the theatre by noon on the day of the dress rehearsal so that there will be time to procure other pieces should some prove to be unsuitable when they are seen on the stage.

He must make arrangements for procuring all the necessary properties: both those that dress the stage and those that are necessary for the action of the play. A list should be made of all

properties. The stage manager should go over this carefully to see that it is complete, and then show it to the producer for his approval. There will probably be little doubt about the properties that are necessary for the action, but producers are sometimes disinclined to make up their minds about properties that dress the stage. If possible, all properties should be collected and shown to the producer at a rehearsal, so that if he disapproves of some, others can be secured before the dress rehearsal. The fewer the alterations that are made at a dress rehearsal the easier it is both for the stage management and the cast, and the better, therefore, for the production as a whole.

Remember that the producer is a busy man, and has a great deal to think about apart from the stage management side. The stage manager should keep all matters connected with his department constantly before the producer, and see that he remembers to give them due attention at the proper time.

Often members of the cast provide properties from different places. The stage manager should make a note, as indicated by the list in Fig. 103, on his initial list of properties, of the names and addresses of those who are responsible for providing various props. Further, he should make a list for each individual, and show all the properties that the player is expected to bring.

The whole business of properties may be delegated to the property master, or mistress, from the beginning. If he, or she, is keen and efficient, this is a wise plan, and relieves the stage manager of a great deal of detail, but it does not relieve him of his responsibility, and he must always be conversant with all that is taking place in his department.

In addition to the foregoing, the stage manager must plan his production beforehand. He must draw up a scenery plot, a property plot, a lighting plot, and plan the changes. He must plan out the working of effects. The more planning that is done in advance the more efficient will be the stage management.

PLOTS AND PLANS

Before the day of the dress rehearsal the stage manager should have—

(1) Made arrangements for the scenery to be taken to the theatre and there unpacked and set.

(2) Made similar arrangements for the (a) furniture, (b) costumes (if any), and (c) props.

(3) Interviewed the theatre electrician, told him the general outline of the lighting scheme, and made arrangements for any special lighting.

(4) Seen that the cast and stage hands have

PROPERTY LIST	
Telephone	Collect from G.P.O.
Gong and gong stick	A. Jones
Silver Salver	Mrs. Smith
Letters	Self
Footstool	Mrs. Smith
Tablecloth	Miss Wilson
Tablenapkins (4)	do.
Dessert knives (4)	Mrs. Smith
do. forks (4)	do.
Tea Plates (4)	Miss Wilson
Ash Trays (3)	Self
Cigarette Box	Robinson
Handkerchiefs	Collect from Police Station.
Brass Candlesticks	Miss Whyte
3 Photographs	Self
2 China ornaments	Self
5 Etchings	Self
Standard Lamp	Messrs. Wilson, Johnson & Co.

FIG. 103

been notified of the *time* the dress rehearsal is to start, i.e. the time the curtain is expected to rise, and not the time of their arrival in the theatre.

(5) Arranged with the producer and the electrician when the lighting rehearsal is to take place, and at what time Press or other photographers are to take photographs.

(6) Drawn up (a) a scene plot, (b) a lighting plot, and (c) a property plot.

(7) Drawn up a plan for any quick changes, and made definite arrangements for the working of effects. If necessary, a special effects rehearsal should be arranged.

It is obvious in connexion with (1) and (2) that these arrangements must be made, but they are often too indefinite. If it is impossible to take scenery into the theatre before the day of the dress rehearsal, as it often is, a point should be made of getting the scenery in early during the morning. The professional stage hands who look after this should be given a definite hour by which the first scene should be set ready for

the stage manager to inspect. To unload scenery from a lorry usually takes longer than is realized. Stage hands are incurably optimistic, and, as a rule, it is safe to add an hour to the time they estimate that it will take to do this job.

The furniture should arrive at the theatre in good time, but after the scenery. The props should also be there early. Ascertain from the property master when he wishes to have them at the theatre.

Regarding (3), a great deal of time can be saved on the day of the dress rehearsal by having a talk with the electrician beforehand. He will want to know, for instance, what coloured media are required in the battens, and where spots and

floods are to be used. If the media in the battens have to be changed a great deal of time is wasted.

(4) is obvious, but sometimes forgotten.

With regard to (5), the lighting rehearsal should be timed so that it may be completed before the dress rehearsal proper starts. This implies also, of course, that the producer and stage manager will have seen all the scenes set; otherwise a lighting rehearsal is not possible. There is nothing more irritating to a cast than to be kept waiting for long stretches of time while lighting and scenery are discussed.

Photographers are the stage manager's bugbear at a dress rehearsal. They drop in at the most

OPENING.—		
	Floats	Straw $\frac{1}{8}$
	Batten No. 1	Straw $\frac{1}{2}$
	Batten No. 2	Straw $\frac{1}{2}$
	Batten No. 3	Straw Full, Blue Full
	Flood No. 1	Straw Full, through window, striking downstage
	Flood No. 2	Pink <i>OUT</i> , on backcloth
	Baby Flood	Orange Amber Full, on window backing
	Spot No. 1	Straw Full, striking downstage <i>R</i> .
	Spot No. 2	Straw <i>OUT</i> , striking below lamp
	Spot No. 3	Straw <i>OUT</i> , striking upstage <i>R</i>
	Hanging Lamp	<i>OUT</i>
CUE 1.—		
	Floats	Check to <i>OUT</i>
	Batten No. 1	„ $\frac{1}{4}$
	Batten No. 2	„ $\frac{1}{4}$
	Batten No. 3	„ Straw to $\frac{1}{2}$
	Flood No. 1	„ to 1 2 and move 1 eam to strike upstage <i>R</i> corner
	Flood No. 2	Bring up to $\frac{1}{4}$
	Spot No. 1	Check to <i>OUT</i>
	Spot No. 3	Bring up to $\frac{3}{4}$
	All during 5 minutes	
CUE 2.—		
	Batten No. 3	Check Straw to <i>OUT</i>
	Flood No. 1	Check to <i>OUT</i>
	Flood No. 2	Bring up to $\frac{1}{2}$
	Spot No. 3	Check to <i>OUT</i>
	All during 2 minutes	
CUE 3.—		
	Hanging Lamp	ON
	Floats	Straw to $\frac{3}{4}$, Pink to $\frac{1}{2}$
CUE 4.—		
	Flood No. 1	Change medium to Blue and bring up to 1 2 striking window backing
	Baby Flood	<i>OUT</i>
CUE 5.—		
	Flood No. 2	Check to <i>OUT</i> , during 4 minutes
CUE 6.—		
	Flood No. 2	Change medium to Dark Blue and bring up to Full, while door is shut, 2 minutes

FIG. 104. LIGHTING PLOT

inconvenient times, and as they can usually wait for only a short time, the proceedings are held up while photographs are taken. This can be avoided if the photographers arrive at a specified time—preferably half an hour before the rehearsal is due to start, or at an interval when a

foregoing is less necessary. Unfortunately, few societies are able to take possession of the stage until the morning of the dress rehearsal, with the result that a great deal of work has to be crammed into one day. It is then that organization becomes a necessity, and good results are

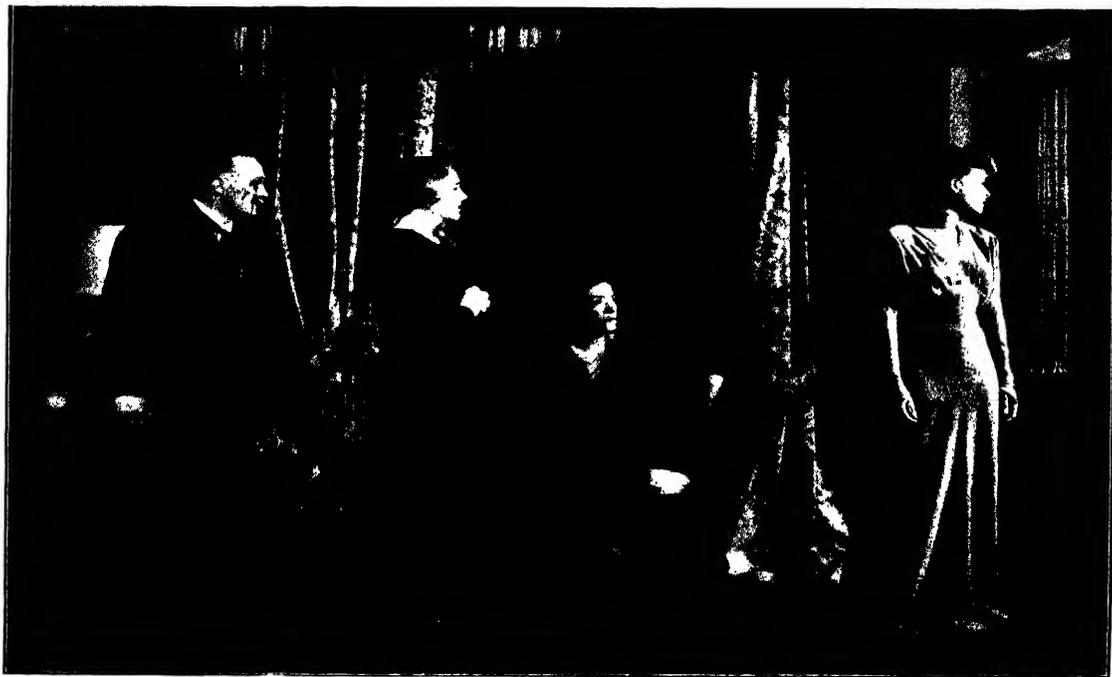


FIG. 105 THE NEW YORK PRODUCTION OF "THE LAKE"

*It is interesting to compare this setting with that of the London Production on page 1010

PI I Van Damm Studio, New York

scene is changed. The producer should also be reminded to fix the scenes of which he wishes photographs to be taken.

If the scenery, lighting, and property plots, and the plans for changes and effects, are made in advance (6 and 7), a great deal of time is saved, notwithstanding the fact that all these will probably have to be modified at the rehearsal.

When a society plays in its own theatre, or is able to have the use of the theatre for a few days before the performance, much of the

possible only if the preliminary preparation that I have suggested is carried out.

The producer should draw up the lighting plot, but the stage manager must see that he gets it, and that he understands it. It is true that a lighting plot drawn up before the rehearsal is no more than a starting point. Alterations to it at the lighting rehearsal are almost inevitable, but the time saved by having such a starting point is appreciable.

Fig. 104 shows a specimen lighting plot. It

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will be seen that the changes in the lighting are numbered Cue 1, Cue 2, etc. This is all that the electrician need, or should, know. The actual cue is noted in the script, as is also a warning. When the warning is reached the stage manager gives the electrician "Warning Cue No. 1." At the actual cue he gives "Cue 1." It merely confuses the electrician if he is told the actual cue, and it is apt to lead to mistakes. The lighting plot should be made out in duplicate. The electrician is given one copy, and the stage manager

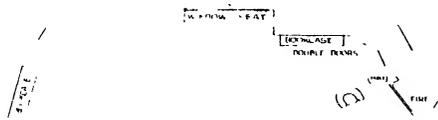


FIG. 106. SCENE PLOT

retains the other. At the lighting rehearsal the plot is altered in accordance with the lighting finally decided on by the producer. It is then advisable to make fresh copies. Any effects that are worked by electricity should be included in the lighting plot.

Lighting rehearsals frequently take a long time. Each scene should be set complete with furniture and props when the lighting is being tried. The dresses worn in the scene should be on the stage in order that any change in their colour will be noticed.

When possible, it is a good plan to have the whole stage staff present at the lighting rehearsal, so that the changes can be properly rehearsed. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and if time is pressing it is sometimes necessary to take the rehearsal backwards, starting with the last set, so that the first scene will be set ready for the dress rehearsal to start whenever the lighting is finished.

I have stated it is important that furniture and props should be set for the lighting rehearsal. It is also advisable that someone should stand or sit wherever characters will play important scenes. An example of the importance of this is found if the stage has little depth, and a player has to sit behind a table that runs parallel to the floats. The floats will often cast a shadow on the player's face, and it may be necessary

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to use a spot to kill this, or to alter the position of the table. This may not be noticed until the dress rehearsal starts, unless at the lighting rehearsal someone has sat in that particular chair.

BOOKCASE R.—	<i>On it:</i> Two photographs Small blue vase Ash tray
	<i>In shelves:</i> Property books
ROUND TABLE UP R.—	<i>On it:</i> Blotter (open) Inkstand with Two pens Stationery rack (filled) 5 used envelopes Ash tray
SOFA R.C.—	<i>On it:</i> Two blue cushions <i>The Times</i>
	<i>On upstage arm:</i> Ash tray
BOOKCASE L.—	<i>On it:</i> Large blue vase with flowers Pile of magazines Two brass candlesticks
	<i>In shelves:</i> Property books
	<i>In top shelf:</i> <i>Sartor Resartus</i>
LOUNGE CHAIR L.	
SMALL TABLE L.	<i>On it:</i> Cigarette box (filled) Match box Ash tray
ON MANTELPIECE	Clock Pile of papers Two red books Vase with spills Three pipes
ON CLUB FENDER	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>
BELOW FIRE	Pile of newspapers

FIG. 107. PROPERTY PLOT

Fig. 106 gives an example of a scene plot, and shows the position of the furniture. A copy of this should be exhibited where it can be referred to by any member of the stage staff. The attention of all concerned should be drawn to the plot, and the stage manager should explain it personally to all who will be concerned with setting or striking the scenes. The staff should memorize

the position of all flats and articles of furniture. This plot may also be altered at the dress rehearsal.

The example of a property plot given in Fig. 107 requires very little explanation. All props should be set out in the manner shown, and should be taken in order, from stage R to stage L, or vice versa. This simplifies the task of checking whether the props are correctly set. This plot should also be in duplicate. One copy for "Props," and one for the stage manager. It should be pasted on a piece of millboard so that it will be easy to handle, and will not be torn.

The property plot should also show any alterations that may have to be made to the setting during an interval when the set itself is not changed: for example, alterations in the position of the furniture, window curtains being drawn, doors being opened or closed.

Effects and "noises off" should be rehearsed in the theatre before the dress rehearsal. The more complicated and difficult these are, the greater is the need for such a rehearsal. Panatropes are now used extensively, and, on the whole, successfully, for effects. The volume and tone should be correct. The exact position of the speaker must be carefully noted so that it will not vary from night to night. It will probably have to be tried out in various positions before the correct one is found.

Panatropes care asy to use. There are many effects that are much more difficult to operate—the reproduction, for instance, of various "war" noises. The people who work the effects at the rehearsal should be those who will work them at the actual performance. It is always difficult, and sometimes impossible, to describe to another person *exactly* how a particular effect is achieved.

The scenery should be complete at the dress rehearsal, and the furniture and props should be those that are finally used. Furniture is often changed at a dress rehearsal. This is extremely hard on the players who have thus to play with strange furniture on the first night. It can be avoided if the producer sees the furniture on the stage in time to have it replaced before the dress rehearsal starts.

DETAIL FOR A PRODUCTION

Productions vary greatly from the stage management point of view. In some plays, where there

is no change of scenery or furniture, there is little for the stage staff to do. Nor is there, as a rule, any great difficulty when an interval of ten or twelve minutes is allowed for a change. It is when there must be quick changes, i.e. changes within an act, when if possible the house lights should not go up, that stage management problems arise. They occur also when there are many off-stage noises or effects.

In such cases the secret of success lies in making adequate preparation beforehand. This preparation depends largely on common sense. It is impossible to lay down any set of rules that will be applicable to all productions. Plays vary too much. The matter can be summed up by saying that each individual member of the stage staff must know exactly what he has to do and when he has to do it.

The best way to illustrate what I mean will be to take a concrete instance. I propose to give full details of the stage arrangements for a production of *Twelfth Night*.

The theatre in which this production took place is constructed so that it is impossible to fly scenery. It was, therefore, decided to produce the play in curtains, and to use as few flats as possible.

Twelfth Night is written in five acts, and the scenes are—

Act I, Scene	1.	The Duke's Palace	(3 min.)
	2.	The Sea Coast	(3½ min.)
	3.	Olivia's House	(6 min.)
	4.	The Duke's Palace	(2 min.)
	5.	Olivia's House	(18 min.)
Act II, Scene	1.	The Sea Coast	(2½ min.)
	2.	A Street	(4 min.)
	3.	Olivia's House	(11 min.)
	4.	The Duke's Palace	(8½ min.)
	5.	Olivia's Garden	(13 min.)
Act III, Scene	1.	Olivia's Garden	(8 min.)
	2.	Olivia's House	(4 min.)
	3.	A Street	(3 min.)
	4.	Olivia's Garden	(19½ min.)
Act IV, Scene	1.	Before Olivia's House	(4 min.)
	2.	Olivia's House	(7 min.)
	3.	Olivia's Garden	(2 min.)
Act V, Scene	1.	Before Olivia's House	(16 min.)

In brackets is shown the playing time in minutes of each scene.

You will see from the list above that there are eighteen scenes and fifteen changes. For the

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production to be successful speedy scene-shifting was essential. An interval of even two minutes between short scenes would inevitably have caused the play to drag. Some method of ensuring

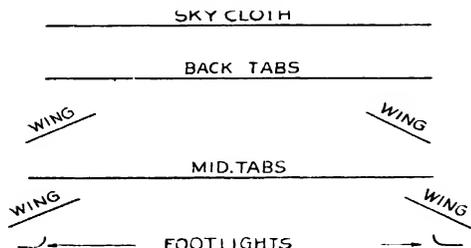


FIG. 108

short intervals by means of rapid changes had to be devised.

To begin with it was decided to present the play not in five acts, but with only one interval. It was also agreed to use mid. tabs, and to play the street scenes in front of these. Act IV, Scene 1, was made a street scene, and to minimize

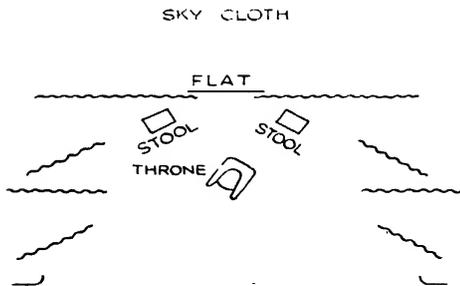


FIG. 109. THE DUKE'S PALACE

scenery, in the text Act V was altered to Olivia's Garden, there being no reason against these alterations. The programme after these alterations had been made read—

ACT I

- Scene 1. A Room in the Duke's Palace
2. The Sea Coast.
3. A room in Olivia's House.
4. A room in the Duke's Palace.
5. A room in Olivia's House.
6. The Sea Coast.
7. A Street.
8. A room in Olivia's House.
9. A room in the Duke's Palace.

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ACT II

- Scene 1. Olivia's Garden.
2. Olivia's Garden
3. A room in Olivia's House.
4. A Street.
5. Olivia's Garden.
6. A Street.
7. Another room in Olivia's House.
8. Olivia's Garden.
9. Olivia's Garden.

Fig. 108 shows the general arrangement of the draperies. Notice that there are two sets of tabs—mid. and back, in addition, of course, to the front curtain. For practical reasons 6-ft. flats had to

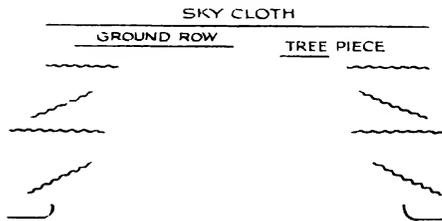


FIG. 110. THE SEA COAST

be used to support the draperies that formed the wings. This was not, of course, noticeable from the front. I mention it because the wings were thereby unyielding, and made it essential that the setting and striking of furniture should be carefully planned. The mid. tabs formed an

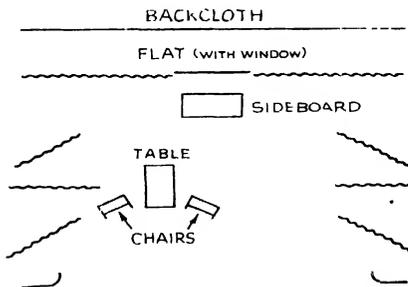


FIG. 111. A ROOM IN OLIVIA'S HOUSE

Figs. 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113 show the settings for the six different scenes of the play. I have already stated that the street scenes were played in front of the mid. tabs. No setting at all was needed for these.

You will notice that for only two scenes (Figs. 110 and 112) was the full stage used. It will thus be readily appreciated why the single long interval was arranged to take place after the

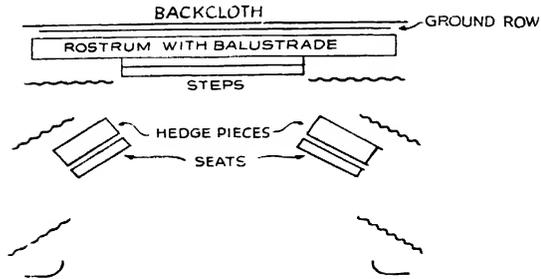


FIG. 112. OLIVIA'S GARDEN

ninth scene. It is, roughly, about the middle of the play, and it allows time to strike the ground row of the Sea Coast Scene, and to set the rostrum,

steps, and the ground row for Olivia's Garden, which is first used in Scene 10. The garden can thus remain set (as far as the pieces I have mentioned are concerned) until the end of the

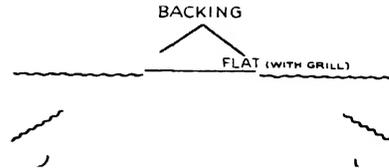


FIG. 113. ANOTHER ROOM IN OLIVIA'S HOUSE

play, as it is the only set for which the full stage is used during the second half.

Fig. 114 is a copy of the actual notice regarding the scenery. It was posted on the stage for the benefit of the stage staff. The actual act and scene, according to the printed copy of the play, is shown in brackets after each scene. This was

"TWELFTH NIGHT"			
Scene	Times		
1	3 min.	Duke's Palace	(I, 1)
2	7½ "	Sea Coast	(I, 2)
3	6 "	Olivia's House	(I, 3)
4	2 "	Duke's Palace	(I, 4)
5	8 "	Olivia's House	(I, 5)
6	2½ "	Sea Coast	(II, 1)
7	4 "	Street	(II, 2)
8	11 "	Olivia's House	(II, 3)
9	8½ "	Duke's Palace	(II, 4)
<i>Interval</i>			
10, 11	13, 8 "	Olivia's Garden	(II, 5, and III, 1)
12	4 "	Olivia's House	(III, 2)
13	3 "	Street	(III, 3)
14	19½ "	Olivia's Garden	(III, 4)
15	4 "	Street	(IV, 1)
16	7 "	Passage	(IV, 2)
17	2 "	Olivia's Garden	(IV, 3)
18	26 "	Olivia's Garden	(V, 1)

SETTING	
Sea Coast set	behind back tabs at opening and remains through first half.
Olivia's Garden set	behind back tabs during interval and remains through second half.
Street	always played in front of mid. tabs.
Passage flat set	in opening of mid. tabs.
Scene 8 set	during Scene 7 (3 minutes).
Scene 14 set	during Scene 13 (2½ minutes).
Scene 16 set	during Scene 15 except for opening tabs (4 minutes).
Scene 17 set	during Scene 16 (6½ minutes).

FIG. 114



FIG. 115 A SCENE FROM THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PLAYERS' PRODUCTION OF "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Photo by Kay Lepping Glasgow.

for the benefit of the cast, who had been accustomed, during rehearsal, to refer to scenes as they were given in the book. The playing time, which was noted at the dress rehearsal, is also shown.

Notice that there was never more than one flat used in any scene. The following arrangements were made with a view to making the changes as speedy as possible.

Both sets of tabs were on lines, and opened from the centre. Both were operated from the O.P. side. One member of the stage staff was permanently on these lines and on the front curtain. He had no other duties. Two others handled the flats—and nothing else. For the first scene the flat was held in position. It was not braced. Thus it was removed the moment the curtain fell. The back tabs were opened, the furniture was struck, and the second scene was

ready, the ground row and tree piece being set at the beginning and remaining until the end of the first half. The flat in the third scene was braced, but the actual bracing was done while the scene was proceeding. The flat for the fourth scene was simply slipped in front of the one already there. It lay against it, and no bracing was necessary. For the next scene it was removed. For the next (The Sea Coast) the braced flat was struck and the back tabs opened. The next scene being a street, all that had to be done was to close the mid. tabs. During this scene Scene 8 was set. For Scene 9 the flat was again slipped in front of the one already in position.

During the interval the stage was set for Olivia's Garden. It was arranged that this interval should be 15 minutes. Actually, it was

never more than 12 minutes, and the scene could have been set in about 7 minutes. Scenes 10 and 11 were played without a break. For Scene 12 the back tabs were drawn and the flat set as before. The seats and hedge pieces were struck, but the steps, rostrum, etc., remained in position behind the draperies. The flat was not braced, as the scene lasted only 4 minutes. For Scene 13, a street, the mid. tabs were again

drawn, and during this scene the Garden was re-set. Scene 15 was another scene in front of mid. tabs. For Scene 16 the flat and backing were set behind the mid. tabs. This was done during the previous scene. Thus, all that remained to be done was to draw back the mid. tabs far enough to show the flat. During this scene the Garden was re-set.

The result of these arrangements was that no

		CHANGES	
First	Strike flat Strike stools to P Strike throne to O.P.	Brown, Jones. Smith, Robinson. Davis, Black.	
Second	Set flat Set table and two chairs Set sideboard Set props	Brown, Jones. Davis, Black. Robinson. Smith.	
Third	Strike and set flats Strike sideboard to P Strike table and two chairs Set stools Set throne	Brown, Jones. Robinson. Davis, Black. Smith. Davis, Black.	
Fourth	Strike and set flats Strike throne Strike stools Set table and two chairs Set sideboard	Brown, Jones. Robinson. Smith. Davis, Black. Robinson.	
Fifth	Strike flat Strike sideboard Strike table and two chairs	Brown, Jones. Robinson, Smith Davis, Black.	
Sixth	Set flat Set sideboard Set table and two chairs	Brown, Jones Robinson Davis, Black.	During Scene 7.
Seventh	Same as third		
Eighth	Strike O.P. hedge and seat to O.P. Strike P. hedge and seat to P. Set flat Set sideboard Set table and two chairs	Davis, Black Robinson, Smith. Brown, Jones Robinson. Davis, Black.	
Ninth	Strike flat Strike sideboard Strike table and two chairs Set O.P. hedge and seat Set P. hedge and seat	Brown, Jones. Robinson. Davis, Black. Davis, Black. Smith, Robinson	During Scene 13.
Tenth	Set flat and backing Set chair	Brown, Jones. Davis.	During Scene 15.
Eleventh	Strike flat and backing Strike chair	Brown, Jones Davis.	
Twelfth	Set O.P. hedge piece and seat Set P. hedge piece and seat	Davis, Black. Robinson, Smith.	During Scene 16.

In addition to above Smith will be responsible for all props, Williams for drawing all curtains and tabs.

change occupied more than a minute, and many of the changes took only a fraction of that time.

THE PERFORMANCE

There is a saying that a bad dress rehearsal means a good first night. This may bring comfort to the superstitious after a dress rehearsal has gone badly, but it is not based on fact. If a dress rehearsal has passed off well, the stage manager may be fairly confident that the first night will be free from hitches.

Every effort should be made to make the dress rehearsal as nearly as possible the same as a performance. The producer should not stop the play during an act. His remarks to the cast should be made at the end of each act, and scenery should not be changed during these remarks. The intervals, as well as the acts, should be timed. Every possible precaution should be taken to ensure that each member of the stage staff understands exactly what he is required to do at each change.

I have given details of the stage management for a production of *Twelfth Night*. I now give the application of these details to the stage staff.

To achieve the quick changes that were necessary, a large staff had to be used. Altogether eleven people were employed—

Stage Manager and A.S.M.	. . . . .	2
Electricians	. . . . .	2
Tabbs	. . . . .	1
Flats	. . . . .	2
Furniture and Props	. . . . .	4

Fig. 116 furnishes the details for the changes. The names have been altered, otherwise this is a copy of the actual notice that was used. One copy was posted in the wings for reference, and one was given to each person concerned. Fig. 119 is a copy of the property plot. It will be seen that the properties were few and simple; otherwise it would not have been possible for Props to assist with furniture.

The man posted on the tabs did nothing else but his work on them. There were three sets of tabs that he was required to draw at different times. His task was one where accuracy was essential, but as he stood by the tabs throughout the production the curtain could be drawn the moment that the stage was set and the signal agreed upon given to him by the Stage Manager.

The senior electrician remained at the switch-board. His assistant moved floods and other off-stage lights during the changes.

The A.S.M. prompted the play. The Stage Manager remained in the prompt corner throughout, and gave the necessary curtain signals. When a scene was set the Stage Manager gave the warning "Stand by." If any member of the stage staff was not ready he was instructed to say "Not ready." The Stage Manager paused for two seconds after the warning, and unless the staff had reported "Not ready," rang up the curtain.

These details were applicable to this particular production. They are given as an example of detail that worked well in a particular case. Every production varies, and the Stage Manager's detail must, of course, vary also, but these methods or a modification of them can be applied to any production.

The whole secret of Stage Management may be said to lie in adequate preparation. Granted a thought-out plan, and an intelligent staff that knows what is required of it, and how and when to do it, there is no reason why stage management should not be completely successful, no matter what the limitations of the stage may be.

The real business of stage management is concerned with before and during the dress rehearsal. Therefore, there is little for the Stage Manager to do on the night, except to see that other people do their jobs properly. With a well-trained staff and a simple play there is no sound reason why the Stage Manager should remain in the prompt corner throughout the run, but he should always be there on the first night, so that he can control any unforeseen situation that arises. The stage manager is in complete control behind the curtain. He must realize this authority and assert it tactfully. The following is a list of things that a Stage Manager should do. All these are not remembered in some productions—

1. He must keep a note of the running time of the play, noting the exact time to a minute each time the curtain rises or falls. To do this enables him to tell the playing time of each act, and the exact time of intervals at each performance. This information should be copied into the prompt copy, as it may be extremely useful in the event of a revival of the production.



FIG. 117. AN EXAMPLE OF LAVISH STAGE DÉCOR FROM "DOCTOR'S ORDERS," PRODUCED AT THE GLOBE THEATRE
Photo by Pollard Crowther



FIG. 118. ANOTHER SET FROM "DOCTOR'S ORDERS"
Photo by Pollard Crowther

2. He must arrange with the front of the house when the orchestra is to start, how long it is to play, and when the curtain is to rise. Front and back stage watches must be synchronized. He must also arrange a system of signalling

up" unless the beginners are actually on the stage.

4. He must see that the final curtains are arranged, and must be in the prompt curtain to give the signal for these curtains. A curtain should never be taken unless the applause warrants it. The Stage Manager is the judge of this.

5. He must see that there is no unnecessary noise in the wings. Players should not be encouraged to stand about the stage, but should wait in their dressing-rooms until the time for their cues. No player should ever be allowed to stand in the prompt corner, or in the O.P. wing without permission. This permission should be granted very sparingly, as a group of spectators in the wing is apt to distract the attention of the actors. In no case should anyone not actually concerned with the production be allowed on the stage during a performance.

6. He should see that the stage staff wear rubber-soled shoes. This sounds trivial, but it is important.

There are also points in which a general ruling by the committee of the society is desirable. I will give two as examples.

Sometimes players are allowed to go round to the front of the house to see a scene in which they are not taking part. This is undesirable and a rule forbidding it is usual in the more serious play producing societies. In any event, no player must ever go in front without the Stage Manager's permission, and must never appear amongst the audience wearing costume or make-up. To do so is an unpardonable breach of good taste, and is ruinous to the artistic effect of the production. Incidentally, it is against the law.

It is also wise to have a rule forbidding flowers, chocolates, or other gifts to be handed across the footlights.

The two photographs shown in Figs. 117 and 118 are fine examples of elaborate stage sets.

LIGHTING AND EFFECTS

As stage lighting and effects are responsible for most of the work of the stage manager during a performance, I cannot close without discussing how they affect him.

I have already written about lighting plots. It is important that the electrician who works the switchboard should be accurate. He must never

PROPERTIES	
Scene 1.	Nil.
2.	Nil.
3.	<i>On sideboard.</i> 2 candles (lit), 4 mugs, jug, bunch of keys.
4.	Nil.
5.	<i>On sideboard.</i> 2 candles (out), 4 mugs, jug
6.	Nil.
7.	Nil.
8.	<i>On sideboard.</i> 2 candles (lit), 2 mugs, jug. <i>On table.</i> 2 mugs.
9.	Nil.
Interval	
Scene 10.	Nil.
11.	Nil.
12.	<i>On sideboard</i> 2 candles (lit), 2 mugs <i>On table.</i> 2 mugs, jug
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.	Nil
HAND PROPS	
Malvolio	Wand Letter Candlestick and candle
Olivia	Purse Ring
Orsino	Money Jewel.
Maria	Letter
Clown	Letter. Tabor
Viola	Money.
Antonio	Purse
Sir Andrew	Letter Bandages
Sebastian	Purse. Ring.
Sir Toby	Bandages.

FIG. 119

to the orchestra, so that the conductor can be told to continue or to stop playing, should this be necessary.

3. He should arrange to call the cast half an hour and quarter of an hour before the curtain. The beginners should be called on the stage five minutes before the curtain is due to rise on the first night. Later in the run they need not be called quite so soon. He must never "ring

vary between rehearsal and performance, or between performances. His copy of the lighting plot must be tidy and easy to read at a glance. There must be no time-lag between his receiving a cue and the required change of the lighting. Often it is necessary to have several electricians because one man cannot control all the dimmers. Make sure at rehearsals that you have the people on the switchboard who will operate it at the performance. Never rely on information being passed from one man to another by word of mouth.

The stage manager must know a good deal about lighting so that he can help the producer to get the desired effect. The producer, it may be assumed, will always know what he wants, but it cannot be assumed that he will always know how to get it. The stage manager must ascertain, as soon as possible, what lighting equipment is available. He can then form an opinion on how far it will be possible to comply with the producer's wishes about lighting. He must discuss lighting with the producer at an early stage in the production. Lighting is important in the production of all straight plays. If the equipment is insufficient, additions can be hired inexpensively. Some theatres are short of spots; others have none. In such cases it will be necessary to hire them if the lighting of the play is to be adequate. Equipment such as acting area floods, pageant lanterns, and baby spots will almost certainly have to be hired if they are required, and they are often invaluable in achieving successful and artistic lighting.

You should notify the theatre well in advance what coloured media you require and where you require them, so that the screens can be fitted with the correct colour before the lighting rehearsal. If you have to wait while the gelatines are cut, valuable time will be wasted, and the colours required may have to be ordered.

At the lighting rehearsal, remember that all off-stage lights, such as floods and spots on stands, must be masked. Check this from the auditorium. Be careful about shadows. A general, even light over the acting area is uninteresting and should be avoided, but the actors should be properly lit so that the audience can see facial expression. Shadows on the stage, if they are natural and do not interfere with the visibility of the actors, add interest. There must, however, be no shadows on

the backcloths. To avoid these is often troublesome, particularly where a window backing has to be set near the window. To kill the shadows of the window astragals it is necessary to have as much light behind as in front of the window, or to avoid direct light on the window from the front.

When deciding colours bear in mind the effect they will have on costumes and make-up.

When planning the production leave sufficient time for the lighting rehearsal. The lighting may have to be done at the dress rehearsal between each act, but avoid this if possible. If there are different sets, you may not have time to set, light, and strike each set before the dress rehearsal, although this is desirable. When there is only one set, it should usually be possible to finish the lighting rehearsal before the dress rehearsal starts.

Where there are many effects, an effects rehearsal should be arranged. Optical effects such as fires, clouds, etc., normally form part of the lighting rehearsal, as these effects are operated by the electrician. Sound effects are much more common. Some effects are usual and easily made. Telephone bells and door bells can usually be rung by the prompter in the prompt corner.

Weather effects—thunder, rain, wind, hail, etc.—can be produced either by amplified gramophone records or by a machine. Nowadays there are few sound effects that cannot be produced on the panatrope, but often the record is less satisfactory than a machine. I think that this applies to all weather effects—but this is a personal opinion: much depends on the panatrope and record used. A record is much simpler and the volume can be controlled accurately. I advocate the use of wind machines, rain drums, and thunder sheets in preference to records. If these are employed time must be spent to get the correct balance of sound. The effects rehearsal will take place in an empty theatre; during a performance the effect has to be heard through spoken lines and above the rustle made by the audience. Allowance for these must be made.

A machine for producing motor-car noises is available. Opinions differ on whether it is better than any record. I should say not—unless the car is a taxi. Modern cars make very little noise, and unless the sound is important it is often better to cut it. Records of aeroplane noises and of

crowds in all sorts of tempers are obtainable. A crowd record is often good backing to actual voices off. It is usually less good when used by itself. Church bells, the striking of clocks, etc., can also be produced either by records or by using actual bells.

The old-fashioned method of producing a shot on the stage, fired off, was to strike a horsehair sofa or similar surface smartly with a cane. This method is still used, but some form of blank cartridge is preferable. If an actual pistol is used you must hold a firearms certificate. It saves trouble to use a safety pistol or some other device that makes the correct sound. The sound of firing a gun can be reproduced by striking a bass drum twice, the second blow almost merging into the first.

There are records of all sorts of battle noises.

There is no end of the noises that authors call for, and ingenuity to reproduce them must be exercised. It is possible to have special recordings made of particular sounds and it is worth remembering that a microphone can be a useful addition to amplifying equipment. A tiny noise made close to a microphone and amplified may often give the effect required for a loud noise.

Effects should be carefully rehearsed before the dress rehearsal. Those who have to operate the effects must know exactly what to do and

their cues. They should not rely on memory but have a clearly typed cue sheet with numbered cues, or better still, a marked script of the play.

When the stage manager has satisfied himself that the electricians are fully conversant with the lighting plot and will produce the required lighting at the right times; when he is certain that the effects will be done properly and at the right time; when he knows that the scenery will be changed as desired and correctly set by a staff that knows what it is doing; when he knows that his arrangements for the setting and changing of props are fool-proof: then he will face the dress rehearsal confidently and with an easy mind. Seldom will he be in this happy position.

I have not suggested that stage management is easy, or that stagecraft is simple. There is always something to be learned, for every production brings its own problems. Stage management calls for an alert and inventive brain, an equable temperament, and a real enthusiasm for the theatre. If it were not difficult, it could hardly be interesting; I hope I have shown that with all its many facets it is intensely interesting. As a stage manager you will never see your name in lights in Shaftesbury Avenue, but if you have a real love for the theatre you will find that if you devote yourself to stagecraft you will not be disappointed.



ARNOLD RIDLEY

Russell Sedgwick

STAGE EFFECTS AND NOISES "OFF"

A. E. PETERSON, Editor, "Bulletin of the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild," etc.

INTRODUCTION

ARNOLD RIDLEY

*I*N considering the question of stage effects one must, first of all, come to an exact definition of what the expression is intended to convey. What is meant by stage effects? Obviously, one of three things, or, better still, all of three things: noises off, stage lighting, and stage dressing. Producers of amateur societies often spend many sleepless nights on the question of noises off. Yet to produce these is simple if one salient rule is kept in mind. It is merely this: illusion on the stage and suggestion off. What I mean is that however good or bad may be a noise effect off-stage it is entirely dependent upon the atmosphere prevailing on-stage at the critical moment.

Take a somewhat exaggerated example. A tropical storm is an essential of a production. Off-stage, no end of trouble is taken to produce a realistic effect. A character enters wearing a perfectly dry overcoat, well polished shoes, and his hair is parted dead centre. What is the result on the audience? They ask, "What is that noise going on behind? Has something gone wrong?" But consider the same situation when the character enters apparently soaked to the skin and wiping water from his eyes. The effect on the audience is then quite different. "Why, it's pouring with rain. Yes, listen! There it is! Isn't that wonderful?" Yet the effect may have been of the utmost simplicity—a few peas dropped at intervals upon a drum, but the realism on the stage has so stimulated the imagination that the success of the off-stage effect is assured.

I am often asked questions relative to the sound effects that were used in my play "The Ghost Train," which was brilliantly produced by the late Mr. E. Holman Clark. Mr. Holman Clarke used to the full the methods to which I have referred. Immediately he estab-

lished illusion on the stage. The play opened by the curtain rising on a set that depicted an ordinary country station waiting-room. Every detail was correct—a smoky lamp, cracked and dim; an untended fire burning in a dirty grate; a floor covered with orange peel; empty cigarette packets and stub-ends; casual litter; the water bottle with a broken glass; steamy windows; bills advertising out-of-date excursions, and orders restricting the movement of cattle during foot and mouth disease plagues. There was even framed advice to friendless girls arriving at the station. Such perfect detail had the effect upon the audience of making them say "Ah, we are in a waiting room, presently we shall hear a train coming. Here it is! Splendid! Wonderful!" The effect itself was perfectly simple, being merely a judicious mixture of thunder sheets, compressed air, a garden roller, and pieces of sandpaper and wire brushes combined with a kettle-drum. There was nothing in fact that is out of reach of the smallest amateur society. But would that train suggestion off have been really effective without the perfect railway illusion on? Definitely not.

Some years later I used precisely the same methods in a scene in "The Wrecker," where trains pass a lonely signal cabin. Once again these methods met with instant success. Every detail of that signal cabin was correct, and the signalmen were real signalmen, not stage figures, so that the audience were in the right mood to anticipate the noise caused by the passing of trains. Almost any old noise would have served the purpose.

The essentials are easily summarized. An audience must be with the off-stage effect. They must never be allowed to say: "I wonder what that is supposed to be?" They must know what

it is supposed to be in advance. Then it is they themselves who provide the effect and not the workers behind the scenes.

These remarks must, of course, be imaginatively interpreted. I do not suggest a stark naturalism in the presentation of stage plays such as we have never yet seen. The cup and saucer drama of Robertson struck a note that brought out the interest that can be created in paying attention to accuracy in detail, but I have something different in mind.

One of my main points is that the audience must be with the players, and to make that point is, in one sense, to bring myself in harmony with another section of the theatre world that is ultra-modern. Changes in the theatre have taken place with great rapidity.

Both stage effects and noises off have been considerably influenced by the work of modern scientists who have concentrated on the extension of the practical uses of electricity. Rain, for example, is now the responsibility of the electrician if he is fortunate enough to be in charge of up-to-date apparatus such as that of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, where I was lucky enough to serve my apprenticeship in stage matters, whereas it used to be, and still is in many theatres, the work of some odd stage-hand who, to earn his daily bread, has to be as prompt on his cue as has any member of the cast. That reminds me of another point.

An effect must be expertly timed. All of us know more about synchronization than did our forefathers, who had never heard of the word. The best made effect, the most impressive noise off, can be destroyed absolutely if it is a fraction of a second too soon or too late. More, it can upset the sympathetic co-operation of the audience for minutes afterwards.

The psychology of an audience in a theatre

cannot be forgotten with safety by any any players or stage-hands during a performance. I have already indirectly touched upon this fact: "Illusion on the stage and suggestion off." "On," the illusion must be readily acceptable to bring success. "Suggestion off" is, in a certain sense, more important than a noise off. Many things are violently altered by illusion in the theatre. Time, for example. Which one of us ever has a "stage meal" at home? Similarly, the suggestion that enforces an illusion is, paradoxically, more important than the noise itself. Try the experiment of transferring some of the actual noises of the street, street noises being one of the urgent problems of to-day that await a satisfactory solution, and success in actual transference can become ludicrous failure. There has got to be suggestion rather than actuality.

"The right moment" is closely related to one other point that I will make. Success with stage effects and noises off cannot reasonably be expected unless they are well rehearsed before production. Adequacy of rehearsal will create difficulties for some amateur societies. However, the acoustic properties of the theatre in which a production is to be given, stage width and depth in relation to the seating arrangements, the assistance that the management can provide, and the requirements that will have to be met without managerial aid—these are a few points that can helpfully be looked into in advance. There must, however, be rehearsals, a generalization that must necessarily be modified in accordance with peculiar circumstances. With these and other points as the foundation of activities for the production of stage effects and noises off there ought to be success—but it cannot be attained if the one salient rule, which becomes the golden rule, is ignored.

Ames Rialley

PAST AND PRESENT

It is quite possible that some of the "effects" I shall describe are already familiar to producers, but it is hoped that many will find, here and there, fresh ideas that will set their inventive faculties to work and enable effects previously beyond their scope to be undertaken with some degree of success. I shall also remember that there are many budding producers whose knowledge of stagecraft is microscopic.

In the early days of the nineteenth century the stage in England seemed to have reached a point where the *visual* effect of a play was of more importance than the play itself, and a study of the plays produced from, say, 1800 to 1825 will amply prove this fact. Realism was demanded by an audience nourished upon gargantuan feasts of spectacle. The theatre opened its doors at 6.30 p.m., and between that time and midnight three or four plays were presented. The "machinist" was as important as the "star," in fact he was the "star." With a change of programme nightly he staged, with bewildering ease, spectacles that almost defy description. Burning forests, castles, and mills, battles on land and sea accompanied by a generous discharge of firearms and cannon, and explosions, arranged with the aid of "fire powder," Bengal lights, naked flares and torches, were simple matters to him. What mattered if the theatre itself went up in flames, as it frequently did? Another theatre could soon be built.

Another favourite but risky device was the "illuminated" scene, where one saw Vauxhall Gardens or some other night scene where Gilded Vice flaunted itself, brilliantly lit with hundreds of small lamps—and this before the invention of gas as an illuminant.

Water spectacles claimed their followers. Here is a description of a play taken from an old play bill in my possession. The play was *Kenilworth, or England's Golden Days*, and in language



A. E. PETERSON

unrestrained in its enthusiasm one reads of "scenes that beggar belief." It continues ". . . water rises from beneath the stage, and Cleopatra's Galley is Seen Sailing down the River Cydnus. Cleopatra is reposing under a Golden Canopy. The Galley Sails into the centre of the Stage and then by Degrees the Water Subsides, then a Grand Chorus by all the Musical Strength of the Company—the Queen Rises—all the Court Kneels—and the Curtain Drops."

STAGE EFFECTS IN 1820

Here are dialogue and some weird stage directions taken from Carl Maria Von Weber's opera *Der Freischutz*, showing Caspar at work during—

THE CASTING OF THE BULLETS
(Music).

Cas. (Casting the bullet, and letting it fall from the mould, exclaims aloud.) One!

Echo. (Answering, R.) One!

Echo. (L.) One!

Echo. (R.) One!

Echo. (L.) One!

(These four echoes answer in repetition on the casting every bullet growing gradually more and more hideous. At ONE, night birds flutter and hover over the circle, and strange faces and heads of monsters appear starting out of the rocks, and almost instantly vanish from sight.)

Cas. (The same ceremony as before.) Two!

Echoes. Two!

(At TWO the Witch of the Glen enters from R., threatening CASPAR, walks round circle, and exit, L. U. E.—various reptiles appear from separate entrances, and surround the circle—also serpents flying in the air.)

Cas. Three!

Echoes. Three!

(At THREE, a storm and hurricane break down trees—the night-birds as also the faces and heads of monsters reappear momentarily.)

Cas. (Faltering.) Four!

Echoes. Four!

(At FOUR, whips cracking, the rattle of wheels and tramp of horses are heard, and two

wheels of fire roll over the Glen from R.U.E. to L.U.E.)

Cas. (With great agitation.) Five!

Echoes. Five!

(The audience part of the theatre, as well as the stage, are now in complete darkness.)

(At FIVE, neighing, barking, and huntsmen's cries are heard; amid discordant and eccentric music, supposed to accompany the wild chase in the air; the misty forms of a skeleton stag, skeleton horsemen and hounds pass over the magic circle to the clouds, to a

HUNTING CHORUS OF INVISIBLE SPIRITS.

Spi. Through hill and dale, through glen and mire,

Through dew and cloud, through storm and night,

Through earth and water, air and fire,
Unhurt we spirits wing our flight.

Joho—wau—wau!

Cas. Horror!—'tis the wild chase in the air—a fearful omen! Six!

Echoes. Six!

(At SIX, a tremendous storm of thunder, lightning, hail, and rain, meteors dart through the air, and over the hill—trees are torn up by the roots—the torrent foams and roars, and turns to blood—the rocks are riven—the serpents, birds, and reptiles reappear—the female spectre re-enters, R., and crosses to C. at back of stage—all the faces and hideous heads are visible at every entrance on L. and R.—the Witch of the Glen darts forth from L., and all the horrors of the preceding numbers are accumulated, to deter the *Freischutz* from the completion of his object.

Cas. (In agony.) Seven!

Echoes. Seven!

(At SEVEN, Caspar is struggling on the ground, the hearth of lighted coals scattered around the circle—a tree is rent asunder, L., wherein ZAMIEL appears surrounded by a tremendous shower of fire—ZAMIEL discharges two rifles at one time, and the curtain drops—the audience part of the theatre and stage-lights full on.)

(*End of Act II*)

In the last scene of the Third Act a wedding party has gathered to celebrate the nuptials of Agnes and Rodolph—the heroine and hero—but

there is yet one of the seven magic bullets to be fired. Prince Ottocar points to a white dove, which flies from a small tree to the large tree in the centre of the stage. Rodolph fires and misses. The bullet strikes Caspar, who is hidden in the tree. He falls forward on to the stage. But let us read from the text of the play itself.

Otto. Is it possible that you, knowing the fatal power of the forest-fiend have thus consented to become his guilty agent?

Cas. (Writhing in agony.) No. The guilt was mine and I am the victim. Zamiel has betrayed me. His Seventh Ball has indeed deceived me—by his diverting power it has reached my life. (Shrieking and shuddering.) Ah—already does the fiend, to whom I've sold my soul, await and beckon me. (Desperate with agonizing fancies.) See—there he comes—Oh—Save me—save me from his power and vengeance.

(Zamiel rises in a fiery car, and the back part of the stage becomes entirely illumined with crimson fire. Zamiel drags Caspar into the car.)

Zamiel. Six shall achieve—Seven deceive.

(Zamiel and Caspar descend through the stage in flames of fire—the crimson hue disperses, and the forest view again becomes serene.)

Otto. The guilty wretch has fallen into the snare he laid for Virtue. The ways of Heaven are just, and punishment awaits the bold presumption of the man who dares to tamper with the Powers of Darkness

(*End of the Play*)

The Greeks invented machinery that enabled them to produce the unusual stage effects that many of their plays required. Scenes where a god ascended to his own particular heaven, descended to earth, or conversed with a mortal from a conveniently placed scenic cloud, were common, though "noises off" as we know them were rarely used.

But enough of the past. What we are concerned with now is the present immediate need of the amateur producer so far as stage effects are concerned.

LIGHTNING

In the Theatre of Ancient Greece if it was necessary to remove one of the characters a

favourite method was to invoke the Gods and leave the matter to them to finish. A board upon which was painted a vivid streak of forked lightning was flung from some elevated position on one side of the stage to the other, and the crash that accompanied the fall of the thunderbolt conveyed to an appreciative audience the fact that justice had been avenged. Nowadays, if there is a scoundrel whose villainies are only punishable by the wrath of heaven all that is necessary is for the villain to take up a suitable position near an accommodating window, behind which, and out of sight of the audience, is a stage hand holding a photographer's magnesium gun or flare, which he fires at the crucial moment and launches the accursed one to the place where stage villains go. The effect must be most carefully prepared and there must be no suspicion in the minds of the audience that the means used are so simple. A spare gun should be kept handy in case the first one misfires, and, if possible, the smoke from the gun should not be allowed to percolate through to the auditorium.

A small magnesium gun suitable for the purpose may be purchased from any chemist who deals in photographic materials. It costs little, and is already charged with magnesium made up in strip form and wound on a spool. To use the gun pull out sufficient of the prepared strip magnesium to serve the purpose and ignite it in the flame of a lighted candle, which should be placed in some convenient position out of sight of the audience. The length of the strip magnesium necessary to cause a flash of lightning can only be determined by experiment and sufficient refills for the storm should be obtained. The refill is quite cheap. In place of magnesium, strips of prepared lycopodium can be used in a similar manner. This powder is practically smokeless. To stimulate the rapid flickering of tropical lightning 3, 4, or 5 strips of magnesium may be ignited in quick succession. If, however, this particular flash does not meet requirements and the photographer's magnesium gun has to be used care must be exercised that the Puff . . . ff . . . f of the explosion is minimized as much as possible by firing it away from the stage, or the noise of the explosion may be smothered by a simultaneous rattle of thunder. As an alternative to the magnesium gun a blow pipe, loaded with

lycopodium or magnesium, may be used, the powder being blown across an open flame.

THE MAGIC LANTERN

A magic lantern is frequently used to provide lightning effects. The lantern may be placed in the wings or fixed at the back of the stage to throw the flash on to a thin back-cloth or transparency. The slide may be prepared by exposing a photographic plate to the light and the flash of lightning scratched through the film. If a photographic plate cannot be obtained,

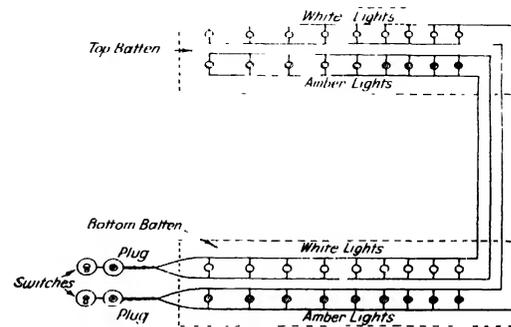


FIG. 1

thick black paper, such as is used for packing photographic plates, may be used. When the flash has been cut out the black paper should be gummed to a clean glass slide. Whatever adhesive matter is used, care should be taken to ensure that the "flash" is kept clear of blurr. After the glass slide has been prepared it should be protected by having another glass slide placed over it and the edges of both slides bound together with passe-partout paper. When all is prepared, the lightning may be flashed by rapidly removing and replacing the cap of the lantern. If the lightning is to flash frequently the operator may use the palm of his hand as a shutter. We must also assume that the producer has arranged a suitable day for the occurrence and not a sunny afternoon when there is not a cloud visible. I once saw lightning produced without the necessary darkening of the stage: the attempt was a failure.

If the stage is set for an outdoor scene the effect must be varied to suit the occasion, and in place of the magnesium gun the use of the

STAGE EFFECTS

lighting system can be considered, assuming, of course, that the stage is lit with electricity. The electrician arranges to have two switches placed in a convenient position. To these he connects two battens, each carrying two rows of electric lamps arranged as in Fig. 1. Each batten has one row of white and one row of amber lamps. These rows are arranged so that one batten is immediately underneath the other, and the white

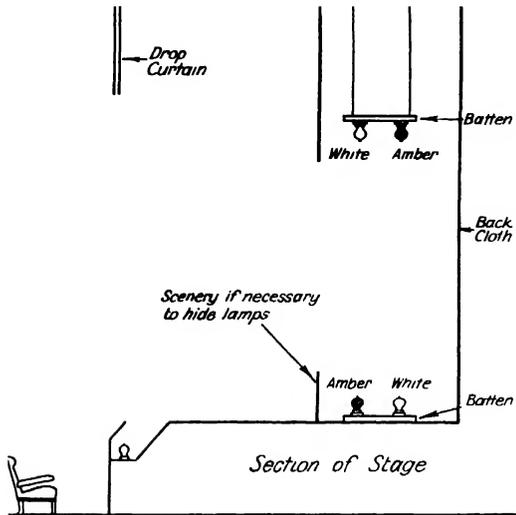


FIG. 2

lamps in the top batten are immediately over the amber lamps in the bottom batten (Fig. 2). The effect of lightning is obtained by a rapid, alternate switching on and off of the lights. If it is impossible to obtain amber lamps the illusion may be conveyed by a rapid flickering of a row of white lamps with the stage suitably darkened. This effect is not to be recommended, but it is still used by many touring companies.

A suitable piece of apparatus for making lightning is described in Fig. 3. It is a long iron file, with a wooden handle, about 18 in. long, and a wooden handle to which a stick of carbon is attached. The file and the carbon are attached to wires that are connected to a plug. In the wire from the file is a piece of electrical apparatus called a resistance, of a suitable value, and the

THEATRE AND STAGE

effect of lightning is produced by bringing the carbon into contact with the file after the apparatus has been connected to the wall plug.

