THE ACADEMY.

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

From these tragic memories it is easy to pass to others of a wild and gaudy kind, for in Holborn the pickaxe is heard on every hand, and at every blow some memory starts to life. A little farther westward, on the north side of the street, there is a gap from which clouds of engine-smoke roll across the traffic. Here, in Fuller's, or Fulwood's, Rents, a shaft of the new electric railway is sunk on the very sight of Squire's and other coffee houses of riper memory. Several of Addison's Spectators were dated from this spot, and here, too, and not without some grace on its windlass, and the whistle shrills discordant, the good knight and the Spectator met for quiet talk. Sir Rogers's venerable figure drew the eyes of the whole room upon him, and he had no sooner seated himself at the upper End of the high table, but he called for a clean Pipe, a Paper of Tobacco, a Dish of Coffee, a Wax-Candle, and the Supplement with such an Air of Comfort and Good-humour, that all the Boys in the Coffee-room (who seemed to take pleasure in serving him) were all at once employed on his several Errands, insomuch that no Body else could come at a Dish of Tea, till the Knight had got all his Conveniences about him.

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

PARIS LETTER.

(From our French Correspondent.)

STEPHANE MALLARME.

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

The fact is, Mallarme was a writer guided by sight, and not by ear or sense. What he writes is not to be read aloud or to be understood; it is written to be looked at. The juxtaposition of words is arranged for him, not by what these convey to the intelligence, but by their distinguished elegance, by their graceful look. They may mean nothing at all, or simply the grotesque. The thing for the printed page is to furnish evidence of choice. "Is it willingly," Daudet once asked him, "that you have retired into tenacia that the world may not follow you, to be alone with yourself, to be yourself, and to know your dreams is it voluntarily?"

The delicious malice of Daudet's question rests for ever in interrogation. That "involuntarily" is delightful. To be sure, Mallarme has his answer: "But, my dear fellow, the more operation of writing consists in putting black upon white." Mallarme never did anything else. Here is a page chosen at random, and heaven knows if they lack in the slender collection of his works—those impenetrable pages written in an unknown tongue, in the scorn of syntax, whose meaning he himself would describe as "absconse." The word is a favourite of his, as is the condition in intelligence. He describes an afternoon in which his lucidity is veiled in mental somnolence. He fancies a woman's skirt invades his solitude, and thus addresses the unseen lady: "I could neither translate Mallarme into French nor English, not often having the ghost of an idea what he means! Perhaps another day the reader will find me published, and furnish me with the clue of this passage, which I own, looks very pretty and simple in print:"

"A quel type s'ajustent vos traits, je sens leur precision, Madame, interrompue tendrement, si je puis dire, buissonniere, avec une boude en diamant, des centuries. Si vague concept so suffit; et ne transgresse point le deobe imposant de generalite qui permet et ordonne d'exclure tous visages, au point que la relevation d'un (malles point le pencher, aver, sur le furfut seul ou je regne) chasserait mon trouble, avec lequel ii m'a que faire."

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

"A la une accolante, on base de basaltite et des pines sacrant des echos enclaves par une trompe sans vent qui qualifie de deplaisir le rire, l'eau, l'ecume, mains et larmes suprime une entre les espaces aboli le lable d'eau, ou cola que furveste route de quelques pection haute tout l'abime venu pies dans le blanc et blanc qui traine avancement sans aux, le blanc enfant d'une etrine."

For a prince of poets, confess that this is indeed a royal mystification. But there is a large gathering of mortals who remain faithful to the sailor's parrot, and who admire the more the less they understand. Yet, strange to say, the man who could make this brutal assault upon our poet's patience could now and then write verses so true, delicate, and simple. I remember an essay by M. Jules Mauve, the novelist, who, in discussing about Mallarme's little theatre at Valvins, where he did quote a couple of really charming sonnets actually written in French. Here is the summer adieu, recited by the poet's daughters to the friendly audience:

"Avec le soleil nous partons
Pour revenir au temps des roses.
Sans or, O Gilles et Marton!
Avec le soleil nous partons.
Mais il nous reste encore
De quoi chasser les jours sombres.
Avec le soleil nous partons
Pour revenir au temps des roses."

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

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

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

"Ainsi quand des raisins j'ai su l'écrit:
Pour bannir un regret par ma feinte carte.
Rieur, j'elevo au clat et le grappe sale
Et soufflant dans ses yeux liméisses, avait
D'irresso, jusqu'au soir je regardas au travers."

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

"Mordant au citron doré l'idéal ame
Est unforgettable. Of a rare and radiant beauty also are those lines in Apparition:"

... Tu m'es en ressentir approi
Et j'ai cru voir la fee au chemineau de chat
Qui jadis, sur mes beaux souvenirs d'efant
Passait laissant toujours de ses mains des fioris
Neige de blancs bouquets d'etoles pur-
fumes."
The Academy.

Shakespearean actors are supposed to range over the entire field of human nature: to pass at will "from gay to grave, from grave to gay." On no other hypothesis could we suppose a first-rate Hamlet undertaking the part of Macbeth. Mr. Forbes Robertson's comparative failure in Macbeth is due to his failure to play the part of an actor; it only shows that the actor's personality will assert itself, whether recognized or not.

S. C. SEMBLE.

Drama.

"Macbeth" at the Lyceum.

PERSONALITY IN ACTING.

This week a diligent copymaker on one of the Paris newspapers entered his readers with a collection of opinions, derived from dramatic authors, on the question whether actors, properly speaking, "treated parts," or merely reflected the ideas entrusted to them. Naturally, the opinions were various, the actor being regarded either as a good or a bad collaborator according to circumstances—good when his personality happened to fit in with the author's conception of a character; bad when it differed from, or conflicted with, it.

My own experience in the matter is small, but I remember that in a couple of pieces of mine which were played in London some years ago the actors, in certain instances, vouched and defined my ideas—in fact, improved on them; while, in others, as M. Marcel Provost puts it, "the action presented images" more or less "deformed" in outline. Certain it is that the actor, whatever his abstract conception of a character may be, is, to a great extent, the slave of his personality. Theoretically, he adapts himself to his part; practically, his success is most assured when the part is adapted to his personality; it is so well understood by dramatists of experience, that they write, as far as possible, with a particular company of actors in view. The actor-manager has often been blamed for his habit of standing in the middle of the stage, and being fitted with a part as a tailor fits his customer with a coat; but there is no doubt that by this means success for author and actor alike is most easily and surely achieved. A dramatist might, without regard to his interpreters be somewhat in the position of an artist who paints a picture in the dark; the result when the work comes to be exposed to the glare of the footlights may be either better or worse than he anticipated—it can never be exactly the same. This is why writing a play is so much like drawing a number in a lottery. The novelist or the essayist, if his book fails, or falls by his own handiwork; the dramatist is at the mercy of half-a-dozen collaborators, who only approximately realize his conceptions, and he is in no better position than a picture, retouched by so many hands, comes out as an harmonious whole.

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

Mr. Forbes Robertson is an actor possessed of a rare intellectuality and refinement, whose Hamlet placed him in the forefront of Shakespearian actors. But