An improvement on this is the apparatus shown in Fig. 4. It is simply two pieces of wood

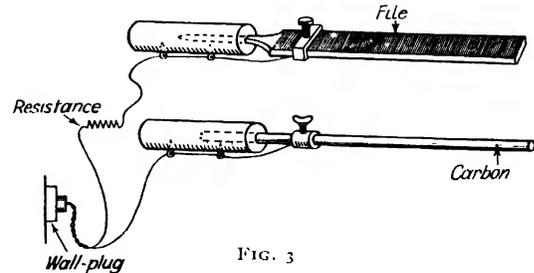


FIG. 3

hinged as shown and kept open by a spring. The ends of the wood carry a carbon and an iron plate, and the effect is obtained by holding the apparatus in the hand and compressing it until contact is made. The length of the flash is determined by the time contact is maintained. This apparatus should be made by an experienced person and

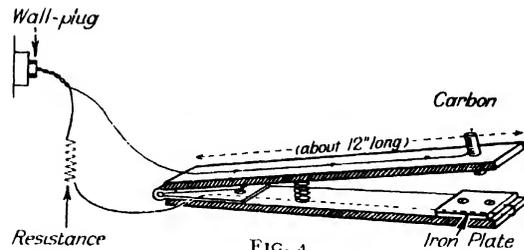


FIG. 4

carefully worked, and the eyes should be protected against the glare.

It is possible to hire for a relatively reasonable sum of money a "Stage Lightning Lantern." This apparatus consists of a lightning striker actuated by electricity, mounted in a metal frame, and enclosed in a strong wire cage. It is easier to operate than the carbon and file. An elaboration of this device consists of a piece of mechanism actuated by an electro-magnet. A series of these lightning producers can be placed in different positions and may be operated by means of switches fixed to the main switchboard.

THUNDER

After the blinding flash of lightning comes the menacing roll of thunder. It may reverberate overhead with nerve shattering violence, or it may roar and rumble along at a distance, fading away until all that is heard is an occasional angry mutter. It is an effect that requires careful arrangement and the particular circumstances that obtain on the stage at the time must determine the volume of sound that is produced. If thunder is introduced to drown the report of a revolver or to cover a crash of glass it must not be forgotten that it is stage thunder and that it must be so controlled that the noise of the deadly shot that causes all the complications in the play is heard plainly, but at the same time does not make the noise of the elements seem puny in comparison, and that the sound of breaking glass is not out of proportion to requirements. Dialogue must also be heard above the roar of the storm so that none of the plot is missed by the audience. The wise producer will see that the person who actually produces the thunder when the play is staged is carefully rehearsed beforehand, otherwise an effect intended to be serious may be funny with disastrous results to the production.

In the old days there was a weird contrivance called a thunder box or cart. This was a long, heavy, wooden box, roughly mounted on springless wheels of irregular shape. The wheels themselves, two or three inches thick, had edges that were unevenly corrugated and thunder was produced by the cart being pushed from one side of the stage to the other by three or four stage hands. Sometimes the cart went along on two wheels, sometimes on three. The cart was weighted by being filled with old iron, bricks, and rounded stones or cobbles. The volume of sound that was produced by it was enormous. In some theatres a smaller edition of the thunder cart was rolled in the flies.

Another effective piece of mechanism for the production of thunder was known as the "rabbit hutch." This was a tall, narrow box fitted with a number of shelves so arranged that they sloped outwards and downwards. Each shelf had its own door, which consisted of a strip of wood hinged at one end and secured at the other by a metal turn button. Each shelf held three or four large

heavy iron balls. When thunder was required the retaining buttons were turned and the balls dropped into a chute that zigzagged its way down the side or back wall of the theatre. The chute was plentifully supplied with obstacles that caused the balls to jump and bump and the run also contained numerous shallow steps. At the end of each length of run the balls, instead of turning round a corner, frequently dropped through a hole



FIG. 5

on to the next run and continued the journey. For an occasional clash of thunder directly overhead, the "rabbit hutch" was used, but the heavy balls, instead of entering the chute, fell into a wooden box, which was fitted with two or three deep steps.

The Greeks used a small room underneath the stage to conceal a thunder effect that was obtained by rolling bladders or copper vessels, filled with pebbles, across sheets of copper. This effect is referred to by the Chorus in their last speech in *The Birds* of Aristophanes. At Drury Lane in 1840 the rumblings of an earthquake were suggested by a garden roller dragged over sheets of iron stretched across the hollows above the proscenium.

There are many ways of producing thunder. If the building is one that is regularly used for stage purposes it is possible that there may be a "thunder sheet" as part of the stage fittings. If not, and if it is decided that a thunder sheet must be provided, a piece of sheet-iron, six or

seven feet long by three or four feet wide will be required. This sheet of metal is suspended from the roof by strong leather thongs or similar material and is hung in a convenient place sufficiently high to allow the lower end to be reached with comfort and clear of the wall so that it will vibrate freely. At the lower end are fixed two metal handles; a second or so after the lightning has flashed the handles are grasped and shaken. If sheet iron cannot be obtained a sheet of block

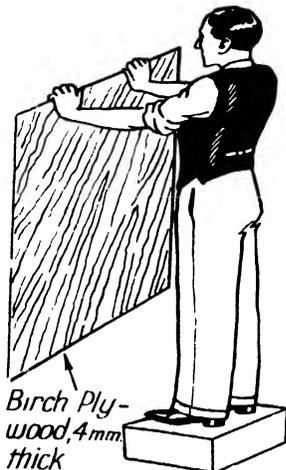


FIG. 6

tin of about the same size can be used as a substitute. Care should be exercised to ensure that the sheet does not sound too "tinny" when it is vibrated. If the noise produced is too heavy for our needs we may moderate the tone by striking the thunder sheet with a drumstick or a mallet. In a well known London theatre hanging up near the thunder sheet are two large mallets, one well padded with blanket material and the other one having one end covered with a large piece of indiarubber cut from an old motor tyre, and nailed in position, with the other end just plain wood. With a choice of three beating surfaces, the operator can obtain almost any variety of thunder sound that is required.

If a thunder sheet is out of the question, other methods may be adopted. For instance, a large tin tea tray, properly beaten or shaken, is effective.

It may be beaten with the flat of the hand, with the fist, or with a padded mallet (Fig. 5).

A medium sized zinc bath hung up by the handles and beaten skilfully will also provide good thunder.

A small covered handcart such as bakers use, with a series of loosely fitting wooden shelves or trays on runners, if pushed over a series of laths or battens nailed to the stage, will produce a rumbling noise similar to the thunder cart, but on a much smaller scale. If the battens are of uneven sizes and at unequal distances apart, the effect is improved.

In one of the largest theatres in the north of England an almost perfect thunder was produced by violently vibrating the bottom of a large empty tank that had originally been part of a gas engine plant. During structural alterations to the theatre it was necessary to dismantle the thunder sheet. An emergency arising, the tank was brought into use, and it proved to be so successful that it was fixed permanently, and is now in regular use.

Many amateur societies depend solely upon the use of a bass drum for the production of thunder effects. Properly "rolled off" the drum produces many variations of tone. To heighten the effect a gentle suggestion of a burr . . . r . . . r . . . r from the cymbals is helpful, but it should not be overdone.

A wooden cask three parts full of sand rolled slowly across the stage will also provide a good rumble of thunder or in place of sand the cask may contain a couple of heavy iron balls if such are obtainable. Iron balls enclosed in a heavy metal cylinder, made of corrugated iron, mounted in a frame and rotated by means of a handle constitute another successful thunder device.

Perhaps the best effect of all is that produced by the use of a sheet of plywood. It should be made of birch, four millimetres thick, and free from cracks. The edges should not be frayed. The sheet is gripped firmly with both hands, raised clear of the floor of the stage, and then agitated (Fig. 6). The volume of sound that can be obtained is remarkable, and in the hands of a skilful operator the effect is satisfying. The plywood sheet often bolsters other "sound" effects and it may be purchased from almost any joiner or cabinet maker or from the shops that specialize in the supply of woodworking materials.

RAIN

Many plays depend upon the incidence of rain to develop plot or atmosphere. In Shaw's *Pygmalion*, for instance, the stage directions to the first act read: "Covent Garden at 11.15 p.m. Torrents of heavy summer rain—cab whistles blowing frantically in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter in the

Schuitzler arranges a rain storm so that Anatol may meet Gabrielle, an old sweetheart, in *A Christmas Present*, and in the third act of Ronald Mackenzie's *Musical Chairs*, ". . . it is early morning. The rain is falling torrentially." In *Rain* by Somerset Maugham the drumming of tropical rain was heard from the moment the play began until the final curtain. There was no respite, even

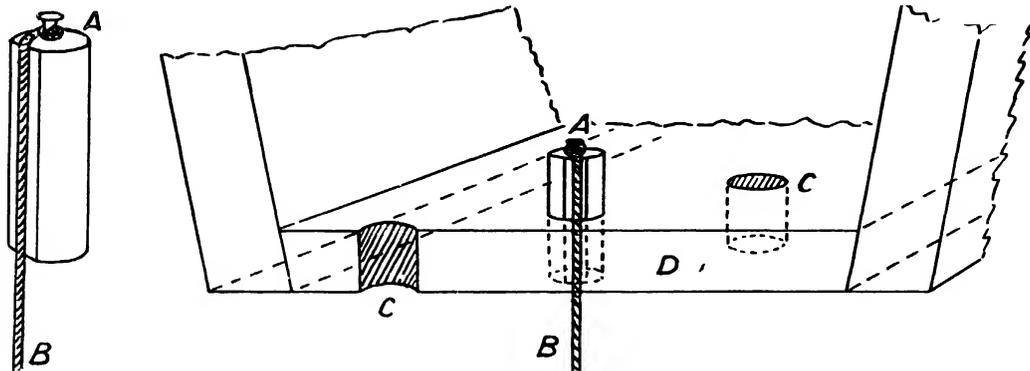


FIG. 5. PIPES MADE FROM $\frac{3}{8}$ " DOWELS WITH A FLAT PART PLANED LENGTHWAYS

Pin and pin at top, *A*. Strong thread *B* tied to pin *A* and pressed into hole *C*, which are bored through bottom of delivery tank *D*. The thread is then allowed to drip into the receiving trough.

market and under the portico of St. Paul's Church, where there are already several people, among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. They are all peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, who seems wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is busily writing. "The church clock strikes the first quarter." In the second act of *The Devil's Disciple* Shaw finds it necessary to have a rain storm, so that later on in the play the exchange of a wet coat for a dry one enables Richard Dudgeon to change places with Minister Anderson, whom the military are anxious to arrest and to bring to trial as a rebel. In this case, "The evening has closed in and the room is dark except for the cosy firelight and the dim oil lamps seen through the window in the wet street, where there is a quiet, steady, warm, windless downpour of rain. As the town clock chimes the quarter, Judith comes in with a couple of candles in earthenware candlesticks and sets them on the table."

during the intervals, and the noise towards the end of the play became almost intolerable.

VISIBLE RAIN

Unless it is absolutely imperative, the use of water to suggest rain is not recommended, but if there *must* be "real" rain there are many ways to arrange it. It may be supplied by having metal pipes, suitably perforated, fixed to battens and connected either to a water tank in the flies or to the water system, providing there is sufficient pressure. If the rain has to be seen falling on to the stage, a waterproof stage cloth must be used, and underneath this a second such cloth should be laid. Between the two cloths there should be a layer of sawdust to absorb any water that may percolate through. Similarly, if water has to be seen gushing down a window, the same means may be adopted. In this case the rain pipe is fixed close to the window, and the water as it falls is collected in a trough. Perfect drainage must be arranged in both instances.

Here is a description of a water effect that was most successfully staged. The scene was the interior of a room with a large bay window overlooking a garden. During the course of the play a storm arose, and when it was nearly over the windows were flung open and the audience saw the rain falling. This is how it was arranged. A

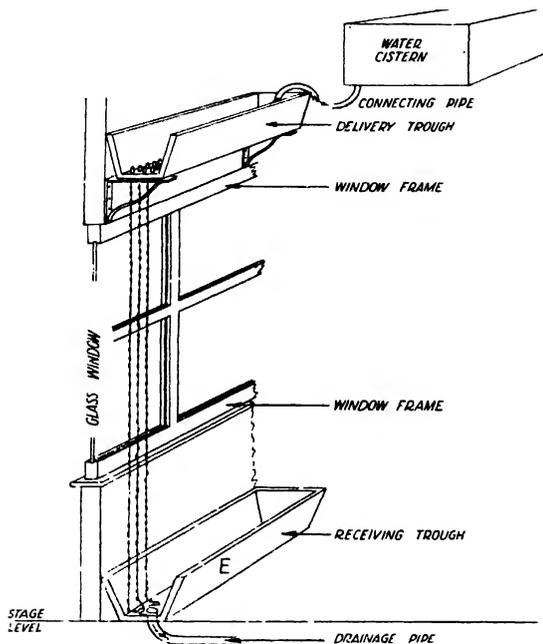


FIG. 8

long deep wooden trough shaped to fit the window was securely fixed to the framework of the window by means of strong iron brackets. A second trough of the same shape, but larger, was placed immediately underneath it at stage level. In the construction of the troughs the joints were made watertight by the use of paint and putty. Through the bottom board of the upper trough rows of holes were bored three-eighths of an inch in diameter. Lengths of three-eighths dowelling, planed flat on one side and cut into pieces about three inches long, were hammered into the holes, leaving the bottom edge flush with the bottom of the trough. Small sprigs were nailed into the centre of each

piece of dowelling, leaving about half an inch protruding. To the head of each sprig lengths of strong thread were attached. The thread was long enough to reach the bottom trough. The thread was passed through the space left by the flattened side of the dowel and led down to the trough at stage level. When all the dowels had

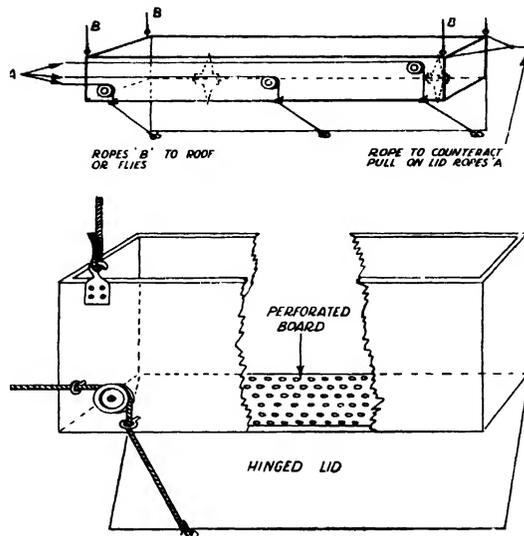


FIG. 9

been threaded, the ends of the thread were made fast to a shaped length of metal electric wire casing that was laid in the bottom trough. The weight of the metal casing was supported by lengths of fishing line placed at suitable intervals to lessen the risk of the threads being broken when the scene was struck. When the effect was required the upper trough was gently filled with water from a tank in the flies and the water trickling down the flattened side of the dowel ran, drop by drop, down the thread into the bottom trough. The "dropping" effect will be spoiled if too much wood is planed from the side of the dowelling, and it will be advisable to experiment on a small scale before building the apparatus. In the particular effect I have described the upper trough filled once held sufficient water to supply rain that took fifteen minutes to fall and the bottom trough was large enough to hold all the water that fell.

Amber floods lit up the effect which, seen from the front, was beautiful (Figs. 7 to 9).

Falling rain may also be suggested by having a long box or trough, fitted with a bottom that has been generously perforated with holes sufficiently large to allow the passage of rice. To the bottom front edge of the box is hinged a long tin or wooden shutter that can be opened and closed by means of cords led through strong screw eyes and over guide wheels fixed to the side of the box. To counter the pull on the box when the shutter is being worked a strong cord or wire should be fastened to the opposite end of the box and the wall. The box is filled with rice, and when the shutter is dropped the falling rice, illuminated with amber floods, is most effective (Fig. 10). The rice can be caught in a trough or it may fall on to a stage cloth that can be taken up quickly in order to avoid unnecessary waste of time if further scenes are to be set.

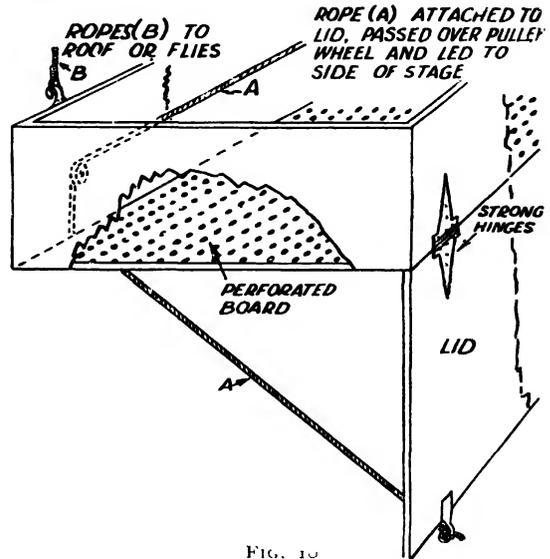
Lamb says that "A play is said to be well or ill acted in proportion to the scenical illusion provided," and whilst this may be true in the case of some plays the theatre has moved since the days when one courted death amidst a struggling mob frantically fighting and pushing its way through a narrow door set flat in the wall, risking broken limbs in the mad race up winding stairs that seemed never to end, and then, breathless, making a breakneck descent to get a front seat in the gallery. A word of warning is perhaps necessary to the beginner, especially to one whose ambition it is to become a producer, or to one who aspires to climb the Everest of dramatic authorship, and that is always to remember that stage effects as "effects" should never be overdone. There is sometimes a tendency to stress some particular effect, or some unusual mechanical device never before used on the stage, and whilst the desire to make a play successful is natural enough the danger of overdoing things is always present.

Effects should be of secondary importance unless, of course, the play has been written as a vehicle for staging some wonderful effect, when any means are legitimate, but it is disastrous to the success of any ordinary play if an effect is so startling that the curiosity of the audience is aroused as to how it is arranged. This question may become so urgent to some of them that what happens afterwards, and what really matters, is

forgotten altogether, and their only memory of the play is that it was "that" play in which they saw a horse-race on the stage. The name of the play itself was of no importance. It is forgotten.

Much can be done by intelligent suggestion. The audience is always pleased to be able to anticipate what is to happen later on in the play and a skilful dramatist persuades his audience to believe

END VIEW OF RICE BOX



that they alone are omniscient, that the actors and actresses on the stage are the only ones who are ignorant of their ultimate fate, and makes their words and actions carry out this belief. Craig says that by means of suggestion you may bring on the stage a sense of all things, the rain, the sun, the wind, the snow, the hail, etc., and in saying this he may have had in mind Shakespeare, who, by dialogue, conveyed whatever he wished by subtle touches. Take *Macbeth* for instance. In the opening scene of the first act we are told that it is "An open space. Thunder and Lightning. Enter three witches." There is no mention of rain, but the first witch speaks—

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, and rain.

The italics are mine, but there is no further need for description. Similarly in *The Tempest* we are "On a ship at sea. A storm with thunder and lightning," and the vileness of the weather is emphasized by stage directions that read "enter Mariner, wet."

If we wish to convey the fact that it is raining, one of the characters may enter with an umbrella that is dripping wet and wearing a wet mackintosh or sou'wester and oilskins. New oilskins look shiny and seem wet and old oilskins may be drenched with water immediately before going on the stage. If the character has to have a wet, bedraggled appearance an old suit or dress can be "made up" with paint, varnish, or distemper, according to the material of the dress, or streaks of shiny material such as American oilcloth or satin of a suitable colour may be sewn on to the portions of the dress that receives, or is exposed to, the full force of the rain. A sense of falling rain may be conveyed by dimming lights, a shrug of the shoulders, an upward glance, and when one's coat collar is turned up and the coat buttoned there is no doubt whatever that rain is falling.

It is a peculiar fact that although the theatre of old had every facility for staging storms of rain, rain as a spectacle was neglected. Realistic fires and other risky devices were popular and many disastrous fires, attended by a regrettable loss of life, made it imperative that some means be adopted to minimize the risk of danger. In 1791 the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was demolished and after being rebuilt was opened on 21st April, 1794, with a production of *Macbeth*. The spirit of the times is reflected in the Epilogue, written by George Colman the Younger and spoken by Miss Farren. Here is an extract that is worth repeating if only for the sake of "effects" it mentions—

Our pile is rock more durable than brass,
Our decorations gossamer and gas.
Weighty yet airy in effect our plan,
Solid though light—like a thin alderman.
"Blow wind, come wrack" in ages yet unborn,
"Our castle's strength shall laugh a siege to scorn."
The very ravages of fire we scout,
For we have wherewithal to put it out.
In ample reservoirs our firm reliance,
Whose streams set conflagrations at defiance.
Panic alone avoid; let none begin it,
Should the flame spread, sit still, there's nothing
in it.

We'll undertake to drown you all in half a minute,
Behold, obedient to the prompter's bell,
Our tide shall swell and real waters swell.
No river of meandering pasteboard made,
No gentle tinkling of a tin cascade,
No brook of broadcloth shall be set in motion,
No ships be wrecked upon a wooden ocean;
But this pure element its course shall hold,
Rush on the scene, and o'er our stage be rolled.
(*Here the scene rises and discovers the water,*
etc., etc.)

How like you our aquatics? Need we fear,
Some critic with a hydrophobia here,
Whose timid caution caution's self might tire,
And doubts if water can extinguish fire?
If such there be, still let him rest secure;
For we have made "assurance doubly sure"
Consume the scenes, your safety yet is certain—
Presto—for proof let down the iron curtain.
(*Here the iron curtain is let down.*)

The Epilogue continues and at its close the iron curtain is drawn up and discovers the statue of Shakespeare under a mulberry tree. *The theatre was again burnt down five years later.*

Much valuable and unexpected information regarding the conditions that obtained in the theatre of old is to be found in many of these ancient Epilogues, and they well repay the trouble of reading. Frequently the information is hidden away in the folds of some lengthy discourse where it is likely to be overlooked. They were usually written to grace some festive occasion and were spoken by some celebrated actor or actress or by the author himself. In one Epilogue the advent of gas was welcomed more for its heating qualities—keeping an audience warm was a difficult matter in those days—than as an illuminant. Much capital was made out of the use of unusual stage effects; yet, strange to say, some of these effects are being used in the theatre of to-day.

Here are two pleasing rain effects that are suitable for children's plays. To make the first one procure sufficient lengths of planed wood about two inches wide by one inch thick—or of stouter material if the frame required is large—and shape it according to requirements. The joints should be halved and screwed together. Along the top, bottom, and, if necessary, the sides, small wire nails, or cabinetmaker's panel pins, three eighths of an inch long, are tacked; they are inserted at an acute angle, and sufficient of the head of the nail is left protruding to hold the fishing line or white cord that is strung, harplike,

over them. When the fishing line has been run in the direction the rain is required to fall, the line is painted in irregular streaks of white and black, silver and black, or similar toned shades. The painted streaks should be about two to three

feet long. To the head of each sprig is attached a long length of thread upon which is fastened small glass beads tied about two inches apart. These long lengths may be prepared in small pieces of about two or three feet long and then

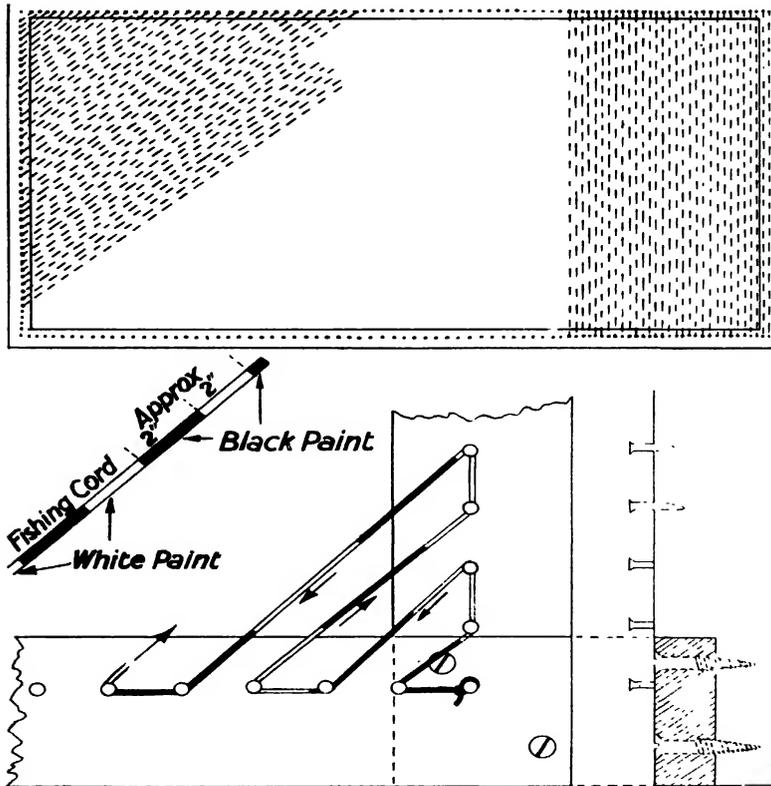


FIG. 11. RAIN FRAME.

inches long. If it is desired to give the rain a "slant," this may be done, care being taken that the rain slants evenly. By placing the sprigs in the frame at exact distances apart evenness is ensured. The streaks of black and white should be irregularly spaced (Fig. 11).

The second effect is a rain screen, simple but effective. All that is required is a long batten on which is tacked sprigs with the heads left pro-

joined to whatever length is required. The bottom ends are attached to a batten at stage level, but the weight is sustained by lines joining the ends of the battens. By vibrating the upper batten and playing amber floods upon the screen the suggestion of falling rain is obtained (Fig. 12).

RAIN NOISES

R. W. Elliston records that he preferred the

simplicity of a small country theatre to the pomp of Drury Lane. Once when he was acting at the Coventry Theatre in O'Keefe's *Wild Oats*, playing "Rover" to Bob Keeley's "Sim," it was discovered that no "rain effects" were available.

"Rover's" entry, as buttoning up his coat, he exclaimed "Here's a pelting shower and no shelter. Poor Tom's a-cold. I'm wet through," (Elliston, in an aside, "Louder, louder—rub the water, Bob"), and though Keeley did his best, the

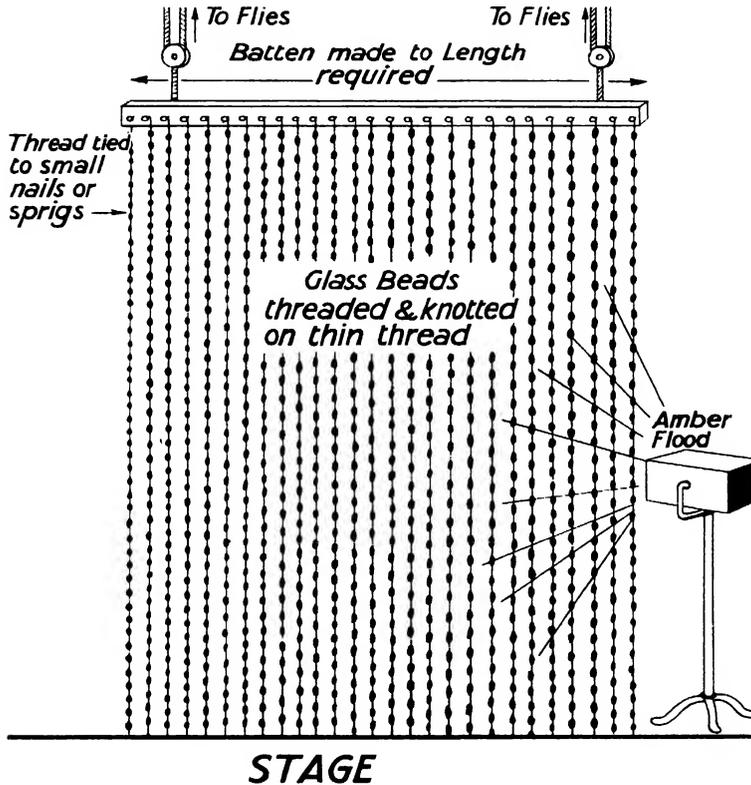


FIG. 12 RAIN SCREEN

Elliston immediately sent out for sheets of stout brown paper, and the "effect" was produced by the vigorous rubbing of the paper on the wall behind the wing. The prompt copy runs: "Exeunt Sim and Jane (a shower of rain). Enter Rover hastily." As Keeley made his exit, Elliston thrust the brown paper into Keeley's hands, saying "Rub away, Bob, as much water as you can." This was to add to the effect of

asides continued "Quicker, Bob, rain—rain" and to the great delight of the audience who could hear every word Elliston continued, "Not a bit like rain, but pelt away, Bob, pelt away."

To produce the sound of rain falling off stage procure a bucket full of fine washed gravel, such as builders use for pebble dashing the front of houses, and three large empty cardboard boxes. Place the boxes on the floor of the stage and rest

the bucket on an upturned wooden box high enough for the purpose. The person making the rain sound takes a handful of the gravel and allows it to trickle through his fingers so that it falls into the first of the empty boxes. When this

A rain box is a simple piece of apparatus and can easily be made. Two long pieces of match-boarding, four inches wide and about six or seven feet long, form the sides. At the top and the bottom the sides are held in position by two pieces

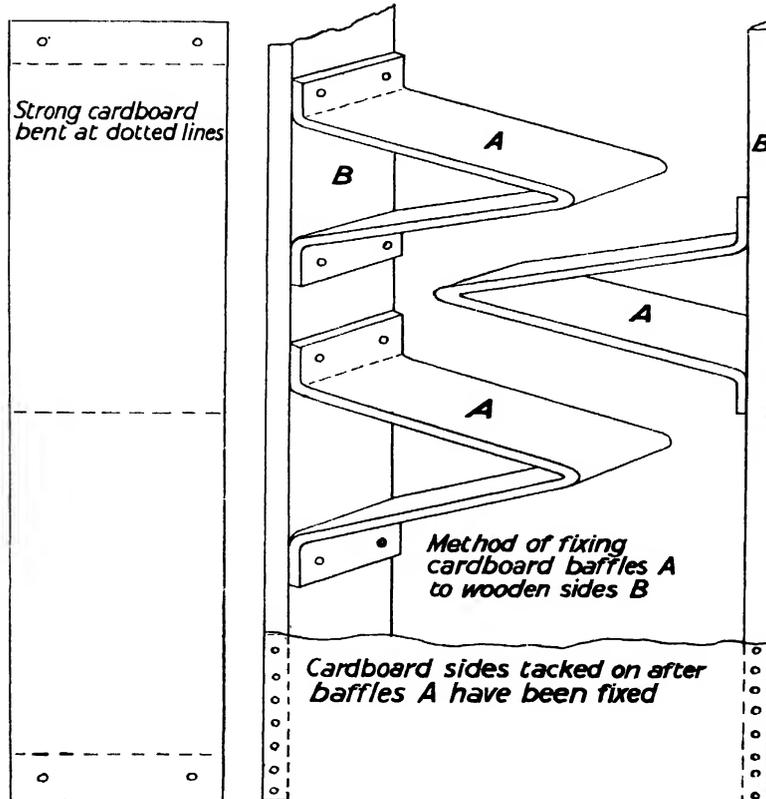


FIG. 13. RAIN BOX

box is three parts full the trickle is directed into the second box, the contents of box No. 1 are returned to the supply bucket, and the procedure is repeated until the rain ceases. If the tone of this effect does not satisfy, the gravel may be made to fall on to a sheet of tin, plate glass, plywood, or other material placed so that the gravel after striking it falls into the collecting box as before.

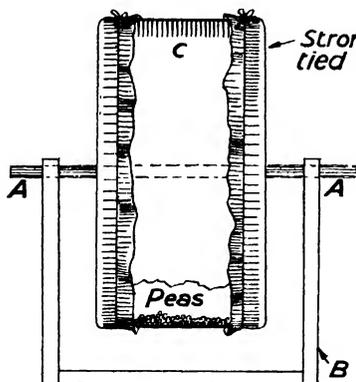
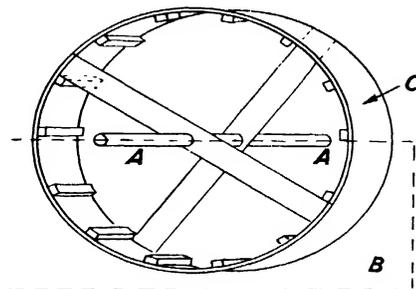
of wood four inches square. Sheets of cardboard, bent as illustrated in Fig. 13, are tacked to the inside of the box, leaving a space at each end large enough to hold a couple of pints of dried peas. The sides of the rain box are next filled in; long pieces of thin cardboard will suffice. Before fastening the last sheet in place the dried peas are placed in the box, and the effect is obtained by allowing the peas to run from end to end of the

box. The noise of the peas pattering down the inside of the apparatus can be made continuous by reversing the rain box when necessary.

Another type of rain box, cheap and easy to make, consists of the circular side of a wooden cheese box, which is about six inches deep. Two pieces of wood, about an inch thick by an inch

it with cord. The brown paper is pierced to take the axle, and after a pint of dried peas has been poured through one of the holes the axle is fitted and the apparatus is complete. To simplify working, place the cheese box in an empty soap box that is deep enough to hold it. At each side of the box the circular dowelling rests in a groove,

*Wood laths $\frac{1}{4}$ " square
nailed to inside of
box C about 3" apart*



*Strong brown paper
tied over both ends*

*$\frac{3}{4}$ " dowel A through centre
of cheese box C,
resting on sides of wooden
box B
To prevent box C sliding
when being revolved, semi-
circular grooves should be cut
in box B to receive dowel A*

FIG. 14 RAIN BOX

and a half wide, are fitted across the widest part. Before nailing them in position find the exact centre, and, holding both pieces of wood together, bore holes through them to take a piece of stout dowelling about two feet long. Tack strips of builders' laths, six inches long and about three eighths of an inch thick, to the inside of the cheese box, inserting the tacks from the outside. Close the ends of the box by means of two sheets of stout brown paper, which, after being laid over the ends of the box, are securely fastened round

and the apparatus when rotated by hand makes the sound of falling rain (Fig. 14).

The simplest method is to obtain a new dripping tin, about 12 or 16 inches long by 10 or 12 inches wide, or a large circular tin lid, in which is placed dried peas that are slowly rolled from side to side, the peas being kept in constant motion as far as possible. If peas do not make sufficient noise, lead shot, which can be purchased by the pound at any good ironmonger's shop, may be used. Experiment will prove which material is more satisfactory.

WIND

The question whether scenery or stage machinery was used by Shakespeare has caused much discussion and the belief that his plays were acted upon a stage bare of decoration may have been wrong. Shakespeare was essentially a man of the theatre, and the repetition of the words "A storm is *heard*. Thunder and lightning," in many of his plays seems to indicate that he had some means of suggesting the noise of the "fretful elements," which he so frequently turned to account. The drum was already in use, and wind machines, consisting of long, thin pieces of wood of different widths, with holes of varying shapes bored through them and whirled around the head by means of a thong, were known to the ancients. Here, then, were two simple means of supplying thunder and wind. These puny efforts to accompany the majestic words of Shakespeare are referred to in an anonymous article, entitled "Theatralia," believed to have been written by Charles Lamb, in which the following passage occurs—"The Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery with which they mimic the storm he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear," but what producer staging "the play" would neglect to supply the baleful flicker of lightning, the terrifying roar of thunder, and the shrill whine of wind?

The lack of sound effects has often been covered by adding to or amending the dialogue to meet the particular needs of the case, and although this is a dangerous course to adopt it is sometimes justified. In some plays atmosphere is developed by the subtle use of dialogue in such a manner that the provision of sound effects is unnecessary. A good example of this occurs in Beaumont and Fletcher's play *The Double Marriage*, the second act of which opens as follows—

Act II

Enter Boatswain and Gunner

Boats : Lay her before the wind; up with her canvas
And let her work. The wind begins to whistle.
Clap all her streamers on and let her dance,
As if she were the minion of the ocean.
Let her bestride the billows till they roar,
And curl their wanton heads. Ho, below there.

Sailors (within) : Ho ho.

Boats : Lay her North East, and thrust her mizen out
The day grows fair and clear, and the wind
courts us.
Oh for a lusty sail now, to give chase to.

Gunner : A stubborn bark, that would bear up to us,
And change a broadside bravely

and after more in this strain the audience can almost feel the wind blowing in their faces.

If it is impossible to produce a desired effect satisfactorily, it may be wiser to cut the effect altogether rather than risk failure. This course is frequently adopted. On one occasion, however, it roused the ire of Marshall who, writing in his *Chronicle of Events for April, 1847*, says—

7th.—*The Tempest* was produced at Sadler's Wells but in a mutilated state, the summoning of Ariel was entirely dispensed with, as was the famous opening scene with the sailors; and Mr. Phelps as Prospero looked more like Cop the conjurer than the high-minded, noble and forgiving Duke of Milan. The whole of Shakespeare or none we say.

The dramatist of to-day is saved these subtrefuges and with the facilities of a modern theatre at his disposal no effect is beyond his reach. The amateur producer, faced with the presentation of such plays as *Granite, If Four Walls Told*, and *The Good Hope*, has no hesitation in accepting responsibility for the realistic sound effects required. In the third act of Heijerman's play, *The Good Hope*, a storm is raging and from the rising of the curtain until the close of the act there is ample scope for noise effects. The noise of "A gale" that "is blowing outside" almost drowns the recitation of "A Prayer to the Blessed Virgin," and as the act proceeds every character that enters makes some pointed remark to the gale that is raging. One says "Has the wind gone down yet?" another "What a wind," others remark "What a storm." "The tree by the pig-sty has broken off like a clay pipe." "Here's a wind." "It's dreadful out of doors." "Listen to its cursed wailing," etc. A window is opened and the gust of wind that rushes in blows out the lamp; the pig-sty itself is eventually blown down, and throughout the act the wind "shrieks" and "whistles," whilst "Wind" and "Gusts of Wind" are frequent stage directions. The curtain falls whilst a prayer is being said, and all the time "The storm howls round the house."

Before the invention of the electrically driven wind fan the heroine of old, who through the evil machinations of the villain of the piece, was turned out into the cruel, cruel world, somehow or other usually began her journey to happiness by fighting her way through a storm that almost tore from her body the few tattered rags that barely sufficed to cover her shrinking form. She was almost blown off her feet by the wind as she staggered across the stage to the accompaniment of the stifled sobbing of a sympathetic audience already in tears. At a well-known Lancashire theatre during the performance of a scene of this description, the entry of the heroine's stage stepmother, who was in league with the villain, was greeted by an angry uproar and a deluge of missiles. The manager of the theatre had to explain, personally, that the scene was simply make-believe, and that "Miss —— is at this very moment resting in her dressing room after her *strenuous* exertions," before the audience would allow the play to proceed.

The suggestion of real wind was made by having long black threads attached to various portions of the lady's dress, and as she swayed across the stage her dress was pulled and tossed from side to side by one of the stage hands who manipulated the threads after the manner of the puppeteer working his dolls. Just before her exit she was faced in the wings by two of the stage hands who were armed with large sheets of stout cardboard which they vigorously plied as she released small strips of dress material that she had held in her hand for the occasion. With the wind machine roaring, the rain pattering in the rain box, and the darkened stage lit up by an occasional flash of lightning, the illusion as seen from the front was effective. Nowadays if we wish to stage a similar effect we employ a large electric fan.

As a contrast in stage methods this is how a modern theatre arranged a scene that demanded exceptional wind effects. The scene was a desert, and as the action developed a sand storm arose. The sky darkened, the wind whistled, and soon the sand was whipped into motion. The stage was covered deeply with a material to suggest sand. The "sand" was blown about by streams of air supplied by a special machine, and forced through a series of pipes laid under and brought up through the stage to a number of nozzles concealed in the

sand material. When the storm began a number of pipes were brought into action, and the wind from these pipes sent a ripple of air across the sand, giving it the same visual appearance as a ripple on water. A second series of pipes was next brought into use. These pipes were so arranged that by systematically operating them in a carefully pre-arranged sequence the suggestion of the rapid whirl and twist of sand in motion was conveyed. A third series of pipes, placed immediately behind the footlights, was constantly emitting a steady stream of air, which formed a curtain and effectively prevented the escape of any of the sand material into the auditorium.

There are many machines that will provide a good wind sound, the commonest type being that which consists of a series of laths fastened between two circular end pieces of wood, which are mounted in a frame and rotated by means of a handle. The machine should be high enough for convenient working. A long strip of canvas is attached to the machine in such a manner that the edges of the laths come in contact with the surface of the canvas when the cylinder is rotated. The sound developed varies according to the size of the drum and the speed at which it is turned. A suitable canvas may be purchased from a ship chandler's establishment or from a firm that specializes in the manufacture of tents or stack covers. Three or four dozen varieties of canvas are made. Before deciding which particular quality to use it is wise to experiment.

A wind machine similar to that shown in the accompanying illustration (Fig. 15) is used in one of our most progressive "Little" Theatres. The frame work is made of wood, and the iron handle by which the cylinder is rotated is of a substantial character. The axle is secured to the cylinder ends by lugs that effectively prevent the handle slipping round when pressure is brought to bear on the paddles. In many of the simpler forms of wind machines that are made by amateurs the apparatus sometimes fails at a crucial moment owing to the turning gear working loose and becoming ineffective. On a small machine this weakness may be eliminated by flattening a portion of the axle at that point where it fits the end piece of the cylinder and inserting wedges, which are firmly driven in.

Another effective wind machine has a long

cylinder that contains two sets of paddles spaced differently. Three or four different toned canvases are used, and these are mounted on battens in such a manner that they can be quickly fixed over either set of paddles. The battens are held in position by iron holders that are fixed to the front struts. With the canvas hanging loosely over the cylinder when it is rotated, a good wind sound is produced and by exerting pressure on

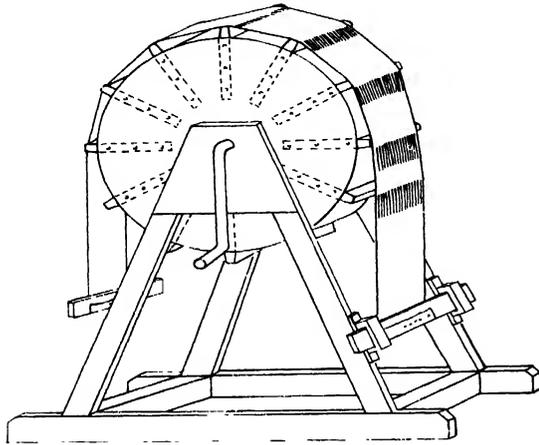


FIG. 15. WIND MACHINE

the free batten variation of tone can be obtained. This particular machine is three feet six inches high, three feet wide, and four feet long. The paddles are six inches deep, and are fixed to the sides of the cylinder by screws. The paddles of one set are four inches apart and of the other three inches apart.

A well-known repertory company uses a wind machine that consists of the frame work of a long narrow table from which the top has been removed. The top wooden roller of a wringing machine with the cog wheel removed rests in sockets in the side of the table. Long triangular shaped pieces of wood, one inch high, are nailed along the roller, two inches apart. One end of the iron bar that goes through the wooden roller has been filed square, and to this is fixed a large handle secured to the central bar by means of a split pin slotted through the end of the iron axle. A piece of canvas belting, about eight

inches wide, is fastened to the underneath side of one end of the frame by means of flat headed nails, carried across the top of the roller, and secured to the opposite side. The wind noise it makes can be heard in every part of a large theatre and by simply pressing one finger on the canvas while the machine is being operated the low moan of the wind suddenly rises to a shrill whistle.

A smaller and more simple wind machine may

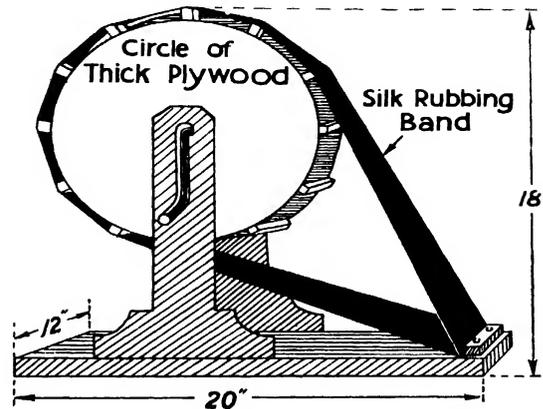


FIG. 16. PORTABLE WIND MACHINE

be made. In the place of canvas, use a length of silk and fix it around a small cylinder, as illustrated (Fig. 16). The machine may be clamped to the top of a table or to the edge of the stage, and the paddles may consist of strips of wood nailed or screwed to the outside edge of the cylinder end. It is always worth while to have a soundly constructed wind machine. When making it the cylinder ends should be prepared first. The centre hole in the cylinder should be bored through both end pieces at the same time to ensure the even running of the cylinder, and if the paddles are cut with the ends perfectly square the cylinder should fit properly. The frame work of the machine should be made last, and, if possible, the handle should be removable.

For particularly shrill wind effects the noise of the wind machine may be augmented by blowing a whistle of the siren type, which may be purchased at almost any musical instrument shop.

It is possible that the illustration is of a stage production, in a French theatre, of a Shakespeare play, or, as no title of the play is given, of a classical play of the 18th century (Fig. 17).

The scene as witnessed by the audience was of a god, or spirit, swooping down from heaven towards the vessel in a heavy sea, and commanding the wind to do its worst, or directing it to blow the vessel to safety from a dangerous lee shore



FIG. 17. A FRENCH PRODUCTION

and then, just as swiftly, darting aloft again to the safety of a cloud. The effect was arranged by stretching tightly across and over the stage a wire hawser or stout rope, securely fastened at each end, either to the walls of the theatre or to the timbers of the platforms from which the scene-shifters operated in the "flies." From this rope a strong wood beam, fitted with runners at each end, was suspended so that it could be drawn from one side of the theatre to the other by a long rope, at one end of which a heavy counterweight, running over a sheave, was hung. This counterweight was held in check at the opposite side of the theatre by the other end of the rope, which was turned round and firmly held by a cleat. When the rope round the cleat was "cased," the counterweight automatically pulled the beam of wood across the theatre, and, when it became necessary to return the beam, a windlass fixed under the scene-shifters platform was used. The rope, after being "held" or "stopped," was secured to the cleat and the beam was ready for

action again. At a short distance from both ends of the beam two sheaves were fitted, end to end, and through these passed two long ropes terminating in iron hooks fitted with tongues. The upper ends of these ropes were carried up to a double sheave-block in the roof timbers, exactly over and half-way across the fixed rope, then along the top of the roof beams, down the side of the wall and eventually secured to another cleat. Underneath the platform carrying the windlass and cleats was a small room or platform from which the actor began his flight from one side of the theatre to the other. A corresponding room or platform on the opposite side of the theatre allowed him to swing into safety. A small cradle, or suitable harness, enabled him to be secured to the tongued hooks for his flight. The beam approaching the centre of the fixed rope automatically lengthened the two supporting ropes as they slipped down between the double sheaves in the beam, and this caused the actor to dip rapidly. As the beam passed the centre point, the movement was reversed, and the actor climbed sharply to the opposite side.

SNOW

One frequently hears of a "frost" in the theatre, but the actual presentation of a snow-storm on the stage is a more rare occurrence. The modern producer instead of allowing his audience to see a snowstorm usually arranges his snow scene immediately *after* a fall of snow. Years ago producers welcomed the opportunity of staging plays with snowstorms or some other spectacular display, and in this connexion some of the old playbills are a joy to read. In *Exile, or the Deserts of Siberia* one reads of "A Dutiful Daughter who conceived the Glorious Design of Rescuing a Father from Exile carried into Execution in Defiance of Intercepting Mountains of Snow" and which she crossed during a "Raging Blizzard." In the pantomime of *The Magic Pipe, or Harlequin and Snowball*, staged at the Adelphi Theatre about 1820-1822, we are told of the "Songs, Choruses, Etc., the Machinery and Tricks, invented and executed expressly for this Occasion. . . ." and the wonders to be seen are hinted at in the "Succession of Scenery." "Scene I. A Mountainous Country covered with Snow—Heavy Fall of Snow—The

Spirits of Frost hail their Monarch—Frost descends in a Car—Grand Recitative and Chorus—Spirits Retire, Pilgrim attacked by Frost and Rescued by a Country Traveller—Who the Devil are you?—Frost sent Packing—Traveller Rewarded—Magic Pipe—Change of Affairs—

the Sweep, and various other Pantomimic Characters.”

In those old plays the snow was supplied by men standing on the grid or in the flies from where they flung handfuls of paper snow with a broad sweeping gesture similar to that made by a

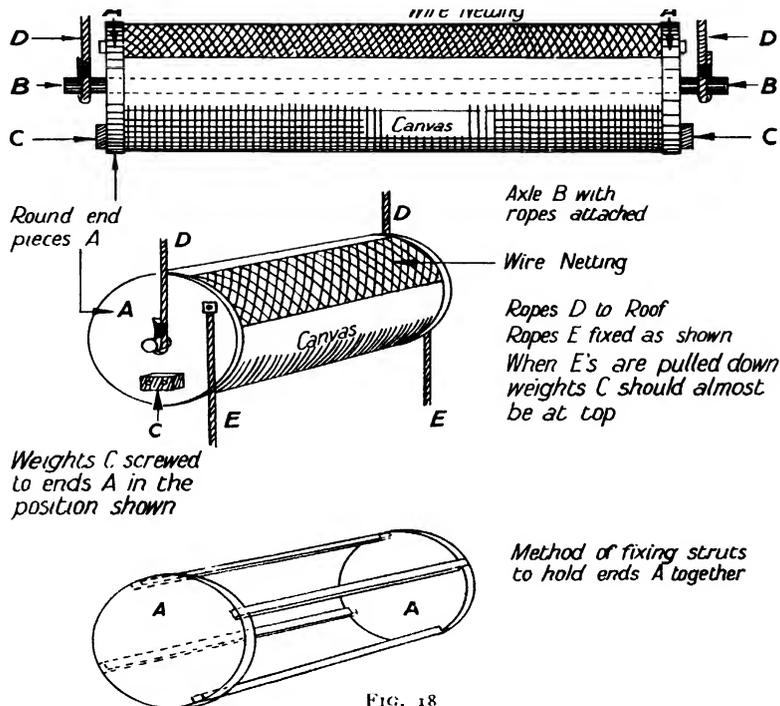


FIG. 18

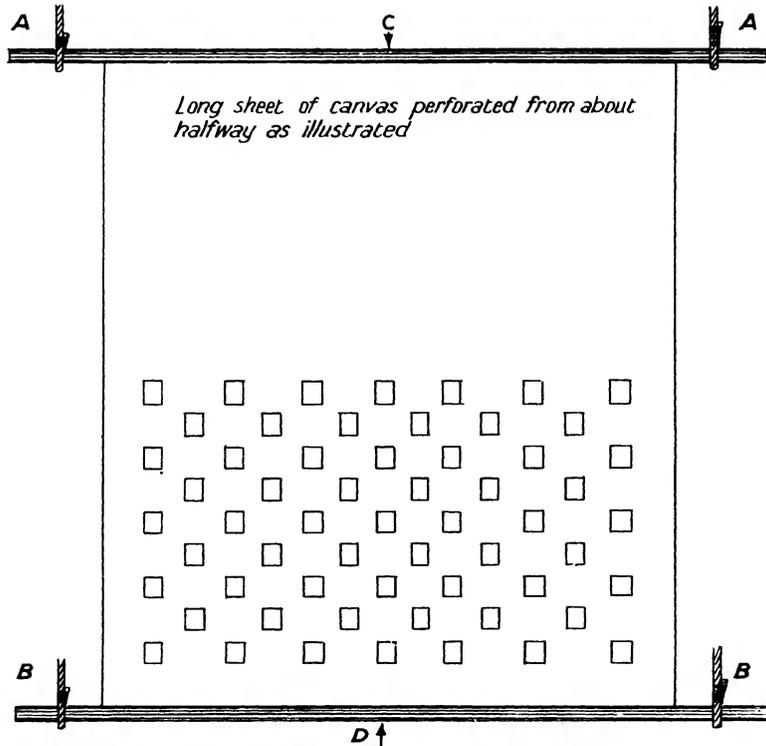
'Turns to Harlequin—Gift of Magic Sword—Seeks Columbine—Great Disappointment of Frost—Swears Revenge—Dreadful Thunderbolt—Fall of Snow." During the course of the pantomime, in addition to meeting "The Clown with Three Heads," one met ladies rejoicing in the names of "Nancy Nantz, Margery Clack, Dolly Dumpling, Susan Whipe, Margaret Flaps, Mrs. Twist, and Squinting Nan," whilst amongst the gentlemen were "Timothy Queer'em, Young Vasey, Chanting Ned, Shrillcove Bob, Trottershaking Tom, Tim Grab'em, John Lag'em, Tim Alum the Baker, Will Fluecfaker

farmer broadcasting his seeds. The machinist of one theatre was in the habit of purchasing his snow material already torn up from the local printer who supplied the playbills. On one occasion the play came to a premature close owing to the carelessness of the printer's apprentice who had inadvertently (?) dropped a large iron nut from one of the printing machines into the sack containing the torn waste paper. This was not observed at the time, and during the storm the heroine was struck on the head and stunned. The thickness of her hat saved her from what might have been a more serious accident,

and the re-issue of a free pass to the gallery, which had been withdrawn from the apprentice, prevented further "accidents."

In some of the older theatres there is still to be seen the "snow box" or "snow trough." This

and in a presentation of Ibsen's play, *John Gabriel Borkman*, the scene where Borkman dies in the snow consisted of a backcloth showing snow covered hills in the distance, a stunted fir tree the branches of which were heavily laden



*Ropes A to Roof and fixed.
Ropes B to pulleys fixed slightly higher
than rod C and returned to stage level.*

FIG. 19

is a long wooden box fixed above the grid and extending from one side of the stage to the other. The box is so constructed that it can easily be rocked. This causes the torn paper to fall through the long slits that are cut in the sides of the box.

In place of the snowstorm the snow scene is now used. In a production of Masefield's *The Faithful* a snow scene was represented by a six-fold Japanese screen painted to suggest winter,

with snow, and a snow-covered garden seat. The stage cloth was painted a greyish white. As Borkman entered he accidentally brushed against the fir tree and the audience saw the snow shaken from the branches fall to the stage, he collapsed on a mound of snow, conveniently placed in the centre of the stage, and when he was lifted to the garden seat much play was made of clearing it of snow.

In many stage spectacles where snow scenes were featured an added attraction was an ice carnival or ice ballet where shapely beauties attired in white fur coatees and silk tights glided about the stage on roller skates. The carnival was usually graced with the presence of a couple of expert skaters whose acrobatic ability was turned to good account. The novelty of roller skating as a stage spectacle soon wore off, and the

the Stone Jug Inn with a reunion in middle age of the characters whose love stories have been told was seen at the same time as the exterior where happy youth glided over the ice to the accompaniment of joyous laughter. Such scenes are further exemplified in the very successful series of ice shows held in recent years at the Stoll Theatre.

When it is necessary to stage a snowstorm, a

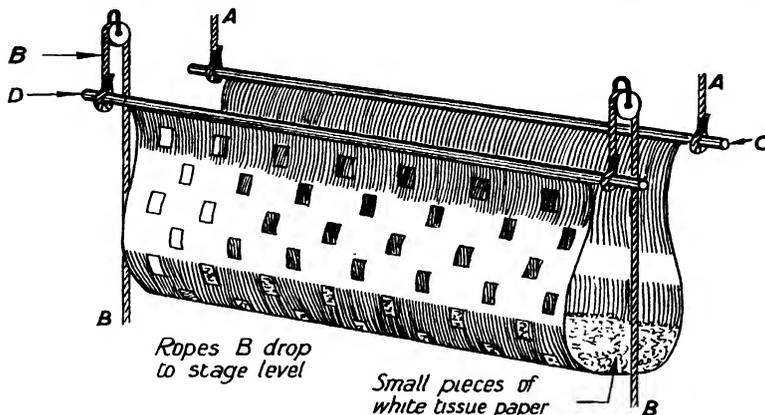


FIG. 20

next development in this direction was made possible by the use of a tank of water, which was kept frozen over by means of ammonia piping. This made real ice skating possible. The latest, and perhaps final, development of this type of stage effect was that used in the production of *Wild Violets*, where in the second scene of the Epilogue "The Garden of the Stone Jug, 1932" a skating spectacle was staged. On a huge revolving stage the outside of the inn was shown with a small pond of water covered with ice, on which skated eight or nine couples. The pond was a number of flats of wood which, when laid on the stage, fitted together and were held in position by a jointed beading that surrounded the whole. The "ice" material was set with a hard, smooth surface. It was spread over the wood foundation to a depth of half an inch, and the surface was made new again after each performance by a top dressing of the material. Ordinary ice skates were used. As the play closed the stage revolved and the interior of

long wooden box similar to that already described for suggesting falling rain by means of rice may be used, but in place of the perforated bottom through which the rice falls, the bottom is made of wire netting such as is used for enclosing poultry runs and which fits close to the shutter. The box is filled with white tissue paper torn into small shreds, and when the shutter is dropped the snow should fall. If the wire netting becomes choked, a gentle shaking of the box will clear it.

A variation of this device is illustrated by the drawings in Fig. 18. The round end-pieces of the apparatus are made of stout plywood and are loosely slotted on a long round batten. The circular ends are joined together by four long lengths of wood, which keep the cylinder rigid when it is rotated. The ends of a long narrow length of wire netting are fastened to each end of the cylinder, and the remaining portion of the cylinder is enclosed with a long strip of canvas. One edge of the canvas is secured to the edge of

the wire netting, and the other edge is laced in such a manner that it can be opened to allow the snow material to be inserted. The rope *D* may be threaded through a hole bored in the batten *B* or it may be fastened in such a manner that there is no risk of the centre batten *B* slipping when the apparatus is rotated. When snow is required, a pull on the cord *E* will swing the cylinder, and a rocking motion is easily maintained by pulling and releasing the cord *E*, which is assisted by the counterweights at *C*.

A more simple form of apparatus consists of two long battens, between which is slung a long piece of canvas or scrim. The batten *C* is fixed and the batten *D* is suspended from the flies or roof in such a manner that it can be pulled up and lowered by the lines *B*. If the cradle has to extend across the entire width of the stage the batten *D* may be supported by the usual three lines, which are led to a single cleat. The canvas bag that holds the prepared snow is perforated with long holes about two inches apart. These begin about half way along the length of the canvas, and when the batten *D* is at its highest point the sagging portion of the canvas bag retains the torn paper. A constant fall of snow is ensured by working batten *D* up and down, care being taken to make sure that the lower end of the bag is always out of sight from the front (Figs. 19 and 20). Both these snow machines should be fixed as high as possible to allow the snow to separate and begin to fall steadily before becoming visible to the audience. There should, of course, be a stage-cloth to catch the fallen snow.

The effect of scurrying and whirling snow may be obtained by having electric fans placed in the wings or some other place and blowing the snow upstage to prevent it escaping into the auditorium. The fans should be noiseless in running.

When a character enters after being in a snow-storm that is raging outside, it is customary for him to shake the snow from his hat and coat. This snow is coarse salt. A plentiful supply should be placed in the brim of his hat and along the shoulders. The actor should not enter wearing brightly polished shoes; they should be made up by means of wet fuller's earth or wet salt. Drifted snow on a window is suggested by fixing long strips of cotton wool to the outside of the window along the bottom and half way up one side.

One of the finest snow scenes ever staged was in Sir Henry Irving's production of *The Corsican Brothers* at the Lyceum Theatre in 1880. The second act has a duel scene, between Fabian dei Franchi and Chateau Renaud, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, with many gigantic trees, a frozen lake, and a thick covering of snow. It is dawn and the rays of the rising sun cause the snow to sparkle and glitter in the frosty air. The duellists, preparing to fight, find their action impeded. Much business was made of clearing away the deep snow from the duelling area so that they could obtain a firm foothold. The scene occupied the whole stage and required a small army of stagehands to set it. The snow was coarse common salt and tons of it were used. Small rubber wheeled trucks were employed to carry the sacks of salt, which after being deposited was spread evenly over the stage with wooden shovels.

THE EFFECTS LANTERN

Many fine visual effects may be obtained by using the magic lantern, sciopticon, or effects lantern, and wonderful results can be produced by means of coloured lights. With a patented lighting system it is possible to set a scene showing summer in its full glory and then by switching on a different set of lights to transform the scene to winter. An actor in evening dress can be changed instantaneously from a normal human being to a grinning negro, in a white suit that may be faced with brilliant colours or decorated with jazz designs, and it is possible to change a row of beautiful chorus girls into a nightmare of grinning skeletons by the same means. Such effects as these are usually introduced into the revue type of entertainment for the sake of their novelty.

The average amateur producer is usually a genius at improvisation and remarkable effects have been obtained by using a home-made flood light and a magic lantern with suitable accessories. If it is necessary to see snow falling and there is no snow trough or cradle provided, it may be suggested by means of a magic lantern fitted with a special snow screen. This is a shallow box having at each end a small roller fitted with a handle for turning. Between the rollers is a long narrow band of black silk wide enough effectively to close the light aperture. The black silk is

generously perforated with a sharp needle, leaving intact at each end a portion about five or six inches long. The black silk should be wound on to the bottom roller, and the unpierced portion of it should be fixed so that when the light is turned on no light escapes. When in position, the black silk takes the place of the ordinary lantern slide and when the upper roller is turned the pierced portion of the silk passing behind the objective

fixed glass prisms in such a manner that the light piercing the curved slit in the tin slide passes through them. The reflected image shows all the colours of the rainbow. Owing to refraction, however, the rainbow may appear anywhere but where it is required, and it may be necessary to tilt the lantern until the rainbow moves from the floor or the wall to the correct position. The rainbow may be made to appear and disappear by

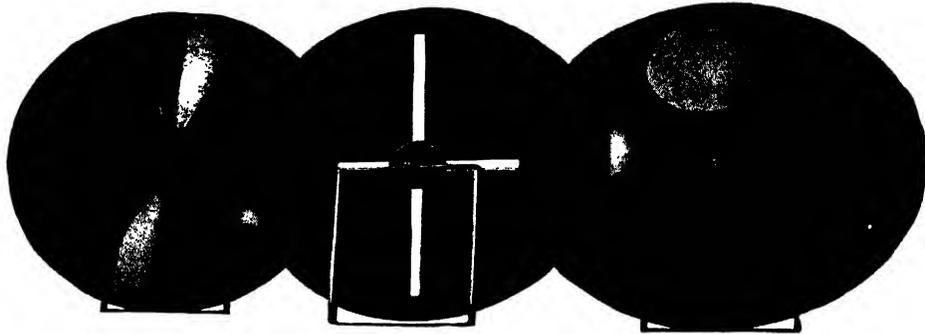


FIG RAINBOW, FLICKER, AND COLOUR WHEELS

lens allows the light to pass through the silk on to the backcloth where the small circles of light slowly drifting downwards provide a good impression of falling snow.

A moon effect is obtained by fixing a light in a box and covering the open front with a moon transparency, or by having a tin cone, with a light at the narrow end, fitted with a similar moon. Stars can be sequins strung on short lengths of carpet thread and hung from the flies. The bottom ends should be loose so that movement on the stage, or the currents of air that usually circulate backstage, sway the threads and cause the stars to twinkle automatically.

The effect of flames or fires is supplied by a painted slide consisting of a circular piece of glass mounted in a brass frame, which turns by means of a rack and pinion; and twinkling stars can be similarly suggested. For rainbows the apparatus is somewhat more complicated. The slide is made of tin or other metal in which a semi-circular or bow-shaped slit about a sixteenth of an inch wide has been cut. This is placed in the slide holder, and immediately in front of the objective are

turning the light on and off, or a second tin slide may be placed in front of the prepared slide.

The hot white glare of southern sunlight may be intensified by throwing long black shadows across the stage. The sharp pointed gables of houses, trees, and signposts, or even the threatening arm of a gibbet with its menacing noose dangling in the wind may be suggested by fixing tin or cardboard shapes in the slide holder. The lantern should be securely fixed to prevent any accidental jarring that would spoil the effect. Silhouettes of heads or grotesque figures may be thrown on to walls or windows by similar means. If it is desired to throw the distorted shadow of a dancer or some other person on to the backcloth, this may be done by placing a spotlight in the wings or by concealing it in the footlight trough. The light when required is operated by a switch placed in such a position that the operator has the dancer and his shadow in full view all the time. This is simply a reversal of the old shadow show where one saw on an illuminated white screen the black shadow of a performer that seemed to grow larger and larger as he walked away from

STAGE EFFECTS

the screen towards the light, and finally appeared to jump into the auditorium as he leaped over the lime light placed well upstage at stage level. The mysterious shadow of a stork carrying a baby in a bundle that it dropped down a chimney was arranged by having a cardboard stork hung at a distance from the screen and a man behind it

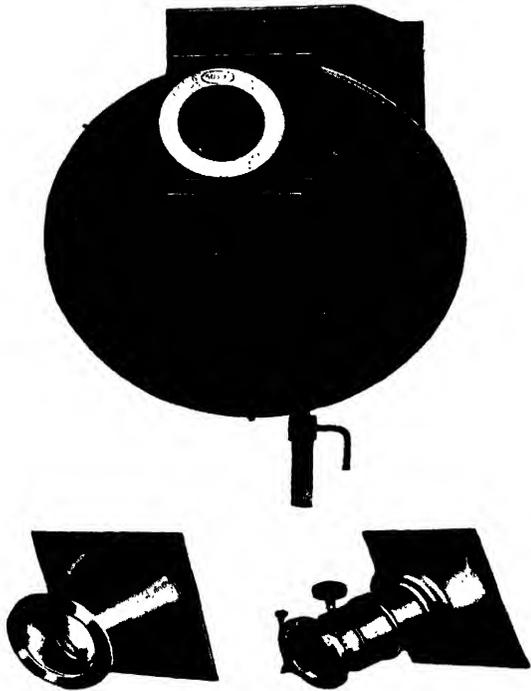


FIG. 22. OPTICAL STAGE EFFECTS LANTERNS

waving a lighted lamp. The shadow could be multiplied by placing additional men with lights, each light casting a separate shadow, which grew or diminished as the men moved about.

A magic lantern of the dissolving view type can be used to show in a sequence of pictures such effects as the thoughts passing through the mind of a man in a condemned cell, the hallucinations of a disordered mind, the visions of a dreamer, or ghostly visitors who appear and disappear at will.

THEATRE AND STAGE

An interesting variation of the snow screen effect is the colour screen, but instead of a magic lantern a floodlight is used. The coloured silk band is worked in a similar manner, the colours being determined by the particular atmosphere to be suggested. "Toned" strips of coloured silk with long "V" shaped joins, will cause the colour



FIG. 23. AUTOMATIC COLOUR WHEEL

of the light to change almost imperceptibly as the joined portions slowly pass across the light.

The sciopicon is an improvement on the magic lantern. The advance in scientific research has enabled the "effects" lantern to be utilized to simulate Nature to an extraordinary degree. The lantern itself usually consists of a planished steel lamphouse, well ventilated and lined with asbestos, and fitted with a four and a half or five inch condenser. The light source is an arc lamp of 20-40 ampere capacity, the other essential being the objective or optical lens, the focus of which will depend on the length of the throw and the area to be covered. The effect itself depends on the required result, but in many cases it consists of a circular mica disc on which has been hand-painted clouds, rain, snow, waterfalls, rippling water, waves, fires, and other natural phenomena. Driven by either clockwork or a small electric motor, it rotates between the condenser and the objective lens. In the case of a rough sea, a vertical movement may be required. This is secured by a series of slides operated by eccentrics.

In an effects lantern supplied only to a professional theatre where effects are projected from a distant operating-box, the light source often reaches a capacity of 80-100 amperes, and here great care must be taken so that the heat does not damage the mica disc or effect slide. In such circumstances, movement of the effect should be



FIG. 24 SCINTILLATING MIRROR BALL

started before the arc is struck, and when the lantern is finished with, the arc should be switched off and the lantern door opened to admit air before the effect disc is stopped, otherwise the slide may be blistered by residual heat.

An effects lantern of this description costs with one effect about £70. Additional effects to be used on the same lantern cost from £17 to £25 each, according to the detail required in the hand-painting, which must be done by a skilled artist who is gifted with the essential imagination to depict phenomena of Nature as

stage spectacles. Each effect is complete with its own clockwork motor. The illustrations, supplied by the Strand Electric and Engineering Co., Ltd., of London, show the types of lantern described.

Many grades of effects lanterns are manufactured. Prices vary according to the quality.



FIG. 25 EFFECTS LANTERN

The needs of small societies that produce a play once a year, for perhaps three performances only, are recognized, and it is possible to hire a first-class effects lantern of 30-40 amps. in capacity. The usual hiring charge is about £3 a week for a complete single effect outfit, inclusive of the necessary resistance and plugging fuseboard, telescopic standard, etc. If additional effects are required for the same lantern, it is usual to charge a sum about half that figure. It is always advisable to deal with a firm of repute when hiring effects. Many firms keep a staff of experts who are willing

to advise, free of charge, on any lighting effect that is required.

In all cases when an effects lantern is used, care should be taken to place it in such a position that whilst it can be easily and quickly moved it can also be firmly fixed so that it cannot be accidentally moved or knocked over during

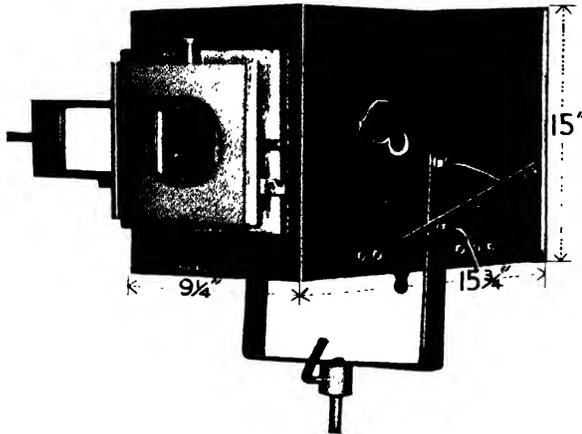


FIG. 26. EFFECTS LANTERN

performance. The free movement of the players making their entrances and exits should not be overlooked, and no one should pass

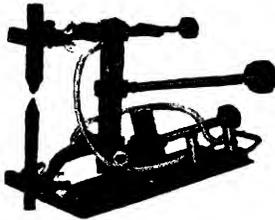


FIG. 27

across the front of the lantern when it is in action.

The use of the moving picture film as scenery and the "talkie" as an aid to stage effects has already been accepted by the theatre, and such spectacles as waves breaking on a rocky coast, street life, or open country fleeting past the window of a train supposed to be in motion, accompanied by "sound," are common. When

Chlumberg's play *Miracle at Verdun* was produced in New York there were eight film interludes, and at one stage three films as well as a scene from the play were being shown simultaneously, the same actors appearing in the film episodes as on the stage. Whether this type of "cineplay" will revolutionize the technique of playwrighting or die a natural death can be left to the future to decide, but in the meantime it will be wise to accept and use any medium that offers interesting possibilities in the production of stage effects.

EXPLOSIONS

There have been many attempts to show on the stage the awful conditions that obtain during war-time in the trenches, in hospitals, and at sea.

In Velona Pilcher's play *The Searcher* the stage is set in such a manner that it suggests the steely interior of a gunbarrel, and throughout the play there is the "relentless rhythm" of the barrage that forms a tonal background to the action. What a contrast to the days when the thrill of the evening consisted of an execution, as in *The Deserter of Naples*, where one saw "A Solemn Procession of Soldiers—A Regimental Band playing the Dead March—and the awful Ceremony of SHOOTING A DESERTER." In place of the single volley of rifle fire, the present-day producer must be able to suggest, and suggest convincingly, every variation of explosion, from the subdued "pif" of a revolver fitted with a silencer to the stunning crash of artillery that is fired at close quarters. In some plays the "effects" are so complicated that a specially trained staff is retained and accompanies the play when it is on tour.

Realism in one play was supplied by a small brass cannon, loaded with gunpowder, and fired by means of a percussion cap and lanyard. The cannon was mounted on a carriage with wheels to overcome the recoil. It was twelve inches long, and in its firing position it faced a wall, which was protected from damage by a sheet of steel. Almost the same noise effect could have been obtained by firing a revolver loaded with a blank cartridge into an empty tank.

As an alternative to the use of the small brass cannon a maroon or a large single report cracker, fired in an iron drum or tank, will give a report

that is equally satisfactory. The sound has a deep tone. There are two methods of firing these, one by what is called friction ignition and the other by electrical ignition. When the former is used a bead of composition is struck, just as a match is struck on a box, and the explosive is dropped into the tank. In order to prevent any risk of

firework specialists supply equipment of this description.

If it is not desirable to use either firearms or fireworks the effect of a heavy gun being fired at a distance can be obtained by suspending a metal cask, with one end open, and striking it with a heavy wooden mallet. The reverberations

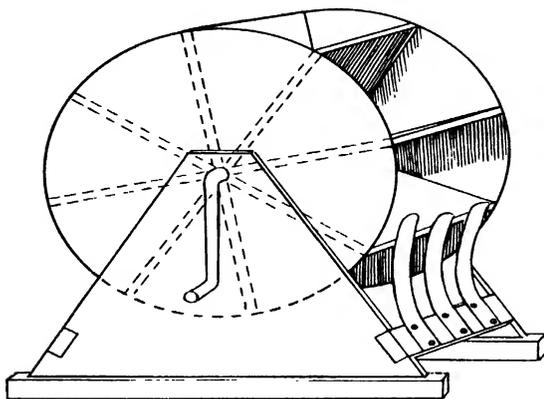


FIG. 28

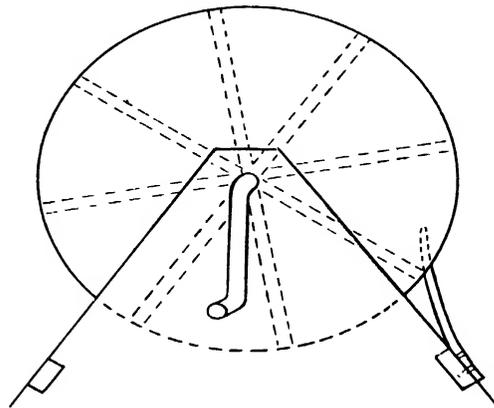


FIG. 29

accident and also to ensure the safety of the operator, a time fuse, generally about three seconds in duration, is interposed between the friction composition and the explosive. The more simple method is to use electrical ignition. In this case the explosive is provided with an electric fuse, which is connected in circuit with a battery or with the lighting installation of the theatre or hall, and immediately contact is made, by pressing a switch or button, the explosion follows. This method of firing the explosive has a great advantage in that the explosion can be arranged exactly on the cue, without any guesswork on the part of the operator, who with the previous method has to allow for a time delay which, if miscalculated, would probably ruin the effect.

Should it be desired to accompany the discharge of heavy guns with a smoke effect, this may be arranged with the aid of a "smoke case." Smoke cases are usually burnt in an iron bucket or tank, care being taken to prevent any stray spark from the opening coming into contact with any inflammable material. Messrs. C. T. Brock and other

are "rolled off" on a bass drum, which is struck a number of times, the sound being diminished at each blow until it fades away. If a metal cask cannot be procured it is possible to suggest gunfire by using the drum alone. In this case the drum is given a violent blow, which is followed by "rolling off." The faint rumble of guns in the distance can be conveyed by a slight vibration of the plywood thunder sheet if there is no other occasion during the play when the thunder apparatus is used.

If it is necessary to discharge one of the trench guns known as a "whizz-bang," the noise may be made by blowing a suitable blast on a siren type of whistle, following this by firing a revolver loaded with a blank cartridge into an empty tin biscuit box. The shell should "whine" its way through the air, but should not be heard after the shot is fired.

The visual effect of shells bursting is obtained by fitting a wooden box with a glass front on the inner side of which is painted the vivid representation of a bursting shell. An electric lamp

connected to a switch is placed inside the box and the impression of the shell exploding is obtained by operating the switch at the instant the noise is made. A shell box and one of the electrically discharged fireworks already described may be operated together very effectively. In a

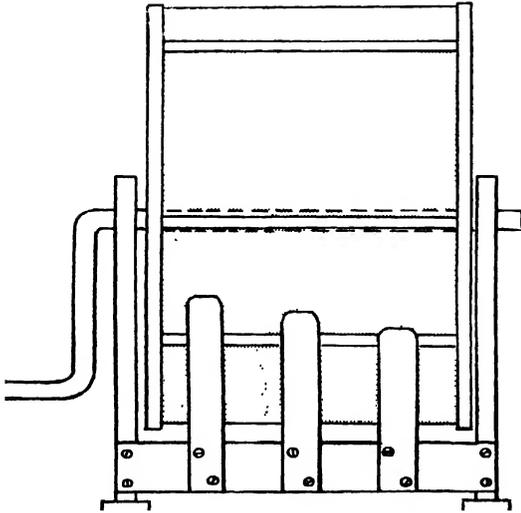


FIG. 30

bombardment by the enemy a number of these shell-boxes may be used. In each case the glass front should be hidden so that the bursting shell is not seen until the lamp is flickered.

A small "flash," similar to that used by illusionists, may be used to suggest hand grenades being thrown in the dark. The flash consists of a small wad of guncotton or flash paper which is lit by breaking a small tube of sulphuric acid on it. When this effect is used, the hands should be protected by rubber gloves. A drum supplies the noise of the explosion.

The glare of fire is made by laying a train of ordinary red fire powder across a piece of tin or other metal and igniting it with a match, the amount of powder used being determined by the length of time the glare is required.

In all effects where a certain amount of smoke is produced it is wise to make certain that none escapes into the auditorium. The audience may

enjoy the spectacle of seeing dense volumes of smoke rolling upwards, but their pleasure is spoilt if they are inconvenienced by the acrid smell of gunpowder or any other explosive that may be used.

Machine gun fire may be supplied by a special cracker fired in a metal box or it may be suggested very simply. A couple of canes and some sharp sounding surface, such as a cushion with a leather cover or the canvas from the wind machine, stretched taut between the backs of two chairs, are required. The seat of a bentwood chair when beaten properly produces a suitable noise. The person who is responsible for the effect holds a cane in each hand and strikes the cushion or canvas sharp blows that are repeated at regular intervals. The shots are timed to give a suggestion of mechanical accuracy, and a noise like pom pom pom pom . . . pom pom pom pom . . . pom pom pom pom . . . should be aimed at. The rapid continuous rattle of a Maxim gun may be produced by a machine that is similar to the wind machine, but with a smaller drum or cylinder as shown in the illustrations (Figs. 28 to 30). This produces a noise like taptaptaptaptaptap. Irregular bursts of rifle fire can be suggested by arming as many of the cast as possible with canes and by getting them to beat a sheet of plywood or a leather cushion. A wooden clapper, such as farmers use for scaring birds, provides an excellent noise for battle scenes, and is useful for other purposes.

Should it be necessary to stage a murder or a suicide, it is possible to obtain a revolver that is realistic in action. It carries twelve rounds .22 blank cartridge and can be loaded in view of the audience. When the revolver is fired the flash and wad are ejected upwards at right angles to the line of fire, and the barrel, being solid from end to end, may be brought close to the person who has to die. The noise of a rifle or a revolver shot can be produced by clapping together two pieces of wood, about three feet long, three inches wide, and an inch thick, joined at one end with a strong hinge, which is countersunk. The surface of the wood should be planed smooth and even.

The Great Lafayette used to stage an illusion in which after many confusing changes of character he eventually assumed the part of Napoleon

and appeared on the stage mounted on his famous white charger. The spectacle was the grand finale and showed the debacle of the retreat from Moscow. Much use was made of "noise effects," smoke cases, and red fire, and to the accompaniment of the roar of heavy guns the orchestra thundered out the famous "1812" overture. Through the dense smoke the audience saw at the back of the stage the gleam of moving bayonets, drooping banners, an occasional cavalrman, and at odd intervals the grim muzzle of a cannon. These effects were made of cardboard and were mounted on endless bands of canvas that passed round rollers operated by hand. The invention of this device was welcome to the producer of old who, in order to present a spectacle of this description, usually had to engage a small army of supers. In order to maintain the illusion they marched round and round in a circle past some door, window, or archway. That famous old play *A Royal Divorce* owed much of its success to the fact that whenever possible the management used to engage the band of the local volunteer regiment to play the necessary music, and the willing co-operation of officers and men in providing a "real" army, which fact was well advertised, usually ensured the use of the "house full" boards.

The modern producer attempts with ease feats that can hardly be believed. The spectacle of an Atlantic liner sinking at sea after striking a floating mine will be described in detail later, but a description of the means to effect this will not be out of place here. The explosion was arranged by placing in the centre of the darkened stage a small circular iron tank and exploding in it one of the electrically operated bombs already described. The tank was of the size and shape of a domestic dust-bin, and the top was fitted with a fine wire gauze mesh which, whilst it effectively prevented the accidental escape of any of the exploded material, allowed the audience to be thrilled by the visual effect of the vivid flash that seemed to come from the actual contact of the ship's bows with the mine.

In staging a production in which firearms are discharged or explosives are used for stage effects it is necessary to prevent any inadvertent infringement of the Explosives Act or the regulations that govern the carrying and use of weapons that

are described as "lethal." The Local Authority sometimes places the responsibility of administering the Explosives Act with the Weights and Measures Department, whilst the Administration of the Acts of Parliament dealing with firearms is vested in the police. Both these Departments are always willing to advise on any point, and readily place their experience and knowledge at one's service.

It is not necessary to have a licence to carry a gun when the gun or revolver has a solid barrel and cannot possibly fire a bullet, but as there are frequent alterations in the regulations, and so many pitfalls in law, it is a wise precaution to submit for approval whatever kind of weapon it is intended to use. The law does not accept ignorance as an excuse, and if it is proposed to use for stage effects grandfather's old-fashioned smooth-bore fowling piece that hangs on the wall as an ornament the experts should be consulted, as it is quite possible that even this type of gun may have been brought under control by an Order in Council or an addition to the regulations. A Chief Constable may issue a certificate that entitles the holder to "hold and carry a gun for stage purposes only," and such a certificate is renewable every three years. The initial cost is small, and there is a charge for renewal.

The production of *The Miller and His Men*, a melodrama by I. Pocock, included a famous stage explosion. The play, originally produced at Covent Garden Theatre, retained its popularity for more than fifty years. On 5th March, 1856, a fire at Covent Garden Theatre destroyed many valuable works of art, etc., in the library. These included the original manuscripts of *The Miller and His Men*, *The School for Scandal*, an opera called *The Slave*, the original operatic scores of Weber's *Oberon* and Donizetti's *Elisir d'Amore*. *The Miller and His Men* was burlesqued by W. S. Gilbert under the title of *Dulcamara*, or *The Little Duck and The Great Quack*, and, with its magnificent scenic effects it was quickly adapted for the "Juvenile Drama." A short time afterwards, the play was produced by enthusiastic owners of model theatres: the "terrific spectacle" of the explosion receiving special notice in volumes of reminiscences of stage personalities, authors, and others.

The final scene of the play, told in terms of

stage directions, shows "A near view of the Mill, standing on an elevated projection. From the foreground a Narrow Bridge passes to the rocky promontory across the ravine . . . Music . . . Enter Ravina, ascending the ravine with the fusee, which she places carefully in the crannies of the rock, the mill is crowded with banditti—Lothair throws back the bridge, upon his release from Wolf, and hurries on to the bridge.

Loth. (Crossing the bridge with Claudine in his arms) Ravina, fire the train.

Rav. I cannot.

Loth. Nay, then give me the match.

Lothair instantly sets fire to the fusee, the flash of which is seen to go down the side of the rock into the gully under the bridge, from which Ravina has ascended, and the explosion immediately takes place."

FIRES AND CONFLAGRATIONS

In a great number of interior scenes there is a fireplace. Many amateur societies build their fireplaces in pairs, and fasten them together back to back. One side may represent the massive grandeur of marble with an electric fire that is the real thing, whilst the opposite may be the simple homely kitchen grate complete with oven and boiler, the fire in which is suggested by crumpled red tissue paper with two or three small electric lamps or a couple of flash lamps hidden amongst it to supply the glow.

The actual kindling of a fire is seldom seen. The fire is usually burning when the scene opens, but there are plays where it is necessary for the proper development of atmosphere to make a "real" fire. This fire is like many other stage realisms—illusion. This is how an effective stage fire was produced. The scene was the interior of a cottage, and the fireplace was painted on the backcloth. Behind the cut out bars of the grate was a wooden box to the back of which was fastened a long piece of cardboard. The cardboard and the top of the box were painted black to represent the fire back. A stage hand seated on a chair supplied all the "effects." As the fuel was placed in position from the front the stage hand surreptitiously thrust amongst it an electric lamp that had been dipped red and switched it on when the lighted match was applied. The match was dropped where it could safely burn out. The

flicker of flames was supplied by an assistant who allowed the light from the red bulb to escape through his fingers, which he opened and closed, and who occasionally removed his hands from the light, which he covered with both hands. The crackle of burning wood was made by a small wooden clapper, similar to that with which children play, but instead of it being twirled round and round it was slowly moved in a jerky manner. A much simpler method of making this kind of noise is to smack two, three, or four fingers of one hand into the palm of the other, varying the sound to suit the needs of the moment. The impression of a smoky chimney was suggested by a wad of smudging cotton wool contained in a tin smoke box shaped like a trumpet. The wool was kept alight by blowing down the narrow end, and a wave of the smoke box just behind the top of the cut out portion of the scene sent a plume of smoke that was visible to the audience and that caused the old lady making the fire to cough and splutter.

A drawing room interior requires a more artistic fire effect. The fire may be a real electric fire with a translucent top made of chunks of coloured glass, underneath which is fitted a revolving fan to suggest flames. A fire of this description should be placed where it is easily seen, and the effect is improved if the fire is lit with a red floodlight. The flood should be placed so that the light is thrown upstage, and the source of this additional light should be carefully concealed from the audience. Care should also be taken to ensure that there is not too much glow for the size of the fire.

Another well tried device is the fire with a flame effect that is supplied by lengths of flame coloured silk, which are agitated by means of an electric fan and lit up with a small electric lamp. This effect seems to have originated with the old-fashioned serpentine or skirt dance. The dancer was dressed in a voluminous white skirt, at each side of which was sewn a long, thin cane, the upper end of which she held in order to manipulate her skirts. As she danced and twirled round and round she waved intricate designs of half circles and whirls, which were made to suggest flames by having coloured limes thrown on her. Sometimes the dancer would stand with arms outstretched whilst pictures of butterflies were

thrown on her dress by a magic lantern or sciopicon, and by gently moving her arms the butterfly was made to appear to be moving its wings. Then someone thought of placing the dancer on a pedestal through the top of which a red floodlight threw its glare upwards and made the fire effect more real. This effect was further improved by utilizing the electric fan. The flame dancer stood upon a grating through which came a miniature gale of wind in which she played small scarves and larger streamers. Eventually she moved into the centre of the current of air and released the many silken flames that were attached to her dress. Confetti and small discs of tinfoil were cast into the wind passage. These, flying upwards, gave an impression of sparks that added greatly to the effect. As the force of the wind was gradually diminished the dancer slowed down her movements and drooped on the stage as the fire gradually died down.

If it is necessary to stage a scene where a witch is burned at the stake or to show, say, St. Joan being put to death, the pyre can be actually built on the stage in sections, which, although they may seem to be carelessly thrown together, will really be carefully arranged according to plan. In the pyre are arranged batteries of fans that are connected to separate switches. The angles at which the blades of fan are fixed determine the direction of the flames, and although the silk streamers may be fastened to the guard of the fan it is better to use a wooden frame with a wire mesh bottom to which they are attached (Fig. 31). With a number of fans rotating together the flames can be controlled by fixing sliding covers underneath or over the wire mesh and releasing these at the proper time. In the centre of the pyre long streamers of dark silk to represent smoke may be placed. Small red floods will add to the general effect. Strips of tinfoil placed where they will catch and reflect the red light and a few small red glow-lamps that are rapidly switched on and off, with the addition of confetti thrown into the fans, give a suggestion of reality that can be enhanced by the clapping of hands to imitate the sound of cracking sparks. A turn or two of the wind machine supplies the roar of hungry flames, which may also be suggested by a slight rumble of the thunder sheet. If the stage is large enough, it is wise to stage a spectacle of this description as a tableau. This will allow

the scene to be set beforehand, and enable it to be well rehearsed before the actual production. Electric fans are made in many sizes and can be hired at reasonable cost.

A camp fire, such as is built by gypsies, boy scouts, or soldiers, can be made of logs. Small pieces of wire netting, such as is used for enclosing

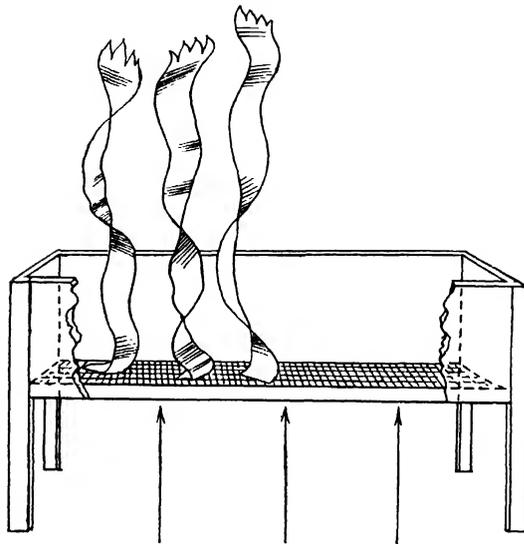


FIG. 31. WIND FROM FAN

poultry runs, are rolled into cylindrical form, about twelve inches long by three inches diameter, and tied. A sheet of brown paper that has been torn has the torn portions repaired with red transparent paper. The brown paper with the repaired side inside is wrapped around the wire log and glued in position. The brown paper may be painted to resemble bark, and the ends may be circular pieces of cardboard to give the log a stiffening. A couple of flash lamps fastened inside convey the impression of burning wood, or the bulbs may be connected to a battery. A red light in the centre of the fire throws a glow on the faces of the campers if required.

Conflagrations are not now so popular as they used to be. The stage fires of old were real fires built on the stage in huge braziers and they were

allowed to burn fiercely, the only safety arrangement being a fireman who stood ready to quench the flames with a firehose.

This is how a modern stage fire was arranged in *The Rising Sun*, by Heijermans. The fire occurs at the end of the third act. Sonia, the daughter of Matthew Strong, takes a lighted lamp in her hand to see her way in the dark of the shop, off stage, to fetch a drinking glass. The glass is on a shelf. She, reaching up to get it, drops the lamp, and the shop is soon blazing furiously. There is a shriek, followed by the sound of breaking glass. Matthew jumps up and exclaims "Good heavens, the shop's on fire." Then through the inside windows that divide the living room from the shop the red glare of fire is seen. Smoke pours in, there is the sound of more breaking glass, the clocks strike nine, there is a cry of "Fire! Fire!" from the street, and amidst a scene of frenzied confusion the curtain falls.

In the next act the same room is seen after it has been gutted by fire. The water soddened debris conveys a sense of desolation that is intensified by the sound of water drip-drip-dripping from the room above where a child has been burnt to death. The dialogue is punctuated by the sound of the water as it falls into a large white enamel bowl set well down stage. Repetition of the sound is driving Sonia mad, and she confesses that the accident to the lamp could have been prevented. Eventually her confession is repeated to the policeman who has brought the coroner's authorization for the burial of the dead child.

The crash of the breaking glass was made by dropping an empty wine bottle on a brick placed in the bottom of a box to prevent the broken glass from spreading. The red glare of fire was made by burning a red flare in a bucket, and the smoke was made by lighting a smoke case. The lamp itself had a glass body containing water, and the light was supplied by igniting a piece of wick that had just previously been soaked in paraffin.

The flash of an explosion off can be made by using one of the compositions which, when lit, burns with a bright flash, and a small explosion actually on the stage can be made by blowing lycopodium powder into a spirit flame.

The apparatus for this consists of a small pipe that passes through the stage, or a rubber ball

can be trodden on by one of the actors when the flash of the explosion is required.

The manufacturer of Bengal lights must have reaped a rich harvest in the past and found the theatre his most profitable customer. For most plays some kind of fire effect was required. In *The Dumb Girl of Genoa* an inn is attacked by robbers and "The soldiers are seen combating enveloped in flames." In *The Woodman's Hut* one saw "The whole Forest and the Hut in Flames" and the grand finale consisted of a "thrilling escape of the Count and Amelia over the Burning Bridge." As a variation to the almost universal use of red fire the staging of *The Flying Dutchman*, written by Edward Fitzball, must have been welcome, as during the play the frequent entrances and exits of Vanderdecken were heralded by bursts of blue fire. In the first act there were three occasions when this effect was used. The close of the act was arranged as follows. "MUSIC. Peter attempts to snatch the letter, when it EXPLODES. A sailor is about to seize Vanderdecken, who eludes his grasp, and VANISHES through the deck. Tom Willis fires on (r), Von Swiggs on (l). A sailor falls dead on the deck. Vanderdecken, with a demoniac laugh, rises from the sea in blue fire, amidst violent thunder. At that instant the PHANTOM SHIP appears in the sky behind. Vanderdecken and the Crew in consternation exclaim 'Ah VANDERDECKEN—VANDERDECKEN' as the curtain hastily closes." In the second act there is a remarkable display of Vanderdecken's supernatural power. He waves his hand "and a small rose-coloured flame descends on the sentinel's gun. He retreats in terror," and the effects at the close of the act must have caused the stage manager some sleepless nights. Here is the stage picture. "(STORM.) A mist begins to arise, through which Vanderdecken is seen crossing the open sea in an open boat with Lestelle, from L U E. The storm rages violently. The boat is dashed about on the waves. It SINKS suddenly with Vanderdecken and Lestelle. The PHANTOM SHIP appears (*à la phantasmagorie*) in a peal of thunder. The stage and the audience part in total darkness." The end of the play sees Vanderdecken descending through the stage to the accompaniment of RED fire, probably a concession to popular taste.

Coming to more modern times, one of the most

famous thrills of last century was the production of the fine old play *The Still Alarm*. In this play one saw the interior of a fire station with its waiting engines and fire escapes, and in the rear two horses in their stalls. The alarm rang and amidst a scene of great excitement the horses were harnessed and quickly dashed out. The horses used in the production were specially trained for their work, and it was a remarkable sight to see them, immediately the alarm rang, quietly leave their stalls and place themselves in position underneath the suspended harness in readiness for the word of command, which usually came 6 to 8 seconds after the alarm first rang.

The fascination that stage fires have for an audience explains the invention of many startling effects. During October, 1841, the management of the Adelphi Theatre installed a mechanical "sinking" stage which was used for the production of the first play of the season, *The Black Hand or the Dervise and the Peri*. Another play, *The Temple of Death*, produced at the Coburg Theatre, had for its last scene the "Interior of the Temple of Helen," in which the audience saw the temple sink in a shower of fire. In 1851 the Surrey Theatre staged *Walthof*, in which a sorceress is burned alive in the ruins of a blazing tower which crashes into the courtyard where she dies. Byron's *Sardanapalus* staged by Charles Kean in 1853 at the Princess's Theatre "with the greatest magnificence" involves the destruction of a place by fire. The relatively simple effect of a house on fire has often been staged. In *The Streets of London*, produced at the Surrey Theatre, the audience saw a house on fire and a fire engine, drawn by spirited horses, dash on to the stage. Another "sensation" was the scene in which the heroine, Lucy, and her brother were slowly being suffocated by the fumes from a charcoal fire but they were rescued! *Lost at Sea*, by Byron and Boucicault, produced at the Adelphi Theatre on 2nd October, 1869, had "a house on fire" scene. At the Holborn Theatre a melodrama *Behind the Curtain* had a sensational scene where the audience saw, on the stage, another theatre on fire.

Many real life dramas have been enacted behind the scenes when accidental outbreaks of fire have occurred during the presentation of a play.

"Ordeal by fire" has been used for stage purposes. In Sophocles's, *Antigone* a watchman protests his innocence by saying ". . . and we were prepared to lift hot irons with our bare palms; to walk through fire, and swear by all the Gods at once that we were guiltless, ay, ignorant of who had plotted or performed this thing."

The tendency of some dramatists to adapt—after the lapse of a reasonable time and with suitable alterations—current events as a basis for their work may possibly be influenced by striking fire-raising disclosures, but whether the dramatist will deem it necessary actually to stage spectacles showing conflagrations in progress remains to be seen. Fashions in plays are constantly changing. Old plays such as *East Lynne* and *The Lady of the Camellias* are staged and dressed in the times when they were first produced, period plays are coming into their own again, and with the annual advent of pantomime, with its occasional use of Bengal lights and flares, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that we may once more be thrilled at the sight of the Devil claiming his own in a blaze of red fire and disappearing through a trapdoor in the stage to the accompaniment of much rumbling from the thunder sheet.

BANQUETS

The stage banquet of old was a function of much ostentation and little real satisfaction. Spectacular feasts were always welcome, and in an old playbill of the production of *Macbeth* in 1824 the two items in the bill that received the honour of large type were "In Act the Second, a Witches Dance" and "In Act the Fourth, A Grand Banquet." In those days the stage banquet was a function at which wine was consumed to the exclusion of all other things. The staging of a banquet was looked forward to because it offered an opportunity to an army of unpaid amateurs who, if the costumes provided would fit them, were allowed to "strut and fret their hour upon the stage" and disappear until the next presentation. Rehearsals were scratch affairs and with a different play each evening of the week the revellers were allowed much latitude and took advantage of it. Some of these budding Thespians had a repertoire of gesture and dialogue

that was limited only by the time at their disposal. Loud laughter, a swaggering gait, coarse jests, the familiar pat on the shoulder, and the frequent hiccup were items upon which many changes were rung. The climax came when, as drunk as he was, he carefully arranged his sword so that it should not be accidentally broken as he

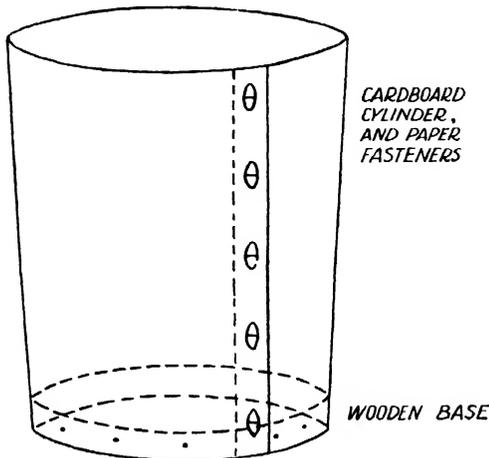


FIG. 31

rolled under the table, where he laid to the great relief of the stock company, on whom the success of the play depended, and the intense regret of a sophisticated audience quick to grasp and appreciate unexpected developments of plot.

Goblets made of cardboard nailed to a thick wooden base (Fig. 32), were useful articles with which to beat time to a drinking song, and the singer, after having his beaker filled to the brim, never had any hesitation, in the excitement of recalling the charms of his loved one or the gallantries of his prince, in throwing his arms about, forgetful of his wine, but when the moment arrived when the rousing toast was drunk he drank as deep as anyone, and a loud smack of the lips, followed by a courtly gesture as he wiped the drops of wine from his mouth and beard, testified to the quality of the goods supplied by mine host.

With the passing of Opera Bouffé, the drinking of imaginary wine was followed by plays where one saw dinners consisting of numerous courses

of *papier-mâché* fowls, sirloins of beef, or haunches of venison, and the illusion was perfect when one saw a piece of venison transferred from the dish to a plate and actually eaten, the audience never guessing that the meat was simply slices of brown bread that had been carefully stacked behind the *papier-mâché* property joint. Then came the time when real meals were served on the stage and it is on record that the husband of the great Mrs. Siddons sent in "from the pub next door" a real roast fowl, potatoes, and beer, and the play had almost run its course before the meal was finished. The famous J. L. Toole in his reminiscences describes an incident that occurred during the performance of *The Christmas Carol* at the old Adelphi. He was playing the part of Bob Cratchit, and for forty nights he had had to carve a real roast goose and a real plum pudding that were provided by Mr. Webster, the manager. The meal was served steaming hot to the seven little hungry Cratchits, including, of course, Tiny Tim. The children had enormous appetites, and cleared "the board" each night. Tiny Tim's appetite appalled Toole, who was haunted by the thin, wan, pitiable face of the child acting the part, and, in consequence, he used to pile her plate every evening more generously than anyone else's until at last she was receiving nearly half the goose besides a generous helping of potatoes and apple sauce. During the course of the scene she took her plate to the corner of the fireplace where she quickly disposed of her "wittles." The rapidity with which the meal disappeared amazed Toole, and eventually he and Mrs. Alfred Mellon, who was acting the part of Mrs. Cratchit, decided to watch the child. They saw her take her accustomed seat near the fire and after a while noticed the plate and its contents vanish into the interior of the fireplace, to reappear almost instantly scraped clean. It was afterwards discovered that Tiny Tim was one of an enormous family belonging to an old scene shifter, and that this single helping provided a half-starved family with a hearty supper every night. Dickens when he was told of it was much interested and smiled sadly as he said to Toole, "You ought to have given her the whole goose."

Food taken on the stage must be of a soft nature and easily eaten. The stage idiot stuffing his mouth full of bread from a loaf that has had

almost the whole of its inside scooped away, is, after the first bite, busy removing the bread from his mouth and replacing it in the interior of the hollow loaf. Fancy buns and cakes may have the centre removed in order to be easily eaten, and one can obtain from makers of conjurers' apparatus a stack of buns that can be eaten in view of the audience, the only difficulty being in disposing of the empty cases after the air inside them has been released.

Sandwiches or bread and butter may be the real thing, but the bread and butter should be cut into very small, thin pieces. Ice cream wafers are useful, and can be made to suggest many things, whilst a meal for four persons can be supplied by a single banana eaten to the accompaniment of noisy "business" with the knife and fork.

Cold tea can be diluted with water until almost any shade of colour is obtained, and is used to suggest whisky, sherry, and many other drinks. If it is necessary to consume champagne on the stage a bottle of cheap cider can be used, the cork and neck of the bottle being covered with gold-coloured tinfoil. The pop of the cork as it is drawn may be made by bursting a paper bag, both actions being carefully synchronized. Port and similar wines are made by colouring water with cochineal.

When the ceremony of making tea on the stage takes place, much play is made of setting the kettle on the fire, and when the time arrives to pour the boiling water in the teapot a stage hand removes the first kettle and passes through the fireplace a second kettle of the same make that has been kept boiling on a convenient gas ring.

Toast is made in similar manner, and the freshly cut slice of bread is placed on a toasting fork long enough to allow the stage hand, without being seen by the audience, to substitute a slice of well browned toast.

The steam from a pan or kettle that is supposed to be boiling is made by placing in the vessel three or four lumps of lime and covering them with real boiling water. To ensure that the steam is ready when required it is wise to experiment beforehand, keeping a record of the weight of the lime, the volume of water used, and the time it takes "to work."

Wills, old love letters, and other important

documents can be burned by placing them well inside the fire and lighting them from a taper or candle held by someone out of sight of the audience.

A perfect stage meal is that served during the progress of Thornton Wilder's one-act play *The Long Christmas Dinner*. The play is included in *The Long Christmas Dinner and Other Plays* (Longmans, Green & Co.). Here are the stage directions.

THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER

(The dining room of the Bayard home. Close to the footlights a long dining table is handsomely spread for Christmas dinner. The carver's place with a great turkey before it is at the spectators' right. A door, left back, leads into the hall.

At the extreme left, by the proscenium pillar, is a strange portal, trimmed with garlands of fruits and flowers. Directly opposite is another edged and hung with black velvet. The portals denote birth and death.

Ninety years are to be traversed in this play, which represents in accelerated motion ninety Christmas dinners in the Bayard household. The actors are dressed in inconspicuous clothes, and must indicate their gradual increase of years through their acting. Most of them carry wigs of white hair, which they adjust on their heads at the indicated moment, simply and without comment. The ladies may have shawls concealed beneath the table that they gradually draw up about their shoulders as they grow older.

Throughout the play the characters continue eating imaginary food with imaginary knives and forks.

There is no curtain. The audience arriving at the theatre sees the stage set and the table laid, though still in partial darkness. Gradually the lights in the auditorium become dim, and the stage brightens until sparkling winter sunlight streams through the dining room windows.

Enter Lucia. She inspects the table, touching here a knife and there a fork. She talks to a servant girl, who is invisible.)

The play begins, and soon Roderick (extending an imaginary fork) . . . asks Mother Bayard . . . "Come now, What'll you have mother? A little slier of white?" She accepts. This phrase is repeated in slightly different form by various characters during the play. Very soon there enters Cousin Brandon (rubbing his hands). "Well, well, I smell turkey," and in a moment he is busy with his stuffing and cranberry sauce. The characters gallantly toast each other in imaginary wine and the play ends as—

Ermengarde, left alone, eats slowly and talks to Mary.

Then—

She props a book up before her, still dipping a spoon into the custard from time to time.

She grows from very old to immensely old.

She sighs. The book falls down. She finds a cane beside her, and soon totters into the dark portal, murmuring "Dear little Roderick and little Lucia."

The pleasant fancy of regarding a play as a banquet is a very old one and many witty lines on the subject have been written. Here is the Prologue from Fletcher's tragi-comedy *A Wife for a Month*.

You're welcome, gentlemen, and would our feast
Were so well season'd, to please every guest;
Ingenuous appetites, I hope we shall,
And their examples may prevail in all.
Our noble friend, who writ this, bid me say,
He'd rather dress, upon a triumph-day,
My Lord Mayor's feast, and make him sauces.
Sauce for each sev'ral mouth, may further go,
He'd rather build up those invincible pies
And castle custards that affright all eyes,
Nay eat them all and their artillery,
Than dress for such a curious company.
One single dish; Yet he has pleas'd ye too,
And you've confess'd he knew well what to do;
Be hungry as you were wont to be, and bring
Sharp stomachs to the stories he shall sing,
And he dare yet, he says, prepare a table
Shall make you say, Well dress'd, and he well able.

Farquhar's play *The Inconstant* is frankly admitted to have been built on Fletcher's play *The Wild Goose Chase*, and it is not too much to assume that the prologue to *The Inconstant* may have been suggested to Farquhar by the above lines when he wrote the following—

PROLOGUE

Like hungry guests, a sitting audience looks;
Plays are like suppers; poets are the cooks.
The founders you; the table is this place;
The carvers we; the prologue is the grace.
Each act, a course; each scene a different dish;
Tho' we're in Lent, I doubt you're still for flesh.
Satire's the sauce, high season'd, sharp and rough;
Kind masks and beaux, I hope you're pepper-proof.
Wit is the wine; but 'tis so scare the true,
Poets, like vintners, balderdash and brew.
Your surly scenes, where rant and bloodshed join,
Are butcher's meat, a battle's a sirlain;
Your scenes of love, so flowing, soft and chaste,
Are water gruel, without salt or taste.
Bawdy's fat venison, which, tho' stale, can please;
Your rakes love HAUT-GOUTS, like your damn'd French
cheese.

Your rarity for the fair guest to gape on,
Is your nice squeaker, or Italian capon;
Or your French virgin-pullet, garnish'd round,
And dress'd with sauce of some—four hundred pound
An opera, like an oglio, nicks the age;
Farce is the hasty-pudding of the stage.
For when you're treated with indifferent cheer,
You can dispense with slender stage-coach fare.
A pastoral's whipt cream; stage whims, mere trash;
And tragi-comedy, half fish and flesh.
But comedy, that, that's the darling cheer;
This night we hope you'll all inconstant bear;
Wild-fowl is lik'd in play-house all the year.
Yet since each mind betrays a different taste,
And every dish scarce pleases ev'ry guest,
If ought you relish, do not damn the rest.
This favour crav'd, up let the music strike;
You're welcome all—now fall to, where you like.

Colley Cibber's play *Love Makes a Man, or The Fop's Fortune* is also graced with a Prologue written in a similar strain. The story of the old actor, who, after acting the part of host at an elaborate stage banquet, was discovered by friends cooking his wig was current at this period, and the incident throws a vivid light on the conditions that obtained on the stage in those days.

Modern writers still find the stage meal or banquet a useful asset. Pinero, in *Trelawney of the Wells*, devotes the whole of the first act of the play to a dinner in honour of Rose Trelawney, who is leaving "the profession" to marry and become "a well-to-do fashionable lady." Immediately the play starts Mrs. Mossop and Ablett begin to lay the table and soon there is a gallant array, consisting of "a joint, a chicken, a tongue, a ham, a pigeon pie, etc.," and the festivities open. The second act of the play is "a spacious drawing room" and the time is "that dreadful half hour after dinner every, every evening," whilst in the third act the change of an engagement causes one of the characters to have visions of "Steak for dinner." Pinero uses a similar technique in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. When the play opens "A circular table is laid for a dinner for four persons, which has now reached the stage of dessert and coffee. The fire is burning brightly." In the second act there is a "fire burning in the grate, and a small table is tastefully laid for breakfast. Aubrey and Paula are seated at breakfast and Aubrey is silently reading his letters. Two servants, a man and a woman, hand dishes and then retire." When the third act opens Lady Orreyed and Paula are discovered. They are

"Both in sumptuous dinner gowns," and we have not long to wait until "a servant enters with coffee." This *penchant* for dining may have been remembered by Hare, who, on the occasion of a public dinner, used the opportunity to compare Pinero with Ibsen by saying, "Better a wineglass of Pinero than a tumblerful of Ibsen."

The last play presented at the Imperial Alexandrine Theatre at St. Petersburg under the old regime was staged in the days that immediately preceded the revolution of 1917, and was Ler-mantov's *The Masquerade*. It was mounted with lavish extravagance and with all the magnificence, pomp, and splendour that had always been associated with productions of the State Theatre. After the revolution a lean time for the theatre set in, and stage productions were arranged with a minimum of display. Recently, however, there has been a revival of the old manner of stage decoration, and in this connexion it is interesting to note that one of the plays produced was Byron's *Sardanapalus*. This play was staged with much magnificence, and the banquet scene was particularly fine. The play was not staged as an example of a fine play, but was used for propaganda purposes. It showed a decadent and dissolute emperor careless of his people's welfare in an orgy of drunken dissipation and wastefulness. One can imagine the effect of this on an audience, many members of which were still illiterate.

At a provincial theatre a light meal had to be served on the stage. During the performance the players held up the action while a cake, specially prepared for the occasion, and wine were consumed. "Business" was improvised, and the audience never suspected that the wedding of two of the cast was being celebrated.

A famous actor-manager had to stage a banquet during the run of one of his plays. He provided the "guests" with real food. One evening while preparing in his dressing room for his next scene, his "guests" scrambled wildly for the food, with the result that he secretly instructed his property master to provide a banquet, with additional luxuries, in *papier mâché*. On the evening when the specially prepared banquet was introduced he watched, with Machiavellian glee, the grimaces and antics of his disappointed guests as they literally "bit the dust."

CRASHES

At the end of Ibsen's play *The Doll's House* the catastrophic clash of the downstairs door shatters for ever Torvald Helmer's chance of happiness. In the last few seconds of the final scene Torvald hopes that a miracle will take place, and that Nora, his wife, will return to him, but his hopes are shattered as "From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing," and almost before the audience has had time to grasp the significance of the sound, the curtains begin to close and the play is ended.

What must have been the feelings of the audience who witnessed the first public performance? What single stage effect is so devastating? Yet this terrific effect would be no more than the noise of a heavy plank of wood, or some other weighty object, dropped on to the stage by an unknown stage hand, probably impatient at being kept from his supper by having to provide this solitary and simple effect. Some years after the play had been produced, Ibsen admitted that it was almost for the sake of the last scene alone that the play was written, and it is not generally known that there is an alternative ending to the play in which Nora recognizes the claims of children, husband, and home, and the play ends on a note of reconciliation. This alteration was made to make the play palatable to German audiences, which in those days refused to tolerate the idea of a woman throwing convention to the winds and boldly deciding her own future life.

If there is a real door near the stage that can be closed with a loud crash it is possible that this noise may be suitable for "effects" purposes, but, as a rule, actual doors are seldom met with, and even if one is convenient the noise it makes in closing, no matter how vigorously it is banged, is usually so poor that the audience, instead of appreciating the realism of the effect, is likely to believe the noise to be an effect carelessly arranged and nonchalantly carried out.

Generally speaking, an effect should be toned down rather than exaggerated, but in the case of a door crashing, especially when the noise is an important factor in the development of the plot of the play, it is wiser to overdo the effect rather than to run the risk of some members of the audience missing the effect altogether.

A simple alternative to the use of a real door is

to drop a short, heavy plank of wood, such as is used by builders for scaffolding, and to make the noise at such a distance from the stage as the particular circumstances of the occasion demand. It may be arranged by placing one end of the plank against the wall and raising the other end to whatever height is necessary to suggest the noise of a

cord *D* should be pulled so that the wooden breaking joint does not fall on to the stage and make a clatter. When the apparatus has been set, the breaking cord *D* can be led to the place from where it is desired to operate it, and by arranging it to run over a pulley wheel all risk of clatter can be avoided. In constructing such a

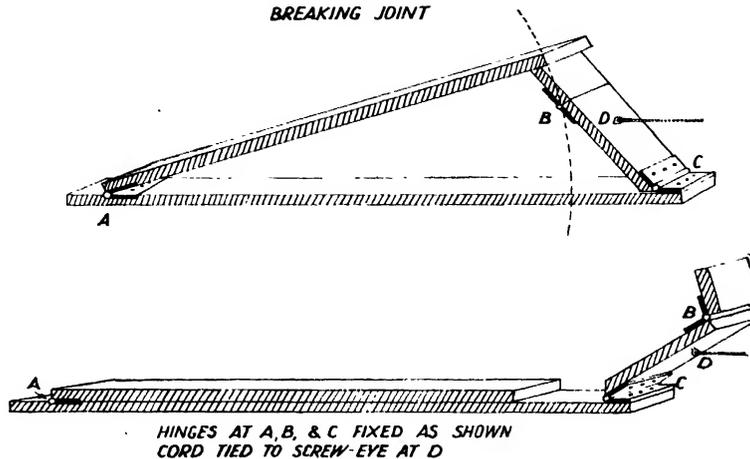


FIG. 33

door closing when the end is dropped. The sound may be intensified if a foot is pressed on the plank as it falls. If there is no wall handy, a heavy plank, four or five feet long, may be allowed to fall from a perpendicular position, being helped by the operator's foot. Care should be taken to prevent the plank bouncing after it has fallen. If the door that is to be heard closing is a long way off, a soft thud is all that is necessary, in which case the plank may be suitably padded or allowed to fall on a piece of carpet.

On a small stage, where there is little space to work and where it is essential to employ an effect of this description, it is possible, by using a simple piece of apparatus, to overcome any difficulties that may arise. The diagrams comprising Fig. 33 show how this may be done. The hinges at *A* and *C* may be replaced by wooden stops, and the "breaking joint" may be made of wood an inch and a half or two inches square. The joint is operated by a cord fastened to it just below the hinge. If the hinge *C* is replaced by a stop, the

piece of apparatus, it is absolutely necessary that the position of the hinge *B* should be outside the dotted line of the arc shown on the illustration; otherwise the apparatus will not work satisfactorily. If the apparatus is properly constructed by a skilled workman, it should, when once it is "set," easily bear the weight of a man, yet be so delicately balanced that the slightest pull on the cord should be sufficient to cause the supported plank to fall. If there is a tendency for the upper portion of the breaking joint to slip down when placed in position, this may be overcome by fixing a narrow strip of wood to the underside of the upper plank, or by inserting a screw the head of which is left protruding about half an inch. If this is done, the bottom plank should have a corresponding groove into which the retaining strip will easily fit, or a hole deep enough to accommodate the head of the screw when the plank has fallen. It is, of course, a simple matter to support a plank upon an unbroken strut, but frequently the weight is such that considerable force is

required to release it, and when the success of an effect of this description depends upon a cue word or perfect timing, the importance of a reliable piece of apparatus need not be stressed.

The noise of a door that is being broken down, if the effect has not to be seen by the audience, may be supplied by a wooden box with a thin bottom, a heavy hammer, and a strong arm, or may be made by placing lengths of thin match-boarding between two upturned boxes and breaking them. If it is necessary for the audience to see the breaking down of a door, a panel of thin wood is fitted into the framework of a door that is substantially built. The preliminary blows should be struck on the stage, and the first cracks, as the door is giving way, should be made by breaking thin wood laths. To support the illusion every time a heavy blow is dealt the door should be vibrated and the panel that is to be broken should be prepared beforehand by cutting or sawing through it in suitable places.

The sound of breaking glass is made by dropping a large glass bottle or jar on to a piece of paving stone or a couple of bricks placed in the bottom of a basket or box to prevent as far as possible the broken glass spreading. The noise of glass dropping on a pavement from a height can be made by suspending an empty wine bottle by a string fastened to a nail high up in the rear wall and by allowing the bottle to swing well before it smashes on the wall at the back close to the floor.

A fishmonger's bass filled with broken glass and dropped on the stage suggests the sound of a window being broken, or the bass may be suspended and struck with a heavy stick. The continuous crash of glass one hears as someone falls through the roof of a conservatory is made by having a couple of zinc buckets, one three-quarters full of broken glass, and by emptying the contents from one bucket into the other as often as is required, as much noise as possible being made in the process.

If there is an objection to the use of broken glass, the noise can be suggested by dropping small sheets of thin metal, four or five inches square, on to a marble slab or a similar material. The sheets of metal may be loosely fastened together by a wire threaded through a hole bored through them at each corner.

The sharp metallic click a cabin door makes on being closed, or the noise of a motor-car door being slammed, can be made by the lid of a tin trunk or portmanteau being violently shut, or two metal surfaces clapped together will give a satisfactory suggestion of the noise.

The heavy bumping and crashing noise that

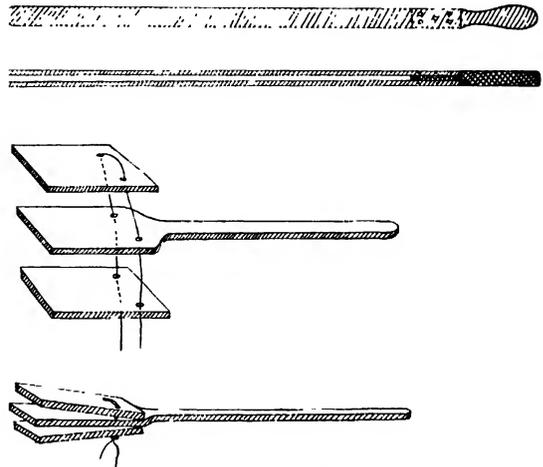


FIG. 34 SLAP STICKS

accompanies a fall downstairs is made by loosely tying together a bundle of stage braces or a dozen brass stair rods, and dropping them repeatedly on the floor of the stage.

Ornaments, clocks, and similar articles may be made to fall from a shelf or the mantelpiece by having a black thread attached to them, and being pulled off from the wings. If this is impracticable they may be poked off by means of a wire worked from behind the scene.

Much noise can be made by using one of the large clappers that are popular with football fans. A more simple instrument is a long wooden clapper with loose tongues, as illustrated in Fig. 34. The old-fashioned slap stick still retains its usefulness. In the hands of the clown, it caused much distress to dear old pantaloon, who was always in trouble, and when the stick was loaded with small percussion caps, which exploded with a generous display of sparks and much noise whenever anyone was struck with it, the joy of the

juveniles who were watching an old time harlequinade found expression in shrill yells of delight. Alas the harlequinade is no more. The stick was made of two long pieces of thin, pliable wood, about three feet long and two inches wide. A wooden handle fastened between the long slats was of a thickness that allowed the slats to meet

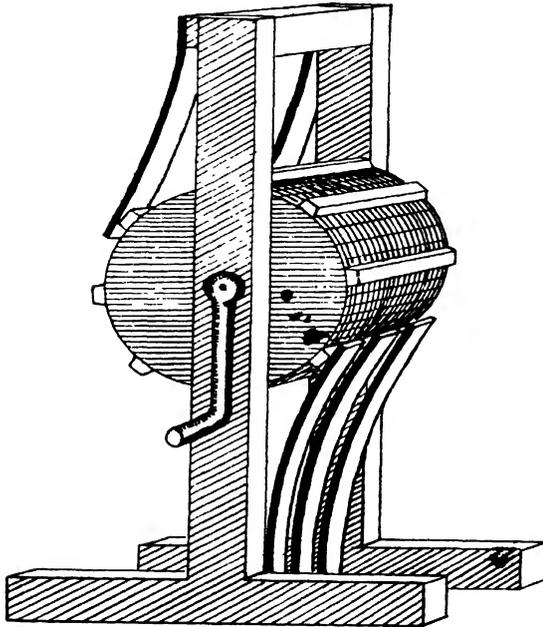


FIG. 35. CRASH MACHINE

with a loud clap when anyone was struck with it, and a gentle tap caused a sharp noise (Fig. 34). This stick, though, must not be confused with harlequin's wand or magic bat, which was sometimes made of long flat strips of whalebone covered with black silk and finished off at the end with a broad tassel with which harlequin used to tickle the ears of the clown, and for which the pantaloons received many an undeserved crack over the head.

To suggest the noise of an aeroplane crashing or the crash of timber as ships collide, a more complicated piece of mechanism than any of the effects that have already been described is neces-

sary. The apparatus is similar to that used to suggest the sound of continuous machine gun fire, but is built on a much larger scale. The framework should be of stout material, six feet high, four feet wide, and a foot deep (Fig. 35).

The roller, fitted in the centre of the frame, rotates between opposite sides of the frame, and engage the paddles of the roller when it is turned. The slats are sprung to the roller under pressure, and are so arranged that when the machine is in action the crashes are continuous. Supported by the noise supplied by a really good thunder sheet, the enormous volume of sound produced should be sufficient to meet whatever demands may be made for sound effects, no matter how unusual they may be.

Plays have been written in which convulsions of nature have been depicted on the stage. In 1877 Labouchère staged at the Queen's Theatre, London, a dramatized version of Bulwer-Lytton's novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*, showing Vesuvius in eruption. Labouchère was the second husband of the well-known actress Henrietta Hodson, a member of a theatrical family, and he purchased the Queen's more as a theatre where Miss Hodson could display her undoubted talents than as a business proposition. He lost much money in financing some of the plays in which she took part. In the 16 August, 1877, issue of *Truth* which he edited, after describing the many calamities that occurred during the first production, he concluded ". . . Those of his audience who were not hissing, roared with laughter. The last act represented Vesuvius in eruption, and the destruction of Pompeii. The mountain had only been painted in time for the opening night, and I had never seen it. What was my horror when the curtain rose on a temple with a sort of sugar loaf behind it. At first I could not imagine what was the meaning of this sugar loaf, but when it proceeded to emit crackers I found that it was Vesuvius."

No one in the audience at the provincial theatre where an "earthquake" was staged saw the wires and poles that pulled or pushed columns down and caused buildings to collapse, or knew that the seemingly solid marble columns and the ornamental fronts of the buildings were simply light, hollow, shapes made of *papier mâché* and built up in sections. When the earthquake was

at its height the vivid lighting revealed toppling masonry, succeeding seconds of gloom screened the movements of actors who, placing themselves where the falling masonry would crush them to death, caught, or at least broke the fall of it, and quickly piled it accordingly to plan in order to create a "stage picture"; while waiting stage hands pushed on additional "debris" kept in the wings for the purpose.

MACHINERY NOISES

Interesting experiments in the search for "sound" effects to suggest machinery at work have been made by producers, and some remarkable results have been obtained by using specially prepared gramophone records and passing the sound through amplifiers and loud speakers. It is not necessary, however, to go to much expense to provide this class of noise effect. It is quite easy to imitate the sounds one hears in a factory or mill, on board ship or in an aeroplane, and the producer should endeavour to convey by means of subtle suggestion noises that an audience will readily associate with the scene that is being played on the stage.

All noise made by machinery is rhythmic. It has a regular beat, and by listening closely to the real sound one can identify a rhythm that can be translated into vocal sounds and imitated by anyone with imagination. The noise of heavy machinery at work sounds like "thud hiss thud hiss thud hiss." Light machinery seems to have a galloping sound that consists of a continuous pinga-ponga-pinga-ponga-pinga-ponga-pinga-ponga, etc. Then there is the sound that seems to have a stutter in its composition, and pimpompompom-pimpompompom-pimpompompom-pimpompompom is the result. A further impression is that of clip . . . clop . . . clip . . . clop . . . the interval between the "clip" and the "clop" being bridged by the hiss of escaping steam.

The clip . . . clop type of noise can be obtained by striking a suitable sounding wooden box or empty tea-chest with a padded mallet or drumstick, first on the side and then on the bottom. The hiss of steam between the blows is supplied by rubbing together two pieces of glass or sand paper held between rubbing pads such as woodworkers use. Boxes of various sizes and thicknesses, metal containers, such as petrol tins or oil cylinders, and

pieces of different metal struck with a hammer, wire brushes, or specially constructed tappers will supply a sufficient variety of sounds that can be fitted to any rhythm that meets our need.

The noise of steam escaping, if the duration of time is not long, can be suggested by allowing the wind to escape slowly from the inner tube of a

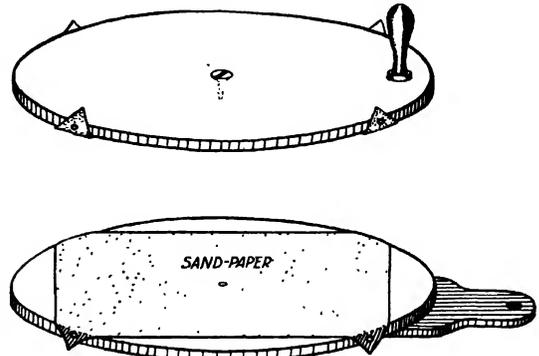


FIG. 36

motor-car tyre that has been inflated to capacity. If the hiss of steam is to be continuous for some time a useful piece of apparatus can be made by cutting two circular discs of plywood, half to three-quarters of an inch thick, with a diameter of not more than ten inches, and mounting on these discs two sheets of glass or sand paper. A sheet of glass paper measures twelve inches by ten inches, which enables the glass paper to be fixed at the corners by drawing-pins to the edge of the plywood disc. The top disc has a screw an inch and a half long, driven through the centre and counter-sunk, and the bottom disc has a hole bored through it in which the screw works loosely. The upper disc has a strong, reliable handle with which to turn it (Fig. 36). The apparatus can be hung up in a place where it will be out of the way. As glass or sand paper soon wears out a plentiful supply should be at hand. A wind machine fitted with a "shrill" canvas will give a steam sound, or in place of the canvas, long strips of sand paper such as are used in sand-papering machines, can be substituted, with good results.

In a small hall a bicycle will supply many useful noises that will assist in creating the illusion of machinery at work. The suggestion of a lift

humming its way up or down, or the far away drone of an aeroplane, can be produced by turning the bicycle upside down and rapidly pedalling by hand. The back wheel should be fitted with a tyre that is well studded and not worn, and by holding the edge of a stout piece of cardboard against the tyre a humming sound is produced

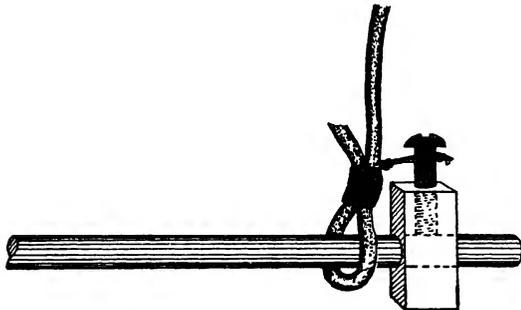


FIG. 37. SPINDLE OF ELECTRIC FAN FITTED WITH SPECIAL COLLAR, AND METHOD OF SECURING ELECTRIC WIRE STRIKER

that may be varied by the speed at which the wheel is turned.

A "vibration" noise can be obtained by holding against the spokes of the wheel a piece of cardboard, a pliable lath or cane, or similar material, and by moving the vibrator across the spokes as the wheel spins round the tone can be varied.

The steady hum of a dynamo can be suggested by removing the dust bag from a vacuum cleaner and holding one of the small rubber tyred wheels against the back wheel of a bicycle that is slowly pedalled. Two persons are needed to work this effect; one to hold the vacuum cleaner and the other to pedal the cycle, which, as before, must be upside down. If it is possible to obtain one of the large electrically-driven vacuum cleaners, such as are used in cinemas, public buildings, etc., this will, with the end of the dust container removed, provide a satisfactory imitation of a motor-car engine when it is running. An engine backfiring may be suggested by firing blank cartridges into an empty tin box or tank.

Another valuable aid to the inventive producer is an ordinary electric fan, which can be set to run at different speeds and tilted at almost any angle. Noise is obtained by holding against the

revolving blades of the fan the end of a piece of rubber tubing, electric wire cable, or thick window cord. Care must be taken not to use any material that will damage the fan whilst it is in use. It is also wise to remove the guard. This is done by taking out the small screws that hold the back legs of the fan guard to the casing of the motor. In some designs of fan these screws hold in position one of the end-bearing plates of the motor. In such cases the motor and casing should be held firmly whilst the screws are being removed. They should be carefully replaced as soon as the guard is clear. Some producers prefer to use the fan after it has had the blades removed. In this case when the small screw that pierces the collar of the fan has been released, the blades should slide off the spindle without trouble. A separate collar must be provided. This should be fitted with a long securing screw that protrudes about three-quarters of an inch when the collar is firmly screwed in position. The collar shown in the diagram (Fig. 37) was of brass, and was about an inch square by half an inch thick. The screw should be a round-headed metal thread screw. By

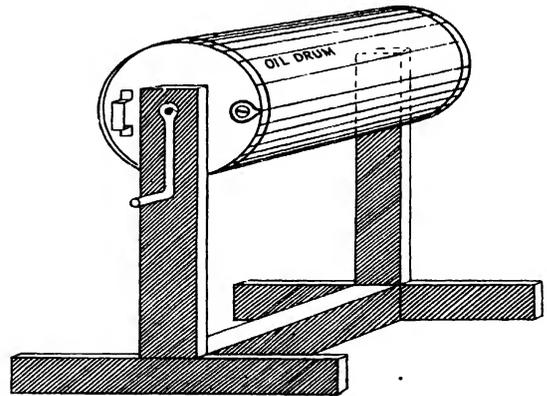


FIG. 38. METAL CYLINDER CONTAINING LEAD SHOT

looping a piece of single electric cable round the spindle behind the collar, and fastening it below the round-headed portion of the retaining screw, the apparatus is made ready for use. It is an improvement if a small wooden ball is slotted on the cable, and this may be held in position by doubling back, for a quarter of an inch, the free

end of the cable, tying and countersinking it so that the end is well inside the ball. When in action the wooden ball as it whirls round is brought into contact with the surface of a piece of plywood, tin, cardboard, or an empty box. In a production of Elmer Rice's play, *See Naples and Die*, the recurring noise of motor-cycles whizzing past was made by "playing" the ball across a bass drum. The suggestion of distance was obtained by working the ball around the edge of the drum and then, by suddenly playing the ball from the edge to the centre and back again the noise of the motor speeding past was very real. In some theatres this device is used to suggest aeroplanes. In a production of Wm. Archer's *The Green Goddess* a battery of three fans and drums supplied the terrifying roar of a flight of aeroplanes circling round and round, and was far more impressive than another experiment that was carried out with the aid of three or four motor-cycles, the engines of which supplied the noise. A small drumstick may be used in place of the electric cable but a piece of ordinary electric wire, such as is used to wire houses, is admirable for the purpose. Six to eight inches of wire is sufficient and the fan should be run at low speed for a few seconds before being opened out to full. Window cord is a useful substitute, but ordinary string or twine is useless, because immediately the spindle begins to revolve the string either twists around the spindle or twists and breaks in the middle.

When the fan is being operated it is wise to have the base securely fixed, and the piece of plywood, or whatever material is used, gently brought to bear on the striker as it hurtles round. In place of the drum the vellum and metal rims of an old banjo, or a tambourine, with the small cymbals removed from their slots, will answer the purpose and will not be expensive to replace in case of accident.

There are many other methods of producing noises to imitate machinery at work. The apparatus usually consists of a striker or plunger, balanced between supports, and sprung to the base. A toothed or eccentric wheel, or a series of paddles moving round, lift and drop a plunger, which, in falling, strikes against a brass tube, a sheet of metal, or a piece of hard wood. The simpler the apparatus, the more effective it seems to be, and the audience should never be allowed

to discover how the particular effect is obtained. Once they know, the effect is spoilt, and instead of hearing the chatter of machinery through the subdued hiss of steam, those "in the know" visualize one of the lady members of the cast slowly working a sewing machine while another person turns a metal cylinder that contains two or three pounds of fine gauge lead shot (Fig. 38).

It is always possible, of course, that we may be faced with the problem of having to stage a scene in which it is necessary to show machinery at work. It may be a scene like that in O'Neill's play, *Dynamo*, where one sees the interior of a power station and a gigantic dynamo, which, although stationary, conveyed a sense of movement by the constant hum of the motors, or it may be some fantastic setting like that used in *The Insect Play*. Whatever kind of design is decided upon it should be as simple as possible; otherwise there is the risk of playing into the hands of some cynical reporter whose criticism may suggest that the settings were designed by Heath Robinson. It is wise to have a working model made to scale, and if when the set has been constructed the movements can be made by someone standing at the back of the set or anywhere else out of sight of the audience during the actual performance it is an advantage. Any kind of material will do; even on the professional stage some of the most impressive machines are miracles of cardboard cylinders with plywood pistons that turn massive flywheels built of canvas or strong paper fastened to or pasted around a wire framework.

An effect of this kind was once used in a spectacular revue. The scene represented a factory where human beings were produced by machinery. The entire stage was cumbered with gigantic wheels that moved slowly and small wheels that revolved at a rapid rate. The large wheels were kept moving by stage hands stationed at the back, and the small wheels were operated by an endless rope that passed round the spindle or axle of each wheel and was pulled from the wings. Two men were required to work the apparatus, one to pull the rope that revolved the wheels and the other carefully to pull back the loose bight of rope and at the same time pay out and guide the rope over the spindle of the first wheel of the set. The suggestion of a furnace

door opening and closing was supplied by a red flood, and the noises off were provided by two men beating with a regular beat two drums differently toned. A ship's bell and a long iron tube received occasional blows, and a noise of steam escaping was produced by a cylinder of compressed air fitted with a megaphone arrangement for amplification. A smoke-pot giving off a white smoke supplied visual steam.

Although the Ancients made good use of simple mechanical contrivances in presenting their plays, there does not appear to have been any need for effects to suggest a mechanical noise off stage. The only "noises off," as we know them, were the sounds of women weeping and wailing, prayers, combats, tumults, the shrieks of those who were being tortured or murdered, and the groans of the dying. The audience heard the noise of creaking ropes and blocks as the different contrivances were operated. These machines were cranes which carried small platforms, from which the gods conversed with mortals, or others, and which were suitably masked by cloud scenery.

In the *Clouds* of Aristophanes there is a scene where Sophocles, one of the characters in the play, descends from a cloud by means of a basket, this being the author's playful way of suggesting that Sophocles and his theories were "in the air." In Flecker's *Hassan* a similar device is used. "A basket comes down," the Caliph "Sits in the basket, and is drawn up," to be followed by Jafar, Masrur, and Hassan. In the second act are seen the basket and its passengers arriving at the mysterious house with the moving walls. If it became necessary to save someone from a watery grave or to transport a god hurriedly, this was effected by a crane, swinging on a pivot, and having, at the end of the rope, grappling irons that snatched him up and whirled him away. Cranes capable of carrying heavy weights were also used. In *Prometheus* Aeschylus used a winged chariot that carried fifteen persons and Oceanus was seen riding a griffin through the air. The cranes were placed well behind the walls of the permanent buildings of the theatre and out of sight of the audience.

In the *Archarnians* Dicaeopolis, standing outside the house of Euripides is informed by the servant that his master ". . . is in the garret

writing tragedy." Euripides "is not at leisure to come down." Dicaeopolis says "Perhaps, but here's the scene-shifter can wheel you round." The front of the house is swung round, the interior pushed forward, and Euripides says "Well, there then, I'm wheeled round, for I had not time to come down."

The majority of plays that are staged in modern Russia are of necessity of a propagandist nature, and travellers who have returned report that the theatres and cinemas are packed to capacity every night. The type of play produced is dictated by the particular needs of the moment. If there is a shortage of agricultural tractors then a play dealing with the subject is written; if there is a need to explain some measure that imposes an additional burden on the workers then a play is written that shows the benefits that will accrue in good time. Three or four years ago a play called *Oil* was written around an idea that was to revolutionize the petroleum industry. It was suggested that synthetic rubber could be obtained from the by-products, and as the play progressed the treatment of crude petroleum was shown from the moment it emerged from the earth until the final processes. Real machinery was shown on the stage and, in addition, a large orchestra of "sound" makers accompanied the scene with appropriate "sound rhythms" specially written for the occasion.

A fine description of machinery at work on the stage is that contained in the third scene of the fifth act of Toller's play, *The Machine Wreckers*. The play is translated from the German by Ashley Dukes, and is published by Messrs. Benn Brothers, Ltd. The scene opens and we see "The factory by moonlight, with a gigantic steam engine and mechanical looms, at which women and a few children are seated. . . ." Then "Amid the sounds of machinery are heard the hum of the transmitters, the clear tone of the running crank-shafts, the deep rumble of the levers, and the regular whirr and rattle of the shuttles. . . ." A child falls asleep at her loom and is wakened by the overseer's strap. A government representative arrives and is shown the factory. Soon after a mob arrives armed with picks and shovels, and eventually "The door is forced. . . ." In a few moments "The mob see the engine. They are overwhelmed with wonder and stand transfixed. . . ." The engineer orders the steam to be

turned off, and "The engine stops." He then harangues the mob and ". . . pulls a lever. With a sound like a human sigh the machinery begins to work." The engine is stopped again, restarted, and finally wrecked by the frenzied mob, to the accompaniment of heavy peals of thunder from the storm that is raging outside.

TRAIN NOISES AND EFFECTS

It used to be considered sufficient if in order to suggest the noise of a train off-stage one of the hands stationed in the wings frantically clanged a huge handbell and blew a shrill blast on a whistle, whilst a second man beat with a long flexible wire brush the round metal chimney of a slow combustion stove to suggest the PUFF . . . puff . . . puff . . . puff of the exhaust as the train started its journey, the noise gradually quickening as the train was supposed to gather speed and dying away as it disappeared in the distance. Fig. 39 shows the type of brush.

These primitive sound effects were a fitting accompaniment to the crude melodramas in which one witnessed train effects of a most sensational character. A typical train effect scene would show "A Railway Cutting near London," or some other local name place, and to the slow plucking of violins the swarthy villain would make his entry, dragging after him the inert form of the heroine who had been drugged during the previous scene. Then with fiendish brutality and regardless of the angry jeers hurled at him from all parts of the "house," he would proceed to bind her unresisting body to the rails. This deed would be carried out in the semi-darkness of a stage the gloom of which was deepened by the red glare of a lamp on a signal post close by. Just as the final knot was being tied the hero would enter and instantly engage the villain in a "Terrific Combat" for which the orchestra would obligingly provide an exciting passage varying in intensity and pace as the combatants, locked together in a deadly embrace, staggered about the stage like drunken men. There would be a momentary lull in the fight and the hero would begin to weaken, when, suddenly, with an ominous clash, the signal arm would drop, the light change from red to green, and the struggle would be renewed with increased vigour. In the distance would be heard the faint whistle

of an approaching train, and soon the dull rumble of wheels would be distinguishable. The struggle would reach its climax as with a last despairing effort the hero would fling his opponent aside, frantically tear away the ropes, and rescue the now conscious heroine only just in time; for, almost immediately, the "Down Night Mail" would thunder past, to the relief of the drummer who had left his place in the orchestra to supply the sound effects with his kettledrum.

The engine, an ingenious contraption of wood and canvas, pulled across the stage a string of railway carriages that were merely strips of painted canvas suspended from an overhead wire by runners. To prevent the bottom edge billowing out as it moved, the canvas was fitted with a number of brass rings that passed along a second wire just clear of the rails. Sometimes the canvas train was mounted on rollers, one at each side of the stage, and operated after the manner of the old time panorama. The lighting of the stage was usually of such a character that, although it was impossible to distinguish many details, one could see the driving wheel, actuated by a massive cylinder with gleaming piston rods, spinning round, and the steam and smoke escaping from a prominent smoke-stack which carried a brilliant headlight.

In a production of *The Whip* the sensation of the evening was a most realistic train wreck. To stage this every known train effect was brought into use, and many new ones were invented for the occasion. In the beginning of the play the interest centres around the fortunes of *The Whip*, the favourite for the Two Thousand Guineas Race. The horse is being sent to Newmarket by rail, and in order to prevent its arrival an attempt is made to destroy it. The horse is seen being placed in a loose box that is drawn up at the platform of a small country railway station and the truck is coupled to a passenger train. By means of moving scenery the train, with its valuable freight, is seen travelling across country, and it eventually enters a tunnel. Half way through the tunnel the loose box is uncoupled, and after losing its momentum it comes to rest. The stage picture at this juncture showed on one side the black yawning mouth of the tunnel, and on the other the solid-looking masonry of a road bridge that appeared to span the railway track.

The backcloth was painted to represent a desolate stretch of country.

The faint murmur of an approaching train warns the attendants of danger, and amidst a scene of much excitement The Whip is removed to a place of safety. A few seconds later the on-coming train emerges from the tunnel, smashes the loose box to atoms, and then piles itself up, a tangled mass of wreckage. The engine, which looked very real from the front, was operated from the back by stage hands, who, at the moment of impact, threw it over, spun the wheels round, discharged live steam to the accompaniment of noise from a cylinder of compressed air, and burnt much red fire. Other stage hands piled up the wreckage just outside the mouth of the tunnel, and the effect was heightened by carrying on to the stage several injured passengers who were laid alongside the rails to await the arrival of doctors.

A scene in *Calvacade* showed a returning "leave" train at Victoria Station. As the train moved, the engine of an incoming hospital train enveloped in steam, arrived at the next platform, and Red Cross workers hurried away the stretcher cases. The engine, humorously called the "Shy Bride," had only a few yards to travel, and was pushed on to the stage on rollers. Coward says "It went backwards, it went sideways, it tangled itself in the black velvets and fog gauzes, but never, till the last dress rehearsal, did it come in on cue."

SCENIC EFFECT

As a contrast to this type of train effect an old play, called *The Swiss Express*, was used as a vehicle to display the abilities of a family of pantomimists and tumblers. One of the scenes represented a train, and movement was suggested by continuously revolving wheels, whilst the constantly interrupted love-making of a honeymoon couple by the antics of the tumblers was seen by the audience through the removal of the entire side of the railway carriage. This particular kind of scenic effect is still used. In a production of *Subway* one of the scenes represented the interior of a coach on the New York underground railway. The coach was packed to capacity, and there was much wheel noise. The illusion of train movement was conveyed by a

long line of newspaper reading straphangers swaying in unison, first this way and then that, as the train lurched along at speed or negotiated bends in the track.

There are many plays that require a scene showing the interior of a railway carriage, and as a rule the difficulty is overcome by building a small box-set that can be quickly placed in position and struck without wasting too much time. I have seen elaborate sets that have been provided with practicable doors and windows, and in one case with a small panorama effect at the side window. Equally good results have been obtained by a folding screen placed around a seat and lit from above by a small spot-light focused on the acting area.

VISUAL EFFECT

Visual effect is giving place to noise effect, and instead of seeing a scene where the stage is littered with broken machinery and dead bodies, one grips one's seat with fear as "The Ghost Train" thunders past with a deafening barrage of sound that is almost more real than the real thing. The scene is the dimly lit interior of what must be the most dismal railway station in the world. As the play begins the first effect, that of a train steaming into the station, is heard. One hears the noise and bustle that usually accompany the arrival of a train at any station, and as the guard's whistle is blown the noise effects are restarted and the train continues its journey. The second effect is that of the Ghost Train itself. It is heard in the distance, and then with dramatic effect it passes through the station and vanishes. The third effect is when it makes its return journey. All the effects are provided by sound, and there is no sight of the train from the beginning of the play till its close. There are, however, two visual effects, one to suggest the passing flare from the firebox of the engine, and the other to suggest the reflections caused by the lighted windows of the carriages shining in the waiting-room as the train passes through the station.

The noise effects of a play of this description are easily supplied, and for amateur societies there is the added advantage that no costly or complicated apparatus is necessary. The volume of sound effect that can be produced will, to some extent, depend upon the amount of stage room

that is at liberty for the purpose and the number of helpers who can be relied upon to assist in providing the effects. In one large provincial theatre the numerous effects of *The Ghost Train* were supplied by the stage crew augmented by the orchestra under the direction of the conductor, who rehearsed and conducted the effects.

Here are a few ways in which some of the more simple train noises may be arranged. The most familiar noise connected with a train is the puff sound made by the exhaust. This noise can be produced by beating a drum which has had the skin or vellum slackened until the sound represents



FIG. 39. A WIRE EFFECTS BRUSH

as near as possible that made by the engine. The first two or three blows should be deliberate and have an appreciable interval of time between them, this interval being gradually lessened as the train moves away. At the same time, the force of the blows should be reduced to convey the illusion of distance. If, however, it is necessary to employ some other method of supplying this type of effect, the difficulty can be overcome by obtaining a box, similar to the boxes used by haberdashers. This type of box measures 13 in. by 13½ in. and 4 in. deep with an easy fitting lid with a turned down edge 1½ in. deep. The sides of the box are made of thin plywood or stout mill-board, and the top and bottom are of much thinner material. The box is strengthened by its covering of a dark coloured linen or canvas. A pint of dried peas is placed inside the box and after the lid is strapped down or secured by means of cord the box is ready for use. The puff sound is made by pitching the peas from one side of the box to the other by a sharp jerk of the hands, and this movement is continued for such time as the effect is needed. When a noise to suggest the rapid puffing of a train speeding along is required, the peas are allowed to rest on the bottom of the box, which is then shaken up and down with a movement similar to that made by a farmer when he tosses grain in a sieve to remove husky matter. At

every fourth beat the noise is accented, and as the train finally disappears in the distance the peas are rolled with a circular motion on the bottom of the box.

The old music hall trick of imitating a train by means of a kettledrum is familiar to many. It is one that is easily mastered, and that is well worth copying for effects purposes. A snare drum—a small drum with a number of gut strings stretched across the vellum—when beaten with one of the small stiff wire brushes supplied for the purpose is another effective sound producer. Amateurs often find it difficult to hire or borrow drums for effects purposes, but the difficulty can be overcome by diplomatically inviting a local tympanist to undertake the staging of whatever percussion effects are required. One tympanist of my acquaintance, whilst refusing even to consider a request for the loan of a drum for effects,

had no hesitation in supplying a valuable outfit that he himself used with much success. A useful effect to suggest the noise of a train moving across the stage is supplied by having two drums that have been tuned in such a manner that the note that is obtained by beating the lower toned drum in the centre may be repeated as near as possible by beating the higher toned drum near the rim. The effect is produced by beginning to beat, very gently, the first drum near the rim and moving the beat across the drum to the centre, the second drum then being brought into action by a beat starting at the rim and continuing to the centre again. The volume of sound should be controlled so that the noise seems to be continuous and to grow in power till it is at its maximum strength at the centre of drum number two. The process is reversed as the train passes into the distance. The dull rumble of a train can also be supplied by gently shaking the plywood thunder sheet.

Steam noises can be made by rubbing together two sheets of sand paper held between rubbers. If this noise is not satisfactory for the effect required, the roar of escaping steam may be supplied by using a cylinder of compressed air. This type of effect was successfully used in *The Ghost Train* and *Thark* as well as in many film productions. The cylinders of compressed air are similar to those in use at garages where tyre filling

equipment is installed. The illustration, kindly supplied by the British Oxygen Co., Ltd., Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London, W.1., who manufacture and supply this type of apparatus, shows the kind of cylinder (Fig. 40). The rubber tubing and indicator gauge attached to the cylinder are used in operating the cylinder for charging motor tyres with nitrogen gas. A whistle or steamer's siren fixed to the outlet of the cylinder valve will produce an effect that is startling in its realism. The present cost of a fully charged cylinder of compressed air suitable for stage effects is 4/6d. per 100 cubic feet, and a charged cylinder weighs 100 lb. A cylinder with the valve fully open will exhaust itself in 25 minutes at a pressure of 40 lb. a square inch. A larger "air" cylinder is not available. Further particulars, if desired, may be obtained from the manufacturers. The company have works in different parts of the country and the railway charges for transport of cylinders of compressed air are the same as for other goods of a similar weight.

The noise of a train passing over sleepers is made by pulling a small garden roller across laths, some 2 feet apart, which have been fastened to the stage. The noise one associates with shunting operations is made by two or three of the stage hands shaking and dropping heavy chains and rattling the lids of dust bins or milk churns.

In addition to the whistle that is operated by compressed air, there are many special whistles that are suitable for effects purposes, but the qualities claimed for them by their makers should not be accepted without a trial. Should an occasion arise that demands an exceptional whistle effect, this may be supplied by using one of the small metal or wood organ pipes that are obtainable from any organ builder. A letter to a reputable firm giving full details of the effect it is proposed to use will usually bring in reply useful suggestions and probably practical help. The value of the ordinary tin whistle should not be overlooked. It is capable of simulating convincingly the whistles of engines.

The noise of wheels is another effect that is often required. Some makes of electric vacuum cleaner when running with the dust container removed will provide just sufficient noise to be heard without making the dialogue inaudible. If, however, a much more noisy effect is wanted, it

can be supplied by mounting a pair of roller skates on a cylinder. The cylinder is mounted in a frame that resembles a table with the top removed, and the distance between the inner side of the frame and the cylinder should be wide enough to allow the passage of the roller skates. To one side of the frame a sheet of zinc or tin is fixed, and the metal is then bent or curled around the top of the cylinder and passed between the wood framework and the cylinder on the other side. The free end of the metal shield may be weighted to maintain pressure on the skates as they pass. When the cylinder is rotated, the rollers running round the inside of the metal cover or shield make an effective imitation of the noise of train wheels. A couple of long flexible wire brushes can also be attached to the cylinder. The noise they make gives a sound of steam to accompany the noise of wheels.

To provide the illusion of a train with lights on passing through a railway station as in *The Ghost Train*, various methods are used, but in each case the principle is the same. The device consists of a flood at each side of the stage fitted with a slide in which has been cut shapes to represent the windows, the slides being moved across the flood; or the flood has a cover with apertures, which is made to move by simply swinging the flood itself round. A magic lantern fitted with a special slide made of tin, and long enough to give the audience time to recognize what the effect is intended for, is often used. If it is desired to run the effect to suggest a long train, a band of black silk is used. After it has been prepared it should be mounted in a manner similar to that required to produce a snow effect—but the shallow frame and rollers should be arranged to suggest a side-to-side movement



FIG. 40. COMPRESSED AIR
OR OXYGEN GAS CYLINDER

instead of an up-and-down movement. If the effect is used from both sides of the stage, care must be taken to produce an effect that is convincing to the audience.

EXECUTIONS

There are many plays where it is necessary to stage an execution, but as a rule the audience is spared this harrowing sight by the dramatist arranging his execution off stage. A familiar setting for an execution is the dungeon of a prison during the French Revolution. The stage is occupied by a group of aristocrats who have been sentenced to death and are awaiting the final summons. Their last moments are spent in carefully arranging their cravats or seeing that the folds of their dress hang properly. The large doors at the back of the stage are flung open, and the audience is allowed a momentary glimpse of the guillotine; the doomed one mounts the steps, and his appearance is the signal for a storm of jeers and howls of execration from the assembled rabble, whose blood lust has been aroused. The doors close, the noise dies down, and the silence is unbroken, until savage shouts of exultation indicate that another head has rolled into the executioner's basket. The door opens again, the jailer calls out another name, and its owner nonchalantly saunters out to provide more entertainment for the insatiable *canaille*.

In *Hassan*, Flecker arranges a "Procession of Protracted Death" for the execution of Pervanah and Rafi, who have chosen a night of love to be followed by death rather than life with separation. As they cross the stage they pull after them a small cart, which bears their coffins. The procession consists of Mansur, who carries a large scimitar, torturers with their diabolical instruments, men carrying a lighted brazier, a massive wheel, a rack, and a man with a whip and hammer. As the torture begins the stage is darkened, and the noise of the instruments of torture and the low moans of pain are swallowed up by music that is soft at first, but gradually gets louder and louder as the shrieks of pain increase. Hassan, almost fainting with horror at what he has seen, is thrust from the house, the music softens, and the executioners emerge carrying the two coffins that now contain the bodies of Pervanah and Rafi. The coffins are nailed down,

and after being placed on the cart the procession is re-formed and retraces its steps.

An execution scene almost as terrifying occurs in an American play called *The Last Mile*, in which a man is sentenced to death and the execution is carried out by means of electrocution. The scene represents a long corridor, along one side of which are cells the barred fronts of which allow everything in the cells to be seen, and, at the same time, allows the prisoner to see everything that takes place in the corridor. The condemned man is seen on his way to the electric chair. The procession is headed by the prison officials, closely followed by the chaplain, who is reading the burial service. The pinioned prisoner follows, and is supported by the remaining warders who bring up the rear. They pass slowly across and reach the door of the execution chamber on the other side of the stage. They enter, and the door is shut. In a few seconds the low hum of a dynamo is heard; it rises to a shrill whine, the electric lights in the cells and corridor flicker and begin to fade until at last they just glow with heat. Suddenly, the noise of the dynamo ceases, and the lights come on, the door opens, and the officials and others hurry across the stage again and all is over.

An execution carried out by the military authorities was a common sight in the theatre fifty years ago. The occasion allowed a display of small-arm drill, and was accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. Sometimes the execution was preceded by the degradation of the condemned one, and to the muffled rolling of drums the marks of distinction, honours, facings, and buttons of the accused one were torn away by one of the sergeants. Here are a few extracts from an old playbill of *The Innkeeper of Abbeville*. This play was staged early in the nineteenth century, and the plot revolved round the murder of the Count of Idenburgh. An innocent man is accused of the crime and in order to avoid torture he declares himself guilty. "He is led to Execution. His Eyes are Bound. The Soldiers Present their Pieces. The Word is given to FIRE when Dyrkile, pursued by Zyrtillo, Rushing between them, Receives in His Breast the balls designed for the Innocent Clauson." This form of retribution occurs in play after play, and Ouida used a variation of the situation in her

novel, *Under Two Flags*, which was afterwards dramatized.

The unusual sight of a dead body hanging by the neck was seen in a production of *Roar China*, which was staged by Meyerhold at Moscow. The play showed a gunboat at a river-port on the Yangtze, the action of the play alternating between the bund of the town and the deck of the gunboat moored in the river. The play was staged for propaganda purposes, and the dead body was that of a young Chinese steward, who had committed

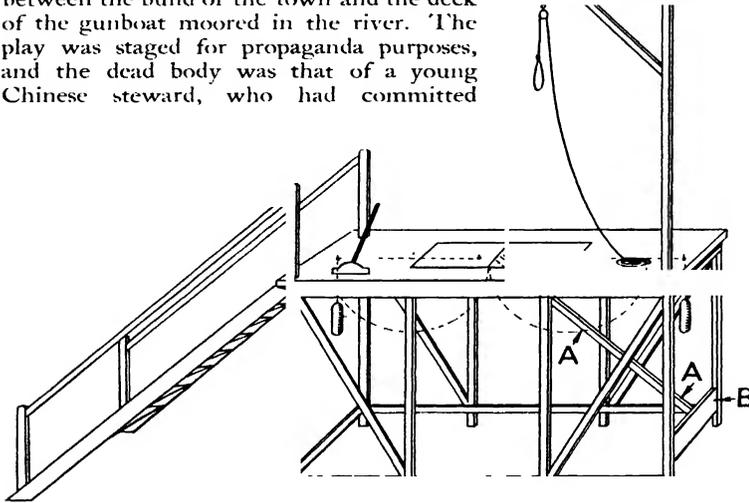


FIG. 41. THE SCAFFOLD

suicide by hanging himself immediately in front of the door of the captain's cabin.

The use of a scaffold on the stage immediately calls up visions of a last-minute reprieve, or a belated confession that prevents the actual carrying out of the death sentence. In *The Devil's Disciple*, for instance, Shaw prepares an execution and has Richard standing in the cart with the noose around his neck. The soldiers are waiting the word to pull the cart away whilst Burgoyne is waiting for the clock to strike the hour. As the clock chimes, Anderson dramatically enters and prevents the execution taking place. Otway, in his *Venice Preserved*, written in 1682, ends his tragedy with a scene on a scaffold. Pierre, who is to be executed, has

just been pinioned and mounts the scaffold, when Jaffier, who has betrayed him at the instigation of Belvidera, follows him to beg forgiveness. Pierre forgives him, and then to save his friend from an ignominious death Jaffier stabs him, and, before the guards can stop him, he turns the dagger on himself and they both expire.

It is possible to carry out an execution in full view of the audience. In a production of that old-time melodrama, *Maria Marten*, or *The Murder at the Red Barn*, the traditional version of the play had an additional scene at the end where one saw William Corder pay the extreme penalty. This particular interpretation of the play contained fine scenes that were acted with much feeling and sincerity. The execution scene was particularly effective. The scaffold was erected in the prison yard and the death chamber immediately below the trap door was hidden by the wall of the prison. The wretched man was seen in the condemned cell, and after hearing the news that there was no hope of a reprieve he was pinioned

and led out to execution. The next scene showed the scaffold, and to the tolling of the bell Corder, helped by the Governor, staggered

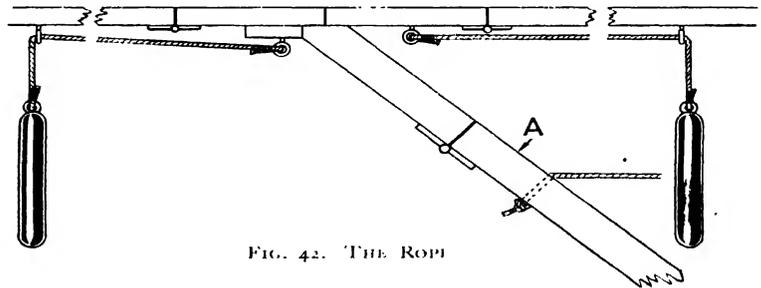


FIG. 42. THE ROPE

up the steps and was received at the top by a masked hangman in traditional costume. Corder was blindfolded, the noose was slipped over his head, and as the lever was moved Corder

disappeared through the trap and justice was done.

The scaffold, a substantial structure made of sound material, was built by a joiner. It was strong enough to carry the weight of three men, Corder, the hangman, and the chaplain, and with detachable steps was easily and quickly placed in position for working. If it is necessary to build a similar scaffold Figs. 41 to 44 reveal sufficient detail to enable a practical woodworker to do the job. The gibbet arm can be of light material as it has to carry only the weight of the rope. The rope itself, after passing through a small block or strong screw eye, is loosely fastened to the base of the post supporting the gibbet arm. There should be sufficient rope between the block on the gibbet arm and the noose that is placed over the head of the condemned one to reach the ground with two or three feet to spare. The space enclosed by the four upright supports nearest the trapdoors is boarded round, leaving room for the trapdoors to swing up and the breaking joint that supports the traps to be pulled

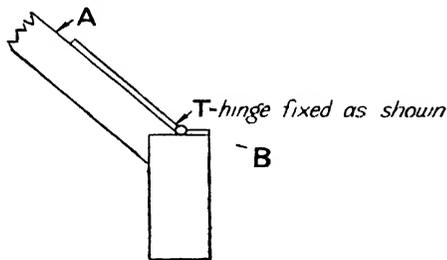


FIG. 43. PRINCIPLE OF TRAP DOORS AND BREAKING JOINT

clear when worked. The space at the back is filled with a loose door that is well padded with straw. The three sides are also generously padded. The bottom of the box is filled with loose straw to a depth of two or three feet, and when the loose door is held in position, it is impossible for the person coming through the trap to be hurt. In the actual production the actor, after falling, had to sink on his knees in order to be out of sight of the audience. The slack rope was pulled into the straw nest by the actor, who slipped his pinions, which were only loosely secured. The lever which is shown in Fig.

41 is hinged at the bottom and works in a slot. The act of pulling the lever is the signal to the stage hand working the breaking joint to pull on the rope that breaks the wooden support of the traps. The trapdoors are held in position by a stout length of wood, three inches square, the bottom end of which is secured by a "T" hinge to

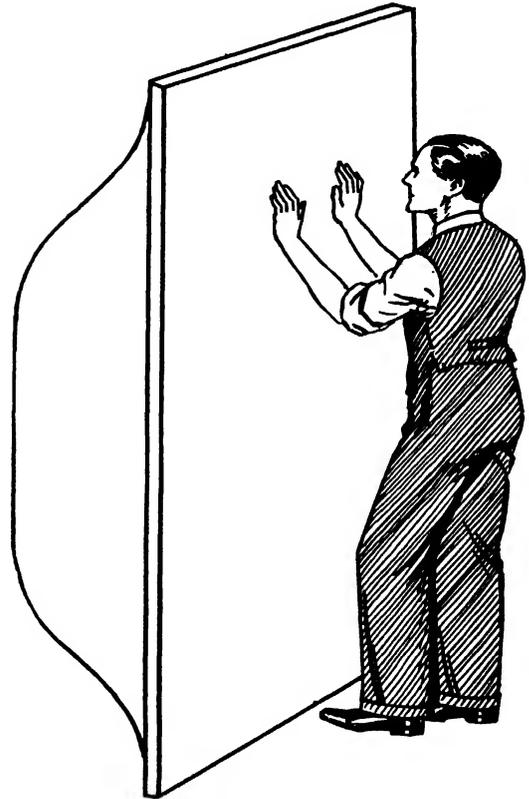


FIG. 44. LOOSE BACK PADDED WITH STRAW TO BE HELD IN POSITION AS SHOWN

the deep cross-bar shown in Fig. 41. The upper portion of the supporting beam is jointed, as shown, and a strong cord is threaded through a hole bored through it and operated at a short distance. The retaining block on the under side of the trapdoor must be securely screwed to it.

The trap, when set, will carry the weight of a man, and by a sharp pull on the cord the breaking joint collapses and releases the trapdoors. The most important detail in the construction of the scaffold is the position of the hinge at the upper end of the breaking joint. It should be so arranged that as the supporting strut is removed the hinge is always inside the arc of a circle made by the edge of the trapdoor as it falls. The trapdoor should automatically sweep the supporting strut right outside the framework of the scaffold. In practice, the sharp jerk on the cord is sufficient to pull the strut clear of the doors. The sash weights are necessary to pull the doors out of the way; otherwise they would swing and possibly get in the way of the person who works the effect. The front of the scaffold should be properly masked. The size of the scaffold will depend, of course, upon the amount of stage room at one's disposal. The scaffold described measured 6 ft. 6 in. high, 8 ft. long, and 4 ft. wide.

It is stated that when an opera called *The Red Mask* was produced at Drury Lane on 13th November, 1834, the execution scene caused a disturbance in the theatre, a public outcry in the Press, and many complaints to be sent to the management. One of the sub-editors of *The Times*, a Mr. Francis Bacon, went behind the scenes to make a personal request to Bunn, the manager, either to take the opera off or to alter the distressing scene where the audience had to witness the execution of an innocent man. One member of the audience said that he saw blood, or something like blood, flowing down the side of the executioner's block. This effect may have been produced by the use of lengths of red silk ribbon. There is, however, no evidence that the story was more than the excited imagination of a person deeply agitated. It was also said that the executioner held up the gory head of his victim, but this was not the case. There is a similar legend about the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, where the executioner holding her severed head aloft, smacked its cheek and was startled to see the cheek flush at this indignity.

The execution was arranged very simply. The block was placed well upstage and to the tolling of a bell troops marched on and formed a hollow square, outside of which gathered a crowd of spectators completely hiding the

block from view. The prisoner was marched to the block and, in a few seconds, the audience saw the flash of the executioner's axe as it was raised, followed by a dull thud as the executioner performed his gruesome task. The spectators moved away, the troops marched off, and the audience saw the executioner leaning on his now bloodstained axe with the body of his victim laid at his feet and covered with a black cloth. The management, bowing to the demands of Press and public, had the execution scene revised and the Bravo, instead of suffering the extreme penalty, was saved by the Doge of Venice at the last moment "in the most approved melodramatic fashion." The opera was based on the novel *The Bravo of Venice* written by Matthew Gregory Lewis, perhaps better known as "Monk" Lewis, with Planché responsible for the libretto.

In connexion with the hanging of William Corder it is interesting to note that in the days when plays of the *Maria Murten* kind were popular a business grew up around the sale of "Gallows" literature. The itinerant sellers of playbills, who were a feature of the London theatre of those days, also included in their wares bills describing the "Sorrowful Lamentation and Last Farewell" of whoever was to pay the penalty of their crimes on the scaffold. For special crimes the literature would take the form of an eight page pamphlet, the title page of which usually contained a picture of the murderer intent on his gruesome deed, with a lurid narrative that was headed "Founded on Facts." Here is a typical example. "The Whitby Tragedy; or The Gambler's Fate. Containing the Lives of Joseph Carr, aged 21, and his sweetheart, Maria Leslie, aged 19, who were found Dead, lying by each other, on the morning of the 23rd of May. Maria was on her road to buy Ribbons for her Wedding Day, when her lover in a state of intoxication fired at her, and then ran to rob his prey, but finding it to be his Sweetheart, reloaded his Gun, placed the Muzzle in his Mouth, and blew out his Brains, all through Cursed Cards, Drink, Etc. Also an Affectionate Copy of Verses."

It is recorded that on the occasion of the execution of Corder no fewer than 1,650,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold in London alone.

SEA EFFECTS AND NOISES

With the arrival of holiday cruising and round-the-world tours, the modern dramatist, quick to grasp the opportunity of arranging his scenes in a new *milieu*, has staged his plays amidst the luxurious surroundings of an ocean liner where his puppets perform their usual tricks to the accompaniment of cocktails and jazz. Gone are the days when the terrors of the sea were summoned to help the play along, and instead of strong plots, where manliness, heroism, and true love walked hand in hand, one has to listen to intrigues developed in the security and comfort of deck chairs and to see their success or frustration as the whim of the author dictates. The settings may be on an elaborate scale, with realistic details, or small box-sets may represent cabins, the bridge of a steamer, the stokehold or fo'c'sle of a tramp, or the saloon of a sailing ship with the 'tween decks portion of the mizzenmast a prominent feature. In plays of the "Pleasure Cruise" variety there is usually a promenade deck with a fairly strong rail over which amorous couples can plight their troth in the glamorous moonlight. As a rule, noise effects are not required, with the exception, perhaps, of an occasional striking of the ship's bell or, if it is misty weather, the long moan of the foghorn.

Eugene O'Neill in his younger days sailed before the mast in both sail and steam, and this fact may be responsible for the number of plays he has written with the sea as a background, and for the characterization of the sailors, who, one is convinced, have actually sailed with him on some ship that has, in the course of time, become the S.S. *Glencairn* of the plays. He obtains some of his effects by simple means. In his one-act play, *In the Zone*, written during the First Great War, the *Glencairn* is passing through the danger zone, and the ever present subject of conversation amongst the hands is mines. There is a thrilling moment when one hears some floating object strike against the iron side of the steamer and they ". . . start to their feet in wide-eyed terror and turn as if to rush on deck. . . ." One of his plays, *The Moon of the Caribbees*, shows the deck of the *Glencairn* with practically the same crew as one meets in his other sea-plays. The ship is anchored off an island in the West Indies. It is night, and a tropical moon lights the scene.

The ". . . port bulwark is sharply defined against a distant strip of coral beach." Two derricks jut out from the foremast and the centre of the stage is occupied by the raised hatch of the hold, which is covered for the night. The men are lying about the deck awaiting the arrival of native women who are bringing off liquor. "A melancholy negro chant, faint and far off, drifts crooning across the water." Three bells are struck, and as the conversation languishes the stillness of the night is again broken by the singing ashore. To counter this Driscoll sings "Blow the man down," and soon the women come alongside and board, bringing with them a generous supply of "booze." In *Ile O'Neill* uses a trick similar to that used by Ibsen in *John Gabriel Borkman*. This is the sound of footsteps of ". . . someone walking up and down the poop overhead."

The mysterious atmosphere of Sutton Vane's play *Outward Bound* is helped by three simple effects. The first is a siren, which early in the play is "low and muffled," and afterwards becomes long and low. This siren effect leads up to one of those moments when even the most hardened playgoer feels his blood run cold. The siren is heard as one of the characters is speaking.

LINGLEY. Well, let's get down to hard facts—I suggest—

DUKE. Too late. Didn't you hear?

LINGLEY. What?

ANN. I heard.

TOM. What?

DUKE. The siren.

TOM. (*After a pause suddenly hysterical*) I didn't hear anything—I didn't hear anything.

(*Duke and Tom rise. Tom knocks chair over.*)

DUKE. Now, now, Prior.

TOM. I didn't. I didn't. (*Another pause.*) But I can feel something though, can't you?

DUKE. No.

The second effect is a drum that has ". . . a muffled and mysterious and irregular beating," whilst almost at the end of the play the third effect is heard. It is "A faint, very faint, sound of breaking glass off right." In one production of this play the siren effect was obtained by blowing across the top of a rather wide bottle similar to those used to contain pickles or chutney. The sound it produced was most weird, and was made by the operator rounding his lips and breathing a deep toned Oooooohhhhhhh . . .

Ohhhhhhhhhhh across, and not down, the mouth of the bottle.

The sea as a spectacle has always been popular, and there is no aspect of it that has not been used at some time or other for stage purposes. The sea itself, tumbling and tossing in anger or just peacefully heaving up and down under some tropical sky; is still seen in pantomimes, where it rocks the raft upon which either Sindbad the Sailor or Robinson Crusoe has been saved from the wreck. The raft is usually a small platform mounted on shallow rockers, and the rolling or tossing motion is supplied by the actor himself who, balanced in the centre, see-saws it up and down. Sometimes the movement is supplied by ropes passed through the stage and worked from underneath. The "sea" is a lightweight stage-cloth, or probably a specially made stout calico, which is painted or dyed. It is fastened to the four sides of the raft and the downstage edge is secured to a batten that stretches from one side of the stage to the other. The loose sides of the cloth are worked in the wing entrances by stage-hands who shake the cloth up and down quickly or slowly as occasion demands. It must have been an effect of this description that was used by Kemble when he produced "*The Tempest*," or "*The Enchanted Isle*," with all the scenery, machinery, music, monsters, and the decorations proper to be given, entirely new. The performance will open with a representation of a tempestuous sea (in perpetual agitation), and a storm, in which the usurper's ship is wrecked; the wreck ends with a beautiful shower of fire, and the whole to conclude with a calm sea, on which appears Neptune, poetick god of the ocean and his royal consort, Amphitrite, in a chariot drawn by sea-horses." It was in this production that young Sarah Kemble, the future Mrs. Siddons, made her appearance as Ariel, charming everyone with her grace and beauty.

On a large stage where an effect of this description was required it was customary to station underneath the stagecloth a number of stage-hands who continuously bobbed up and down to suggest the motion of waves. It was an effect of this kind that gave rise to the story of the man whose head was inadvertently pushed through a weak place in the "sea" and was seen by the audience. The story goes on to say that

the situation was saved when one of the actors on the ship shouted "Man overboard" and then dived to the rescue. The story may be as true as the one about the actor who doubled the parts of Othello and Iago by the simple expedient of blacking one side of his face and turning sideways to the audience as occasion required.

Some plays demand a ship that can be moved across the stage or is seen at one side before moving out of sight. An example of the latter is seen in Comyns Carr's *Tristram and Iseult*. The play opens with a scene showing "A narrow bay surrounded by rocky shores. At the back to R. a shelving ledge of rock forms a natural quay, by the side of which is moored the ship in which Tristram is to set sail for Ireland. The vessel is set diagonally with its raised stern turned to the audience, the remainder being hidden by a rising wall of rock, behind which it finally glides out of view at the fall of the curtain . . . As the curtain rises sailors are seen passing from the ship to the shore . . ." In the third act the scene is "On board the *Swallow*. The front of the stage is occupied by the centre of the ship, where Iseult's cabin is situated. At the back is the raised forepart of the vessel, the tall mast rising from the upper deck. At the opening of the act the large sail is lowered, disclosing in the sky the glimmerings of a grey dawn, with a view of the sea after a storm . . ." As the act proceeds the sail is hoisted and the ship gets under way. At the end of the act the ship arrives in port, the sails are lowered, and the King steps on board.

A remarkable "sensation" scene occurred in the play *Le Fils de la Nuit* staged at the Gaieté Theatre, Paris, in 1872. An armed attack by men in small boats on a ship floundering in a heavy sea was depicted. The vessel when not in use was stored at the back of the stage. A set of rails running down the centre of the stage enabled the ship to be moved down stage to a turntable from where it was run into the safety of the wings. When the scene opened, the vessel, mounted on a platform furnished with "rolling" mechanism, lurched along the rails till it reached the turntable, then, changing its course directly downstage, met the armed boats, approaching along another set of rails, at centre stage.

Water spectacles staged with the aid of a canvas

or an india-rubber tank have provided many a thrill. In an American production the scene represented the sea front with a wharf jutting out at one side of the stage. A steamer and numerous small boats rocked at their moorings. The heroine was brought on the jetty and then flung overboard by the villain. The water in the tank was about 18 in. deep, and, with many cries for help, she splashed her way to the centre of the tank keeping one hand on the bottom all the time. Her cries brought the hero to the rescue, and he was seen swimming to a rock, which was placed well back in the centre of the stage. He mounted the rock to locate her, and then performed a spectacular dive into the sea and rescued her. The dive was made possible by having in the centre of the stage a tank 6 ft. deep, which was let down through the stage, and around which the canvas tank was fitted. The feat brought to an end a play that was truthfully described as sensational.

Water tanks are still used on the stage in productions like *Kismet*; and in that diverting volume, *Seymour Hicks: Twenty-four Years of an Actor's Life*, the author mentions the use of a similar tank which leaked so much that the business premises of a grocer situated immediately beneath the stage portion of the theatre were flooded out. He also describes the production of a melodrama at the Theatre Royal, Ryde, in which the sensation of the evening was a storm at sea during which he had to rescue the heroine from a "foundering steamer." A stage lifeboat that had already been sent from London had not arrived. In the emergency Hicks and a friend sauntered out and in the temporary absence of the owners "borrowed" a small skiff and a mortar-cart to carry it away. The scenery was ingeniously arranged, a sky cloth upside down made a good sea, and a wave effect was obtained by two swinging pieces of canvas suspended from the flies by four wires. After all the trouble and risks he had run a policeman arrived during the performance to arrest him for "borrowing" the skiff—the effect was spoilt because the wheels of the mortar-cart on which the boat was carried across the stage "came a good foot and a half above the swinging waves and gave the entire show away."

Skiffs and small boats were frequently used stage devices. In Dibdin's *Paul Jones*, described

as a melodramatic romance, one saw Captain Corbic, played by Grimaldi at Sadler's Wells, on the edge of a cliff from which he "Plunges into the sea and is seen swimming toward the vessel." George Colman the Younger, describing the trash that was submitted to managers for consideration, mentions a play ". . . in five acts, during which the hero of the drama declaimed from the mainmast of a man-of-war without once descending from his position," and, strange to say, some managers assert that the same kind of material is still offered to them.

Under-water scenes have also received attention at the hands of an inventive producer. In one play the audience saw a diver slowly descending a rope ladder hanging from the flies and reaching to stage level. As he moved he leaned forward and with heavy slowness pushed against the current that swirled behind him, his life line, and air pipe. Green floods and a gauze curtain made a startling effect, which was heightened by the sight of fishes swimming in the semi-gloom that hid the wires that supported them. Mermaids still haunt the seashore, luring men to destruction. In Thornton Wilder's playlet *Leviathan* he describes a mermaid, Brigomede, as having ". . . the green airy hair of her kind, entangled with the friendly snail, the iridescent shoulders of all sea-women, the thin grey mouth . . ." and all she wishes for is black hair and a soul.

Producers of the revue type of entertainment have staged dances where a troupe of girls have performed a "wave" dance, and surely the acme of originality was attained by the producer who staged a scene in the Arctic, complete with a realistic impression of the aurora borealis, which flickered over a backcloth by means of coloured lights and a transparency. The dancers were attired in grotesque costumes to represent penguins and wore masks. They performed a dance that was simply a series of slow waddling movements, and they moved about the stage in groups and assumed awkward postures that seemed quite natural. The Arctic regions have also been exploited for dramatic purposes, and the staging of a play amidst the icy wastes is not new. Here is an extract from an old play called *The Orphan of the Frozen Sea*. The play was first staged at the Theatre Royal, Adelphi, London, in 1856, and must have caused the machinist many sleepless

nights before it was actually produced. The play opens on "The deck of a ship of the time of Louis XIV," and before twenty words of dialogue have been spoken there is "A manoeuvre of sails." A mutiny breaks out, and at the end of the act the captain, his wife, and their small child are cast adrift in an open boat. A faithful seaman jumps overboard and accompanies them. The second act opens with a scene showing "A Frozen Ocean. A wild desolate scene. Here and there blocks of snow and pillars of ice. A small snow hut." The four people are starving, and the father has just broken up the boat to provide warmth for his child, who is slowly dying of cold and exposure. Ralph enters.

RALPH. Did you hear nothing?

BARABAS. (*Agitated.*) What, what, Captain?

RALPH. Like a loud moaning, there, there, under our feet, did you not feel the ice tremble on which we stand?

BARABAS. Yes, it seems, it seems as if it moved, as if it raised itself.

RALPH. It is the sea which raises itself, and fights against all obstacles—the waves will break their fetters and become free.

BARABAS. Heaven have mercy on us. The ice is cracking. We are lost.

(*Fresh noise.*)

(*Louise rushes on carrying Martha.*)

LOUISE. What is the matter Ralph, what means that terrible noise?

RALPH. Courage, my wife, be on your guard, see, see. (*Large pieces of the icebergs break off and fall into the sea. Their fall breaks the surface of the ice in different parts—the sea begins to appear—Louise utters a cry and presses her child to her heart.*)

MARTHA. Mamma, mamma, I am frightened.

(*The icebergs bend, break, and shake. The wind howls, and the waves rise with more violence.*)

BARABAS. Captain, I await your orders.

LOUISE. There is not an instant to be lost. The boat, the boat—quick—quick.

RALPH. The boat is gone.

LOUISE. What do you say?

BARABAS. Hew . . . hew . . .

RALPH. (*Pointing to the child.*) You said let Martha live for an hour, and trust heaven for the rest. I did so, and destroyed the boat.

BARABAS. We are lost.

(*The ice on which he stands separates, and carries him away.*)

RALPH. Barabas . . . (*He tries in vain to help him.*)

LOUISE. Kneel, kneel, my child. (*Martha kneels and lifts her hands in prayer.*) Protector of the feeble and of orphans. (*To Martha*) Repeat after me, my child—Repeat.

MARTHA. Protector of the feeble and of orphans.

LOUISE. Thou, who hast the strength of a Father, and the tenderness of a Mother, save us from the abyss that threatens us, and from the wicked who kill.

MARTHA. From the abyss that threatens us, and from the wicked who kill.

LOUISE. (*Aside.*) Now heaven accept my life for hers.

(*Scarcely has she spoken before the ice sinks and they disappear—Louise entirely—then her arms are seen raising the child above the waves.*)

RALPH. My wife, my child.

(*He rushes towards them and sinks; during this time Martha has climbed from her mother's arms on to another iceberg, to which she has been clinging; Louise quite disappears; the ice is seen in all parts raised by the sea; the one on which Martha is rises and falls by turns.*)

MARTHA. Protector of the feeble and of orphans.

(*She raises her hands to heaven.*)

(*A lapse of fifteen years takes place.*)

It is interesting to know that both Martha and Barabas are saved and they meet in the last act. Their rescue from almost certain death is explained to the audience by Barabas, who says, "You found, then, like myself, a Danish vessel, that relieved you from the icebergs and the white bears."

A simple device to suggest the sound of waves breaking on a shore is similar to the chess-box rain effect that has already been described. In this case the inside of the box is fitted with a shelf that extends across the entire length of the box and is strong enough to hold the weight of the dried peas, which, as the box is turned round, are scooped up and held. When the effect is required the peas are spilled and the noise of the waves receding is made by swinging the box from side to side before the peas are again scooped up ready for the next wave. A strong handle should be fixed to the box where the shelf is screwed to the side.

Spray that is seen may be rice or common salt, thrown into the air by hand or flung from a container fixed to a trap operated by a spring. A stage fog may be suggested either by lighting effects or by using gauze curtains. A fog that lifts, such as may be required in scenes like the one in *Anna Christie*, is obtained by using a number of gauze curtains that are lifted, one after the other, as the fog disappears. The bottom edge of the gauze curtains should be jagged or unevenly cut and should have no batten attached. The effect is heightened by subtle lighting.

GHOSTS

The stage ghost has been with us ever since the theatre first came into being, and it is reasonable to expect that it will remain with us as long as the theatre exists and the plays of Shakespeare, with their many ghosts, continue to be staged. Whether the ghost is actually seen on the stage, or its presence is indicated by the gestures of terrified actors who gaze fearfully offstage, or whether the ghost effect is a miracle of modern stage lighting or simply an effect of different coloured limelights, such as I saw used in a professional production of *A Christmas Carol*, where the ghost of Marley appeared bathed in a ghastly green light and the ghosts of Christmases Past, Present, and Future became visible in more rosy hues, does not really matter if the desired effect is obtained. Aeschylus, in his play *The Persians*, invokes the ghost of Darius by a long incantation and libation, but loses the "ghostliness" of the scene by the lengthy dialogue that ensues between Atossa and The Ghost. The dialogue is a series of questions and answers after the manner of the present-day explanatory scene at the beginning of a play, where the events that happened before the play begins are made known to the audience. Compare this long scene with the short dramatic episode of the Witch of Endor, when, at the bidding of Saul, she raises the spirit of Samuel (1 Samuel, xxviii), and notice how the supernatural is suggested with an economy of words that is remarkable. There was no sense of awe or fear of Darius; he was a kindly disposed apparition, called up by his widow in her hour of need. The ghosts of Shakespeare's day were more businesslike, and a contemporary writer describing a stage ghost of the period explains how—

... a filthy whining ghost
Lapt in some foul sheet or a leather pilet,
Comes screaming like a pig half stick'd, and cries
Vindicta . . . revenge . . . revenge . . .
With that a little rosin flasheth forth
Like smoke out of a tobacco pipe or a boy's squib.

whilst Addison, in *The Spectator* of the 20th April, 1710, says: "Among the several artifices which are put in practice by the poets to fill the minds of an audience with terror, the first place is due to thunder and lightning, which are often made use of at the descending of a god, or the

rising of a ghost, at the vanishing of a devil, or at the death of a tyrant. I have known a bell introduced into several tragedies with good effect; and have seen the whole assembly in a very great alarm all the while it has been ringing. But there is nothing which delights and terrifies our English theatre so much as a ghost, especially when he appears in a bloody shirt. A spectre has very often saved a play, though he has done nothing but stalk across the stage, or rise through a cleft in it, and sink again without speaking a word. There may be a proper season for these several terrors; and when they only come in as aids and assistances to the poet, they are not only to be excused but applauded." This paragraph may have been inspired by the scene that occurred in the last few moments of Otway's *Venice Preserved*, which was frequently staged in those days. In the previous scene Jaffier to save his friend Pierre from the ignominy of execution has stabbed him on the scaffold and has then turned the dagger on himself. The scene is now "An apartment at Priuli's," and Belvidera enters "distracted." She is agitated and on the verge of hysterics; she is exhorting her husband to return to her, when "An officer enters" and whispers the news of the execution to Priuli. At this moment a trap in the stage opens and "The ghosts of Jaffier and Pierre rise slowly up" and Belvidera sees them. Here is the scene—

BELVIDERA

Ha . . . look there . . .
My husband . . . bloody . . . and his friend too . . .
Murder . . .
Who has done this? Speak to me thou sad vision;
On these poor trembling knees I beg it . . .

At this moment the trap begins to sink through the stage again and after a pause Belvidera continues her speech—

Vanished . . . Oh I'll dig, dig the den up.
You shan't delude me thus . . . Hoa . . . Jaffier,
Jaffier . . .
Peep up and give me just a look . . .
I have him . . . I've got him, rather . . . Oh . . .
My love . . . my dear . . . my blessing . . . help me
. . . help me . . .
They have hold of me, and drag me to the bottom . . .
Nay—now they pull so hard—farewell. (*She dies.*)

and "The curtain falls to slow music." When Jaffier and Pierre had sunk out of sight of the audience Belvidera made motions of digging into

the ground and as she called out "I have him . . . I've got him, father" she was laid on the stage with her arm through the trap, which was left open for the purpose. This scene became as famous as the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*, and many theatrical reputations were enhanced by its performance. Later on Mrs. Siddons and others dispensed with the ghosts altogether, and played the scene as a "mad" scene. In this form the scene was often used as a test piece for budding actresses, and Kinnaird, who was then on the Drury Lane sub-committee, heard Miss Somerville, afterwards Mrs. M. A. Bunn, in the part but "thought she would not do." Two years afterwards she obtained another audition in the same part, and the verdict would have been the same but Lord Byron, who happened to be in the pit of the theatre at the time, pronounced it "a promising performance" and she was engaged and almost immediately made her "public debut" with Edmund Kean in the tragedy of *Bertram*, creating the part of Imogene with "brilliant and decisive success."

The ghost of the old-time play usually haunted the spot where he, or more often she, was done to death, or haunted the murderer until he confessed his guilt, and the audience became accustomed to a ghost that was attired in a winding sheet and walked about the stage with uplifted arms and drooping fingers, moaning and groaning or declaiming in melancholy accents: "'Amblett, 'Amblett, I am thy father's ghost." It is interesting to note that the *Story of Ambleth* or *Hamblett*, which occurs in an early History of Denmark, formed the subject of a tragedy that was believed to have been staged before Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. Nowadays a more sophisticated audience witnesses plays like *Outward Bound*, where the entire cast are ghosts, with, of course, the exception of Ann and Henry, who are only half-ways and who return to life again at the end of the play, or plays like *Death Takes a Holiday*, the title of which suggests the plot of the play, or *Sheppy*, where the prostitute of the beginning of the play becomes the Angel of Death at the end. In *The Miracle at Verdun* millions of the soldiers who were killed in the War rise from their graves and return to their homes, causing world-wide consternation, and they eventually return to the place from whence they had come. Paul Green,

in his one-act play, *Supper for the Dead*, uses a witch, the burning of herbs, incantations, and a supper, to recall the spirit of a child who has been murdered and buried in a nearby swamp. The father, an aged negro, who has murdered the child, is a horrified witness of the proceedings. A modern play, called *Beyond*, was staged by Sir Martin Harvey at Manchester in February, 1934. In it he acted the part of a ghost that returns to his family in their hour of need. He made his appearance as the ghost, wearing the clothes he was dressed in at the time he was killed.

Spiritualistic seances occur in many plays. In Veillier's play *The Thirteenth Chair* a professional medium arranges a seance at a country house, and the plot revolves around a murder that is committed whilst the seance is actually in progress. The stage is darkened whilst the seance is being held, but there are no visual effects. In the first act Rosalie, the medium, gives a display of spirit rapping that mystifies those present. She explains—

ROSALIE.

You did watch the wrong end of me. I've a wooden sole in my shoe. (*She lifts her skirt and shows that she has taken one foot from her slipper*). You do it with your foot. Like this (*Laughingly*). It is a trick.

Rosalie next gives an exhibition of table turning, which she does not explain, and by the time the real seance comes on we are prepared to accept her as genuine. Another play where spiritualism occurs is Aldous Huxley's *The World of Light*. In this play a father is trying to get in touch with the spirit of his son who is believed to have been killed in an aeroplane disaster some years ago. He is convinced that he can summon his son's spirit, and during the seance the son actually appears, but in the flesh, the report of his death being incorrect.

One of the earliest visual ghost effects is that described in Cellini's *Memoirs*. He had fallen in love with a beautiful Sicilian girl whom he desired to see. A Sicilian priest of his acquaintance, gifted with powers of necromancy, takes him to the Colosseo in Rome, where the priest, after drawing a magic circle and burning herbs giving off much smoke, produced "several legions of devils." This was not what was wanted, so they made a second attempt. This time the same kind

of apparition appeared, so after "waiting till the bell rang for morning prayers," they made their way out of the magic circle and home. An explanation of the ghost effect is that the priest threw pictures on the smoke by means of a magic lantern somewhat after the manner in which the old phantasmagorical effects were arranged. The operator had the lantern strapped around his

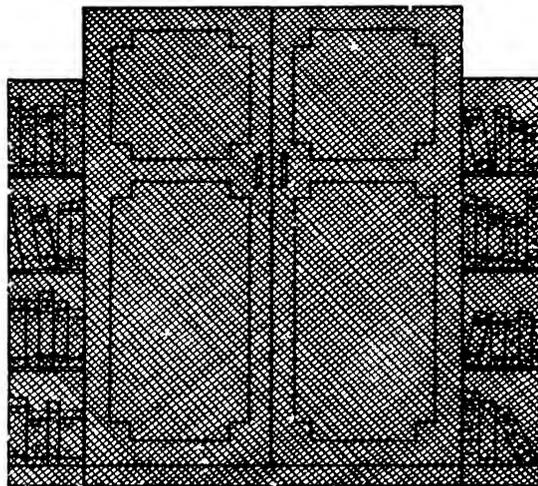


FIG. 45. FRONT VIEW OF CABINET TRANSPARENCY

waist, and by moving forward or backward from the smoke cloud or transparent screen made the figures appear larger or smaller at will. In the course of time the famous Pepper's ghost arrived and became popular. The effect was originally invented by Henry Dircks, and was later improved upon and exhibited by Professor Pepper at the Polytechnic, where it caused a "profound sensation." The effect was mystifying, because whilst the audience could actually see the ghost, it could, at the same time, distinguish the details of the scenery behind it through its transparent body. The illusion was made possible by a well or pit, or sometimes by a passage extending right across the stage, in which below stage level and out of sight of the audience the ghost performed its appearing and disappearing tricks. Extending under the stage, the passage or well was lined with a black material and formed a place known

as the "oven." At the opposite side of the passage and towards the back of the stage was a limelight that was played on the ghost when the effect was required. Hinged to the upstage edge of the passage and at stage level was a large sheet of plate-glass leaning forward at such an angle that it reflected to the audience the illuminated figure of the ghost as it slowly passed through the passage. This illusion was for many years a popular attraction at fairs where "penny gaffs" staged excerpts from *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* or, if opportunity offered, a scene depicting some local murder and the consequent haunting of the murderer by his victim. The effect was more successful in a small theatre than in a large one because in the latter the size of the reflecting glass required was such that not only did it reflect the ghost in the oven, but also the faces of those in the first few rows of the pit. Modern illusionists

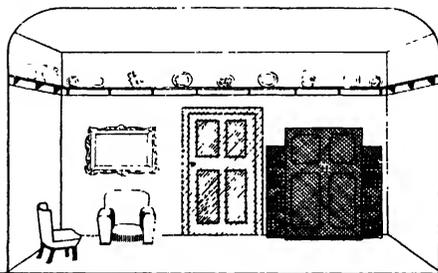


FIG. 46. STAGE SETTING FOR GHOST EFFECT

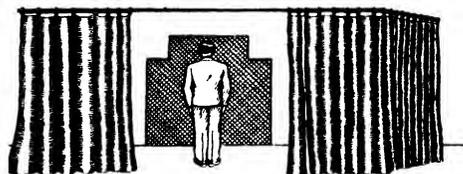


FIG. 47. BACK VIEW OF CABINET

have improved this device, and by using plate-glass backed with black material, mirrors, and dimming apparatus almost any kind of ghost effect can be obtained. Here is a variation of the effect. In a recent production of a play it was necessary for the purpose of the play that before one of the characters made his entry on the stage

he should be seen slowly approaching down a long corridor. He was dressed in Elizabethan costume consisting of black doublet and hose, and his appearance had to strike a note of ghostliness and inspire fear. The stage of the theatre where the effect was produced was shallow, but the difficulty was overcome by a simple trick. The door through which he made his entry was upstage right, and the backcloth represented the interior of an ancient castle. When in position, it was about 4 ft. from the actual wall of the theatre—a fact, by the way, of which the audience was well aware. The back of the scene and the wall formed a corridor that was hung with black material, and immediately above the passage were a number of powerful lamps, controlled in such a manner that the light did not escape. At the end of the corridor was our old friend the large sheet of plate-glass suitably backed, and set at an angle that caught the image of the actor and reflected it into the auditorium. Seen from the front the effect was perfect and the illusion was mystifying. Just before the actor neared the glass he suddenly quickened his pace, which had been slow, and as he reached the centre of the doorway the lights in the passageway were extinguished, and there was no interval of time during which the audience could see the back of the ghost at the same time as the front.

Here is another ingenious ghost effect. In this case the effect requires no apparatus beyond a small spotlight which can be dimmed and which is, in addition, suitably masked. The scene in which this effect was used was a drawing room with a glowing fire in the right wall. In the front of the fireplace was a small occasional table, and behind this upstage was an easy chair with a rather high back. The shadow of the chair from the fire covered a small arch that opened on to a balcony. The ghost appeared to a lady, seated in the chair, who sensed its presence, and, after a moment of fear and hesitation, moved to the switch in the wall near the fireplace and switched on the electric light, but there was no sign of the ghost, which had vanished as noiselessly as it appeared. The effect was made possible by the stage being in utter darkness save for the glow from the fire which seemed to increase the blackness. The ghost entered from the archway and took up a position within the shadow of the chair and immediately beneath the small spot light

fitted with a screening mask. The light was gradually brought on, and the features of the ghost appeared to be floating in space whilst the lower portions of its body were invisible. When the lady moved to the switch the spot was quickly but carefully toned down till it was extinguished altogether. At this moment the ghost slipped through the archway and operated the switch that controlled the stage lights, thus making it impossible for the ghost to be accidentally seen.

The "transparency" ghost is still seen in many productions, and is useful for amateur productions. The ghost appears to the audience by standing behind a scene having a portion of the backcloth cut away and the opening covered with transparent gauze. This is painted over to conceal the opening. Behind the gauze is a black screen, and between this and the transparency the ghost stands and waits (Figs. 45 to 47). So long as the lights in front of the scene are up the backcloth seems to be ordinary, but when the lights are dimmed and the lights over the ghost are brought up the apparition is seen by the audience.

Shakespeare provides us with the spectacle of no fewer than eleven ghosts in the Tenth Scene in *King Richard the Third*, and out of this number nine of them have already appeared in the play before their death. Flecker, in *Hassan*, immediately after the torture and death of Rafi and Pervanah, shows us their ghosts as well as the ghost of the builder of the fountain, the waters of which turn red as the ghost scene begins. In *Berkeley Square* we meet a delightful array of ghosts in costume, whilst the most weird ghost "effect" of modern times is surely that in W. W. Jacobs's play *The Monkey's Paw*. This is the rapping of the door knocker. The paw confers on its owner the fulfilment of three wishes. The first, through the accidental death of their only son, seems to have been granted. The second, "I wish my son alive again," conveys to the audience that the son is knocking for admittance, and, as the knocking rises to a crescendo, "I wish him dead" is spoken, the knocking ceases abruptly, and the door is opened, but no one is there.

SCENIC EFFECTS

The tendency of many amateurs to stage their plays within the limits of a set of curtains with possibly the addition of a window

and a practicable door, whilst it may, perhaps, throw the acting into greater relief, is not always to be desired. There are innumerable plays in which the scenery itself almost acts a part. An example of what I mean is the scene that occurs in *Madam Butterfly* at the end of the first part of the second act. Butterfly, with her baby and her old and faithful servant, Suzuki, patiently awaits the return of her husband, Lieut. Pinkerton of the United States Navy, whose ship, the *Abraham Lincoln*, has just arrived in the harbour below. In a frenzy of happy excitement she attires herself in her wedding dress. The floor is strewn with flowers, and the gay colours of lighted paper lanterns, arranged in a large semi-circle across the room, convey an atmosphere of joy that almost makes the dialogue unnecessary. The tableau at the end of the scene shows Butterfly with her baby and Suzuki standing motionless behind the *Shoji*, the paper windows of the house, through which she has pierced holes so that they can see the arrival of her husband in whose honour and love she still implicitly believes. As they stand motionless awaiting him the baby falls asleep, old Suzuki nods, the light of the rising moon illumines the *Shoji*, and the curtains slowly close to denote the passage of time. After a few moments they open again and the coldness of breaking dawn is accentuated as the few lanterns that still remain alight flicker and go out, one after the other, conveying an atmosphere of desolation in keeping with the thoughts of Butterfly, who now realizes that she has been forsaken.

It is only reasonable to assume that much of the effect would be lost if in plays like *The Will* or *Milestones* producers relied upon curtain sets instead of having the generous assistance of painted scenery and properties. In *Milestones* the stage setting represents the drawing-room of a house in Kensington Gore. The first act takes place in the year 1860, and the second and third acts during the years 1885 and 1912 respectively. In the second act the scene, although it is much altered, is only "re-arranged and added to" but in the third act "it has undergone an entire change," the only things that have not altered being the shape of the room and the position of the doors, windows, and fireplace. When produced the play required the services of a small

army of stage-hands to set and strike the scenes during the short interval of time between the acts because, although the scene showed the same room throughout the play, three different sets necessitating a complete change of carpets, furniture, and other properties were used.

As a contrast to this hustle and bustle of scene-changing the scenery for a production of one of Shakespeare's comedies consisted of a stationary backcloth, in front of which stood an enlarged facsimile of a volume bearing on the cover the title of the play and the author's name. The book when closed was 12 ft. high and 10 ft. wide. Each scene was painted across two pages of the book, which was opened by the Jester at whatever scene was required at the moment, the opened book providing a scene 20 ft. long by 12 ft. high, quite large enough for any amateur production. In a play that requires sixteen or eighteen changes of scene, in some of which only eight or ten lines of dialogue are spoken, the value of a set of this description is at once apparent. Its use prevents the waste of time with the consequent loss of interest in the play that is often noticed at amateur productions of Shakespeare. The sixteen or eighteen changes of scenery mentioned may represent only five or six different places, the action passing from one place to the other very quickly. This form of scenic effect is not suitable for productions of the tragedies. Those whose business or pleasure it is to study the stage in all its aspects cannot fail to notice how certain of Shakespeare's stage settings seem to have a fascination for designers that is almost an obsession.

Take, for example, the numerous designs for the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*. Practically all of them show Lady Macbeth descending a flight of stairs that seem to have been designed for a theatre having a stage almost as large as the Crystal Palace. A scene of this kind is possible in a film, and has already been used by Douglas Fairbanks, but as the theatre has its limitations, Lady Macbeth will still continue to make her entrance in the usual manner from the wings. That great figure of the theatre, Edward Gordon Craig, realizes this, for in his *On the Art of the Theatre* he confesses that "I have even made some settings for buildings which mankind will never erect." Yet mighty spectacles can be and are staged even in a very small theatre.

Scenery was most effectively used by the early Greeks. Their theatre, usually built on the slope of a hill, was without any protection from the weather. The plays were staged during the hours of daylight.

It is known that Julius Pollux left a catalogue in which many of the stage effects used were described. Some contrivances were ingenious. The stage scenery consisted of a solidly built permanent set of stone buildings, having in the centre the exterior of a palace—sometimes furnished with massive gates—and flanked by buildings representing the exterior of a house or temple. There were, in addition, movable sets built to represent the wall of a fortress, a beacon which could be used for many purposes, a look-out from which a sentry could watch, and a tower from which to converse with a god. These structures were placed so that they could be regarded as part of the permanent stone-built set or used separately with a scenic device that completely masked the buildings in the background. This scenery was made of painted canvas fixed to a wood base and the rules of perspective were observed.

Side wings, as we know them, consisted of three scenes, one fixed to each side of a triangular base mounted on a pivot, and change of scene was effected simply by turning to the required position. A back scene might represent a wall that divided in the centre and could be drawn off showing, perhaps, a fresh scene or set piece.

In the centre of the permanent set a door, or gate, was used solely by gods, heroes, royal personages, and similar characters. On either side were doors from which emerged the less important characters. This rule was not rigidly maintained. There were the usual entrances from what we may call the wings. Characters arriving from the country entered from the right and those returning from the city from the left. In the centre front of the actual acting area, ambassadors from abroad or other foreigners made their entrance by a stairway from a position corresponding roughly to the position of the conductor of an orchestra in a modern theatre. These entrances conveyed to the audience an idea of the importance of an actor immediately he made his first appearance.

A MODERN SCENIC EFFECT

Here is a description of a modern scenic effect. The spectacle offered is the representation of the sinking of a gigantic Atlantic liner. A short introductory scene on the bridge of the liner prepares the way for what is to follow. The captain receives a wireless message warning him of danger from mines that are believed to have broken from their moorings and are floating in the direct path of the liner. As this scene ends it is blacked out, and in the ensuing darkness the stage hands arrange a black stagecloth that entirely covers the stage from footlight trough to the backcloth, which is also black.

From the centre the backcloth begins to change colour, becoming deep blue, which allows the audience to observe the appearance of the bows of the vessel that appear as a sharp knife-edge blackness that seems to cut its way through the lighter darkness of the backcloth. The few stars that have already been seen are blotted out by the immensity of the ship as it moves slowly across the stage. In a few seconds the liner with its four or five rows of portholes, blazing with light, glides into full view. The foremast, with its white steaming light, and the green starboard light near the navigating bridge, tower high up into the flies, and are almost dwarfed by distance.

When the bows of the liner reach the centre of the stage there is a terrific explosion and the flash from the exploding mine is plainly seen. The vessel stops, appears to shudder, the electric lights flicker, and almost at once she begins to settle by the bows. The long lines of lighted portholes assume an alarming slant that becomes more and more pronounced. The electric lights continue to flicker in and out, and soon one realizes that by now the propellers must be well out of the water. Then she begins to slide down . . . and down . . . and down . . . until with a final flicker of lights she rushes to her doom. Utter darkness reigns on the stage as the curtains close, and the effect upon the audience was such that it was some seconds before the well-deserved applause thundered out.

The spectacle was arranged very simply. The ship was a large, light, but strongly built frame covered on the audience side with painted canvas. Long rows of circular holes covered with gauze represented the portholes, and behind these were

rows of electric lights mounted on battens fixed within the framework. The frame was covered at the back with a canvas that was lightproof, and it was suspended by a single swivel block that travelled along a wire hawser fixed to the wall at each side of the flies. It was pulled across the stage by a wire rope attached to the swivel block in the centre of the frame, and the whole was delicately balanced. The lights were controlled from a switchboard mounted on the back of the frame, and two operators were required to work the effect. These men wore black overalls, and from the side of the stage they were almost invisible against the black background.

The bottom edge of the frame was 4 ft. clear of the stage. When the effect was brought into use it had first to be swung round from its resting place against the wall of the theatre until it was parallel with the proscenium opening from where it could be moved across the stage. This particular swinging movement suggested the gradual approach of the ship as it was first seen by the audience, and the porthole lights were not switched on until this movement was completed.

In the centre of the stage was a black, iron tank, similar in size and shape to an ordinary domestic dust-bin and having a cover made of fine wire gauze mesh. The explosion of the mine was arranged by using an electrically operated bomb, which exploded at the moment the bows of the vessel reached the centre of the stage, and was operated by the man who controlled the lighting effects. The sinking effect was obtained by one of the operators gently pulling down the bows of the ship, the frame, as previously mentioned, being delicately balanced, whilst the second man helped by lifting up the after portion of the ship. At the moment when the maximum slant was obtained the ship was again moved slowly across the stage. This movement suggested the beginning of the dive, and when the rows of porthole lights were almost perpendicular the final plunge was suggested by extinguishing the lights from the top to the bottom. The whole effect was a matter of seconds, and the illusion was almost painfully realistic.

Matthew Gregory Lewis, known as "Monk" Lewis, should really have been known as "Effects" Lewis, for some of the plays he wrote

contained not only some of the most gruesome dialogue ever written for the stage, but also many original and startling scenic effects. In *The Castle Spectre* the ghost of Evalina stalks through the play, leaving her own particular "haunted room" as necessity arose. Alice hears a ghostly voice singing a lullaby, and also the accompaniment played by ghostly fingers that pull the strings of a guitar that is laid in the centre of a table. Father Phillip, to whom she is telling her story, ridicules the idea, when she suddenly shrieks out "Look, look, a figure in white. It comes from the haunted room," and to the consternation of the priest the apparition appears as he drops to his knees, murmuring "Blessed St. Patrick . . . who has got my beads . . . where is my prayer book . . . It comes . . . it comes . . . Now . . ." But to his relief he recognizes it as the friendly disposed ghost of Lady Angela. At the end of the fourth act the apparition appears again, and its presence is preceded by "A plaintive voice" that "sings within, accompanied by a guitar"—

Lullaby, lullaby, hush thee, my dear,
Thy father is coming, and soon will be here.

Then—

The folding doors unclose, and the oratory is seen illuminated. In its centre stands a tall female figure, her white and flowing garments spotted with blood, her veil is thrown back, and discovers the pale and melancholy countenance, her eyes are lifted upwards, her arms extended towards heaven, and a large wound appears on her bosom. Angela sinks upon her knees, with her eyes riveted upon the figure, which, for some moments, remains motionless. At length, the spectre advances slowly to a soft and plaintive strain, she stops opposite Reginald's picture, and gazes upon it in silence. She then turns, approaches Angela, seems to invoke a blessing upon her, points to the picture, and retires to the oratory. The music ceases. Angela rises with a wild look, and follows the vision, extending her arms towards it. The spectre waves her hand, as bidding her farewell. Instantly the organ swell is heard; a full chorus of female voices chant the "Jubilate," a blaze of light flashes through the oratory, and the folding doors close with a loud noise.

For sheer unadulterated horror what dialogue in any play can equal the following extract taken from the same play? Osmond has had a dream which he describes—

OSMOND. "Methought I wandered through the low browed cavern, where repose the reliques of my

ancestors. My eye dwelt with awe on their tombs, with disgust on mortality's emblems. Suddenly, a female form glided along the vault; it was Angela. She smiled upon me, and beckoned me to advance. I flew towards her; my arms were already enclosed to clasp her, when suddenly, her figure changed, her face grew pale, a stream of blood gushed from her bosom, —Hassan, 'twas Evalina."

SAIB and HASSAN. "Evalina."

OSMOND. Such as when she sank at my feet expiring, while my hand grasped the dagger still crimsoned with her blood. "We meet again this night," murmured her hollow voice. "Now rush to my arms, but first see what you have made me. Embrace me, my bridegroom. We must never part again." Whilst speaking, her form withered away; the flesh fell from her bones; her eyes burst from their sockets; a skeleton, loathsome and meagre, clasped me in her mouldering arms.

SAIB. Most horrible.

OSMOND. Her infected breath was mingled with mine; her rotting fingers pressed my hand, and my face was covered with her kisses. Oh! then, then how I trembled with disgust. And then blue dismal flames gleamed along the walls; the tombs were rent asunder; bands of fierce spectres rushed round me in frantic dance; furiously they gnashed their teeth while they gazed upon me, and shrieked in loud yells,—“Welcome thou fratricide—welcome, thou lust for ever—” Horror burst upon the bands of sleep; distracted, I flew hither; but my feelings—words are too weak, too powerless to express them.

SAIB. My lord, my lord, this was no idle dream. 'Twas a celestial warning; 'twas your better angel that whispered “Osmond, repent your former crimes; commit not new ones” Remember, that this night, should Kenric—

OSMOND. Kenric? Speak, drank he the poison?

SAIB. Obedient to your orders, I presented it at supper; but, ere the cup reached his lips, his favourite dog sprang upon his arm, and the liquor fell to the ground untasted.

OSMOND. Praise be heaven; then my soul is lighter by a crime.

But at the end of the play he meets his doom at the moment when he is about to strike down an unarmed man. As he lifts his arm to stab Reginald—

Evalina's ghost throws herself between them; Osmond starts back, and drops his sword. Angela disengages herself from Hassan, springs suddenly forward, and plunges her dagger in Osmond's bosom, who falls with a loud groan, and faints. The ghost vanishes and Angela and Reginald rush to each others' arms.

These effects and scenes fall into insignificance before the wonders of his play *One O'Clock, or*

the Knight and the Wood Demon. When the play opens there is seen a goodly company of spirits who “ascend from the ground” as the “Moon becomes red.” During a tempest “A black cloud descends” and when it reaches the stage “The cloud opens and Sangrida appears in the midst of it. The back part of the cloud is formed of flames,” and after singing a solo she “sinks into the earth with a group of elves; the other spirits retire to the trees and rocks, which close upon them. The moon shines through a red cloud.” Various characters are seen to “traverse the mountains,” an effect that was usually arranged by having a number of long wooden gangways that were carried across the stage at different levels on tall trestles.

When the second act opens there is another display. “The stage is filled with brilliant clouds,” in the centre of which is seated Auriol. Clouds on the right and left open and show the shades of Ruric and Alexina. Other clouds open, and in one of them we “discover eight children in white, crowned with flowers, each pointing to a wound upon her heart.” The children disappear, Ruric and the other spectres “sink,” the “Spirits ascend,” the clouds disperse, and suddenly the scene changes to “A splendid Castle, in a flower garden, surrounded with bowers of gilt trellis.” Sliding panels are everywhere. There is a huge bed that sinks through the stage and reappears. It is interesting to know how the secret of the bed is discovered. Una is searching for the hidden spring when it strikes midnight. She is just going for assistance when some of the statues that are in the room move. She notices them, and shrieks “They move . . . The figures move . . . (With the first stroke of the clock a blue light illuminates the portraits, which become animated; the pedestal on which they stand moves forward; they kneel and clasp their hands.) They kneel . . . they supplicate . . . Speak . . . What must I do? Ha . . . they point to yon golden tassel. 'Tis there, then, that the secret spring is concealed. Blessed Spirits I obey you. (She seizes a blazing firebrand, springs upon the bed, and draws the tassel. The bed sinks with her, while the statues return to their places.)” Later on in the play there is a “necromantic cavern with a burning lamp” and an altar round which “curl two enormous snakes, on

their heads rests a large golden platter, and on the altar stands four candles not lighted." When all is prepared Hardyknute enters, and after arraying himself in "a magic bonnet and robe, takes a wand from the altar and performs incantations." He calls the demons, who answer from "below": "We hear; we hear; we hear"; and "During this chorus a stream of blue fire issues from the jaws of the snakes, and a gigantic golden head rises in the centre of the altar." With all these preparations the audience must have been ready for the grand finale which begins with Sangrida entering through a rock and stabbing Hardyknute—

He falls into the arms of four fiends, who come from behind the altar, to which they bear him. The snakes twist themselves round him. Sangrida stands over him and they all sink into the earth. The statue and the rocks disappear. The cavern vanishes, and Leolyn and Una find themselves in the great hall of the castle, which is illuminated.

When Wagner wrote his operas he imagined scenes which, in the ecstasy of creation, were real enough to him, but which when they had to be translated into terms of practicable scenic effect seemed almost impossible to arrange. This fact may perhaps explain why some of the more spectacular operas are so seldom seen. In many of the operas the scenic effects play an important part, and are, in fact, almost indispensable. How much of the effect would be lost, for instance, if the wonderful music written for "The Ride of the Valkyries" had to be played without the aid of some visual effect showing them riding wildly to Valhalla. In the third act the Valkyries—women warriors—eight in number, are seen galloping across the sky carrying in front of them on their saddles the bodies of heroes who have been slain in battle, with the exception, of course, of Brunhilde who is carrying the body of Sieglinda. When this remarkable scene was staged at the Opera at Paris the audience saw in the foreground well down stage a built-up rocky spur of mountain that was boldly silhouetted against a sky, across which the Valkyries passed. The effect was arranged as follows. At the back of the stage and extending right across it was a tall wooden structure similar to that used for a switchback or the scenic railway one sees at pleasure fairs. The top of the structure

carried a narrow platform, along which travelled small stands, fitted with wheels, on which were mounted life-size models of the Valkyries. The noise of the wheels was drowned by the music.

Immediately in front of the structure hung a blue transparency, upon which a battery of effects lanterns, placed at the back of the built-up rock section and out of sight of the audience, threw the shape of moving clouds. The horses appeared to gallop up an incline, and the motive power was supplied by a wire cable that passed over a pulley and was attached to a counterweight that was loaded with additional weights from the working platform as the effect was put into operation. The illusion was perfect when the horse-women, illumined by the light from a powerful projector thrown diagonally across the stage, appeared to materialize out of the moving clouds and became visible through the blue gauze that hung immediately in front of them. There are, of course, other ways of obtaining this kind of effect. The Valkyries may be suspended from a steel cable and pass across the sky along guiding wires, whilst it is quite possible that in the future the Theatre and Film will combine to produce visual effects that will maintain the spirit of the opera and at the same time appease the critics, one of whom during a Covent Garden production complained that this particular illusion was spoilt because although the horses were supposed to be galloping their legs never moved.

Siegfried is another opera that demands the assistance of mechanical effects. In this case Fafner, the Dragon, is killed by Siegfried, who after tasting its blood is enabled to read the thoughts of Mimi, who means to poison him. The dragon used in the Paris production was a gigantic affair built on a long sloping structure, approximately 45 ft. long, 5 ft. wide, and 6 ft. high at its highest point. In the centre of the sloping platform a second platform carried the shaped dragon, 15 ft. long and 8 ft. high, from the interior of which two men operated the mechanism controlling the eye, mouth, lighting, and fire and smoke effects. This platform was hinged at the lower end and the front upper end was raised so that when the dragon was slain it could be lowered about 18 in. The tail, a huge piece of apparatus, was mounted separate from the body, and was fixed to a wooden base by

strong spiral springs that allowed the tail either to wave or quiver as occasion demanded. Three men worked this particular part of the effect, one to control the up-and-down movement and another the side-to-side movement, whilst the third man co-ordinated the tail movements with the body movements. Underneath the sloping platform three men provided body movements by means of ropes and winches and a musician with a special trumpet supplied the noise effects. The illusion as seen by the audience was impressive.

In *Nibelungen*, the film version of the opera, Siegfried meets the dragon, which he slays, in the depths of a forest, where it guards the treasure of the Nibelungs. This dragon was more like a gigantic alligator or some prehistoric monster, but it breathed fire and smoke like any ordinary dragon. It weighed nearly two tons, was 70 ft. long, and travelled on rails running along and over a deep trench, from which its movements were controlled by a number of men. Inside the dragon a dozen men were required to operate the neck, leg, body, and other effects, and the setting in which the scene was played was built on a large scale. Stage dragons are not always built on these generous lines. In some productions the requirements are met by a small dragon carried across the stage on an adjustable platform that allows the dragon to be raised or lowered to whatever height is required, and is also supplied with an up-and-down motion to suggest either a running or springing movement. The body of the dragon rests on a small platform on which a man may sit with the upper portion of his body in the front portion of the dragon, from where he can easily operate the various strings, wires, or springs that control the head and body movements.

The illusion of mermaids swimming about in the depths of the sea is arranged on similar lines. In this case a strongly constructed platform fitted with rubber wheels or castors supports a shaped cradle in which the girl who represents the mermaid or siren reclines at her ease or gracefully makes the movements of swimming. The moving platforms are hidden by a piece of scenery representing the uneven bottom of the sea that effectually masks them, and the whole effect is seen through a blue or greenish transparency. The supporting rod is painted to harmonize with

the backcloth, and in addition is also hidden by the folds of the siren's draperies or by lengths of seaweed that the mermaid either carries in her hand or appears to trail after her.

This effect is sometimes arranged by suspending the siren from the flies by means of wire cables, but without the aid of special apparatus and harness the only movement that is possible is a swinging one that may not be suitable.

Eugene O'Neill, in his play *Where the Cross is Made*, suggests an under-water scene by means of lighting and body movements. The scene is Captain Bartlett's "cabin," a room in his house furnished after the style of a ship's cabin, with a row of portholes for windows and a skylight in the ceiling. A binnacle lamp over a compass hung in one corner of the skylight lights the room. Captain Bartlett has already lost his reason and his son Nat is on the verge of insanity.

Sue, the daughter, is sane, and during the scene that occurs, although she is on the stage, she sees nothing of the ghostly visitors, who are only part of the hallucinations of the captain and his son. Captain Bartlett imagines that the crew of the *Mary Allen* are returning, bringing with them gold. Bartlett hails a ship that is not there and receives an answer that is an echo of the same hail from Nat. Then they hear Horne, Cates, and Jimmie Kanaka approaching, and the noise of the wind and sea ceases. "A dense green glow floods slowly in rhythmic waves like a liquid into the room—as of great depths of the sea faintly penetrated by light." Nat, who is now as mad as his father, draws Sue's attention to it but all she sees is the moonlight.

"The green light grows deeper and deeper," and the noise of a door slamming is heard, bare feet patter up the stairs as Bartlett throws the door open to admit his ghostly visitors. As he welcomes them in the audience sees "The forms of Silas Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka rise noiselessly into the room." They bring with them a heavy chest, which they carry up the companionway leading to the roof. As they come on to the stage "Water drips from their soaked and rotten clothes. Their hair is matted, intertwined with slimy strands of seaweed. Their eyes as they glide into the room stare frightfully wide at nothing. Their flesh in the green light has the suggestion of decomposition.

Their bodies sway limply, nervelessly, rhythmically, as if to the pulse of long swells of the deep sea." They are still "swaying" as they go up out of sight and in a few moments "The green glow disappears. The wind and the sea are heard again. Clear moonlight floods through the portholes," and the scene becomes normal once again.

An interesting play from the point of view of stage effects is Ware's *Bothwell*. This is one of the few plays in which a direct reference to panorama effects is made. The play is a drama in four acts, and concerns the fortunes of Mary Stuart from the time she leaves the shores of France until her escape from Lochleven. The play opens in "The Guard Room of the Palace of St. Germain, near Paris," and by the time we arrive at the third scene of the first act we find ourselves on "A ship at sea, built as viewed from the bows. A cloud panorama forming the distance commences moving. Discovered—Mary Queen of Scots asleep, and Alice seated on a cushion on the quarter deck. Around them Brantome, Chatelard, Douglas, Darnley, sailors, etc. Sunset effect on this group. The movement of the vessel is slight. The clouds move very slowly. The captain gives various orders through his trumpet. The Queen is awakened because she wants to see the coast of France when it is "but a line on the sea."

The captain fears that a storm is brewing and "the ship moves more unsteadily, the clouds move more rapidly, dusk gradually comes on." There is more talk of the weather, and the captain orders "Luff, luff," and almost in the same breath commands "Reef all sails." The helm is put to starboard as "The ship sways still more. The clouds become heaped in appearance. The wind is heard," and after three lines of dialogue there is "A pause. The action becomes more violent. A violent rush of wind carries away rigging and a sail, also the captain." A voice calls "Man overboard," but as the darkness is now complete he is given up for lost. The wind increases, and the ship rolls heavily. Female voices are heard chanting a slow *Ave Maria*, which is followed by a loud explosion of wind, and thunder, and a crash of wood." Bothwell orders "Down with the mast," and as the noise effects increase "several sailors run to the mast

and are blown into the sea. Loud cries are heard, and the hymn is joined by men's voices. Bothwell immediately calls for an axe and "Axes are brought by the sailors. Bothwell, Chatelard, and others seize them. The mast is cut. The sound of crashing wood must be heard off. The mast falls overboard with a splitting noise."

The vessel rights herself, and "the wind ceases. The rocking of the vessel is not so great. The clouds go more slowly." The Queen is reported to be praying as "The *Ave Maria* is heard again in entirety. The wind abates. The motion of the vessel is but slight. The panorama clouds become serene, and the moon appears full and bright," and at the end of the act Mary confers the dignity of an earldom on Bothwell in recognition of his services in saving the ship from disaster. The second act is "Netley's Alehouse in a common quarter of Edinburgh," and an opportunity is taken to stage a ballet of gipsies, who dance the Tarantella, "the male dancers humming the air with their closed mouths." The Queen and Rizzio have just arrived when Darnley enters drunk. The Queen unmasks Darnley, who recognizes her and Rizzio.

The second scene is a "Corridor at Holyrood; a practicable door, tapestried. Night," and in a scene that is most affecting one sees Rizzio done to death in a manner that closely follows the historical description of the event. In the third scene of the third act the setting is "A corridor in the Abbey of Kirk-o-Field, night. The scene built diagonally left to right. A Gothic window opening on a balcony. Chair. Discovered Bothwell, Allan, dressed as a valet. Three armed men all looking to the right." They are about to set the train of gunpowder that is to explode the mine under Darnley's house. An "Armed man opens trap. The trap must be bordered with wood to give idea of thickness." The end of this scene and the beginning of the following one are played without a break. The train is fired and "A loud explosion is heard. The entire scene is blown up, producing slight fire and smoke. N.B. All the scenery must go up. The explosion brings to view Scene IV: Interior of Holyrood Palace. The Great Hall. At extreme back the Queen, in white satin, is seated. Dancers in court dress gradually enter dancing in slow measure.

The noise of the explosion must not cease before the music begins, and this music, of a slow, staccato, minuet character, must move from *pianissimo* to *forte*. Many gentlemen, including Douglas, stand round Mary, who smiles and bows." The effect which this change of scene had upon the audience can well be imagined.

The final scene is "Lochleven. The lake takes up the whole of the stage. The end of the Castle of Lochleven; one window only seen, and that lit up. Between the base of the castle and the water a rock extends. Halfway between the basement and the lake is a practicable rampart. There is a slight beach between the base of the rock and the water. Moored under the rock is a boat in which lie concealed two men. The moon is seen near the water, and sinking behind it. Below rampart a watchtower and door." There is a sentry on duty who is relieved and as the soldiers move off there is heard a soldiers' song. The play after supplying more stage effects and exciting situations than was usual, even in those days, falls away in the last few seconds. Mary is in the boat as Bothwell and Douglas begin to struggle under the ramparts of the Castle. They are challenged by the sentry, who, receiving no reply, fires and rouses the garrison. Just before the sentry fires his musket Mary has uttered a shriek, whilst Bothwell has loudly called out "Treason—The Queen, the Queen," but this does not seem to have been heard. Bothwell receives the bullet and falls.

The boat is pushed, and to escape capture Bothwell throws himself in the lake as an officer looks over the rampart. Torches are held down but as everything appears to be tranquil, the officer assures the sentinel that "'Twas but thy thought. On guard!" The officer retires, and as the sentry continues his rounds the voices of the soldiers are heard, but the words cannot be distinguished, and the curtain falls.

Another remarkable scenic effect that is worthy of notice occurs in Edward Stirling's historical drama, *The Three Black Seals*. This play was first produced at Astley's Theatre on the 2nd of May, 1864. Anne of Austria, Louis XIII, Marchionesses, Counts, and Chevaliers rub shoulders with pages and guards. Secret panels, statues that move and disclose secret passages, and closets in which nearly all the characters

hide in turn are numerous. The curtain at the end of the play was most exciting, the situation being reminiscent of the style of Edgar Allan Poe, who had then been dead some fifteen years.

The last scene is "The Red Chamber." A room richly and heavily decorated. A barred window. A large closet with glass doors. A door leading to a corridor in which is a fireplace. Carpet on the stage enclosed on all sides. Moon seen through the window. Music. Sylvie de Noyes slowly unlocks the door and peeps in. When she has made her entry she explains to the audience through the medium of a long soliloquy that the room is a kind of Bluebeard's Chamber. She is disturbed and seeks safety in the closet, through the glass doors of which she can see all that happens. Somewhere in the room is a chest of jewels, the hiding place of which is a secret known to two persons only. Count d'Iglese, who believes that he can find the secret hiding place, enters the room to try to discover the treasure. The door is locked from the inside, and in the closet are Sylvie and Marguerite who has also arrived on the scene. As he presses the secret button he laughs wildly, "Now I triumph over all. (Music of a peculiar character, the heavy corniced ceiling is seen gradually to descend.) I can easily wrench a bar from yonder window and descend unseen. (Looks up. By this time the ceiling is half down.) Horror, horror, what have I done? The ceiling falls down on me. I shall be crushed to death. (Runs to window and tries bars.) No—no—I have not the strength—the key. (Feels for it.) That door . . . lost. . . . Ah, misery. (Runs to closet.) Closer, closer it comes on me. Wife, Marguerite, for the love of mercy spare me. Open, open, I will not harm you. The accursed secret kills me. Give me life! I am not fit to die! (Ceiling presses him down, he endeavours to keep it up with his hands raised up, forced on his knees by the pressure.) Mercy. Not yet. Give me a moment. (Falls on his back.) I will not die! (The ceiling crushes him, and takes the place of the carpet on the stage. Another ceiling exactly like the one that descends is discovered when the action takes place. When the ceiling is on the stage the closet doors fly open and Marguerite falls out fainting. The door is forced open and La Venne rushes in)," and the play ends.

MASKS

There are many occasions when masks are required for stage productions; therefore, it is desirable that some simple, easily followed guidance on the making of masks should be given. The following instructions, however carefully carried out, will not enable anyone to sit down and immediately construct masks comparable with some of the beautiful examples seen on the professional stage, but it will be possible for pleasurable experimental work to be undertaken that may eventually lead to more artistic endeavours. It should be realized that there will be many disappointments in store for the amateur mask-maker before he or she can be entrusted with the creation of masks that are suitable for use in an actual production. Patience, skilful fingers, and imagination are essential qualifications. Given these the remainder is easy. The materials required are not expensive. They comprise a modelling board, a supply of plasticine, tissue paper, paste, a soft brush, and one or two other items. The modelling board may be of half-inch plywood cut to a convenient size. Plasticine is cheaper when it is purchased by the pound. Two or three pounds will be sufficient, and the same material can be used time after time. The tissue paper should be absorbent—grease-proof paper is useless—and two different colours should be chosen; yellow, white, or flesh-coloured paper is preferable to the heavier blues or reds. Any kind of paste is suitable, but do not use gum. The paste can be home made; flour and water, with the addition of a little seccotine, or any of the commercial pastes, will do. The tools required are of the simplest kind—a wooden skewer or a nail fixed in a wood handle, and a small smoothing or scoring tool, costing a few coppers are all that are needed.

Before beginning to work, make a rough sketch of the mask, both full face and profile, and be sure that when the mask is complete it will be large enough to cover the face of whoever is to wear it. If the mask is for decorative purposes only, these details are not of great importance. The plasticine is next moulded into shape with the fingers, care being taken to maintain a sense of proportion and balance. Features should be sharply defined and slightly exaggerated, and if it is possible to catch and fix "expression" in one

or two lines this should be done. Features should be built up with care, and as the face begins to assume a definite form it should be viewed from different angles from time to time. When the plasticine model is in its final form it should be coated with a fine covering of olive or linseed oil, which should extend for an inch or so all round the model on to the modelling board. The model then receives its first covering of tissue paper. The paper is torn, not cut, into strips about an inch wide and as long as required, and then gently laid on the model and brushed smooth, care being taken not to disturb the feature. The natural lines of the face should be followed as far as possible, and great care should be taken that the paper, whilst being brushed well down into the eyes, mouth, etc., is not wrinkled more than is necessary. The paper should be carried to the edge of the mask and overlap on to the modelling board. After the first covering of paper has been affixed it is wise to let it stand for an hour or so.

The next covering of paper is made in the same manner, and by using a different coloured paper one is sure that every part of the mask has been covered twice. The second covering is pasted on, and after five or six layers of paper have been affixed suitably and similarly the mask should be left for a few days till it is absolutely dry. By running a sharp knife round the edge of the mask where it joins the modelling board the mask should lift easily off the plasticine. If, however, it does not, the plasticine may be carefully removed from the mask piece by piece. The mask can be strengthened by having a layer of fine linen pasted inside it or inserted between the layers of paper in the early stages. When the mask is dry additional details may be supplied by using plastic wood. If it is desired to economize in the use of plasticine, a wooden shape roughly following the form of the mask can be securely screwed to the modelling board as a foundation upon which to build.

The mask is now ready for painting. For this purpose use students' flat oil colours that have been run down with turpentine to the appropriate thinness. These colours dry "flat," which means they dry with a dull surface. An application of gold size will give a slight glaze that can afterwards be varnished. Water or poster colours

STAGE EFFECTS

can be used, but oil colours are preferable, as they have the advantage of being washable.

If it is necessary to build a mask that entirely covers the head, this may be done by moulding the plasticine around a wooden shape firmly fixed to the modelling board. Make sure that the opening through which the wearer will insert



FIG. 48. MASK IN TRIANGLES AND STRAIGHT LINES

his own head is large enough for the purpose. The ears should be moulded close to the head: they should not be loose. If the ears must protrude, it is better to model them separately and to attach them after the mask is removed from the plasticine model. The model is covered with five or six layers of different coloured tissue paper exactly as in the previous case, a strengthening layer of fine linen being inserted, if desired. It is allowed to dry as before, and the mask is removed from the model by cutting it in two with a sharp knife along a line passing behind the ears and over the top of the head. When the plasticine is removed and the mask is thoroughly dry the two

THEATRE AND STAGE

halves are joined together by strips of paper or linen pasted along the cut portion, the joins being



FIG. 49
H W Whanslaw

made on the inside as well as the outside. In the mask in Figs. 49 and 50 the hair, which consisted of lengths of white cord, was attached to it



FIG. 50
H. W. Whanslaw

with glue and afterwards painted. The hair on the negro mask (Figs. 51 and 52) consisted of

strips of light grey astrachan affixed in a similar manner. Animal and bird masks are

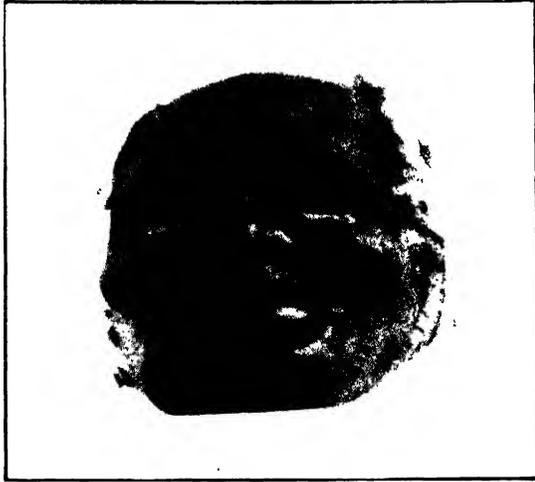


FIG. 51
H. W. Whanslaw.

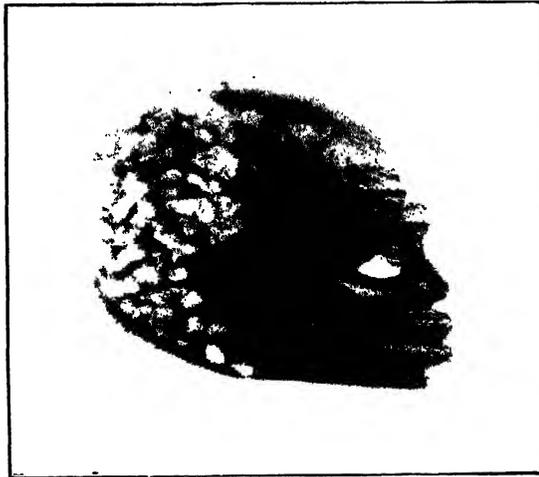


FIG. 52
H. W. Whanslaw.

made after the same style, and any mechanical details, such as winking eyes, opening and closing

mouth, moving ears and tongue, etc., are fitted before the two halves of the mask are finally joined together.

Should it be necessary to make a number of identical masks the procedure is slightly different. The modelling material can still be plasticine, but it is more economical in this case to use



FIG. 53 MASK IN THE CHINESE MANNER

modelling clay. The head is modelled as before, and when this has been done the model is enclosed with a wall of clay that comes well above the top of the model and also covers the inside exposed portion of the wooden modelling board. Sufficient water to fill the mould thus formed is placed in a tin vessel and plaster of Paris or dental plaster is gently added and stirred until it assumes the consistency of cream, when it is immediately and carefully poured into the mould and allowed to set, which it should do in from three to four minutes. Before pouring the plaster into the mould the modelled face and retaining walls should have been generously coated with

olive or linseed oil to ensure a clean cast. When preparing the model care should be taken that there is no "undercut." By "undercut" is meant any portion of the model that will allow the liquid plaster to get inside or under it and prevent the mould being lifted clear when it has set. The



FIG. 54. MOULD FOR PLASTER OF PARIS CAST WITH FRONT WALL REMOVED

nostrils or ears or a chin with a pronounced downward thrust are points where "undercut" may occur. When the mould is set it should stand firmly on its flat base, and after it has been well oiled the mask can be constructed as before, only in this case the layers of paper are pressed into the shape and the pasting is done from the inside. The mould should be cleaned after each mask is removed and with care it should last indefinitely (Fig. 54).

The eye and mouth openings should be made last. When painting the mask it should be remembered that it is to be used on a stage lit with artificial light, which will make the colouring appear different from what it is in the daylight. Flesh colours, Naples yellow, and light red are usually safe colours to use. When using a mask with plenty of red in it take care not to expose it to a green light, as this will make the mask appear black. This is the lighting effect used in revues where the appearance of a troupe of dancers, with plenty of red in their make-up, change from white to black when green floods are thrown on them. It should also be remembered that a red light on yellow appears reddish orange, yellow and blue appear green, red and blue appear purple, and almost any colour appears lighter when illuminated by a similar coloured light. Tapes or elastic fasteners used for masks should be in one piece and fixed to the mask in such a manner that there is no undue strain on the material; in fact it would be better to say that the mask should be fastened to the tape or elastic.

There are many other methods of making masks, but those outlined are satisfactory for all purposes.

In the plays of ancient Greece the actor, dwarfed by the immensity of the open-air theatre in which he performed, wore a mask so that his features could be seen by the audience, and spoke through a hollow mouthpiece fitted inside the mask so that they could hear his voice. The soles of his buskins—high boots—were made thick to give him additional height, whilst his body was made proportionate by padding. Two, or sometimes three, actors, with the assistance of a chorus, were sufficient to stage any of the plays of the period, and the impersonation of additional characters was made possible by changes of costume and mask. The masks might resemble real persons or be grotesque caricatures of types. Bird and animal masks were necessary in plays like Aristophanes's *The Birds* and *The Frogs*, the masks of the latter probably being fitted with special devices to enable the chorus to simulate the dismal croaking of frogs which in Frere's translation of the play is represented by the words "Brekeke-kesh, koash, koash." In tragedy, where the play of features would normally convey to a present-day audience hate, pity, fear, or despair, the situation was met by keeping the face of the mask turned from the audience until the dialogue that followed enabled the character to turn.

In Sophocles's *Electra* Orestes, who is believed to be dead, has just made himself known to Electra, his sister—who wears a tragic mask—and her joy finds expression in the words "O day of days," but as this sudden change of mood is not in keeping with the mask she wears, Orestes's following words "Hush, speak not so loud, lest one within should hearken" prepare the audience for the same sorrowful mask that is presented when Electra once more turns to them.

These masks were beautifully made of wood, linen, copper, or bronze, and covered the head completely. They were thin and light in weight, and suitably coloured or enamelled. Half, or partial, masks were used. These, carefully fitted to the face of the actor had, in place of the usual opening for the mouth, a larger opening through which could be seen the grotesque grimaces of the mouth in movement.

TRAPS AND REVOLVING STAGES

Apart from pantomimes and spectacular productions, the opportunities for the use of traps are limited. In the production of *The Golden Toy* at the London Coliseum, in one of the scenes two vocalists taking the parts of "The Golden Voices" rose slowly through traps at each side of the stage, and, after singing, slowly descended. The Ghost in Hamlet frequently made his appearance and disappearance through a similar trap, and the need for an opening in the stage to enable the Gravediggers' Scene to be played properly brought about the provision of a trap that has become known as the "grave trap." In Raymond's amusing *Life and Enterprizes of R. W. Elliston* he relates how during the run of some play an actor taking the part of a ghost had to be lowered through the stage by means of a trap. Elliston and a colleague, who were concealed below the stage, had provided themselves with small flexible canes with which they mercilessly belaboured the almost bare legs of the ghost as he began his slow descent. The actor was compelled to maintain a dignified demeanour during his punishment and whilst the orchestra played solemn music to suit the occasion he danced with pain and "corvetted with his heels, like a horse in Ducrow's arena." The incident is illustrated with a drawing by Cruikshank and shows the kind of trap in use at that time. It consisted of two square frames fitting closely into each other, the smaller frame moving up and down in grooves on the inner side of the larger frame. The trap was lifted by a small hand-windlass, similar in construction and operation to one of the modern lifting turntables used by electric tramway companies for the maintenance and repair of their overhead cables.

The stage trap to-day is, with the exception of one or two minor improvements, practically the same as that used fifty years ago, when trap effects were in constant demand for plays such as *The Flying Dutchman* and *Der Freischutz*. The trap is operated by means of a rope secured at one end and which, after passing over and under a series of pulleys, one of which is fixed to the centre of the bottom end of the sliding frame of the trap, terminates in a counterweight held in check by a retaining rope until the trap is operated. When this occurs the retaining rope

is slipped, and the trap is catapulted upwards, throwing the actor three or four feet into the air through a star trap made of triangular pieces of leather or wood, which immediately close after his passage. By employing a lighter counterpoise the trap can be made to lift the fairy queen gently into view.

Sometimes the counterpoise would be so adjusted that the weight of the player using the trap was the greater, in which case ropes were led over pulleys fixed in the corner posts of the trap and fastened to the moving platform, when it was quite easy to lift the fairy or demon to stage level at whatever speed was desired. In many of the older theatres the traps were operated by hand power alone, sometimes eight or twelve men being required to work one trap. Another kind of trap is that used in pantomimes. Through it all the comic members of the cast make a hurried and unexpected descent on to carpets held by men standing beneath the stage. This trap is usually placed where the "grave" trap is situated, and the doors are fitted with springs that return them to stage level after each descent. The trap is removed immediately it is finished with in order to prevent any inadvertent descent.

A play that demands an unusual trap effect is that old time-thriller, *Sweeney Todd*, or the *Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, which is often revived, either as a straight play or as a burlesque. In the burlesque form the audience is usually invited to assist in the performance by creating an atmosphere redolent of the period when the play was first staged. This is done by the audience applauding virtuous sentiments when expressed, cheering the heroine and hero every time they make an entry, hissing and groaning whenever the villain makes his entry and exit, vocally encouraging the hero whenever he engages the villain in combat, refuting false statements, and warning the innocent of danger from poisoned cups; but these exhortations fall upon deaf ears, and the play hurries along to its inevitable conclusion, and is great fun. There are many variations of the traditional version, but they generally follow the main outlines of the story, and all of them feature the scene in the barber's shop, where Sweeney Todd, at the instigation of his imbecile cousin, has fixed his operating chair to a trap that revolves and precipitates his

victim into a deep cellar, where, if he is not killed outright, he is finished off by Sweeney's ready razor. Mrs. Lovatt, who keeps the pie-shop next door, assists him in disposing of the bodies, and waxes rich on the proceeds of her pies, which are in great demand, and no one ever suspects the

for this scene was a chair firmly fixed to a moving panel hinged at stage level, and provided with feet upon which the legs of the chair rested. The panel when pulled back tilted the chair until it was out of sight of the audience, when the victim was quickly pulled out of the chair by waiting

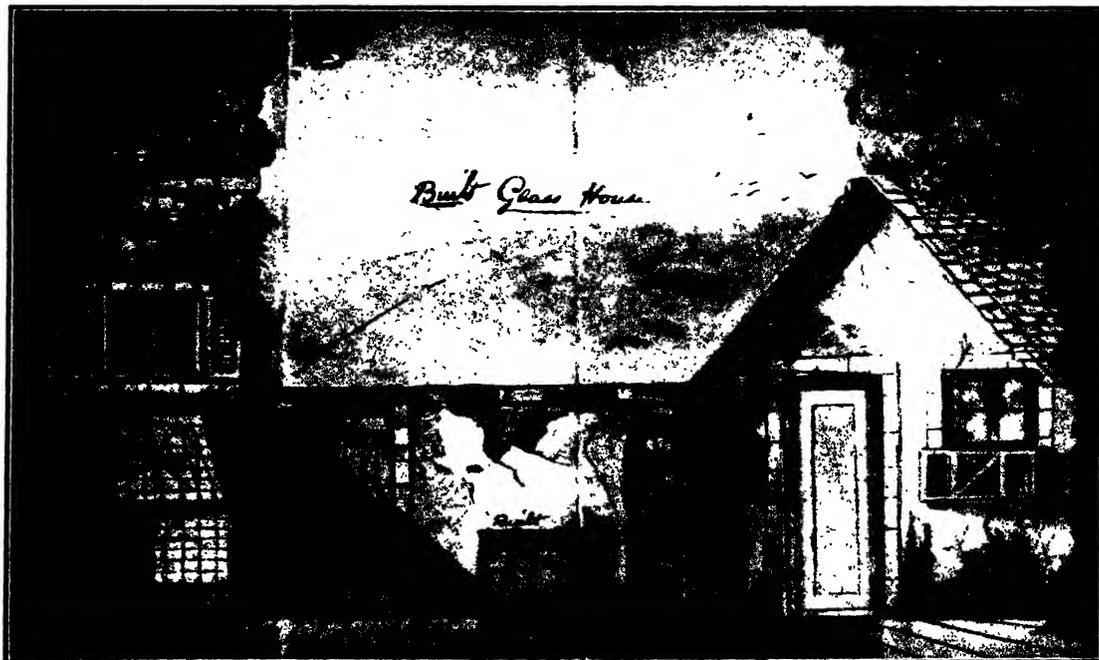


FIG. 55. SCENE FOR "DUMB BALLET"

gruesome source of her meat supply. Mrs. Lovatt takes unto herself a lover, but Sweeney, in a fit of jealousy, murders him and is, in return, betrayed by Mrs. Lovatt. The police arrive and discover Sweeney in the act of "polishing off" his dear Mrs. Lovatt, and the final scene is a court of justice, where Sweeney is sentenced to death for his misdeeds. The trap was usually placed in the centre of the stage, and needed careful understage organization in order to prevent any risk of accident to the victim, who was caught in a carpet or fell into a deep nest of straw. A simpler form of trap effect used

stage hands, and the chair returned to its former position in readiness for the next customer.

An ingenious form of trap effect that does not seem to have received the attention it deserves was that used in what was known as a "dumb ballet." This was a wordless play or sketch played by a troupe of acrobats or tumblers that always developed into a frenzied chase through concealed traps in doors, barrels or water butts, and windows, and eventually concluded with a spectacular dive through the glass top and sides of a conservatory. The illustration (Fig. 55) shows a scene from a play of this description called *Ki Ko*

Kookeeree, and is reproduced from the stage manager's scene plot, a fourfold document that bears many scars from its constant journeys through the post to whatever theatre the troupe worked the following week. A dive from the front of the stage to the back was called a "leap," a dive from back to the front was a "vamp," and a dive through the glass top and side of the conservatory was a "crash," probably so called from the noise of breaking glass that always accompanied a "crash." A trap through which a "leap" was made was never used for a "vamp" unless it was a long trap with double doors at stage level, when one door became a "leap" and the other became a "vamp."

Movements were most carefully timed, and were arranged so that there was no risk of an accidental collision whilst the act was in progress. After a "leap" the tumblers were caught with carpets or mattresses by stage hands, and on occasions when a quick return to the stage was necessary two of the stage hands made a cradle by joining hands and caught the tumbler in their arms, and after quickly spinning him round ejected him head first through the trap on to the stage again. It was a fairly dangerous business, and during the pantomime of *Baron Munchausen* Ellar, the celebrated Harlequin, was seriously injured because the men who had to hold the carpet into which he fell were not at their post when required. This incident is described at length in the *Life of Grimaldi* edited by "Boz."

The dumb ballet seems to have been a form of stage production that has escaped the notice of some stage historians, and the main records available now are reports or criticisms in old newspapers, etc., where the performers are mentioned by name. *Ki Ko Kookeeree* was staged by the Ted Lauri Company. Other troupes were the Lupino Comic Ballet Troupe, the Fred Evans Company, the Hanlon Brothers, who later took their show to Paris, the Vokes Family, and the companies of the Majiltons, Payne, Kitchen, and others. The stage manager's scene plot (Fig. 55) fortunately provides a definite clue for those pursuing this peculiar form of theatrical research. The plan of a scene that required plenty of stage room was usually forwarded in advance to the stage manager of the theatre where the company were to perform next. In this particular case the scene plot was

addressed to "A. Wood, Esq., Mechanics Music Hall, Hull." The postmark indicated that it was posted at Liverpool on 24th August, 1871. Another label was discovered underneath the Hull address. It bore the address "M. De Frece, Adelphi Theatre, Liverpool." The success of the Lauri company, one of the earliest dumb ballet troupes touring, soon brought competitors into the business, for three or four years later there were similar troupes travelling the country.

REVOLVING STAGES

The use of the revolving stage—or "revolves," as they are now termed—comes under two chief headings; first, where the revolve is used for its "effect" value, and, secondly, where it is used as a medium for scene changing. In the first case, in musical plays like *Wild Violets* or *The White Horse Inn*, the stage is moved in full view of the audience so that they see a sequence of scenes or witness a dancing number or a scene like the wood scene in the opening of the second act of *Wild Violets*, where on a steadily revolving stage the characters threaded their way through an ingenious arrangement of trees and winding paths that conveyed an illusion of natural movement that was convincing and provided a panorama-like stage picture that was almost perfect.

During the play some heavy sets were used, notably the scene showing the interior of the dormitory of the girls' school, which, when revolved, showed the exterior of the building with a balcony built strong enough to carry the weight of eight or ten girls. In the second case the use of a revolving stage makes it possible to stage plays like *Service*, where the action, rapidly passing from one short scene to another, makes it imperative that there should be no delay between the scenes. In the case of musical productions the revolves are usually set fairly well up-stage, and a deep false proscenium is used for front masking. During the production of a spectacular musical play at a London theatre the absence of effective masking allowed the occupants of the circle and balcony to witness the stage hands stacking scenery, carrying hand props. from one side of the stage to the other, and the chorus gathering for their next number, which spoilt the whole effect. Revolves used chiefly for scene changing are made as large as

possible, and are set with a small clearance down-stage. Some of the scenes that are used two, three, or even four times during the play are built directly on to the revolve and are not moved during the run of the play. Electric fittings are

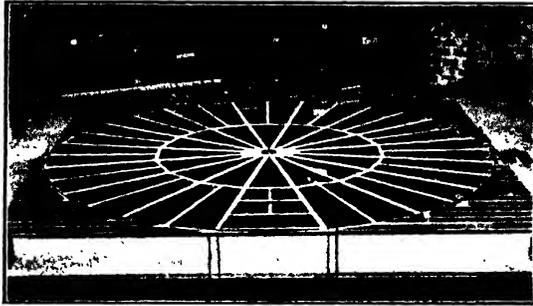


FIG. 56. REVOLVING STAGE IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION

Lift & Engineering, Ltd., London

plugged in, and the stages are fitted with an electric supply which can be rotated with the stage. The revolves are also fitted with sections that can be used for traps. In the illustration of a revolving stage in course of construction (Fig. 56), which is reproduced by courtesy of Lift and Engineering, Ltd., of London, the trap sections can be easily distinguished, whilst the trap openings in the old stage are those seen well down-stage at right and left. The illustration of the revolving stage (Fig. 57) shows a sectional revolve in course of assembly. These portable stages can be accommodated to fit almost any stage, and do not require any under-stage attachments. The revolve runs level with a false stage, which is erected around it, and the driving apparatus sometimes consists of a steel wire hawser passing round the grooved edge of the turntable and the drum of a small capstan, and is so carefully adjusted that it can be operated by one man. It is also fitted with a powerful brake that ensures perfect control, and the stage can be assembled or dismantled for travelling in about four or five hours.

The modern revolve consists of a triple stage that is capable of being revolved independently in either direction at speeds varying from a few yards a minute to twenty miles an hour. It

moves very easily, and is noiseless in action. This was not the case in the early days when managers looked upon the noise made by their stage mechanism as an added attraction. Some of the early revolving stages were rotated by cumbrous machinery driven by electricity. On the other hand, some of the smaller stages are revolved by hand, having a turntable similar in construction to those used in goods warehouses, the stage being moved by means of iron crow-bars inserted in the outer edge of the stage at an angle of forty-five degrees.

An unusual stage effect was that used in the London production of *Waltzes from Vienna*. In this play the orchestra was placed on a specially built platform that fitted into the orchestra pit, and which, at the appropriate time, was bodily lifted up to stage level, and rolled across the stage until it came to rest against the back wall of the theatre. That portion of the stage where the footlight trough should be became a flight of steps extending the full length of the stage, and up these an enormous cast made its entry into



FIG. 57. SECTIONAL STAGE IN COURSE OF ERECTION

Photo by Hull Daily Mail

what was now a magnificent ballroom set. Some expensive machinery was necessary to make this effect possible.

ILLUSIONS

The aid of a professional illusionist is often sought when stage effects of an exceptional character are required, and producers faced

with the necessity of providing something quite out of the ordinary should bear this fact in mind.

Such experiments as dream scenes seen through transparencies are well within the capabilities of the average producer, and some of the greatest plays that have ever been staged owed much of their success to this form of stage illusion.

A weird scene is shown to visitors to the Moulin Rouge, Paris, where, as part of the evening's entertainment, one can witness the unusual sight of one of the members of the party being placed in an open upright coffin and then watch the gradual process of decomposition set in. Soon all that is left is a grinning skeleton that eventually, to the great relief of the remainder of the party, resumes its normal covering and allays their apprehension as to their friend's return from beyond the beyond. A grim effect was staged in a play called *The Last Hour*, when it was produced at the Comedy Theatre. This play, one of a long series of plays dealing with the secret service, concerned the machinations of a group of secret service agents working on behalf of a foreign power that desired to obtain possession of a mysterious machine capable of dealing death by means of a ray of light. Our own gallant, but stupid, C.I.D. took a hand in the matter, and, after experiencing many frightful perils, one of which was a practical demonstration of the gentle art of garrotting as practised by means of a stout cord and a handy poker, eventually turned the tables on the foreigners, who themselves become the victims of the machine when its deadly rays were turned upon them. This takes place at the end of the play, and in order to make the scene as effective as possible Jasper Maskelyne, the famous illusionist, was called in, and he provided an illusion that enabled the audience to see two of the characters changed almost instantaneously from normal human beings into charred, featureless remains that bore little resemblance to their former state.

The professional illusionist spares no expense in supplying himself with apparatus that will stand close examination by members of the audience. Apparatus operated by electrical impulses, secret springs controlled by electromagnets, heavy iron chests secured by massive padlocks from which the performer, after being trussed and handcuffed by experts and placed in

a cabinet, releases himself and emerges free after replacing the trick hinges or "phony" rivets that are a feature of this form of apparatus, makes scrutiny by the most inquisitive not only harmless but desirable. Demonstrations of telepathy, thought reading, or second sight that seem inexplicable and make the real explanation, that of a remarkable system of prearranged signals, incredible, are of everyday occurrence; whilst illusions such as the elephant that walks through a brick wall built on the stage during the performance via a huge stage trap passing beneath it, or draped ladies who from the depths of a velvet cavern on the stage perform the evolutions known as "levitation" are becoming obsolete.

Levitation or aerial suspension was made possible by the lady wearing a complicated harness slotted to receive the shaped end of a powerful lever operated by mechanism behind the scene, and which by being raised, lowered, see-sawed or rocked made it possible to suggest that her movements were controlled by supernatural powers or were performed whilst under hypnotic control. The obedience of her body to every move of the magician's hands being due to the skill of the unseen operators and the comfortable padded harness in which the lady rested whilst being manipulated. An interesting development of this illusion showed the lady standing upon a low stool with her outstretched arms lightly resting upon two supports, to the upper end of one of which her harness was secured. First the platform upon which she stood would be removed and then one of the supports, leaving the lady defying all the laws of gravity as she performed her evolutions on the single support to which she was fastened. The mechanism of this harness was fitted with a ratchet, noiseless in operation and easy to control. The lady was always "mesmerized" before the actual levitation began, and upon being brought round at the end of the act appeared dazed and unaware of what had been taking place during her period of trance.

A VANISHING CABINET

There are occasions when a cabinet similar to those used by illusionists is required. It may be wanted for the staging of a spoof spiritualistic seance or some production of the grand guignol type, where a body, living or dead, has to disappear

mysteriously. The cabinet stands on short legs and is raised just high enough to enable the audience to see beneath it and to be convinced that the disappearance is not arranged by means of traps in the stage. It should be solidly built so that those inside who have to move may do

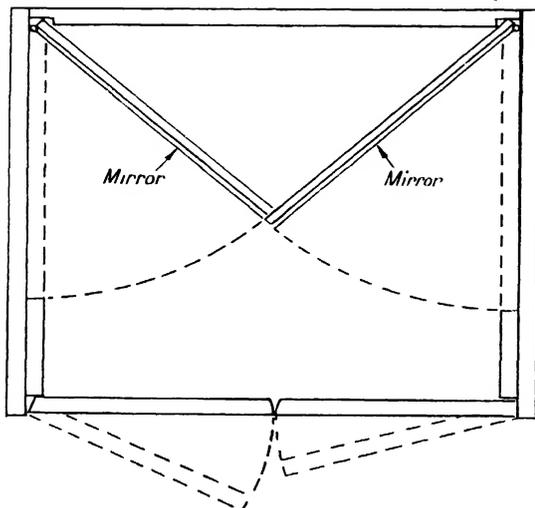


FIG. 58. PLAN OF CABINET

so without causing the cabinet to wobble whilst disappearances or changes of position take place.

If the occasion is a seance, the front may be closed by curtains through which spirits may materialize or objects be whirled over the heads of the audience by means of a telescopic stick or an ordinary fishing rod fitted with reliable joints. If the front is of wood, holes may be cut in the top for the same purpose. Bells, tambourines, luminous skulls, silk bags or shaped balloons painted to represent ectoplasm, and which, after being inflated by means of a long metal tube to one end of which they are attached, are surreptitiously introduced into the room with startling effect, are secreted in the triangular chamber of the cabinet before the seance begins and concealed again at its close. The cabinet is usually square, but it may be deeper than its width, the size of the triangular chamber being determined by the inside width of the cabinet. The principle upon which the illusion is based

is as follows. If a mirror is placed at an angle of 45 degrees between two similar walls built at right angles it will reflect the wall facing it in such a manner that, viewed from the front, the reflection of the side wall convincingly suggests the back wall which, at the moment, is actually hidden by the mirror, whilst the mirror itself merging into the picture seems to disappear.

It must be understood, however, that every portion of the interior of the cabinet must be of a uniform colour and the surface of the mirrors perfectly clean. The effect of the illusion can be heightened by fixing a decorative border round the top of the inner walls. This border, whilst not being too obtrusive, should be easily noticeable, but great care must be taken to have the border fixed evenly so that the reflections of the borders in the side walls will meet exactly when the mirrors are facing the audience. The swinging doors to which the mirrors are fixed are held in position when closed against the side of the

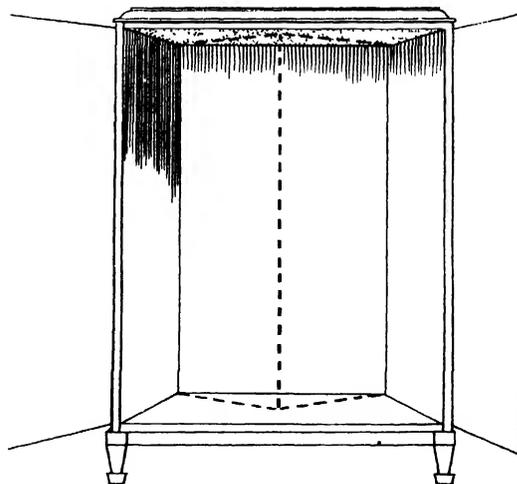


FIG. 59. FRONT VIEW OF CABINET

cabinet by two small ball catches inserted in the top rail. When a person wishes to disappear all he has to do is to enter the cabinet and immediately the front doors are safely closed to pull open the side doors, concealing himself in the triangular space behind them. When the front doors are

opened again the audience sees a cabinet that appears to be empty (Figs. 58 and 59).

KNIFE THROWING ILLUSION

A thrilling, and, at the same time, exceedingly dangerous feat that used to be frequently seen in the music halls was the tomahawk or knife-throwing act. This peculiar form of entertainment was first introduced into this country by a troupe of Chinese jugglers of both sexes who hurled real knives at a living target. A similar act staged by a man and his wife used to tour the music halls, but apart from occasional engagements with a travelling circus this act is now seldom seen. Before beginning to perform the man made it a practice to request those members of the audience who were nervous to close their eyes and ears until the act was over, and he particularly requested absolute silence during the performance of the feat, which consisted of outlining the figure of his wife, who was dressed in a closely fitting costume and flesh-coloured tights, on a solidly built blackboard against which she stood with outstretched arms. There was no trickery about the act, which was purely a matter of skill, and the tomahawks could be seen whirling through the air from the moment they left his hand until they buried themselves in the blackboard with a vicious crash. Sometimes the act was varied by changing the scene, and in place of the blackboard there was a huge tree to which the woman in the dress of an early settler was bound whilst the man appeared in the war paint and feathers of an American Indian.

This type of act in a diluted form is still to be seen and, properly staged, it is just as thrilling as the real thing, but devoid of all risk. Here is a modern version of the trick with a description of how it is arranged. The scene is usually the headquarters of a gang in some low class café in the Montmartre quarter of Paris. The chief characters are the leader of the gang, his unwilling mistress, and a rival for the lady's affections, who may be a member of the gang for whom the lady has developed a hopeless passion, or some casual visitor or tourist. The chief, noticing his mistress's coolness, soon discovers the cause and vows vengeance. This is overheard by the lady, who instantly goes to warn her friend of his peril. She misses him, for, almost as soon as she has

made her exit he makes his entry. Then follows a realistic duel with knives, the result of which is easily foreseen. Driven to bay with his back against a door, he faces the gang unflinchingly as they hurl their knives at him, missing his body almost by a miracle. The chief, who is the deadliest marksman of them all, announces that his knife is the one that shall pierce the black heart of the betrayer, and as he leans back and takes deliberate aim the girl rushes on to the stage, flings herself between the two rivals, and, sad to say, receives the hurtling knife in her bosom, where it buries itself until only the haft is visible. Slowly she sinks to the floor and a spotlight enables the audience to see an ominous trickle of blood. The gang slink away, leaving the lovers locked in a final embrace, and as she falls back dead the curtains close.

VARIATIONS

There are many variations of this plot, but the development is usually the same, and the trick, when carefully produced and accurately timed, is really thrilling. There is no danger whatever to those taking part in the play because the knives that are supposed to be thrown never leave the hands of the so-called thrower.

The thrower, standing sideways, or with his back to the audience, makes a sweeping movement with his arm as he leans back, takes deliberate aim, and then, flinging himself forward, pretends to throw the knife, but really palms it or conceals it in folds of his loosely hanging coat, which has a convenient pocket into which the knife is slipped. In one version of the play the effect of a shower of knives was supplied by two men—one handing the knives to the thrower as quickly as he could pick them from a table. Actually there were only two knives in use, but these were so cleverly manipulated that as the thrower was handed a fresh knife he actually produced the knife he had apparently just thrown and as the second man handed him another knife he in turn deftly concealed it, both movements being made simultaneously as their hands met and only one knife was seen by the audience from the time it left the table until it stuck quivering in the door. The knives were made of millboard with silver paper covered blades, and to guard against the accidental dropping

of a knife, which would have ruined the whole effect, the hafts were secured to the wrists of the actors by loops of tape. The knife that appears to strike the lady is fixed to a belt she wears by means of a spring, which, when released, allows the haft to spring upwards and outwards, and the audience, seeing the blade of the knife buried deep in her breast, believe they have actually seen the knife strike her. As she rushes on the stage she is panting and out of breath, and the quick movement of her hand to her bosom seems quite natural in the circumstances, the audience never connecting this with the release of the spring, which is really the secret of the movement. The stream or trickle of blood that is seen may be suggested by a coloured ribbon manipulated by the person who supports her after she has fallen, or by a dab of paint applied as she releases the haft of the knife. The doorway against which the victim stands whilst the knives are thudding into it is made of stout material covered with transparent gauze and painted.

This allows the man operating the knives from the back of the door to have an uninterrupted view of the stage all the time. This point is particularly important, as the success of the illusion depends upon the accurate timing or synchronization of the movements of all concerned. The hafts of the knives are securely fixed to flat strips of springy wood, or they may be fixed to strips of metal, one end of which slots into a metal holder screwed to the framework of the door. The haft end of the wood is pulled well back and held by hand, or it may be fitted with an automatic release, and simultaneously with the movement of the player on the stage the spring board, on being released, forces the haft through a slit in the canvas of the door, which is invisible to the audience, and strikes the batten of the door a resounding thwack, which the audience readily associates with the blade piercing the wood, especially when they can see the knife still quivering from the force with which it has been thrown. It is essential that the door end of the illusion should be in capable hands, and, what is more important, that any

mechanical aids are made foolproof as far as possible.

A rather unusual illusion was arranged for a play in which the audience witnessed a gruesome execution by guillotine. Before the actual event took place the knife was given two or three trial runs, and an opportunity was also taken to demonstrate to the audience that the blade was really what it appeared to be. The blade was actually made of steel—in parts—to give it the necessary impetus when dropped. That portion where the neck of the condemned man and the blade would come into contact consisted of a cut-out portion covered with tissue paper of the same colour. As the knife fell the man who was being decapitated pushed his head through a small trap concealed in what appeared to be a ledge of the guillotine whilst the executioner lifting a dummy head that had been concealed in another trap held it aloft for a moment or two before flinging it in the basket. The guillotine was placed so that any peculiarity in the construction of the machine was unnoticeable, and attendants, in the excitement of the moment when the dummy head was being exhibited, quietly and unobtrusively released the straps that held the victim, pushed him into the long basket and lessened the risk of detection that might have been incurred if the body had been allowed to remain in full view of the audience for any length of time.

A convincing stage illusion was used by Irving during the Masked Ball in *The Corsican Brothers*. The scene is the interior of the Paris Opera House, as seen from the stage of that theatre, with the seats removed for dancing. The boxes are filled with excited spectators and the dancers pack the floor below. In order to ensure that this huge set should be in correct perspective, those taking part were placed according to their size, the tallest in front and the others, including many children, were carefully "sized." Stage costumes were proportionately correct. The occupants of the most distant boxes were simply painted figures on an ordinary backcloth, which merged perfectly into the stage picture.



M. GERTRUDE PICKERSGILL.

STAGE MOVEMENT AND MIME

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AMATEUR societies to-day are so numerous and aim so high that they can no longer afford to rely upon the rough and ready methods of thirty years ago. The presentation of a play calls for two things: (1) the individual work of the players; (2) the grouping and harmonizing of the players into their stage setting by the producer.

BALANCE AND POISE

In all matters relating to stage, costume, and lighting, real progress has been made, but though the general standard of acting is steadily improving, inadequacy of movement and lack of poise still hamper many of the players.

An audience must be made to hear. Therefore players have given more attention to speech than to movement; but the art of acting depends upon the perfect co-ordination of these two, and this co-ordination can be attained only if the actor has mastered *both* arts. Let any individual—child or grown-up—have to assume a character—to walk, stand, and in every look and action *be* that character, just as clearly as to speak with its voice—and in most cases a curious stiffness descends on the performer that totally destroys his ability to express his intention, however right that may be, and very often is.

This sad divorce of word and action springs, I believe, mainly from two fallacies that are slowly dying. The first is that "Gesture" *cannot* be taught, and that, if people have learnt to move without awkwardness and to stand well, they will do so in any circumstances and, therefore, the rest is best left to the performer's inspiration. The second is that "Gesture" *can* be taught by practising a series of movements, mainly of the lips, eyes, and hands, to signify emotions.

Now both these fallacies contain a grain of truth. Those who believe that all gesture must spring from the performer's mind and feeling are right, but they have no method of ensuring that these results, which will not come unguided, will

be obtained. On the other hand, those who hold that the features and limbs can be trained to express are also right—but their methods are wrong since they do not train a performer's intelligence, but merely his imitative powers.

I want to show that Mime, rightly understood and practised, should avoid the errors of both these groups.

Until recently the word Mime conveyed to the lay mind the semi-ballet of the dancing-school or the dramatization of ballads much favoured in women's institutes. The work of the Ballets Joos, the London Mime Festivals, and the performances in London parks and theatres of actors trained under my direction did much to familiarize the public with the subject. English ballet now lays greater stress on miming and to watch Robert Helpmann is an education in itself.

To attain this end a twofold process is necessary. The body, which is the medium, must be trained to such a supple and quick muscular control that it will respond unconsciously and instantly to the mental processes of its possessor; and the imagination must be trained in the study of emotions and in the observation of human character. It is a mistake to start with a simultaneous study of the two parts of the subject. The player's attention is then divided between the purely muscular and the purely mental processes before he has control over either, and no co-ordinated performance results. They can, however, be studied side by side, and soon they merge naturally into one, while from the beginning creative work is done by the player whose instinctive desire to express thought in action is thus satisfied.

It is difficult to explain on paper the method of a training that really demands demonstration. The following description, however, will give an idea of the initial stages.

EXERCISE I

Walk a few steps at your ordinary pace in order to approach the exercise without any unnatural

stiffening; then change to a slow walk, counting six for every two steps.

Care should be taken—

1. To carry the weight forward each time.

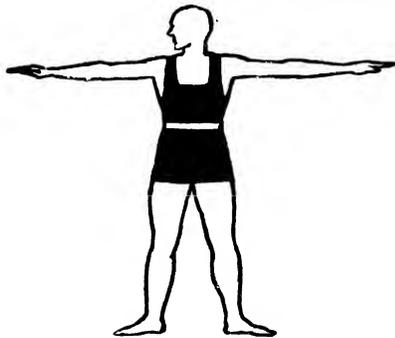


FIG. 1. CORRECT ATTITUDE—
WEIGHT CENTRALIZED

2. To keep the entire body within the vertical line (see Figs. 1, 2, and 3).



FIG. 2. INCORRECT ATTITUDE—
WEIGHT THROWN BACK

EXERCISE 2

Combine with the progressive steps a circular movement of the arms—stretch them sideways from the shoulders, palms downwards, and slowly lower them and complete the circle above the head.

It is most important that these combined movements should be rhythmical, i.e. that the legs and arms should move in consort and that the count of six should extend evenly throughout the exercise.

The second basic exercise gives the reverse poise. Practise it as in the former exercise: first, by two steps *backward*; combine with this a reverse movement of the arms, and observe the same rhythmic harmony as in the first exercise.

Though a lack of balance will not be corrected at a first practice or at many subsequent practices, it is possible at the start to do original work by extending the exercises as follows—

Focus the mind upon the growing idea of Triumph, at the same time going through the same progressive steps and arm movements as in Exercise 1. Express Fear with backward steps

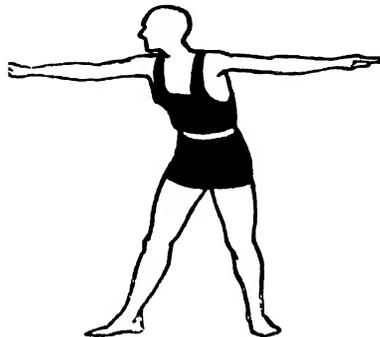


FIG. 3. INCORRECT ATTITUDE—
WEIGHT THROWN FORWARD

The effect will probably lack rhythm and symmetry, but it will result in a rough co-ordination of thought and action, produced from *within*.

The linking of dramatic expression with technical movement arouses the interest of the student and acts as an incentive to further efforts. As the body attains poise the mind gains control and the result is harmony of thought and action.

Freed from the consciousness of stiff or clumsy movements, an actor's speech becomes more flexible and he acquires an "easy" voice and bearing.

I have noticed this growth of vocal flexibility through Mime so often that I am convinced of its importance. Singers as well as actors have told me of the benefit they have derived from a training of this kind. I think it is probably the dramatic quality inherent in Mime which gives it a superiority over *purely* physical or *purely* lyrical movement.

ARMS AND HANDS

How often one hears the criticism levelled against some young amateur: "Too many gestures"; "Fussy hand movements"; "Poking elbows." All too true! The despairing producer, having to cope with his material and present a show within a limited period, usually takes pardonable refuge in the admonition: "Keep your hands still," or suggests some conventional position such as "quietly folded" or "resting on the hips," according to the character represented.

But that very restlessness springs from the urge to be expressive, and should be encouraged and directed in all ambitious actors who are willing to learn.

The training of all parts of the body must be undertaken in order to make it controlled, supple, and responsive. Side by side with this muscular and technical training must go the growth of the imagination, which provides the material to be expressed. It is of the first importance that these two sides of the training be correlated at every step, or the main object may be missed. A further reason for this correlation of body and mind is that it ensures the interest of the player, who is a creative artist, even while he is a technical workman.

Gesture is an expression of the whole body, which is what Shakespeare means when he speaks of "the gesture sad" of the English soldiers before Agincourt; but the arms and hands are such important factors that my next series of exercises will deal with them.

HAND AND ARM EXERCISES

1. *Stretch the arms sideways from the shoulders and alternately stretch and clench first the fingers and then the hands.*

2. *Drop the hands from the wrist and raise slowly.*

3. *Curve the forearms in a circular movement in alternate directions.*

4. *Bend the forearms till the fingers touch the chest and stretch back to the extended position. Thus*



N.B. Keep the upper arms still in Exercises 3 and 4.

5. *Swing the arms in circular windmill fashion from the shoulder, both backwards and forwards; these movements make for flexibility of the hands and arms.*

For further flexibility shake the hands vigorously, the arms slightly extended and the palms towards the body.

PROPORTION EXERCISES FOR THE HANDS AND FEET

1. *Extend both hands, palms upwards, from the wrist slightly towards the left—at the same time take a short step in the same direction. Repeat the action towards the right.*

2. *Now extend the hands at the half-arm length with a correspondingly longer step, first in one direction and then in the other. Lastly, extend the arms full length with a still longer step.*

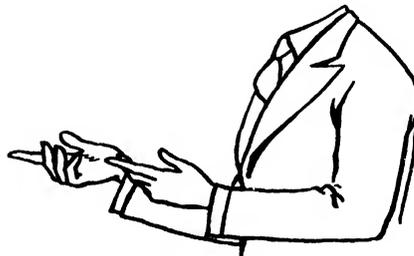


FIG. 4. WRIST

Focus the attention on—

(a) The curve of the arms, which should be circular from the chest outwards—this should be observed in even the smallest movement.

(b) Work from a relaxed shoulder down through the arm to a taut hand where the strength of the gesture lies. It will be found that beginners almost always stiffen the shoulders and work with limp hands.

Now to give these movements meaning—

Make a Request with hands, strengthen it, and again intensify it. Here let the player focus on the Sincerity of the Intention alone. See Figs. 4, 5, and 6.

A similar series of movements with palms downwards and backward steps can be practised, and application of the thought made in a series of Denials gradually intensified.

The next step is most interesting.

STAGE MOVEMENT

The players face each other in pairs. A and B work together. A makes a request and B refuses it. A intensifies the request, B intensifies the refusal. This may be done first to counts, and afterwards at the players' own time. A fresh point is gained by each method. Carried out *to counts*, the exercise makes for Precision of Movement and Proportion of Denials to Request. When it is carried out *spontaneously*, the players focus on each other's minds and proportion their

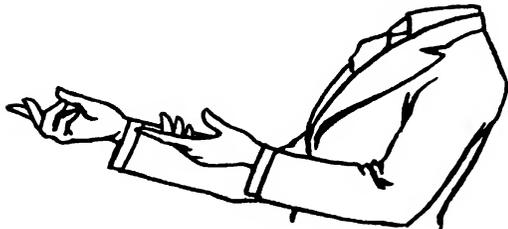


FIG. 5. HALF ARM

actions and counteractions to one another. This reciprocity of action advances the work from single to dual performance, and develops Team Feeling.

This idea can be extended through a series of antagonistic emotions expressed in action; for example, the beckoning of a Faun and the Flight of a Nymph; the oppositions of Anger and Fear (see Fig. 7); Teasing and Sulking; Love and Hatred; Accusation and Guilt. All these can

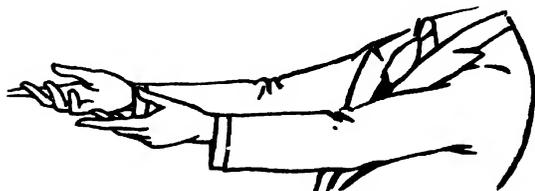


FIG. 6. FULL ARM

be carried out in a series of movements, which, while developing balance and proportion, also encourage meaning and grace.

Eventually, as gestures acquire greater significance and the proportions grow more sensitive, interplay, i.e. the reaction of one person to the suggestion of another, becomes so skilled as to be veritably as quick as thought. This is a most im-

THEATRE AND STAGE

portant factor in dramatic training, and I have never known a student fail to benefit in dramatic team work by a course in Mime. A former



FIG. 7. FEAR—ANGER

student who after her training did a great deal of production told me that of all the subjects her training comprised Mime had been the most valuable.

GROUPS AND PROGRESSIONS

The making of groups combines individuality with mass expressions. The best way to ensure



FIG. 8. GROUP ILLUSTRATING FEAR

Note triangular shape into which Fear group naturally falls

that this is rightly carried out is to call for the whole group of players standing semi-circlewise to give an expression—say of Fear (in passing let me urge everyone to start with big emotions—Anger, Joy, Adoration, Fear, etc., as the broad effects must precede the more subtle ones). Then select, say, four or six players, and form these into a group (see Fig. 8).

ACTION MIMES AND SHORT SKETCHES

I have stated that the study of the Big Elemental Emotions, Fear, Joy, etc., should precede that of the more subtle and complex. Movement should also follow this rule, as the danger with beginners is to fall into a habit of making small, poking, and ineffectual gestures.

A series of gestures such as the following is recommended—

Stretch the arms sideways from the shoulder, palms upward, and take a lunging step forward. Swing the arms backward, with palms down and step backward. Repeat these movements with a sideways turn of the trunk first one way and then the other.

Repeat the first movement, taking a step and kneeling first on one knee and then on the other.

Note that all these actions can be carried out in progression as well as from a static position, and are better so performed since they ensure a greater freedom of movement and rhythm, and are a help in checking the tendency to dwarf the movements.

These exercises can be followed by some characteristically Greek actions, for example, the carrying of a spear; of a sword and shield; of a water-pot; of bow and arrows; of a votive offering.

The following points must be carefully observed—

1. All gestures must be practised with *both* arms and feet so that all limbs function equally.

2. The *tempo* and style of walk must in every case fit the action; for example, a shorter walk for one carrying a water-pot than for one swinging along with a sword and shield.

The usefulness of this work can often be proved later when actors in a play have to walk about wearing unfamiliar garments and accoutrements. A man equipped as a noble Greek warrior will not slouch about if he has acquired the habit of feeling himself to be a warrior when practising in ordinary dress. It may be argued that the case is altered completely when he feels the actual weight of the objects, but experience has shown me that it is far less likely to be so with one who has successfully mimed the action, since he has not only mastered at least the poise and method of carrying the objects, but gauged

their weight to some extent, for it is part of the function of miming to help the imagination to grasp and convey the ideas of weight, distance, etc.

All "Period" gesture and manners, both for Mimes and plays, can be effectively studied in this progressive fashion. Let the actors imagine themselves clad in Early British costumes (*King Lear*



TAKING A PHOTO WITH "MIMLED" CAMERA

or the Mime of *The Wife of Bath's Tale*) and walk around, stopping for occasional greetings; then change to the 16th century (*Much Ado About Nothing* or *Twelfth Night*) to the ornate period of Charles II (original Mime based on the picture *When Did You Last See Your Father?*); to a Roman Senate (*Julius Caesar*); to an assembly of Jane Austen's characters (*Pride and Prejudice*); to a Dickens ball (*Pickwick Papers*). In this way the reading of letters and scrolls, use of fans and weapons, snuff-taking, bowing, and countless other actions will be practised; familiarity with costumes and how they influence gait and gesture will be gained; so, too, will the skill required in balancing headgear and wearing cloaks and drapes—all will develop; thus are Period crowds trained.

Although all Mime is the expression of thought in action it is necessary to differentiate in training between Mimes which focus the mind on *emotional* expression and those in which the *doing* of things is the main object. The latter type is called Action Mime, and is introduced quite soon

in simple forms. Such actions as opening a door, lifting an empty bucket or one filled with water, winding a watch, ringing a bell, and opening an umbrella (the objects being, of course, purely imaginary) are all interesting and useful problems.

It will often be found that people who have power of emotional expression are uncertain when they have to carry out the simplest action



FENCING (THRUST AND PARRY) WITH "MIMED" FOILS

without implements; for these, "Action" Mime is the best type of work. On the other hand, people who are at first self-conscious in expressing emotion foreign to everyday experience show marked ability in Action Mime. They have a good sense of touch and accurate and observant brains, and the fact of showing skill in this part of the work produces a sense of poise and satisfaction, and gradually leads to the awakening of more subtle imaginative power.

Thumb-nail sketches are more elaborate mimes involving a series of actions. For example, "a washing day" suggests filling vessels with water, rubbing garments, rinsing, wringing, mangling, pegging out, the whole concluding with the ironing of the garments. The actions should be made quite clear, that is they should be *detailed*, and not merely *suggested*, as in dancing Mime or in the sketchy way that often marks the so-called "action songs." The ability to convey the impression of an action swiftly and to fit it into the rhythm of a song is acquired only after careful and patient practice. It is one part of the subject, as will be shown later in the treatment of Nursery Rhymes and Folk Songs.

Almost any simple task that is familiar to the player can be made the subject of an Action Mime. It is good to let each one choose a subject and then to make the Mime clear to the others. This encourages observation on both sides, for the players will take great pains to find out exactly how things are done—while the watchers are keen to observe and criticize.

Thumb-nail sketches such as these afford amusing and interesting entertainment, while they are, at the same time, excellent training in observation and accuracy. A policeman, a busman, a charwoman, a shop assistant, a typist are all familiar studies; and I shall always retain a vivid impression of a pavement artist, minus a left arm, given by a clever student. It was absolutely true to life.

REAL AND IMAGINARY PROPERTIES

I am often asked whether real properties should be used in a Mime, or whether everything should be left to the imagination. This depends upon the type of Mime and the distance between the actors and the audience.

A true actor should be able to mime everything and to suggest objects so clearly that one really sees them. I have noticed that even in Mimes where real objects were largely used any incident of the play in which the actor substituted his powers of imaginative creation, and made one see something not really visible, caused a more spontaneous response from the audience. An example occurs to me in which an actor by a deft suggestion of an imaginary snuff-box created one of the most vivid impressions in the play and excited an instant recognition from the audience.

There is a further point to be gained by discarding real properties. The actors are absolutely sincere and lose all self-consciousness; whereas, in the majority of cases where real properties are employed, some of this intense concentration is lost and a certain amount of nervousness, or, in some cases, a rather elaborate posing, takes its place.

On the other hand, there are times when a property is desirable. *The Bandbox* (one of my light musical Mimes) concerns a Victorian elopement in which the "title" plays such an important part that it is essential to use a real old-fashioned oval bandbox.

In *Our Lady's Tumbler*, Gabriel's lily, the bird poised on the hand of Saint Francis, and the angels' trumpets, are all part of the static picture and the miraculous action.

Ballet, so closely akin to the Mime, affords similar examples of the same economical use of properties. In outdoor performances a few real properties are desirable.

EMOTIONAL MIMES

I stressed in the preceding section the importance of arms and hands in "action" Mimes, i.e. in all manipulative work—and at the same time insisted that the whole body must co-ordinate in harmony. Such actions as packing a parcel, washing clothes, sharpening a pencil, etc., belong to the matter-of-fact, logical side of thought, and do not necessarily stir the emotions. Note, however, how quickly they can do so: if the wrapper of the parcel is inadequate, if the water scalds the fingers, or the penknife slips and cuts, a whole gamut of emotions will quickly surge into the face, for it is there that emotion is chiefly registered, through the eyes ("the windows of the soul") and the mouth (the seat of more sensual reactions). People are usually self-conscious about expressing emotion, and it is, therefore, best to appear to take little notice of them when they are training. Suggest a series of fundamental emotions and do not expect much response at first. It is astonishing how soon people lose their fears, and faces become truthful reflexes of the mind and heart.

After a study of broad emotions, Joy, Fear, etc., proceed to the more subtle ones. A few examples will suffice.

Having expressed Joy, ask for expressions of Pleasure, Bliss, Ecstasy, and *then* (not before the exercise) get the players to discuss the nature of these and differentiate them.

Follow the same method with other groups of emotions. For example: After expressing Fear attempt Apprehension, Horror, Terror, and analyse and differentiate in the same way as in the former group. Next, let the players work through a series of subtle emotions. For example, from Apprehension to Fear; from Fear to Relief; from Amusement to Silent Laughter; from Dislike to Hatred.

Players should always work these exercises at

their own time, taking no notice of others. Studies of this kind promote thinking, concentration of mind, and the sincere expression of emotion from *within*.

I hope most sincerely that players will in future study this subject of silent expression in groups and so eliminate that unnatural and terrible performance known as "putting in suitable gestures." Such effects were laid on from the outside as a sort of decoration, and had as a rule no natural significance whatever. The practice, too, of studying in front of a looking-glass is almost as evil. In the absence of a spectator, this may be useful to enable any one to correct a bad posture, but as an aid to significant facial expression and bodily gesture what can it do? The thought in the mind must be "How do I look?" "Is this right?" and that will at once change the expression to one of curiosity.

This part of the work is most useful in building up crowds, whether in a Mime or in a written play.

Tell the players that bad news has just been brought by a messenger entering from the right (this gives them a focus), and let them express their reactions—

First, of a single emotion—Fear or Grief.

Secondly, of any emotion, according to the character that each one chooses to represent. It is always best to urge every individual in a crowd to imagine himself a real character—a friend or an enemy, a son, the Prime Minister, and so on. Crowds produced in this way are full of vitality and individuality of expression.

Group work studied in this way will do much to dispel the prevalent belief that only star actors are noticed and that crowds don't matter. It is, unfortunately, true that a large number of people look only at the star, but there are always some whose discerning eye will mark talent even in a crowd. I remember once noticing a very small actress in a very big crowd lining Caesar's fateful route to the Capitol. To me she was as important a part of the drama as any of the conspirators, yet she in no way detracted from Caesar himself nor did she "steal the thunder" of the soothsayer. What a wonderful example of individual and collective mob fury the crowd at Oberammergau afforded working up to the shout of "Barabbas!"

Crowd work in mimed ballads and prose tales, choruses in musical comedies, Shakespeare's

many characteristic mobs, and the hundreds who appear in pageants can be transformed from a set of rather disgruntled dummies to a pulsing background of human factors essential to the play.

The next step is to suggest an outline story that involves action and emotion.

For example, *A*, An act of revenge and its

to devote three parts of their attention to the up-stage wall!

Secondly, imaginary doors, windows, and articles of furniture may not change their places during the Mime! Therefore, the player must remember exactly where they are, and to do so trains the mind to be accurate. Inexperienced



FEAR

TERROR
Note the eyesHORROR
Note the mouth

result on the perpetrator; or *B*, Expectation and Realization.

Leave the players to work out their own stories; they will be most interesting in many cases, and it will be found that several interpretations are possible. A child climbing up to the store-room shelves in the hope of finding jam only to dip its finger in a pot of soft soap is a humorous rendering of *B*; while the story of a mother happily preparing a tea for her child only to hear from an unseen messenger that it has been killed is a tragic rendering of it, which I remember was poignantly portrayed by a young girl whose emotional work had, in the early stages, been poor.

In working out a Mime such as I have suggested a player will learn a great many useful things, and increase his power of emotional expression and his accuracy.

First of all, he has to "set the Mime," i.e. place the scene before us, and to do this properly certain things must be borne in mind. All the actions must be clear to the onlooker. This means that the player must face his audience, and so place his unseen people and objects that he never turns completely up-stage unless it be to open an imaginary door or window. This seems a simple thing, but it is the invariable practice of beginners

players often walk through tables, take things out of drawers they have already closed, drop cups of tea to shake hands with the new arrival, and throw a ball from a clenched fist.

Thirdly, since any imaginary people introduced into the Mime can be seen only through the mind of the player, it follows that *he* must never lose his mental vision of them: the spectators will see only his mental images and their reactions upon him. How clearly an unseen person can thus be conveyed to the mind is only to be appreciated by those who have really studied Mime or watched good Mime. The vivid mentality of Ruth Draper, for example, can people an empty stage as clearly as if the creations of her brain had a real flesh-and-blood existence.

In learning to bring characters to life in this way a player acquires an almost unbelievable power of imagination and concentration. He has to see his imaginary people from various angles, at close quarters or far off, and to do this means that he must, through the power of his mind, convey these impressions to his audience. What skilled eye-work this means! Further, he must show his own reaction towards the other "person," and sometimes even become a spectator of two

or more imaginary players, show what they are doing, or how he regards them, etc. In this way he becomes inventive, learns something of the psychology of human emotions, acquires great skill in facial play, and loses self-consciousness in peopling his stage.

Before closing this section it may be useful to point out a way in which the study of silent emotions may help a young and inexperienced actor or actress playing, let us say, Richard II or Juliet. I am speaking here particularly to the amateur for as a rule no unseasoned professional is 'flown so high' though I regret to say it happens now and then. Let the actor or actress in question take an important speech and say and act it silently—mime it, in fact—relying only on facial expression and gesture. When the speech is again uttered I dare wager that it will have come to life and that the speaker's mind will be enriched. It is a hard exercise and usually an unpalatable one—particularly if the actor is a little in love with his own voice—but he will reap the reward.

The "Potion" scene (*Romeo and Juliet*); Clarence's dream (*Richard III*); Jaques's description of the seven ages of man (*As You Like It*); and Richard II's soliloquy on the fate of kings are suitable speeches for this experiment.

ACTIONS AND EMOTIONS

I have made suggestions for the treatment of Solo Mimes, first as Thumb-nail Sketches in which the character presents a personal study in dumb show; secondly, as stories in which the player peoples his stage with imaginary characters. I will now work out an example of such Mimes, embodying the hints given in the previous articles. Take "A Flight from Justice," interpreted by a solo player as a piece of *Serious Drama*.

SCENE. A Prison Cell, with its four walls and window, as shown in the illustration (Fig. 9).

The convict is planning an escape. He paces his cell, running his hands along the imaginary four walls (this conveys the *size* and *shape* of his cell). He then listens for steps; his facial expression and the movements of his eyes will convey the sense of a *corridor* outside and fix the *door* in the spectators' mind. Next he takes an imaginary file, which he has managed to conceal under a loose stone, and with this he cautiously files at the barred window. This fixes the *window*, and

the whole scene should now be plain to the spectator. So far the story has been mainly an action Mime, but the personality of the convict is being developed and projected all the time by his stealthy movements, hunted expression, etc. The convict now succeeds in wrenching out the imaginary bar and awaits the entry of the warder. His expectant attitude tells us he is coming. We see "the door open," and with a swift move-

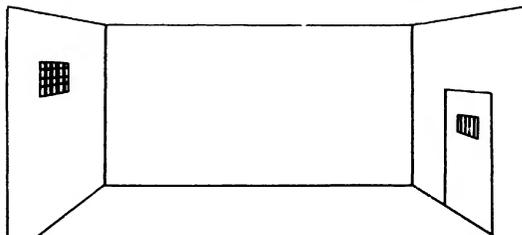


FIG. 9

ment the convict strikes the warder with the bar and knocks him senseless. He then closes the door and proceeds to dress himself in the warder's clothes. He peeps cautiously out and finding the coast clear makes good his escape.

It will be seen that this Mime combines a series of difficult actions with a number of emotions. Filing the bar, stunning the warder, changing the clothes, opening and shutting the door, are all actions that demand observation, memory, and clearness of execution. Stealth, Fear, Hatred, dogged Strength, and Obstinacy, Nervousness, Scorn, Triumph, Remorse, are all emotions that might enter into the interpretation. "A Flight from Justice." *Humorous version*.

Here the player is an urchin running along a street in mid-winter. Snow is on the ground. Note that he must convey the idea of *youth*, *mischief*, and the fact that it is *cold*. He proceeds to make snowballs and piles them ready for throwing (an action Mime). He then looks about and throws them at a schoolfellow and receives one back in return; a mis-directed ball evidently hits an old gentleman who turns and sees him. The urchin endeavours to shuffle away the remaining snowballs. Note that all this is conveyed to the audience mainly by the player's facial expression, glances in different directions,

STAGE MOVEMENT

and so on. He runs away, slips down, and as he gets up is caught by the outraged gentleman and marched off.

This Mime, like the previous one, combines action and emotion (in this case of a lighter kind).

NOTE. These Mimes might have introduced a second player, but they are admirable Solo Sketches, and lose in skill if they are otherwise performed, because one actor has the lion's share of the work.

MIMES PERFORMED BY TWO PLAYERS

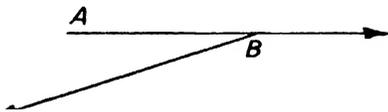
In the following sketches (both the original work of students) the action is evenly distributed between the two players, and a very amusing scene results in each case.

"A Visit To 'The Hairdresser's.'" A lady comes to have her hair "permed." The assistant is much intrigued by something in the customer's magazine and her attention wanders more and more from her job. Result: a frizzled head, an irate customer, and an abject assistant.

"A Medieval Romance." A damsel at the top of a high tower scans the landscape for the approach of her lover. She sights him, in the distance, riding towards her, and begins to descend the spiral staircase. Half-way down she trips over her train and has to limp the rest of the way. Meanwhile, the knight has spurred his horse on, but arriving at the gateway he sees no sign of the lady at the window, door, or gateway. Believing her faithless, he gallops away, and the damsel is left lamenting. Treated in burlesque fashion this is very funny.

These are really miniature plays, and many of the principles of stage technique can be more easily taught through this medium without the added burden of the spoken word.

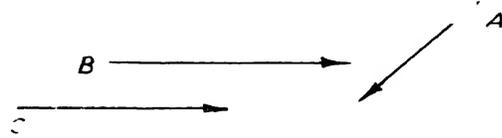
Giving and Taking. When a player crosses another the latter must balance the stage by a slight adjustment of position.



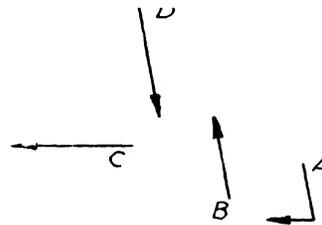
A whole series of moves of this kind can be practised, first with two people, and finally with a well-filled stage. In the figure given above we

THEATRE AND STAGE

have an example of a simple movement, but if *B* were to meet *C* and to turn back with him towards *A* the relative adjustment would go another stage.



D, entering from Up-stage Right, would cause another possible sorting of positions thus—



This continual balancing of positions demands a complete control over poise, so that the reversal of weight and swing of the body is neat and accurate. If a few ideas be suggested, for example, *B* says to *A*, "I must go," and starts to leave the stage, meets *C* entering to make some inquiry relative to *D*, and turns back with him, and so forth, the movements will soon be made more easily, and the players will learn to make natural stage pictures and to avoid the fault of masking others.

Breaking up Groups. This exercise helps to cure the tendency to form lines and semi-circles at the back of the stage. Divide the players into four groups, A, B, C, D—three or four to a group. Let one of group A walk up to group B and mime some message which sends a member of that group to break up group C. C breaks up D, and finally a member of the fourth group can summon all the players round him. Note that the one who enters the fresh group must do so from the front and not sneak up at the back; also that each entry causes a re-shuffling of the positions. Many variations can be played upon this theme. For instance, the news can be urgent, and the messengers run from group to group; it can be

sad, gay, sinister, thus causing various reactions in the players.

Since there are no "spoken" words, but only concepts formed in the minds of the actors, it follows that *cueing* is a matter of far more difficulty. A Mime is a mixture of expressed emotions, actions, and a certain number of words formed in the mind of one player and conveyed to another by certain *signs*.

The timing of entrances has to be arranged, as there is no sound, and it is best to settle upon some action on the part of a player on the stage; for example, when *A* (on the stage) picks up the *second* apple or opens the *second* letter, *B* enters.

Through the medium of such little sketches as these, players learn to work together as a team, responding to the ideas suggested by each other, and they also learn to sustain the subordinate role of spectator and to project the character—a thing that amateur players often fail to do in a spoken play. They find it so difficult to act when not speaking that they often destroy the meaning of a scene by failure to contribute their share. It is easy after such practice to work up a massed scene such as a Procession attended by a crowd; a Market, a Court scene. If these are set in some special period, say the eighteenth century, or in a foreign country (the East), they need a special study of correct bearing and gesture, which is best taken before attempting the Mime.

WORD-MIMES

Miming is silent acting, and has this advantage over speech—it can convey concepts direct from brain to brain without the intermediary of words. Yet so used are we to thinking of things under the cloak of words that even in an emotional Mime the intention often shapes itself unconsciously as a *word* in the mind both of the performer and the watcher. We interpret to one another in words, and they are the means by which we set up communication *between two other people*.

An illustration will make the meaning clearer. *A* has suggested an emotion (say joy) in mime to *B*. *B*, wishing to describe it to *C*, may suggest it in the *same* way, but is more likely to translate the emotion in his own mind as the word

"joy," and, secondly, to convey this in *his own way* to *C* (the third person).

We have become so dependent on verbal expression that the language of pantomime has gradually been lost to us. It is only when two people are face to face with a situation in which there is no common tongue that language reveals itself as a convention of men, and human beings fall back on the older universal "language" of pantomime.

Take the case of a native of some remote African tribe and a Welshman, entirely ignorant of each other's language, placed in situations where they wish to convey the ideas of Hunger, Fear, Relief, and the acts of Giving and Taking. They would rely on the language of signs common to both—to the human race.

Again, if two people are separated by too great a distance for speech to carry they make "signs," as we say, to each other. It is often possible to convey meanings to the deaf by signs. Such primitive suggestions as eat, drink, sleep, run, yes, no, have a universal language of signs, though the word concepts will vary with the individuals who portray or receive them.

There is, however, great value in Word-Mimes proper, as I will try to show. By a Word-Mime is meant the interpretation of certain definite words. Sometimes they are expressed by a slight change of facial expression, sometimes by a movement of the hands or by some other bodily action.

The language of gesture, being elemental, precedes the language of words, even of half-articulated speech. Suppose anyone walking along a cliff sees another pedestrian suddenly stumble and disappear. The order in which the watcher will register the effect will be—

(a) In the face.

(b) By some bodily movement. Here note that a tightening of the muscles is restricted or negative *movement*. He is horror-stricken.

(c) Possibly some form of speech—a smothered cry, for instance.

This is the *natural* order (it is the order in any emotional stress), and should always be the order in any *conscious* performance, i.e. in Drama.

Perception. Facial Reaction (facial expression).

Bodily Reaction (commonly called gesture).

Words.

When this order is not observed—if, for example, words come first, and are followed by a gesture—the effect is unnatural (for example, Clown in the pantomime gets some of his best effects and creates his laughs by this putting of the “cart before the horse”), and is the result either of nervousness, which inhibits the freedom of expression, or of false training, which endeavours to suggest suitable gestures from the outside instead of inducing them from within.

I suggest the following method as a training in Word-Mime—

Give the Players simple words: Yes. No. Please. Then phrases: Come here. Go away. Take my arm. So high! What a weight! Then give them phrases involving the technique of conversing with someone about some object, for example, “Look!” (meaning *you* look). Go out there. Pick that flower. Allow me to introduce you to my friend.

In all these cases let both the person addressed and the person or the object indicated be *imaginary*.

The glance and the hand should always travel from the person addressed to the *object*, and while the hand (as the indicator) remains pointing towards the *latter*, the glance returns to hold the answering glance of the person addressed.

All this happens in a second of time, but it is important that the actions should be quite accurate, and it will be found that in a large number of cases people keep both hand and glance fixed on the object so that the person addressed is left in isolation. This important piece of technique is best taught through the medium of Word-Mimes.

It is not possible to mime *all* words, but the following may be found useful—

Words that signify an action: walk—sleep—run, etc., can be shown in the present tense, but not in the past or future. The person performing the action can be indicated (within limits). The pronouns I, we, you (singular or plural), he, she, and they (but without indication of sex, except by conventional signs such as those the *Dell'Arte* players used, or those invented by present-day mimers, which are so clear as to be unmistakable). This and that, these and those, can be indicated by distinction of space, and are differentiated from “here and there” by the type of hand movement. Numbers can be indicated by movements of the fingers, multiples of ten by reiteration with all the fingers widely expanded. Many *nouns* can be indicated according to the character of the objects they connote; for example, “King” by suggesting a crowned head.

It will be found that where things can be indicated and carefully differentiated from other similar objects by shape and size, they can usually be mimed, but colours cannot be conveyed. Thus *adjectives* of colour are excluded, but a few adjectives indicating size, age, motion, etc., can be shown in a manner recognizable by all.

Interjections such as Oh! Really! are expressive, and it is good training to suggest these in various ways and to note how players will interpret the inflexions of the voice. For example, “Oh!” can express a sudden stab of pain; great pleasure; disappointment; disapproval; eager expectation, etc.

“Really!” could mean “Is that so?”; “It is so” could convey an impression of scorn, delight, and so on.

Prepositions are included in other words: to him; to there; and so have no significance in themselves, and conjunctions, with the exception of “but,” have little significance.

To sum up: most verbs, many nouns, and pronouns, interjections, and a few adjectives and adverbs can all be mimed. It is essential that the following points be carefully observed in Word-Mimes—

The hands, which are all-important, must be widely opened and the fingers supple and well-played—never closed. Beginners tend to keep the fingers tightly locked and the hand half-closed. Vigorous exercises, as suggested earlier, will loosen the joints, but the rigidity springs mainly from inhibition, which only the gradual loss of self-consciousness can cure.

Two rules, which are a contradiction of normal dramatic technique, must be observed.

A: The hand nearer the audience (and not the up-stage hand) should be used.

B: The back (and not the palm) should be towards the audience.

Both these rules spring from the need to make spectators instantly aware of the gesture. The back of the hand is more arresting and the nearer the better—hence the use of the down-stage hand.

The interpretation must be clear and well timed—in fact the actions are neat and accurate as the play of the foils. The value of this part of timing lies in the need for accuracy and precision, the sharpening of the wits, and the neat picking up of cues.

Next give whole sentences. For example

- (a) Will you go for a walk with me?
- (b) Please give me your fan.
- (c) Is this pen yours? It is not mine.
- (d) I have three.

To analyse the actions involved in the *first* of the four sentences above: "Will you"—the right hand would point to the person addressed, the face expressing a request; "go for a walk"—the mime would advance two paces towards the person addressed, still looking at him; "with me?"—he would point towards himself, still looking at the one addressed.

It will be seen from the detailed suggestions here given that precise, quick, and nimble movements are essential. From this point it is an easy transition to the miming of Nursery Rhymes.

Simple Simon and the Pieman is very good exercise for this type, as it introduces into an Action Mime a short but definite conversation. The interpretation of *Simple Simon and the Pieman* affords scope for characterization, and the meeting of the two, the Pieman's indication of his wares, and Simple Simon's greedy anticipations, constitute the introduction.

Then comes the Word-Mime combined with action. Simple Simon: "Let me taste your ware."

- (1) Let me—indicates self, looking at Pieman.
 - (2) taste—points to mouth or rubs stomach.
 - (3) your ware—points to tray of pies.
- Pieman: "Show me first your penny."

(1) Show me first—the Pieman with a commanding finger points to Simon, then to himself.

(2) your penny—it is impossible to give the value of the coin. The Pieman pours supposed coins through the right fingers and thumb into the left palm and then holds up one finger.

Simon: "Sir, I haven't any."

This is best indicated by Simple Simon's pulling out first one and then the other empty pocket.

THE MIMED FOLK SONG AND BALLAD

From Word Mimes of a simple description it is an easy transition to Mimed Folk Songs

and Ballads. These provide most suitable material for miming as they combine narrative and dramatic elements. As a preliminary to the ballad proper, I have always found it good to start with the miming of a Nursery Rhyme or Folk Song, which is best sung or spoken by the narrator and acted in dumb show by the players. One or two hints will be useful to producers.

Natural as it may be for the mimers to sing, it is better if they do not, as they really distract their own minds instead of concentrating on acting the story.

Where a choice of gestures is possible, one must be decided upon (by popular vote, if preferred) and all should adhere to it, as in Mimes of this description if the players vary one from another the symmetry of the picture is destroyed. It may seem that such a conventionality would tend to destroy the spontaneity and turn the players into automata, but it does not. Each individuality finds expression without any sense of restriction.

Each player should learn to hold his poise and gesture during the action of his partner. This, again, does not entail stiffness.

Thus definite, economical, and precise timing is learnt, and these points will be applied later in the more difficult ballads. Time thus spent is not wasted, for besides their technical value these pieces make charming little performances. Take, for example, "*Where are you going to, my pretty maid?*"

Let the players stand in two lines facing the audience. The lilt of the first line can be sung as these two lines advance two steps towards each other—boys starting with the right foot, girls with the left, bowing on the last four notes of the line. The boys' bow is an elaborate one, the girls' a bob-curtsey.

1ST VERSE

"*Where are you going to, my pretty maid?*"

Boy extends right hand towards partner.

"*Where are you going to, my pretty maid?*"

Boy keeps face turned towards partner; indicates direction with his left hand.

While boy keeps this position, girl swings lightly *inwards* and *outwards*, at the same time swinging her imaginary milk pail to the lilt.

STAGE MOVEMENT

*"I'm going a-milking, Sir, she said, Sir, she said,
said, Sir, she said,
I'm going a-milking, Sir, she said."*

On the word "a-milking" (last time) she drops a curtsy and recovers position by the end of the line.



FIG. 10. "WHAT IS YOUR FORTUNE, MY PRETTY MAID?"

2ND VERSE

Boy indicates in mime on words in capitals—

"May I come with you, my pretty maid?"

On repetition of the phrase he crooks his right arm towards the girl.

N.B. This action should occupy the length of the line. He holds the position during the second half of the verse,

"Oh yes, if you please, kind Sir, she said,"

while the girl swings in rhythm as in the first verse, putting down imaginary pail on "*Sir, she said, Sir, she said,*" and taking boy's arm on "*Oh yes, if you please, kind Sir, she said.*"

(During the lilting of one line the couples take four steps, first couple to right, second to left, and so on.)

(As VERSE 3, "*What is your Father, my pretty maid?*" does not lend itself to miming, it may be omitted.)

4TH VERSE

"What is your fortune, my pretty maid?"
(See Fig. 10).

The boy counts imaginary money into left

THEATRE AND STAGE

palm (a conventional miming gesture), and on repetition of the words indicates a query with open palm of right hand to girl.

"My face is my fortune, Sir, she said."

Girl indicates beauty by describing a circle round her face (conventional gesture).

On repetition of the line she swings as in previous verse. All this time the boy maintains his gesture.

5TH VERSE

"Then I cannot MARRY you, my pretty maid."

(See Fig. 11).

Boy with index finger of right hand points to marriage finger on left hand. On repetition of the line he makes gesture of refusal with right hand.

"Nobody asked you, Sir, she said."

While boy maintains the gesture the girl turns her head away lightly from him, swinging to the lilt as in previous verses.

After this simple study rather more elaborate Folk Songs can be treated in the same way. Then might follow the Ballad.

As this is first and foremost a story full of incident, the treatment should be straightforward,



FIG. 11. "THEN I CANNOT MARRY YOU, MY PRETTY MAID"

vigorous, and full of rhythm. The actions of the performers should keep within the swing of the ballad form. This calls for alert and accurate synchronization, for nimble wits, and bodily control. The lack of technique in so many amateurs who seize on the ballad as being an easy

thing to "dramatize" accounts for the boring and meaningless displays that are often given by these performers.

There are two ways of treating a ballad—

(1) Let a ballad speaker sit or stand at the side and recite the tale vigorously while the players mime it in dumb-show and fit their actions to the speaker's words, or

(2) Let the players speak the words given in direct speech while the ballad-speaker fills in the indirect narrative. Number (1) is the better method.

Note here that the method of progression must always match the character and mood; for instance, Robin takes strolling steps, marking the stresses thus—

*"As Robin Hood in the forest stood
All under the greenwood tree,"*

Allan canters to the stresses—

*"He did frisk it over the plain
And chanted a roundelay."*

This important point must be carefully guarded throughout.

If the ballad be treated in this way it makes a brisk, vivid, and rhythmic performance, while affording plenty of scope for Word-Mime, action, characterization, and crowd work.

Team-work in Mimes is important and crowds who form background without any definite words to Mime must learn to be an expressive, but not an obtrusive, part of the scene.

The most suitable ballads for miming are those in which the story runs straightforwardly, and in which the action is definite and well distributed among a number of players. Many such ballads are to be found in the *Oxford Book of Ballads* (Clarendon Press), in *Ballads and Ballad Plays* (Nelson), in *Mimed Ballads and Stories* (Pitman), and in *The Drama Highway* (Dent).

In conclusion, let your ballad work itself out from the suggestions of the players, but keep strictly to the rhythm. Having once settled upon your dumb-show actions adhere strictly to them, and work for that pulsing rhythm which, once begun, never ceases till the story is told.

PRODUCING A MIME

Suitable themes for Mimes are to be found in fairy tales, Greek and other legends, historical incidents, etc. These can be treated in various ways, with or without a musical or spoken setting: the working out of the play will not suffer, whichever mode be chosen. It is best to start with some preliminary exercises—walking and forming active groups according to the period or nationality of the story.

Suppose a Greek legend (*The Persephone Myth*) has been chosen: Divide the players into two groups, one group on each side of the room—

A ₃	B ₃
A ₂	B ₂
A ₁	B ₁

Let A₁ and B₁ advance with light step towards one another, catch hands, and encircle one another, and then run to opposite corners down-stage. A₂ and B₂ advance, throwing an imaginary ball from one to the other two or three times, then run, as did the first pair, to join A₁ and B₁. Gradually the rest follow, till two big groups are formed down stage, the A group now playing ball, the B group gathering and intertwining flowers.

Next introduce further occupations. Suggest the formation of a group up stage R, gathering fruits or high flowering festoons; let the group down-stage L group round a pool and gradually attract their companions. By degrees the ideas will grow; the groups will evolve; spacing, relative heights, and harmony of gesture will all flow naturally out of the first movements.

By this time the players will have absorbed the atmosphere and can proceed to mime the tale, in some such manner as the following—

The nymph Persephone and her playmates are sporting, gathering flowers, etc., on the supposed slopes of Mount Etna. Persephone wanders away from her playmates, who are occupied with their own pursuits, and the god Dis carries her off unperceived. Presently one of the nymphs turns in time to witness the disappearance, and she quickly spreads the news. Demeter enters, and is told of the calamity. She mourns the loss of her child, and is led away by the sorrowing maidens.

The Shades of the Underworld now drift in

STAGE MOVEMENT

upon the empty stage (their costumes and, if possible, a change in lighting, sufficiently indicate the new scene) and Dis drawing the reluctant Persephone appears amongst them.

While Dis and his train are vainly trying to charm the unhappy Persephone, Hermes (Mercury) has been dispatched by the sorrowing Demeter to win back her child.

He describes the mother's grief and the barren earth for, as Demeter is goddess of the harvest, when she grieves the fruits of the earth fail. He implores Dis to relent and set free the nymph. Finally, the pomegranate is brought, and the reluctant Persephone is cajoled into eating six seeds before Dis frees her and Hermes carries her back to the upper world and her mother's welcoming arms. The Mime ends with the rejoicings of the nymphs.

There is ample scope in this Mime for beautiful movement and grouping amongst the nymphs and the spirits of the underworld—indeed, the scene in which the latter appear is highly dramatic and recalls the "tempting" of the "Lady" by Comus and his Rout in Milton's Masque.

Persephone is the legend of the seasons and the six pomegranate seeds signify the six months of autumn and winter when she will perforce return to the underworld and the earth will be barren.

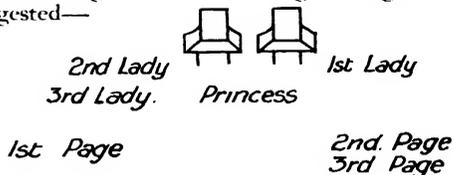
Hans Andersen's story, *The Princess and the Swineherd*, makes a delightful Mime. It is best to begin as in the "Persephone," with a series of walks, greetings, etc.

A medieval English costume suits the play very well, the men wearing long tights and tunics, the women high-waisted, long-skirted dresses and high peaked head-dresses with veils. It is important to realize the costumes from the beginning, as the deportment of the body, carriage of the head, poise of the hands, and the type of curtsy are all the outcome of the requirements of the costume worn, and these details should be realized by every player whatever he or she may be wearing during rehearsals. If this be done, there will be little or no awkwardness displayed at the *dress* rehearsal.

The story opens in the Court, where the Princess is seated surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting and pages. One lady may arrange the Princess's head-dress, while the others stand

THEATRE AND STAGE

by watching. The following arrangement is suggested—



The pages should all stand stiffly, the ladies suggest ecstatic admiration of the Princess.

The 1st Lady hands the Princess a glass and the latter, after admiring herself, gives it to the 2nd Lady. It should here be noted that the glass and all the other properties can be real or imaginary; but in a Mime it is more correct that



they be imaginary, and I assume that they are in my description. A quarrel for the possession of the glass breaks out between the 2nd and 3rd Ladies, while the 1st Lady adjusts the Princess's left shoe. Note (above) one lady holds the (imaginary) mirror in her *left* hand while the other lady from whom it has been snatched prepares with uplifted *right* hand to strike her rival.

The Princess, being vain and shallow, soon becomes bored, and in turn bids the 1st Page play his musical-box, then demands that all three pages shall pay her homage on their knees.

The King enters L, and announces that a messenger from the Prince of the Little Kingdom has arrived bringing gifts (the Prince can be mimed by indicating a circle round the head). While one of the pages fetches him, the King leads the Princess to the seats up stage.

The Messenger enters; his deportment should be easy and natural in contrast to the artificial gestures of the Court. He carries an imaginary rose-tree in a pot and a bird in a cage. His work with these calls for excellent action miming. He bows, and the Princess offers her hand to him to kiss, whereat the Court goes into transports of delight at her condescension, and the Messenger is puzzled and amused.

His rose-tree is rejected for an artificial flower, and the Princess calls for the musical-box, as the bird's song is natural, and therefore repugnant to her. The listening expression on the various faces will convey the idea of the bird's song even if it is not suggested by music.

Finally, the Messenger goes away, but leaves his gifts, and the King stamps out in anger.

The ladies-in-waiting attempt to appease the Princess, when her attention is caught by the sound of a tune. She sends a page to investigate, and the "swincherd" enters carrying the little pot the price of which is a hundred kisses from the Princess. (For the Mime this could be twenty.) During the kissing match the scandalized King enters and scatters the court, leaving the Princess alone with the "swincherd." The latter reveals himself as the Prince. I usually end with a betrothal, though the original ending can be retained at the producer's discretion.

I have sketched in these two stories to show how players can best tackle a Mime. The material chosen can be well known, in fact it is best, at any rate with beginners, to choose something of which the actual facts are familiar to the audience. A few words of explanation before the action or a written synopsis will be a further aid; after that, if the miming be skilful, the players should "get across" quite easily.

Discretion must be shown in choosing and composing Mimes, but they must be full of incident and continuous.

Many Norse and Russian tales, though dramatic in incident and full of character studies, have to be rejected owing to the number of animals introduced. These usually play such an important part that unless they are included the tale suffers. Animals are difficult to represent, their costumes are expensive to make or hire, and in the latter case are usually made to fit children only. The introduction of creatures may occa-

sionally be successful and amusing (as in *The Three Bears* and the old ballad *Cicely and the Bears*),¹ but as their miming depends mainly on movement and not on facial play and gesture they have a limited range of expression.

Fantasy makes a wide appeal, but must be carefully chosen and pruned or it will degenerate into mere sentimentality. Firm characterization and a sense of humour will usually save a Mime from this pitfall. That the *Commedia dell'Arte* Players realized this is evident from the fact that, even in their most pathetic tales, the buffoonery of Clown, the antics of Harlequin, and the inanities of Pierrot relieve the tragedy.

CONVENTIONAL OR STYLIZED MIMES

The simplest way to build up a Mime is to practise the carriage, gestures, and general mannerisms of the period and race chosen; by this means the players develop the characters and create an harmonious picture.

The Stylized Mime stands in a class by itself and needs the utmost finish in every movement. Under the heading of the Stylized Mime come all the traditional stories of the *Dell'Arte* Players who flourished in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were the descendants of the old Roman Mimes, and their scenarios had much in common with the comedies of Terence and Plautus. There is a vast literature dealing with the history of these Players, amongst which Maurice Sand's *Masques et Bouffons* (1859) and Duchartre's *La Comédie Italienne* (the revised English translation of which forms a valuable addition to our literature) stand out as important.

It is sometimes supposed that *all* miming means the performance of plays in the conventional *Dell'Arte* manner, but to accept this narrow view of Mime would be to cut out the presentation of all our ballad literature and the folk lore which are so admirably suited to dumb show work.

Long experience has shown me that the conventional Mimes can be adequately presented only by players who have both skill and training, and attempts by the unskilful to act them result only in discouragement and lack of appreciation.

¹My arrangement of this will be found in *The Drama Highway* Book 3.

The chief reason for this is that in acting these traditional characters one has to assume a type but at the same time to *humanize* it; in other words, to avoid the pitfall of allowing emphasis to be laid too much on the manner rather than the matter—on the habit rather than the man. This is an exacting and subtle art, and only an actor



DELL' ARTE CHARACTERS IN THE "HARLEQUINADI"

or actress of finished technique and possessed of inventive genius and a sensitive mind can reasonably hope to succeed in it. The brilliant and polished dramas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—usually entitled "Old Comedy"—require much the same skill. I can think of no more striking performance than that of Yvonne Arnaud in Congreve's *Love for Love*. Here was a real person in whom one could believe, who lived and moved and had her being in the character of Mrs. Frail. What superb acting!

Certain typed characters evolved within the *Dell'Arte* group—characters well-known to their audiences by their dress and characteristics. There were Harlequin, with his lozenge suit, his power of invisibility (shown by his half-mask), and his wand. He is greedy and scurrilous, but a wit and a leader, nimble and speedy. Clown and Pantaloon (the fat fool and the lean dotard) always inseparable: Clown with his frilled suit, wig, and bedaubed face, foolish and stupid, but with sudden bright ideas. The index finger laid flat upon the nose and the trick of putting the word before the gesture still remind us of him.

Purblind Pantaloon with his goat-beard and white locks is the general gull. Scaramouche, the tatterdemalion rogue and thief; Pulcinello, familiar for all time as Punch, with hooked nose and hump; and Columbine, in her fluttering



FIG. MONEY

FIG. MARRIAGE

skirts and chaplet of flowers—the dancer and soul of the party.

The work of the *Dell'Arte* school has left its mark in many ways. The medieval moralities and fables and much of the drama of the sixteenth

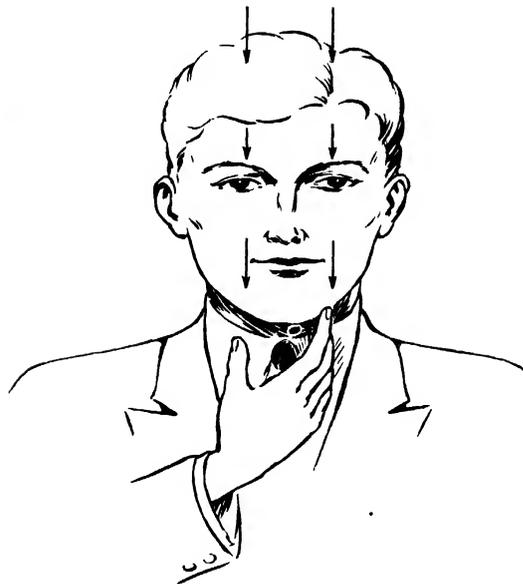


FIG. 14. A GENTLEMAN

and seventeenth centuries (as already noted) show traces of it. Shakespeare's dotards, for example, old Gobbo, Polonius, Antonio (in *Much Ado About Nothing*) are the descendants of Pantaloon.

Pantaloon and Clown are seen in a more rustic setting as the old Shepherd and his son in *The Winter's Tale*; the boastful captain appears in Pistol; the original zany or imitator of Harlequin, is surely akin to Biondello; and the sublime impudence and filching propensities of Autolycus stamp him as Harlequin's descendant.

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

The scenarios of the *Dell'Arte* troupe were rough outlines hung in the booth theatre and memorized by the players, who, whether they acted entirely in dumb show, or spoke, improvised their parts. It followed that they evolved a series of tit-for-tat conversations and a number of familiar bits of business and signs that became a recognized part of their stock-in-trade. Some of these signs have come down to us, and are employed in all Mimes to-day. For instance, the gesture for "a lady" is the act of circling the face; "Money" is counted into the palm (Fig. 12); and the third finger of the left hand indicated for "Marry me" (Fig. 13). "Gentleman" is suggested by a movement of the finger and thumb down the face (Fig. 14).

These players varied their methods of presentation. Sometimes two actors worked together, the one *speaking*, the other *gesticulating*; sometimes the subject of the piece performed by the pantomime (i.e. the Mime actor) was *sung*; at other times he performed in silence, expressing the verses by his mute action (i.e. in the language common to all nations).

Few actors of modern times, and remarkably few screen artists, would stand comparison with these masters of buffoonery. Charles Chaplin alone is master of the complete art of dumb show, and of him it might truly be said: "There are gestures that have a language, hands that have a mouth, fingers that have a voice."¹

The Japanese Players, with their combined skill in acting, swordsmanship, and acrobaticism, are equally effective in the spoken and the silent drama, and the enthusiasm that their performances evoked on their visit to the Globe Theatre some years ago proved that even to those who did not understand their tongue their acting was clear. These Players have another characteristic in common with the old Italian and still older

¹ Nonnus of Panopolis.

Greek and Roman players—namely, the use of masks. Only a highly trained actor can successfully impersonate a character with the additional burden of a mask. The wearer must bring his body into harmony with the sharply defined and unalterable type he represents—so that far from minimizing the need to act, the mask increases it.

I would not suggest that masks be employed in modern representations. The needs for which they were employed have disappeared, and though as a technical study they are useful, they have lost all but an antiquarian interest.

The famous *L'Enfant Prodigue* is an example of a conventional *Dell'Arte* troupe brought under French rationalistic influence, and immortalized by the interest of the theme and the admirable fitness of the music. The *Dell'Arte* mime calls for musical accompaniment of a definite kind—namely, "programme" music in which the motif for each character is gradually developed and interwoven with all the others. The most successful result is achieved when the composer, producer, and players work together and gradually build up the Mime.

STAGING, PROPERTIES, AND MUSIC

Whenever possible, a Mime should be continuous; no fall of the curtain should break the story, even if the events related take place in different scenes. The producer is here faced with a difficulty that is best solved either by the use of a traverse curtain or by selecting a central incident and grouping the action around it.

To adhere strictly to the rule stated means a sacrifice of *décor*—it throws on the performers the responsibility of creating the illusion. On the other hand, if separate scenes be actually represented, though the spectator's eye is filled and his mind helped to realize the story, it is more than likely that the shattering effect of a repeated series of curtains will do more to destroy the illusion than the *décor* does to create it. Let the dresses be as elaborate and correct as possible, the scenic effects be merely suggestive, and rely rather on lighting than on actual scenery to create the right atmosphere.

It follows from the conditions stated as to scenery that the stage properties must be simple and, where possible, permanent. If in one part

of our Mime we really need some kind of seat that should not appear elsewhere, we must arrange for it to be brought on by courtiers or pages as part of the action, or it must be on the stage in an unobtrusive position till required. For example, in the legend of *Persephone*, the throne of Dis can easily be a simple bench over which a leopard skin is thrown, and then it can be placed on the stage at the beginning and form an open-air Bacchic altar for the nymphs' revels in the first part of the Mime.

In the case of some Mimes considerable ingenuity is necessary to solve this problem and retain continuity, but the result is well worth the effort and skill expended.

Traverse curtains are a great help. For example, in *The Sleeping Beauty* these curtains can close out the thrones after the Christening Scene, leaving the stage empty, and they can open again to reveal the Bad Fairy with her spinning wheel. The couch on which the Princess lies for her long sleep can be a permanent cushioned bench or be brought on by two pages at the King's command after the Princess is discovered in the swoon. If this method be followed, it is often necessary in adapting a story to compress it—omitting some of the incidents and tightening up the action—in a manner comparable with that of the dramatist who makes a stage play from a novel (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Rebecca*). We must select—compress—intensify, in accordance with the needs of our arts. Was not this Shakespeare's method?

OPEN-AIR PROPERTIES

This matter has already been dealt with, but I will add a word or two on the use of properties in open-air theatres. Where the arena is probably ninety feet in width and sixty in depth, approached by paths along which the actors are visible before entering the actual playing area, miming loses much of its delicate artistry, and adopts the broader methods of the pageant. Here a few significant properties are essential. Banners, scrolls, inn signs, swords and other weapons, shields, flowers, musical instruments and (in forest scenes) horns, drinking vessels, bowls, etc., (all, of course, larger than normal size) can be used effectively.

A Mime should reveal itself if it is well enough performed; but if it is unaccompanied by speech

or song, a *brief* synopsis can be given on the programme or spoken at the beginning.

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

I am often asked whether Mimes should have a musical accompaniment. That all depends upon the type of Mime. If it be one that introduces the romantic and conventional figures of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, or where the background of the play is frankly melodramatic, as in the famous *L'Enfant Prodigue*, or, again, in the case of a fantastic fairy tale (for example, *The Princess and the Swineherd*) music is essential.

Mimes with music can be arranged in the following ways—

(a) With a musical accompaniment composed to fit each part of the tale—an ideal method if one is lucky enough to work with a composer who understands Mime.

(b) With a musical accompaniment selected from well-known composers and suggesting the atmosphere or character of the tale.

This requires careful selection and a sympathetic accompanist, but is a suitable method in some cases, and helps the players' rhythm. Altogether, music best fits the more lyrical and emotional side of Miming, and should be used only where it can really enhance these aspects. Music should never accompany a Mime of simple prosaic incident; for example, a fable or spoken tale, ballad, or thumb-nail sketch.

When Mimes are performed with a spoken accompaniment—a good method with certain folk tales (from Boccaccio, Chaucer, etc.), they must be carefully practised with the narrator, and much depends upon the skill of the latter in synchronizing the words with the actions, varying the *tempo* and suggesting the atmosphere. The effect is meaningless, even ridiculous, if the speaker is ahead of or behind the action.

Silent Mimes (i.e. without accompanying voice or instrument). This is quite an effective method with dramatic tales—many Eastern stories and thrillers.

My main purpose has been to examine the fundamentals of poised and rhythmic movement and to show how, through the study of Mime, control of every part of the body may become unconscious, thus enabling thought and emotion to flow significantly through. I conclude with

some practical applications of this important subject.

Miming is a subject in which bodily movements are practised and then linked with the child's own dramatic expression in such a way that all self-consciousness is quickly eliminated. It demands sincerity and concentration, and trains the powers of observation and criticism. Further, it satisfies the mass or social instinct in an entirely right way, for not only is team-work essential for a performance, but also no form of dramatic representation establishes a closer link between audience and players.

If it be granted that on truly educational grounds Mime deserves a place in the schools, it follows that it should be a vital part of the training of a teacher whether he or she is destined to be a specialist in dramatic art or an English specialist. All teachers from training colleges and universities should be able to speak and move well, and to apply these graces in their teaching of Drama.

There is another field of social activity where the educational and recreative advantages of Mime could be widely used—namely, in the hundreds of Social Clubs, Youth Organizations, and Evening Institutes, where scores of adolescents waste their time on the aimless study of plays that are far beyond their powers of expression. Even when a suitable play is chosen, there are often members who know too little about acting to be content to create a small part or to learn by watching others. Much time is wasted by a producer in trying to get movement out of people who are unused to the limitations of a stage, who

cannot make one step do the work of three, or "give and take," or learn to space their remarks with their moves or exit lines; who constantly plant themselves in front of one another, and who cannot turn their bodies from one side to the other by neat foot adjustment, or stand or sit still and listen to some one else!

It would be much better if these people employed part of their time in some simple miming, and then applied their training to their drama. We have to-day in the cinema a theatre relying *mainly* on sight, and in the B.B.C. a theatre merely of sound, but it is the Theatre alone that gives us living human beings. It is the most human of all institutions; but if it is to hold its own and to rise above these two rivals it must surely pay great heed to the perfecting of speech and movement and to the perfect synchronization of the two. It is here that to the amateur in particular, and to many professionals also, the art of Mime is useful. It makes for control and poise, mental agility and concentration, rhythm and sincerity. While it in no way detracts from the beauty of the spoken word, which admittedly can sometimes hold our minds and wring our hearts, yet on the stage, unless we be blind or the speaker be hidden, we must needs behold him. If then his body is not expressive we shall, if we are sensitive, experience a feeling of vague dissatisfaction, but if mind and body are in perfect agreement we shall be satisfied. That is the art of the Theatre, and when we experience it we receive something inexpressibly satisfying to our human needs.

M. Gertrude Pickers pll

STAGE TERMS

EDWARD W. BETTS, Dramatic Critic; contributor to "The Daily Telegraph," etc.

EVERY profession has its own peculiar esoteric terminology, but none has so choice and elaborate a wealth of specialized words and expressions as that which has generally been permitted to call itself "the profession." It was wittily suggested by John Drinkwater that the large collection of theatrical terms was invented by stage carpenters to keep producers in their place. As Mr. Drinkwater had considerable experience as a producer in the early years of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, there may be something more than pleasantry in his remark.

A knowledge of stage terms is essential to the amateur producer, even in these days of simplified stage direction.

It is for the guidance of the amateur producer that the following comprehensive list of stage and theatrical terms has been compiled. And if I may revert to Mr. Drinkwater's humorous definition, if you are one of those who delight in the comic side of things, I recommend to you the exceedingly funny stage vocabulary included in Sir Seymour Hicks's book for amateurs, *Acting*.

I must also express my indebtedness to Mr. C. B. Purdom and Mr. Donovan Maule, who, in their respective books, *Producing Plays* (Dent) and *The Stage as a Career* (Pitman), include lists of stage technical terms. W. G. Fay's *Short Glossary of Theatrical Terms* (French) is also useful; while the Strand Electric Company's *Glossary of Technical Theatrical Terms* includes a full list of lighting and other electric definitions.

ACT. The main division in a play. At one time all plays were written in five acts; three acts are now the customary ration taken by dramatic authors.

ACT DROP. A painted cloth lowered during the performance of a play. It is usually employed

for a subsidiary scene to be played while changes are being made on the larger part of the stage behind the cloth.

ACTING AREA. The part of the stage on which the action of a play takes place. The working area is at the sides where the stage hands are employed.

ACTING MANAGER. A theatrical pleasantry. The A. M. looks after nearly everything except acting! His better title would be business manager, as he is responsible for all business arrangements, particularly in regard to the front of the house: q.v.

ACTION. No longer applied exclusively to all movement on the stage. The term as now used covers plot-movement, as well as bodily movement on the stage by the actors.

ACTOR. A man whose profession it is to impersonate characters on the public stage (fem.: Actress).

ACTOR-MANAGER. Now nearly extinct. When the actor-manager really flourished, the term meant an actor who ran his own company and was his own producer and bright particular star.

ADAPTATION. Now usually applied to plays abbreviated or "adapted" for twice nightly performance, or to plays adapted from novels by dramatists other than the author.

AMATEUR. No longer a term of reproach. It is now used to designate a man or woman who enthusiastically undertakes anything for love.

AMBER. A soft yellow light used to represent sunlight. It is the most used light in the theatre.

AMP. Abbreviation for ampere, unit of measurement in electricity.

AMPHITHEATRE. The use of this word as applied to a circular or semi-circular building with a central stage or arena has been almost forgotten. In some theatres, the first tier is so called.



EDWARD W. BETTS

APRON STAGE. Any part of the stage that extends in front of the proscenium arch. It is sometimes called apron-piece, fore-stage, or platform.

Soliloquies in Shakespeare's time and afterwards were spoken on the apron-stage, so also was the *Aside*.

ARCS. Powerful lights are still so called although the carbons that were formerly used in arc lamps have now generally been ousted by gas-filled bulbs.

ARGENTINE. Material used in scenery as an imitation of glass for windows.

ART THEATRE. A name sometimes given to the American Little Theatres.

ASIDE. A remark not intended to be heard by the other characters on the stage. This was the early device of enabling the audience to "overhear" what a certain character was thinking. Eugene O'Neill elaborated this idea in *Strange Interlude*.

A.S.M. Assistant Stage Manager who is also usually the prompter.

AT RISE. The stage when set and awaiting the first rise of the curtain. From the point of view of the genuine play-lover, the most exciting minute in the world when anything may be about to happen.

AUDITORIUM. That part of the theatre where the audience watches the play. Actors call it "in front."

BABY SPOT. A small spot light.

BACK. Behind the scene set on the stage. The full expression is back-stage.

BACK CLOTH or **BACK DROP.** Painted or plain cloth or curtain dropped or hung across the back of the stage. Usually the main portion of the scene as seen by the audience.

BACKING. Scenery or sections of scenery used to mask openings such as doors and windows.

BAFFLE. Transparent board or material placed in front of lights to diffuse and so prevent a beam of light.

BALCONY SPOT. Originally a spot light operated from the front of the balcony. Two or three such lights are now usually placed on the balcony front and are operated by the electrician from the main switch board on the prompt side of the working area of the stage.

BALLERINA. Female ballet dancer.

BALLET. A series of dances introduced into grand opera. In later years, dances with pantomime telling a definite story. Diaghileff brought the Russian Ballet to an unprecedented plane of efficiency and proficiency. The Sadler's Wells Ballet Company is the leading ballet organization in this country.

BALUSTRADE SCENE. A flat with a balustrade painted on it.

BAND ROOM. A room provided for the use of the orchestra (usually under the stage) when the players are not needed in the orchestra pit.

BAR. In many London theatres the bars and programmes are let to contractors. In those theatres where the management retains control of the bars, it is a frequent joke that the profits from the drinks compensate for the losses on the plays!

BARREL. Length of tubing carrying battens, pieces of scenery or lights. A Boomerang abbreviated to boom is a similar length used vertically.

BATTEN. Piping or timber on which scenery is suspended. The batten is supported from the grid.

BATTENS. Rows of lights suspended over the stage.

BEAM BORDERS. Borders painted to represent beams in old rooms.

"BEGINNERS PLEASE." The call-boy's warning that the characters opening an act must take their places on the stage.

BIRD. "Getting the bird" is the professional's euphemism for an unfavourable reception. It originated with the shrill whistle of disapproval indulged in by gallery boys.

BLACK-OUT. A sudden and simultaneous switching off of all lights on the stage.

BLINDERS. Lights facing the audience, often used in conjunction with the stage black-out, when scenes are changed without the curtain being lowered.

BLOCK. Pulley wheel in the grid over which scenery lines pass on their way to the fly rail.

BOARD. Switchboard on which all permanent switches, etc., are placed.

BOARDS. The professional actor's pet name for the stage. A link with the early days when the stage consisted of boards on trestles.

BOOK. Copy of play used by the prompter, hence the phrase often heard at rehearsals: "What does the book say?"

STAGE TERMS

BOOKFLAT. Two-hinged flats set upon their edges.

BOOKINGS. The number of reserved seats sold in advance.

BOOM-ARM. Horizontal piece of metal at end of boomerang for holding light or microphone.

BOOMERANG. See **BARREL.**

BORDER. Narrow strip of painted canvas suspended from above stage and running parallel with top of proscenium. It is used to screen lights, and usually represents ceiling, sky, or branches of trees.

BOX-LIGHTS. A light and reflector contained in a metal box.

BOX-SET. Scene comprised of three walls, the fourth wall being "taken out" for the benefit of the audience.

BRACE. Length of timber or iron attached at one end to a flat and at the other to the floor of the stage for keeping a piece of scenery rigid.

BRAIL. Moving a suspended piece of scenery by hauling it out of the vertical.

BREAK-UP. Scene or property placed in position so as to be immediately dismantled.

BRIDGE. Gallery across and behind the proscenium arch. There are also galleries on the other three sides above the stage, used for shifting scenery, scenic painting, spot-lighting, and other behind-the-scenes activities. On the stage itself, a bridge is a section of the stage that can be raised or lowered.

BRIEF. Free pass to a theatre.

BROAD. Usually applied to comedy. A part or piece in which the humour is "laid on with a trowel." When a variety comedian is described as broad it is meant that he has no difficulty in calling a spade a sanguinary shovel. In short, broad is the opposite of subtle.

BUNCHES. A number of lamps used with a metal hood or reflector. See **LENGTH.**

BURLESQUE. A parody. Either a play or part that exaggerates the idiosyncrasies of other plays or plays. Sheridan's *The Critic* is a perfect example of a burlesque. So is Florence Desmond's impersonations of film stars in her *Hollywood Party*.

BURNER LIGHTS. Clusters of lamps or standards.

BUSINESS. Action interpolated into a scene by

THEATRE AND STAGE

the actors. Much of the "business" in standard plays is traditional. In a larger sense business denotes all action and movement on the stage apart from dialogue.

CACKLE. Dialogue.

CACKLE CHUCKER. Prompter.

CALL. A summons for a rehearsal. A warning to an actor that he must take his place on the stage. An appearance before the audience at the end of an act or a play.

"**CALL BEGINNERS.**" The stage manager's direction to the call boy to summon those actors who are to be on the stage at rise.

CALL BOARD. A baize covered notice board, usually found just inside the stage door, whereon notices applying to the artists or theatre staff are affixed.

CALL-BOY. A stage-hand who has to call the actors when required on the stage.

CARPET CUT. A hinged floor board that clips down any floor coverings on the stage.

CAST. The actors taking part in a play. "To cast" is to select the players considered most suitable for definite parts.

CASTING OFFICE. Agency for putting actors in touch with producers or managers.

CEILING. Piece of cloth stretched on a framework and placed on top of a box-set.

CEILING SPOT. Spotlight placed on the ceiling or in an opening in the ceiling of the auditorium that is focused on a particular point of the scene.

CENTRE-LINE. A line—often imaginary—drawn from back to front of the stage from which positions are calculated. The positions, centre, left-centre, right-centre, down-centre, and up-centre are therefore in accordance with this line.

CENTRE OPENING. Centre door or opening in a scene.

CHAMBER SCENES. An old time term for all scenes representing rooms.

CHAMBERMAIDS. A term applied to all female servant parts in a play.

CHARACTER. A part taken by an actor.

CHARACTER PART. A part wherein peculiarities or particularities of personality are stressed.

CHECK. To dim: lights are said to be dimmed at half check, quarter check, and so on.

CHOREOGRAPHY. The design or production of ballet or dances in a play.

CIRCUS. When scenery is turned round to show another scene painted on the back, it is called *circusing the scene*.

CLIQUE. Hired body of applauders.

CLEAT. Any metal or wooden fixture on the stage to which a line can be tied in order to keep scenery, etc., in position.

CLEAT LINES. Length of cord fastened to the top of a flat and thrown over a cleat on the adjoining flat and made fast at the bottom to bind them together.

CLICK. To get on good terms with the audience.

CLIMAX. The point at which a play should gradually arrive.

CLOTH. Any piece of canvas scenery suspended from above the stage. Hence *back-cloth*, *front-cloth*, etc.

CLOWN. The principal character in the *Harlequinade*; in Shakespeare, a yokel; to clown a part means to play it foolishly.

COD. Bogus imitation; for example, a *cod mind reading act*.

COLOUR-FRAME. Apertures in front of light boxes in which gelatines or coloured glasses can be inserted for stage lighting.

COLOUR-MEDIUMS. The sheets of gelatine or glass used in colour-frames.

COLOUR WHEEL. Four or six aperture disc placed in front of spot for colour changes.

COLUMBINE. The "leading lady" of the *Harlequinade*.

COMEDIAN. An actor who plays humorous parts (fem.: *Comedienne*).

COMEDY. A type of play. Aristophanes wrote the first great comedies, and for years comedy meant a play with a happy ending—as opposed to tragedy. To-day, comedy is little more than a farce, and a musical comedy is—well, musical comedy!

COMEDY OF MANNERS. Comedies in which character-study and amusing dialogue are the chief elements. Molière, Congreve, Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, and W. Somerset Maugham are representative exponents of this type of comedy.

COMIC OPERA. Play with music, having a happy ending. The most popular pieces of this kind are by Gilbert and Sullivan.

COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE. Traditional comedy of a particular Italian School. The characters were always the same—but the actors improvised

the dialogue. It was, in short, a theme with variations.

COMMUNITY THEATRE. So called because this theatre is organized with the object of pleasing the community rather than of making profit. Community drama is the generic name given to plays suitable for such a theatre.

CON. To learn a part by heart.

CONCERT BATTEN. The first lighting batten behind the proscenium arch, also known as **No. 1**.

CONCERT BORDER. Used to mask **Batten No. 1**, if this is not done by the tabs or the pelmet.

CONSOLE. Mobile control for lighting usually operated from the auditorium so that a full view of the stage can be obtained.

CONSTRUCTION. This word is used to denote a production in which the action of the play is laid on different levels, and in which ladders, scaffolding, platforms, and steps are used.

CORKER. Actor who ruins a play.

COSTUME PLAY. Any piece in which the dress is different from that of the present day.

COSTUME PLOT. A list of all costumes used in a play and the characters wearing them.

COUNTERWEIGHT. The lowering and raising of scenery, etc., is helped by the use of a system in which circular slotted iron weights are used for balancing. The long, centre, and short cloths (see **GRID**) are controlled by an endless rope on which a counterweight is also fixed so as to reduce the power needed to raise or lower the scenery.

CRADLE. A platform with ropes at its corners, suspended from the grid, enabling workmen to work on scenery, etc., where ladders could not be used.

CUE. On the stage, an actor's cue is generally the four words spoken by another character immediately preceding his own speech. These words are also typed on his script. Off-stage a cue is a note in the prompt copy indicating signals to the working staff to do certain jobs, such as raising the curtain, changing the lights, etc.

CURTAIN CALL. A call taken by an actor at the end of an act or of a play.

CURTAIN-RAISER. A one-act play that is performed before the main piece.

CURTAINS. Plain cloths suspended across the stage to screen stage from audience or for draping the stage instead of scenery.

CUT. Any opening in the stage such as traps, etc. Particularly a narrow transverse section of the stage that can be opened. See **CARPET CUT**.

CUT CLOTH. Any piece of scenery that is cut to a pattern. When more than one piece is used on the stage they are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., beginning with the one nearest the proscenium.

CUT SCRIPT. To delete words or business from a play manuscript.

CYCLORAMA. Curtain or canvas draped or hung in a curve along the three sides of the stage to represent sky. A permanent cyclorama consists of a curved backing to the stage and is constructed of concrete, or timber and plaster. It is usually painted sky-blue, and by means of lighting, moving clouds, stars, etc., can be represented (see **SCHWABE-HASAIT**).

DARK. A theatre is said to be dark when it is closed to the public.

DAY BILL. Long narrow poster advertising plays and casts. Its usual size is 30 in. 10 in.

DEAD. When flats or scenery are hung so that the bottom ends are level on the stage they are said to be dead.

DEAD-HEADS. Members of an audience who have not paid for admission (see **DRESSING THE HOUSE**).

DEAD STICK. One who makes a mess of a scene.

DÉCOR. The artistic treatment of stage production. The older word "decoration" is now seldom used.

DEMET. Material used for stage curtains.

DIALECT PART. A character part spoken in the manner of the country or district to which it belongs.

DIALOGUE. The words of a play.

DICKY BIRD. An actor who also sings.

DICTION. Manner in which words are spoken on the stage.

DIM. An order to diminish the stage lights.

DIMMER. Apparatus used to reduce stage lighting.

DIPS. Small traps in the stage containing adaptors for plugging in lighting units.

DIRECTOR. See **PRODUCER**.

DISCOVERED. Actors on the stage when the curtain is raised are said to be discovered.

DISSOLVE. Gradually changing colour tones in the lighting of a scene.

DOCK DOORS. Leading to the scene dock or store.

DOG-TOWN. When plays are tried out in provincial towns, the process is sometimes referred to as "trying it on the dog." Hence the description of "dog-towns."

DOMÉ. The extension of the cyclorama curved over the stage.

DOWN STAGE. The front of the stage nearest the audience.

DRAMA. Used variously. It may mean plays in general as in Jonson's line: "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give"; or a "heavy" play.

DRAMATIC. Pertaining to the drama; used colloquially to mean a particularly impressive style in drama or acting.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ. The characters in a play.

DRAMATIST. An author of plays.

DRESS PARADE. Inspection by the producer of the actors in the costumes they will wear in a play.

DRESS REHEARSAL. The final rehearsal before the first public performance.

DRESSING THE HOUSE. When a piece is not going too well, the box-office manager sends complimentary tickets to "dead-heads," a list of whom is kept at the theatre. These tickets are often marked "Evening dress essential," hence, dressing the house.

DRESSING ROOMS. Rooms used by actors for dressing and making-up. The dressing room allocated to the principal actor or actress has a star painted on the door—hence the description of star as applied to leading players.

DROP CURTAIN. A painted cloth lowered when acts are divided into scenes. Also called the drop.

DRY UP. When an actor forgets his line.

DUD. A failure, applied both to a play and to an actor who does not know his part.

EFFECT MACHINE. Apparatus for imitating sounds or effects.

EFFECT PROJECTOR. An apparatus for throwing pictorial or colour effects upon a scene (see **SCHWABE-HASAIT**).

EFFECTS. Light changes, and noises on or off.

ELEVATOR STAGE. Also referred to as a lift stage. There are two floors, one above the other, enabling a second scene to be set or struck while the first is in use.

ENCORE. "We want another." The call by

the audience when they desire a performer to appear again.

ENSEMBLE. The general effect of scenery and character groupings.

ENTR'ACTE. Between the acts. A musical piece played during the interval.

ENTRANCE. An actor's first appearance on the stage in a play is called his entrance.

EXIT. To leave the stage.

EXPRESSIONISM. The aim of the expressionist is to "express," through writing, acting, or production, thought or emotion direct to the audience.

EXTERIOR BACKING. A small scene representing a garden or other outdoor effect set behind a door or window to give an illusion of space outside.

EXTRA. A man or woman who "walks on" in a piece.

F.O.H. Front of house. The auditorium

FADER-OUT. Gradual reduction of the stage lighting by means of dimmers.

FALSE PROSCENIUM. When the ordinary proscenium is larger than is required, a false proscenium is fitted so as to make the opening less wide or high or both lower and narrower.

FALSE PROSCENIUM BORDER. This is a movable curtain just behind the top of the proscenium arch that can be raised or lowered to mask in the scenery at the top.

FARCE. A light-hearted play in which the laws of probability can be disregarded.

FAT. A "fat" part is one that gives an actor opportunities to score either with lines or business.

FEATURE. To "feature," a term borrowed from the Movies, means "to star." Hence, feature players are those who take leading parts.

FEED. The "feed" is an important man—or woman—in variety. It is his business to play up to—or feed—the comedian. Examples are Chesney Allen to Bud Flanagan, and Hilda Mundy to Billy Caryl.

FIREPROOF CURTAIN. A curtain made of asbestos and metal which, when lowered, fits close up against the proscenium and cuts off the auditorium from the stage. The fireproof must be lowered at least once during every performance. Sometimes called "the iron."

FIREPROOF (To). To treat canvas, etc., with fireproofing.

FIT-UPS. Travelling theatrical companies that carry their own scenery and equipment for converting a plain platform into a stage.

FIZZER. A sure-fire hit applied either to a play or a performance.

FLAT. Any piece of scenery canvas stretched on a framework of timber.

FLICKERS. Circular slotted disc with coloured mediums, revolved in front of a high powered light to flood stage with flickering lights of different colours.

FLIES. Galleries running from proscenium wall to back of stage, with thick protecting rail to which lines used to lower and raise scenery can be fastened.

FLIPPER. Any small piece of painted scenery hinged to a flat to permit of being folded when travelling or not in use.

FLOATS. Footlights.

FLOOD LIGHTS. When a large portion or even the whole of the stage has to be uniformly lit, the scene is "flooded" by means of strong lights in one or more metal cases or boxes.

FLOP. A play that fails is a flop.

FLUFF. To fluff one's lines is to speak them indistinctly when not quite sure of the exact words.

FLY. To suspend anything above the stage.

FLY-FLOOR. Stage hands' gallery on sides off stage.

FLY LADDERS. Ladders on either off side of the stage by which flymen reach fly-floor or gallery.

FLY-RAIL. Also known as pin rail. A rail on the fly-floor used for fastening the lines used for flying scenery.

FOLD. A play is said to fold when it is withdrawn, the term coming from America. It can also mean looping up the bottom half of a cloth or border, sometimes called a clew. A looped up curtain is a swag, which can also be used as a verb.

FOLLOW. To follow an actor on the stage with a spot light.

FOOTLIGHTS. A line of lights with strong reflections along the front of the stage. The lights are usually coloured white, blue, and amber, which can be used simultaneously or separately (also called "Foots").

FORE-STAGE. See APRON.

FORTUNY SYSTEM. Stage lighting by indirect means named after the Italian inventor.

FOX WEDGES. Wooden wedges placed under flats when stage is raked to keep them perpendicular.

FRAME PIECE. Another term for flat.

FRENCH FLAT. A cloth mounted on a frame with "practical" windows and doors.

FRONT OF THE HOUSE. The auditorium.

FRONT-PIECE. Another name for a curtain raiser: q.v.

FRONT SCENE. A scene set as near the front of the stage as possible to enable the next scene to be set behind it.

FROST. Piece of ground glass placed in front of light to reduce its strength.

FULL SET. Scene that occupies the whole of the stage.

GAG. Any dialogue or lines introduced into a play not in the book. To gag is to make up lines impromptu.

GARLANDS. Border or hanging festoons of flowers or foliage, usually imitation.

GAUZES. Thin net, battened top and bottom, used to suggest fog or dimness when placed in front of lights.

GELATINE. Transparencies in various colours for use in stage lighting. Also called mediums.

GET IN. Bring scenery into a theatre.

GET OUT. Take out scenery.

GET OVER. To "get over" is to become *en rapport* with the audience. From "get over the footlights."

GHOST. The ghost walks on treasury nights. In other words salaries are paid on Fridays or Saturdays according to the custom of the theatre.

GLASS CRASH. To make the illusion of falling through a glass window, or a crash, a quantity of broken glass is emptied from a bucket on to a piece of sheet iron.

GRAVE TRAP. A large rectangular trap in the stage near the front, used for the *Hamlet* grave scene and similar scenes.

GRAVY. Suggestiveness.

GREASE PAINTS. Make-up paints with lard as a basis, and so easy to remove.

GREEN. The front curtain used to be so called because it was made of green baize.

GREEN ROOM. A room near the stage where actors used to meet and wait for their calls.

GRID. A loft or skeleton roof over the stage. Here are all the sets of pulleys over which the lines for working the scenes pass on their way to the fly-rail. To ensure that curtains and cloths are level or "on the dead" when lowered, it is necessary to have three blocks and one bend to each cloth suspended: these lines are called "short" (nearest the flies), "long" (for the line on the prompt side), and "centre." Between each set of three pulleys are thin battens and looked at from the stage they have the appearance of a large gridiron, whence its name.

GROMMET. A short piece of cord attached to the top of a cloth to which the working lines can be fastened.

GROOVES. Wooden grooves into which flats could be slid. Seldom used now that flying is so much employed.

GROUND CLOTH. Canvas or other material spread over floor or acting area of stage setting.

GROUND PLAN. Stage plan showing positions of all scenery, and, in fact, everything on the stage in a particular set.

GROUND ROW. Low pieces of scenery to represent wells, ledges, etc.

GRUMMET. Ring attached to scenery through which a line can pass.

HAM ACTOR. Player who exaggerates. The term is usually applied to melodrama technique.

HAND PROP. Anything that is carried on to the stage by an actor. A list of articles used by the cast in a play is carefully prepared and kept.

HANGING PIECE. A piece of scenery that is flown.

HARLEQUIN. Originally one of the characters in the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*. In our day, a character in Harlequinade who has the power of making himself invisible to the other characters when he lowers his visor.

HARLEQUINADE. A short play in dumb show which (sometimes) follows a Christmas pantomime. The characters are Clown, Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and Policeman.

HEAD ROOM. Space above the stage where scenery can be flown.

HEAVEN. Concave shaped back and top of the stage representing sky.

HEAVIES. A "heavy man" is an actor who plays serious parts that are plenteously provided with "fat."

HISTRIONIC. Appertaining to stage acting. Generally used in relation to over-emphasized acting.

HOUSE. A good house or a bad house means that the theatre is well or badly filled with paying members of the audience.

HOUSE LIGHTS. The lighting system in the auditorium.

INGÉNUÉ. The part of a young girl.

INSET. A small scene inside a larger one.

INTERLUDE. A simple play of the sixteenth century, performed without scenery.

INTERVAL. The time between the acts of a play. Interval music is that played during these breaks in the play. In variety theatres, the interval has been renamed intermission; why, nobody knows.

JAZBO. Vulgarity.

JOG. Narrow flat used in a box set for setting back alcoves.

JOIST. Heavy timber to which flooring boards are nailed when making a bridge from one rostrum to another.

JUICE. Electric current.

JUVENILE. The juvenile lead is the principal young part in a play. He is usually the hero. All young parts in a play are professionally known as juveniles.

L.1. Left hand first entrance on the stage. (Audience's right.)

L.2. Left hand second entrance.

LADDER LIGHTS. Row of lights fixed to a vertical pipe and placed behind the tormentor: q.v. Also known as proscenium lights.

LEAD. The principal—or leading—character in a play. Hence juvenile lead, heavy lead, leading lady, second lead, and so on.

LEAD BLOCKS. These are wooden or steel cases surrounding three pulley wheels through which the short, long, and centre lines travel from the grid to the fly-floor.

LEFT. The prompt or audience's right-hand side of the stage.

LENGTH. Small portable line of lights that can be attached to pieces of scenery.

LIGHT GROUND ROW. A batten used on the floor of the stage.

LIGHTING BATTEN. A length of metal running from one side of the stage to the other, wired to take electric lamps.

LIGHT-PLOT. Complete description of all the lighting in a play, with cues showing when and where it is to be used in a play.

LIME. A single portable light. (The word "limes" derives from the pre-electric days when oxyhydrogen or similar "limelight" was the main stage illuminant. "Stealing the limelight" is a phrase of obvious meaning that has gone into general use.)

LINE. Anything used on the stage for tying, lashing, etc., is a line. Grid lines are 1½ in. hemp or ½ in. wire rope.

LINE OF BUSINESS. An actor's line of business is the part or parts in which he specializes.

LINKMAN. Outside attendant. Derives from the days when patrons' servants lighted their masters from the theatre doors to their carriages.

LITTLE THEATRE. In this country the Little Theatre Movement usually means Repertory. In the United States it means the Amateur Movement.

LOW COMEDY. Humour of the obvious, elementary type.

LOWER OUT. To let down a cloth from the grid.

L.U.E. Left upper entrance. The last entrance on stage nearest the right hand of the audience.

LYRICS. Songs in a musical play.

MADDERMARKET THEATRE. An amateur theatre at Norwich. Still thought to be the only public playhouse in England to have an Elizabethan stage.

MAKE-OFF. The last flats down stage on either side that join up the scene to the proscenium or proscenium wings.

MAKE-UP. The grease paint, wigs, and other materials used by actors. "To make-up": To alter the appearance so as to allow for the difference caused by the artificial lighting on the stage.

MARIONETTE. A puppet used to represent characters on a miniature stage.

MASK. To cover a part of the scene that should be visible to the audience, or, worse, to

hide from the view of the audience an actor who is speaking or carrying on part of the action.

MASK-IN. To cover any opening in a scene with curtains or flats to prevent the audience from seeing the parts of the stage not in use.

MASTER CARPENTER. The stage carpenter responsible for the department that controls the making and using of scenery.

MATINÉE-CALL. An announcement on the notice board that there will be an additional afternoon performance.

MEDIUMS. Square pieces of coloured gelatine placed in front of a light-box to secure colour effects on the stage.

MELODRAMA. A play of strong contrasts and a happy ending.

MENAGERIE. Pet name by actors for members of the orchestra.

MEZZANINE FLOOR. The floor under the stage.

MIME. Acting in a play without words. *L'Enfant Prodigue* is one of the best known.

MIRACLE PLAY. A medieval play with religious characters. A Morality is somewhat similar, except that the characters personify abstract qualities. A Mystery introduces the Deity.

MISE EN SCÈNE. Completed work of the stage director, usually referring to the effect of the grouping of the actors in relation to the settings.

MUGGER. A comedian who relies principally on facial idiosyncracies.

MUSIC CUE. A note on the prompt copy of a play to indicate when music is to be used either on the stage or in the orchestra. Also sometimes called music plot.

MUSICAL COMEDY. A play with music and dancing, of a light and vivacious kind.

NATURALISTIC. Production and acting in a natural manner. Sometimes called the "drawing room" style.

NOISES OFF. Any sounds made behind or at the side of the stage to give the illusion of storms, rain, wind, horses, motors, etc. These noises are entered in the prompt book with indication when they begin and end.

NON-SYNC. Gramophone records played during an interval on turntables not synchronized with the cinema projector. Derives from the early days when both sound-on-disc and sound-on-film were used in talkies.

NUMBERS. The songs and dances in a musical play. These are numbered in rotation for convenience of reference and are hence called numbers.

OBLIQUE. Scenery set at more than a right angle to the centre line is said to be set oblique.

OFF. The part of the stage not seen by the audience.

OFFER. When fitting doors or windows to their frames the carpenter "offers" them to the frames to see that they fit.

OFF-SET. A portion of a scene set at right angles to the centre line, except the backings.

OLD MEN. The actors who play the oldest characters in a play.

ON THE ROAD. On tour, applying to companies travelling from one town to another.

O. P. Opposite prompt. Off stage on the left hand side of the audience.

OPEN OFF. A practical door or window that opens out of the stage.

OPEN ON. Door or window that opens on to the stage.

OPERA. A dramatic composition in which music is the main feature.

OPERETTA. A light opera.

ORCHESTRA PIT or WELL. The place occupied by the musicians, immediately in front of the stage.

OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS PLEASE. Call-boy's warning just before curtain-rise.

PACKS. Flats placed against each other on the side wall or back of the stage or in store.

PAGEANT. Plays, or tableaux, given in the open-air. Usually an historical sequence.

PAINT-FRAME. Large wooden frame on which canvas is stretched by the artist who paints the scene.

PANATROPE. One of the earliest electrical loud speakers. Now used for any gramophone or amplifier by which records are reproduced. See Non-sync.

PANORAMA. The cyclorama is sometimes so-called, though a panorama is really a set of scenes painted on a long stretch of canvas mounted on cylinders worked by hand from one side of the stage to the other.

PANTOMIME. From the Latin *Pantomimus*—"the all-imitator." A play or part of a play where

the plot is entirely represented by action without dialogue. The term is sometimes applied to any foolery on the stage. The Christmas pantomime which is now the generally accepted idea of the term is an entertainment based on a nursery tale. *Cinderella*, *Babes in the Wood* and *Aladdin* are the most popular in order of merit.

PANTOMIME BUSINESS. A term meaning that a play is doing exceptionally well.

PAPER. Free admission pass. To "paper a house" is to have a liberal sprinkling of "dead-heads" in the house.

PAPER SET. Interior set in which walls are covered with wall-paper and not painted.

PARQUET STAGE CLOTH. Cloth painted like parquet flooring and used to cover the floor of the stage for interior scenes.

PART. The words, business, and cues of each character separately typed.

PASS DOOR. The connecting door between the stage and the front of the house.

PASTORAL. Romantic play in a rural setting. Also an open air performance.

PATCHES. Small patterned pieces of black court plaster worn on the face in eighteenth century plays.

PEG. A large screw with flat handle for fastening braces to flats on the floor of the stage.

PELMET. Short curtain or valance at top of proscenium to mask in Batted No. 1. Also a valance at the top of a window to mask the curtain pole.

PERCHES. Wooden or iron platforms on either side of the stage at the back of the proscenium twelve feet from stage level, where are the limes, arc lamps, and other lights used for the stage area just behind the footlights.

PERMANENT SETTING. A scene so designed that the principal parts remain fixed during the performance. Where only one scene is used throughout it is referred to as a "one set" play.

PICTURE STAGE. This, I am afraid, is a term of contempt for the pretty pretty style of stage production that regards the proscenium as a frame for a picture.

PIECE. Usually applied to complete stage set, made up, say, of house-piece, garden-piece, rock-piece, etc.

PILOT LIGHT. Small electric bulb on main

switchboard in circuit with stage and house lights. While the bulb is lit, the electrician knows that everything is "O.K."

PLAN. The plan of the theatre seats usually fixed on the counter of the box office.

PLAY. As a noun, a story in dialogue form intended for public performance on a stage. As a verb, to take a part in such a performance. Hence a player.

PLAY DOCTOR. A man with practical knowledge of the stage who is often called in to re-write weak passages and strengthen the action of a play.

PLOT. Idea round which a play is written. Often meaning the story-development of a play.

PLUG-BOX. Box containing set of plug holders to which plugs feeding portable lights are attached.

PONG. When an actor forgets or does not know his part, and makes up dialogue as he goes along, he is said to be "ponging."

POSITION. Places on the stage where the actors must stand or sit. The positions are determined by the producer during rehearsals.

PRACTICAL. Doors, windows, etc., which open, and, indeed, anything on the stage which does what it is accustomed to do in real life.

PREMIÈRE. The first public performance of a play.

PRO. Member of "The profession."

PRODUCER. Person responsible for the general presentation of a play. The producer's status has much increased during the past twenty years. He is now almost on a parity with the author.

PROFILE. Thin pieces of wood with canvas glued to each side, used on edges of flats requiring an irregular outline as foliage, masonry, etc.

PROMPT. To remind an actor of his word by repeating the lines from the prompt copy.

PROMPT-BOX. In opera performances, the prompter sits in a small cabinet open only to the stage, immediately in front of the conductor.

PROMPT-CORNER. The left side of the stage (the audience's right) just behind the proscenium where the stage manager controls the performance.

PROPERTIES. Furniture, pictures, and all other articles used on the stage apart from the actual scenery.

PROPERTY MASTER (PROPS). The man in charge of properties.

PROPERTY PLOT. A list of all articles used in each scene of a play.

PROPERTY TABLE. Small table near the principal entrances where actors' hand props are kept ready for use.

PROS. Proscenium. Arch on framework surrounding the stage opening.

PROS. WINGS. Wings immediately behind the proscenium.

PUPPET. See **MARIONETTE.**

PUSHER. A scene shifter.

QUICK CHANGE. This may mean a change of scenery or an actor's change of costume. For the latter he makes use of a quick change room made of flats on the side of the stage. It is fitted with chair, table, mirror, and portable light.

R. 1. Right-hand side first entrance (audience's left).

R. 2. Right-hand side second entrance.

RAG. Front curtain or tabs.

RAILS. Rough handrailing put round rostrums and stairs used off stage.

RAIN DRUM. A metal drum filled with small shot for producing sound of falling rain. A rain box, using dried peas, is smaller.

RAKE. Rise on a stage from footlights to the back. In modern theatre construction the stage is level and the auditorium is raked.

RAKING PIECE. Triangular piece of scenery, painted with a mounting road or bank used to mask in a ramp.

RALLY. Taking a portion of a play at a greatly increased pace.

RAMP. Slope made of planks from a rostrum to the stage.

RANT. To speak lines in a noisy manner.

REALISM. An effort to make a play resemble real life.

REHEARSAL. To prepare for the performance of a play by going through either part or the whole. A rehearsal call is a notice put up on the call board intimating the time, date, and acts to be done at the next rehearsal.

REP. A repertory theatre.

REPERTOIRE. Plays that a stock company can perform and the parts that are known and can be played by an actor.

REPERTORY THEATRE. A theatre with a regular company.

RÉPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE. A private performance of a new play preceding the first night.

REPRESENTATION. Performance of a play on the stage.

RESISTANCE. Lighting system enabling all lights to be diminished gradually.

RESPONSIBLE MAN. Actor who plays small part but can be depended upon for a sound performance.

RETURNS. Flats used next to the proscenium to make up the off-stage side of a scene.

REVEALS. Board placed behind scenic doors and windows to give an illusion of solidity to the scene.

REVOLVE. Scene of flats with castors on bottom sills so that it can be turned quickly to show another scene painted on the other side.

REVOLVING STAGE. Circular stage capable of holding up to three or five sets that can be shown to the audience in turn.

REVUE. A show of songs, dances, and sketches, usually of a topical order.

RIGHT OF STAGE. The half of the stage on the left side of the audience.

RING IN THE BAND. The stage manager's signal to the band room for the musicians to take their places in the orchestra pit to play the overture or other necessary music.

RING UP. The signal to the flies for the raising of the front curtain at the beginning of a play or act. "Ring down" is, of course, the signal to lower at the end.

ROLE. Part taken by an actor.

ROLL OUT. Hinged horizontal flap let into bottom of a flat through which performer can roll on to the stage. Used in Harlequinade.

ROSTRUM. Portable platform used for various purposes. It may consist of a folding framework and a movable stop, as a stockpiece is used as a landing place at the end of stairs, for terraces, etc.

ROUNDS. Applause given by the audience.

R.U.E. Right upper entrance. The last entrance on the (actor's) right-hand side nearest the footlights.

RUN. Consecutive performances of a play.

RUNWAY. Narrow platform projecting from stage into auditorium either round the outer edge of orchestra pit or above the centre aisle of auditorium. Also called the joy-plank.

THEATRE AND STAGE

STAGE TERMS

SAFETY CURTAIN. The fireproof curtain.

SAND BAGS. Small canvas bags attached to scenery lines to act as steadiers.

SAND CLOTH. Stage cloth painted to represent a road (or sand) to cover the stage in exterior scenes.

SARDOODLEDUM. Word coined by Bernard Shaw to denote the kind of well-made (or factory designed) play of which the High Priest was Victorien Sardou (1831-1908).

SCENARIO. Short skeleton of the plot of a play with details of scenes and characters.

SCENE. A place represented on the stage. Division of a play.

SCENE DOCK. Space where scenery is handled when coming in or out of theatre. Scene dock is where scenery is stored.

SCENE PLOT. A detailed list of all scenes in a play in order of use.

SCENERY. Canvas or wooden frames (see FLATS) or any construction of wood and canvas or other material used to represent a scene.

SCHWABE-HASAIT SYSTEM. Stage lighting by means of high powered lamps and projectors, mainly used to represent moving clouds, etc.

SCRIM. Thin canvas used for transparencies.

SCRIPT. Manuscript or printed copy of a play used in a production.

SECTIONS. Footlights and border lights are usually wired in three circuits to each colour, the circuits being known as sections

SET. A completely arranged scene. To set a scene is to arrange the scenery on the stage in readiness for the performance.

SET BACK. Framing for doors and windows for giving the appearance of solidity to these appurtenances.

SET-PIECE. Small piece of scenery used within the scene to represent a garden bank, rocks, etc. : any scenery that stands on the stage is a set-piece.

SHEET. A plan of the seating used in the box-office for marking off the seats as sold.

SHOT. When the edges of the flats are warped and will not properly join, they are planed—or shot—in order to make the joins true.

SIDE SPACE. Space on either side of the stage.

SIDE WING. Flats placed at an angle at the sides of the stage.

SIDES. Pages of an actor's script containing his

part and cues. These are typed on half sheets of typewriter-paper, which are called sides.

SIGHT LINES. Limits of visibility of the stage from various parts of the front of the house.

SILLS. Strips of iron fixed to bottoms of doors or window frames to keep them rigid.

SINKING STAGE. A stage whose floor may be lowered mechanically to the basement.

SITUATION. Either the position of the actors on the stage at any particular moment or the strong point to which the action is projected.

SKETCH. Short play of one scene with few characters and one situation.

SKY CLOTH. Back curtain representing the sky.

SLIDERS. Sections of stage that are movable.

SOLILOQUY. Speech spoken by actor who holds the stage alone. A soliloquy is usually "spoken thoughts."

SNOW BOX. A square canvas box with perforations through which finely cut paper can drop on to the stage. The box is suspended on lines above the stage and works when gently swayed.

SOUBRETTE. Maid servant or similar character, especially with implication of pertness, coquetry, intrigue, etc., in comedy.

SPACE STAGE. A method of staging plays with light focused on the actors so that no setting is discernible.

SPECIALIST LEAD. Actor who specializes in a certain type of character.

SPILL. Effective area of light thrown from a lamp.

SPOT. Spot-light. Metal box containing high powered light, lens, and reflector, and groove for holding coloured mediums. Used for directing light upon a particular actor or portion of a scene.

SPOT LINE. Block fixed in a position on the grid to enable scenery to be flown out of alignment.

STAGE. The entire area behind the proscenium.

STAGE CLOTH. Painted canvas to represent pavement, carpet, or, in fact, any floor covering.

STAGE DIRECTION. Any remarks inserted in a play to indicate movements or action.

STAGE DIRECTOR. Usually known as producer.

STAGE DOOR. The entrance to the theatre used by actors and staff.

STAGE TERMS

STAGE HANDS. Men employed in any capacity in the theatre.

STAGE MANAGER. The chief executive behind the scenes. He controls everything and is responsible for the performance of a play, the preparation and setting of scenes, lighting, dressing, and everything else. He is also responsible for seeing that the play is kept on the lines intended by the producer.

STAGE SCREW. Metal screw of wide thread, and grip, for fixing braces to the flats or floor of the stage.

STANDARDS. High powered lights that can be altered in height, used to flood large areas behind the scenes.

STAND BY. Direction by the stage manager to stage hands to be prepared to carry out specified work, or to actors to wait at the end of a play.

STAND-BY TABLE. Small table off stage where hand props are placed in readiness for use.

STAR. Actor or actress playing the leading part in a play. So called because in some theatres the leading man or woman's dressing room is distinguished by a star painted on the door.

STAR TRAP. Traps in the stage with lids made in sections that open in the shape of a star. Rarely used except in pantomime.

STAY. Piece of wood or metal to keep flats firm when cleated together.

STILES. Wooden strips forming the inner framework of a flat.

STOCK. Repertory. A stock company is one playing their own stock of plays.

STOP BLOCK. Small piece of wood fastened to practical doors to prevent their being opened in the wrong direction.

STOPPED THE SHOW. When an actor makes a big personal hit he is said to stop the show.

STRAIGHT PART. Part that an actor can play without character make-up.

STRIKE. To remove a scene from the stage. When a scene is dismantled it is said to be struck.

STRINGER. The boards to which the treads of stairs are fastened.

STRIPS. Also called strip lights and lengths. Short lengths of wooden grooved casing with small lights attached for lighting outside doors, windows, etc.

THEATRE AND STAGE

STRUT. Wooden brace to support flats.

STUDY. To learn one's part in a play.

SUB PLOT. Any secondary or subsidiary plot to the main theme of a play.

SUPERS. Stage hands engaged to walk on in crowd scenes. More largely used, the word embraces any supernumerary actor.

SWALLOW. Memory. An actor with a good swallow is one who memorizes parts quickly.

TABS. The front curtain only lowered at the end of an act or a play.

TAG. The last sentence in a play. It is a theatrical superstition that if these words are spoken at rehearsal the play will be a flop.

TAILS. Short pieces of canvas hung from the fly rail to prevent sitters in the front rows seeing over the tops of the scenery to the working parts of the stage.

TAKE A CALL. When at the end of a play or an act, an actor appears on the stage, or in front of the tabs, in response to the applause of the audience.

TAKE THE CORNER. To move to the right- or left-hand side of the stage.

TEMPO. Time, pace, or rhythm used in acting. Sometimes called timing.

THEATRE. Building designed for the performance of stage plays.

THROW. The distance at which the rays of a light can be used effectively.

THROW LINE. Cord or rope for lashing flats together.

THROWN AWAY. To speak part of a speech rapidly or indistinctly because it does not give an actor any acting possibilities.

THUNDER SHEET. Long strip of sheet iron hung from the flies. When shaken or struck it resembles the sound of thunder.

TIME SHEET. List kept by the stage manager giving the playing time of each scene, and act, the intervals, and the total time taken by the performance.

TOGGLE RAILS. The battens inserted in the middle of scenery frames to take the strain from the canvas.

TORMENTOR. Flats or curtains on either side of the proscenium to mask the actors after their exits and to hide the prompter and the lighting effects down stage.

TOUR. A company taking a play to provincial towns is on tour or on the road.

TRANSPARENCY. A painted cloth that can be illuminated from behind.

TRAPS. Small movable parts of the stage through which persons or articles can be lowered or raised.

TREADMILL. A kind of endless belt employed for carrying "moving" scenery; is also used for the effect of marching men or galloping horses.

TREADS. Portion of stairs on which the foot treads.

TRICK LINE. Strong black string used to pull things off the stage or to move hinged scenery for quick change effects.

TRUCK. Low platform on castors used for moving heavy portions of a set.

TRY BACK. Direction at rehearsal to repeat scene or part of a scene.

TRY OUT. To try out a play is to produce it in a provincial theatre before West-end presentation. Sometimes referred to as "trying-it-on-the-dog."

TUMBLE. In theatres where the height above the stage does not permit of a flat being hauled up straight, it is tumbled, i.e. two sets of lines are used to raise the top and bottom of the flat simultaneously, thus folding it in two. The upright wooden frames of the flat are hinged half-way up and a batten is used at the fold to prevent creasing. In some theatres, the fireproof is dropped in several sections that overlap.

TUMBLER. Thin batten round which cloths are rolled when being stored.

TURN OVER. To go through a pack of flats to ascertain either their condition or the subjects painted on them.

TYERS. Thin strips of canvas used to fasten rolled cloths when not in use.

TYPE. Actors who specialize in well-defined parts are said to play to type.

UNDERSTUDY. Actor appointed to rehearse and study a part and to play it if for any reason the regular actor of it cannot appear.

UNITIES. The dramatic unities are derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, though the French Classicists are responsible for their present concrete form. They are defined as the unities of place, time, and action. The first holds that the dramatic scene shall not be changed essentially

during the course of the play; the second, that the events shall occur within the space of twenty-four hours; and the third, that all the incidents and speeches shall be subordinated to the main argument.

UP STAGE. Any portion on the stage beyond six feet from the footlights, or, alternatively, all movements towards the back of the stage.

UPRIGHTS. Perpendicular posts at each corner of a fit-up frame.

VALANCE. Pelmet placed at the top of the proscenium arch or at the tops of windows to cover curtain poles, etc.

VALERIUM. Ceiling cloth hanging as a canopy. Often used in a box-set.

VAMPS. Doors cut in a flat and fitted with springs for an actor to jump through. In the cinema world, a "vamp" is what in melodrama days was called an adventuress.

VENTILATOR. A play or performance that empties the house.

VISION CLOTH. Cloth with small portion cut out. The aperture is covered with gauze through which when illuminated a character standing behind it is visible to the audience, giving a vision effect.

WALK ON. To take a part in a play without having any lines to speak.

WARDROBE. The collection of costumes used in a particular play.

WARNING. Signal by light or bell to the stage hands to be prepared to change scenes or lower curtain. When the word "warning" is used instead of bell or light, it is followed by the word "go."

WELL FIRMED. To know one's part.

WINCH. Apparatus for raising or lowering the tabs.

WIND MACHINE. Ribbed wooden drum mounted on a metal spindle with handle and supported on a wooden stand. When rotated against a piece of stretched canvas, the effect is similar to the sound of wind.

WING IT. Said of an actor who learns his part while waiting in the wings to go on.

WING MEN. Stage hands who attend to the wings.

WING NUT. Nut provided with flanges so that it can be turned by the fingers.

STAGE TERMS

WINGS. Painted flats used as scenery set at an angle on each side of the stage with spaces between for entrances and exits. Wings are rarely used now that the box set is so universal.

The sides of the stage outside the acting area are still called wings.

WOOD BORDERS. Borders painted to look like branches and foliage.

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WOOD WINGS. Flats painted to represent trees and used at the sides of the stage. Part only of these flats are visible to the audience.

WORKING AREA. The parts of the stage used by the stage hands.

WORKING LIGHT. A light independent of the stage lighting system used to enable the stage hands to see to do their work.

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SIR RALPH RICHARDSON

'Theatre World'

ACHIEVEMENTS AND HOPES OF THE THEATRE

SIR RALPH RICHARDSON, Actor. His associations with the Old Vic date from 1930

WHENEVER I think of the theatre in modern life I find myself striking a contrast between the existing theatre and the theatre as it might be—if the ideals stated and propagated by the playwright-critic-producer-actor-scholar Harley Granville-Barker were realized. Therefore, let me begin by quoting from his book *The Exemplary Theatre*, which, despite other stimulating and provocative works on the contemporary theatre, and in particular the contribution of J. B. Priestley and St. John Ervine, remains pre-eminent because of its range and depth.

“A theatre to-day is, as a rule, a place of entertainment where plays are produced. A sounder purpose strives to make of it an institution where they are kept alive—a library of drama. Following this narrow path of reform we might still hope for better plays, production, and entertainment, all three, even beyond recognition; to sustain and increase the drama’s life very greatly.”

I am convinced that if Lilian Baylis had lived long enough or if she had happened to work in circumstances that were conducive to rapid growth and successful development—for she had to try to overcome great financial and other handicaps—she would, perhaps, have got nearer the realization of the idealist’s vision than she did, although her distinctive work has earned for her a name that cannot be erased easily from the pages of the theatrical and dramatic history of our country. She died in 1937, and was succeeded by Tyrone Guthrie as administrator of the Vic-Wells organization.

I do not intend to write a history of the evolution of the Old Vic under the management of Lilian Baylis nor to trace, in detail, the theatre’s subsequent development. It is, however, of interest to work backwards from the present, through the post-war and war years to the middle thirties.

In 1948, pronouncements of the Government and the London County Council indicated that the project of a National Theatre on the south

bank of the Thames was to be a certainty. By this time many regular theatregoers had assumed that *The National Theatre* company had been functioning for years though not in a National Theatre. They had in mind, of course, the Old Vic company which during and after the war was very much in the eye of the theatregoing public. Whereas before the war the Old Vic’s main activities were concentrated in the Waterloo Road building, during the war they were spread throughout the provinces. A note in one of the 1942 programmes gives a good idea of what was taking place: “We have never been busier. We have conducted no less than fifteen tours in two years carrying productions of ancient and modern classics all over England, Scotland and Wales.” After the war, as Mr. Norman Marshall points out in his admirable book *The Other Theatre*, “the Governors began to realize that unless they made drastic alterations in their policy, the Vic’s reputation as the leading English classic theatre would soon vanish for ever. In conjunction with C.F.M.A. it was decided that apart from continuing to maintain a company at the Liverpool Playhouse, the Vic should concentrate on founding a permanent repertoire company for the performance of the classics. Tyrone Guthrie, while remaining administrator of the Drama, Opera and Ballet companies, relinquished any active direction of this new company for which a trio of directors was appointed.”

Significant work had included the presentation of *Hamlet* at the New in the spring of 1944; performances of *Abraham Lincoln*, *The Russians* and Peter Ustinov’s play *Blow Your Own Trumpet* at the Playhouse in 1943, during which year, incidentally, the company had appeared during the first four weeks of the re-opening of the Theatre Royal, Bristol, in *She Stoops to Conquer* and Judith Guthrie’s new play *Queen Bee*; and the performances of the two remaining companies on tour, one giving Houseman’s *Jacob’s Ladder* with Clemence Dane and Lewis Casson in the leads, and the other, the Old Vic Shakespearean Company, presenting *Othello*, *The Merchant of*

Venice and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with a short season at the New.

This sketch of the activities of the Old Vic during the post-war and war years suggests the good work undertaken and performed. But what of the theatre's early struggles?

The Old Vic was more than a centre for the production and the performance of plays. It was school and social centre alike. It worked on a basis that revealed artistic perception, organizing ability and unflagging enthusiasm. The theatre was looked upon as a social institution, with artistic achievement, not profit-making, the driving force, and though the Old Vic was not ideally situated, the practice grew for keen lovers of Shakespeare and of the theatre as an instrument for the advancement of theatrical and dramatic art, to take special steps and to make real sacrifices in order to become associated with its activities. They, undoubtedly, took "something" to the theatre, from which in return, they derived an inner satisfaction of co-operating in a laudable cause. It was a satisfaction of the spirit and of the mind.

There, were advantages to be gained too, by professional association with producers who experimented; with actresses and actors who were enthusiastic, energetic, and self-sacrificing in their advancement of a cause in which they believed. There was further satisfaction. It sprang from appreciation of the responsiveness of the audience, the members of which in some theatres are apt to be overlooked or undervalued as essential to the success of theatrical enterprise as a whole.

Theatre-goers supported the Old Vic not only because the plays that were produced there appealed to them, but also because they shared the enthusiasm of the players, players they came to know better and better as they added to the number of their attendances. Enthusiasts who supported the productions regularly created for themselves opportunities to see actresses and actors in different parts, although from the aspect of the management it was not practicable always to change the plays as frequently as some thought

desirable. I mention this seemingly trivial point because my belief is that in a well-organized theatre, maintained in the interests of dramatic and theatrical art, changes of plays, interchanges of buildings, and persistency of adequate support to enhance the value of the audience as an integral part of purposeful theatre-going will be factors that will greatly strengthen the appeal of the theatre as a social and artistic institution.

Much, too, could be stated about the co-operative work possible in a people's theatre.

I have in mind the workshops in which practical aspects of stagecraft behind the scenes can be learned; the activities that are inseparable from the dressing as well as the mounting of Shakespearean, Elizabethan, Restoration, and modern plays. Some of these activities were undertaken at the Old Vic. They have been developed, as have specialized branches of the work that are strictly relevant to the creation and maintenance of a people's theatre. To these belong the educational, recreative, and imaginative work that can be done in children's theatres through the medium of school performances, festivals, and certain competitions which avoid unhealthy antagonisms and develop the co-operative spirit. It is that spirit which is increasingly needed in the theatre of a democratic community. My hope is that amateurs (and others) will adopt it eagerly and adapt it to their own special requirements.

The good work continues and develops. What of the future? And what, especially, of the rise of the National Theatre? I think the expectations of many are stated, inspiringly, by Mr. Marshall: "When the National Theatre is built, the Vic will be the company to occupy it, and then the newer Old Vic will continue. The National Theatre, so far from making a theatre such as the Old Vic unnecessary, will make it more than ever essential. The National Theatre will enormously increase the audience for fine plays, and one theatre alone will not be able to satisfy the demands."

There, in short, are the hopes; the achievements can be awaited with confidence.

Ralph Richardson



J. B. PRIESTLEY



SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THEATRE

J. B. PRIESTLEY, *Novelist, Playwright and Dramatic Critic*

ABOUT two years ago I wrote as follows: "In no country in Europe is the social significance of the Theatre less appreciated than it is in Great Britain. Libraries, art galleries, and museums are maintained by the Government and by municipal authorities, but not theatres. Nobody grumbles if public money is spent on pictures, sculpture, books, and archaeological and scientific exhibits; on parks and bowling greens and tennis courts and lakes for boating; but there would be an outcry, mostly from the older folk, if some portion of the municipal rates were devoted to the art of the Drama. We must spend a good deal of money teaching Shakespeare in schools (even though Shakespeare should be appreciated, and not used as material for a lesson), but never think of spending money on producing Shakespeare in the theatre, where he belongs. Most foreigners would consider that a town was sadly incomplete if it did not possess at least one well-equipped theatre, and the Russians build better theatres in the Ural Mountains, in Central Asia, and even on collective farms, than can be found in the whole length and breadth of some English counties. Moreover, because playgoing, like smoking and drinking strong liquors, is apparently regarded here as a minor vice, it is subjected to a very stiff taxation. 'If you *will* go to theatres,' the authorities say to us, 'then we shall make you pay a special tax.' It is as if official Britain still accepted the view of those 17th century Puritans who promptly closed all the theatres. The theatres are open now, but they exist, so to speak, merely on sufferance."

Now in all fairness I must amend the above paragraph. Since it was written, certain things have happened. Local authorities have been empowered to spend public money on civic theatres. The Entertainment Tax, though still a formidable charge, has been reduced for the Theatre, and has been abolished altogether on dramatic performances in small village halls. We have been promised that something like a million pounds will be spent on building and equipping a National Theatre. The Arts Council, though its

activities urgently need to be multiplied twelve times, is not in retreat but is still quietly advancing.

On the other hand, although the British Theatre Conference sent copies of many important resolutions, pleading for immediate reform, to various members of the Government whose departments would have been concerned with those reforms, no action has been taken by the Government. And, indeed, the economic plight of the British Theatre, faced as it is with high rents and costs, the Entertainment Tax, and a public that are finding it hard to pay the not unreasonable theatre prices, is very serious at the present time.

In order to create a Drama worthy of our people, we need far more than these mere tokens and small gestures of sympathy. In view of this, it is very hard to believe that the official attitude towards the Theatre has really changed, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself found time to address the British Theatre Conference and raised hopes by his excellent speech. Those of us who work in the Theatre still cannot help feeling that in this country, unlike so many others, we exist more or less on sufferance, to be tolerated rather than encouraged.

All this is very curious. It is very curious because, although we have some Puritans and theatre-haters among us, we are a people who like the Theatre, and have always shown a notable talent for it. It is not true—although it is often suggested—that people like the Russians take naturally to the Theatre, whereas we English have not the temperament for it. Long before the Russian theatre existed, the English theatre was famous, glittered with glorious names, including the greatest of them all, the world's delight, Shakespeare. Except during the Victorian age, which was primarily one of poets and novelists, we have always been able to produce as many great dramatists as any other country, and generally more than most. Our actors and actresses have always been excellent. Our ordinary folk, from the time of Elizabeth onwards, have always been keenly appreciative of the Drama.

Indeed, I take the view that we Islanders are essentially an imaginative and dramatic people, who respond at once to imaginative and dramatic appeals of the kind that Churchill made in 1940. It is a mistake, and one too often made, to confuse the mass of the English people with a comparatively small ruling class, whose members were carefully trained to avoid any display of emotion and to distrust the imagination, like so many potential Roman governors. Such persons may well be wary of the Theatre, with its terrific impact upon the emotions and its heightening of dangerous ideas, and possibly they have had good reasons for discouraging the art of the Drama. But these are not the people in general, from whom have come the dramatists, the players, and the delighted audiences. And it may be because the people themselves have not been directly responsible so far for the organization of our cultural and social life that the Theatre has been so strangely neglected here.

We English people of to-day badly need the Theatre. We need it just as we need a balanced diet, sensible clothing, decent houses, adequate education, and medical services. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that the Theatre does much to relieve the strain of modern urban life. So, it will be said, do many other things. Of course they do, but I think the Theatre does it better than most of these things; makes a much more thorough job of it. As people used to say—and may still do, although I have not heard it lately—the Theatre “takes you out of yourself.” (A very profound phrase that is, too.) And modern urban life demands this kind of release. Mere relaxing, though useful, is not enough. We do not need simply to escape from and temporarily forget (if we can) one set of circumstances. It is necessary that we should have at least a glimpse of another set of circumstances. If we are going to be taken out of ourselves, then we should be taken *somewhere*. And the Theatre provides the “somewhere”—and often very artfully and lavishly too, with its colour and wit and laughter and tears and excitement and beauty. Moreover, although in the Drama we are experiencing more life, we are experiencing it in a different way.

When a well-written play, excellently produced and acted, is set before us, we are given the privilege of witnessing a little of this life

of ours as a demi-god might see it. The life that we see on the stage has been elaborately contrived so that everything in it—the shape and colour of a room, the faces people have and the clothes they wear, what they say and how they say it, what they do down to the tiniest gesture—has meaning and significance. Thus we are turned temporarily into demi-gods. It appears as if our knowledge and insight have been suddenly and enormously enlarged. And the better the play and the better the production, the more exhilarated we feel. A little piece of life has been so contrived, shaped, and coloured that we feel we can understand it all. To experience this is thus to do something more than merely relax. It is to have an adventure of the spirit. It is an escape from our ordinary life, but not an escape into oblivion, a retreat into the womb. We retreat only in order to make another attack, this time, as it were, on the flank. People who do not understand the Theatre and consider it trivial, are always astonished when they come in contact with theatrical folk to discover that these folk take themselves and their work so seriously. (I rehearsed plays during air raids when none of us bothered about the raids, but brushed aside the whole senseless attempt at interruption.) Theatrical folk have plenty of vanity and egoism, yet it is not vanity and egoism that give this high seriousness to the job. It is chiefly an intuitive conviction, for which probably no words could be found, that there is something really serious in this business of play-acting, that there is, so to speak, more in it than meets the eye. And remember—the roots of the Theatre go down a long way. The early forms of play-acting are never found far away from religion. They were recognized, I suspect, as a kind of magic. And they remain a kind of magic.

This brings me to the second reason why we English people of to-day badly need the Theatre. It is this—that you cannot enjoy drama without becoming a member of an audience, and being a member of an audience is in itself a valuable and rewarding experience. Now this audience aspect of the Theatre is too often overlooked. But it is all-important. And it is what makes the Theatre quite different from films, radio, or television. In films, radio, or television, something complete is offered to the public. But in

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the Theatre the audience itself co-operates. No production takes anything like a final shape until the audience sits in front of it. But that is not all. Because the mood of an audience may differ from night to night, so, too, the production may differ. "How are they to-night?" the players ask each other in the wings, and vary their performances accordingly. But the "they" is really a kind of collective, many-headed person. As members of an audience, we do not behave as we would if we were alone. A joke that might make us merely smile if we were alone, may throw us into fits of laughter as members of an audience. A touch of pathos that would hardly move us if we were sitting at home may become terribly poignant to us when we are in the crowded playhouse. It is possible, of course, to refuse to share the emotions of the rest of the audience, deliberately to separate oneself and to retain the hard edges of one's individuality, but it is not possible to do this and at the same time to appreciate properly what the Theatre is offering. In other words, to enjoy the Drama you have to join in. And it is this joining in and this being joined in that are of very great value.

It is just because the Theatre offers a communal experience, making you laugh, and wonder, and weep, with your neighbours, that we Islanders need it so badly. I do not mean by this that we must necessarily have huge doses of it. But we need far more of it than most people have. We live in a highly organized industrial community that cannot exist without elaborate planning, co-operation, an understanding of common aims, an appreciation of common sacrifices. If we cannot learn to live together properly, our civilization may perish. Certainly this country cannot survive as a prosperous community unless we plan and work together, and develop a strong sense of a common life and purpose. And the shared experience offered by the Theatre makes a powerful contribution to this sense, stimulates it, and strengthens it. The ego is less lonely and suspicious. Other people are closer and more real than they were. We have been on an adventure together, and have been compelled to share every twist and turn of it. Our common humanity has been made plain to us. We have wondered and laughed and wept at life together. We have co-operated to experience a common feeling of

THEATRE: SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

release and exhilaration. Together for an hour or two we have lifted the burden, we have both strengthened and enlarged our lives.

So far I have considered the social value of the Theatre from the point of view of the audience. But there is, of course, the point of view of those working in the Theatre. If they are going to do good work, they will have to function as a team. And the Theatre demands a team composed of many varied talents. It is the meeting-ground for many different forms of ability. It offers opportunities to writers, players, scenic artists and costume designers, musicians, electrical and mechanical experts, and fine organizers. A lot of different people can have a thundering good time working away behind the scenes. There are quarrels, of course, but there are also magnificent loyalties, and the kind of comradeship and fun you find among people who are working together often against time and with a certain urgency. (The first night begins to creep nearer and then finally comes roaring up.) When, in the depression of the early Thirties, I visited many industrial districts for my book, *English Journey*, I was much impressed by the part played in so many people's lives by the various new Civic or Little Theatres; and I said of them: "These theatres are attracting to themselves the more eager, impressionable, intelligent younger people in these industrial towns, where depression has hung like a black cloud for the last few years. Some of them, in various places, have told me what this dramatic work has meant to them, and in many instances the persons in question have not been producing, designing scenery, playing big parts, but may only have been selling programmes, taking tickets or doing the accounts . . . In communities that have suffered the most from industrial depression, among younger people who frequently cannot see what is to become of their jobs and their lives, these theatres have opened little windows into a world of ideas, colour, fine movement, exquisite drama, have kept going a stir of thought and imagination for actors, helpers, audiences, have acted as outposts for the army of the citizens of tomorrow, demanding to live, though they should possibly have less food on their table and shabbier clothes on their backs, a life at once more ardent and imaginative and more thoughtful than their fathers and

THEATRE: SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

mothers ever knew . . ." So much for our depression; and now for a graver crisis.

In 1945 I visited the city of Leningrad, which endured one of the most terrible sieges in all history. During the worst period, when the only supply line into the city was across the frozen Lake Ladoga and hundreds of thousands of citizens died from famine and the city was at its last gasp, the theatres were still kept alive, often with actors and technicians rushing from the trenches to the stage doors; and these play-going folk were at last grandly triumphant.

THEATRE AND STAGE

And I cannot help wondering if a city filled with sour, unimaginative individualists and theatre-haters would have survived such an ordeal. I ask myself, too, if we British, with lean times ahead, with many sacrifices still to be made, are wise in refusing to feed our imagination and to strengthen our sense of community by not giving the Theatre its proper place in our society. This ancient and subtle mother of the communal arts is still with us: let us restore her to her seat of honour among us and then wait again for her words of magic.



v

VOICE, SPEECH AND GESTURE

POISE AND MOVEMENT
THE VOCAL INSTRUMENT

Elsie Fogarty
Gwyneth Thoburn

WOMEN IN DRAMA

JOHN BOURNE, Playwright and Critic; Women's Institutes and British Drama League Adjudicator

IT is no exaggeration to say that women have the future of the Amateur Dramatic Movement in their hands. The membership of most societies is 75 per cent women, and the number of women in committee work, or who attend drama conferences, is out of all proportion to that of men.

Those of us who have to advise societies on their choice of plays are constantly appealed to for plays with all-women casts, or in which the male parts can be taken by the opposite sex. With ceaseless regularity, requests are received for plays that have not more than two important male characters, although it is frequently added "we *can* scrape up a third man if the part is not very exacting."

These facts, coupled with the widespread growth of dramatic work in connexion with women's institutes, girl guides, and the large number of youth clubs and women's guilds are challenging to dramatists. Some people see in them the danger of the Amateur Movement becoming feminist and partisan; but that is not my view, as women, generally, have no desire to segregate themselves—rather the reverse!

The psychological significance lies in the fact that women and girls—possibly by reason of their more humdrum existence—feel the need of drama in their lives. They have found it a valuable corrective. Its social side appeals to them; and who will deny that acting is definitely part of their make-up?

The challenge to the dramatists is equally emphatic. None, of course, dares to dictate to the playwright concerning the proportions of male and female in his characters. But, considering the immensely widened scope of women's activities, it is surprising that 90 per cent of plays still keep the male all-important. Those playwrights who claim to be commercially-minded are, indeed, missing the market if they ignore the new turn of events. And so are the publishers.

The all-women society creates its own problems. No woman when acting the part of a man is completely convincing. Gestures may be

studied; the voice may be tuned to a lower key; make-up may be perfect—but a woman's general appearance, and more often than not the attitudes she adopts, remain feminine.

Modern plays with mixed casts are almost impossible for the all-women society. Costume plays are easier, not only because they deal with periods in history in which clothes had more frills to them, but because the people of such plays have more airs and graces—in other words they are less masculine *looking* (according to modern standards).

For these reasons, Shakespeare is the great stand-by of the all-women cast. Once the audience is willing to accept the convention (and they should frankly be approached to do so by programme notices and other means) it is surprising what can be achieved. I have seen performances of *Henry the Fourth*, Part I, and even *Antony and Cleopatra*, by all-women casts, which were completely successful because the audience knew beforehand that they would see no men and therefore suffered no disappointment. I have also seen impressive performances of *Hamlet* and Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* by casts consisting entirely of boys. Again, it was merely a question of accepting the convention.

Admittedly, these methods are makeshifts, although it is more satisfying to see a shapely and well-spoken woman Antony than (as might be inevitable in the circumstances) to suffer an "impossible" male in the part. In Shakespeare's time the women's parts were taken by men and, since times have changed, there seems to be no valid reason why the order should not be reversed if the occasion demands it. The aim of these women's organizations, however, ought definitely to be to encourage drama in a *general* sense and to inspire the men to realize the value of the work. Many women's institutes are carrying out that policy. In the villages, however, men are notoriously shy, and lack the leadership that their sisters and wives and mothers have received.

The women's guilds, especially those associated with the Co-operative Movement, keep

strictly to a feminine membership. Their problem is acute since many members are middle-aged or over. They are constantly in search of plays with a minimum of "young" parts and, preferably, with a note of "social significance." They rarely attempt the full-length play. They avoid male impersonation as much as possible. Here, then, is a serious difficulty for the playwright and the producer, especially as in most women's guilds the players pride themselves on belonging to a "working-class" movement and have no wish to engage in sophistication. In short, their scope is limited. But the movement is comparatively new as far as drama is concerned, has enormous potentialities, and cannot or ought not to be ignored, for drama began with just "these sort of people," and it is they who have mainly kept it alive.

The girl guides and similar young people's organizations have not the same difficulties. They can tackle the many children's plays without hurting the susceptibilities of those who dislike male impersonation. Nobody minds a little girl dressing up as a boy and, in any case, there is a wide field of fantasy that they can enter.

The youth clubs are in a different category. Their members are young people, independent and somewhat resentful of "older" interference. At an awkward age, they are too old to act in children's plays and too young to be of great use to experienced societies. However, when they are sponsored by organizations such as the Y.M.C.A. there is no bar against young men taking part. Indeed, most youth clubs are "mixed," although in the acting groups, women predominate. My own view is that the best way is to treat all youth club members as adults and, in drama, to proceed with them as with members of an old (perhaps inexperienced) society.

The fact emerges that women's drama groups are largely in the hands of the playwright who can no longer argue that the all-women play is impossibly limited in its characterization because women are limited in their activities. The Second Great War demonstrated that women can

enter almost any sphere of life; and widened their possibilities as characters in plays. It is only fair to add that plays with all-women casts are increasing—particularly one-act plays—and that their quality is improving.

Besides acting, women are having a great influence in other departments of dramatic work. They are equal to men as producers, and are much better stage-managers because of their instinct for detail. They are invaluable as costume designers and makers. Their tendency in stage decoration is towards the elaborate or freakish; they are rarely good at lighting.

Women are not favoured as adjudicators, and women's organizations undoubtedly prefer to employ men in that capacity. Men dislike being judged by women. Nobody knows the reason; perhaps there is none. But the fact remains, and I can only conjecture that it is because dramatic work is meant to be an antidote to home-life! Why women do not like to be adjudicated upon by their own sex I cannot explain. My own view is that the woman-adjudicator is inclined to over-emphasize small points to the extent of making her miss the wood for the trees. While, for example, a man will appreciate the broad effect of a costume, a woman will often be influenced by some subsidiary detail. The majority of women-judges seem to be drawn from the ranks of the elocutionists and have a habit of making elocution their chief concern. As most village societies have no opportunities for studying that important branch of acting (and it *is* only a branch) they find themselves hard hit when it comes to matters over which they can have very little control.

So long as women in drama keep their enterprise on a broad basis, their work can be safely left to them. Their sensitive minds, their enthusiasm, and their emotional qualities are among the most valuable assets of the whole Amateur Movement. They are setting the pace, as in other peaceable pursuits, and the men who do not help them, or who merely patronize them, are exhibiting their cowardice and their inferiority.

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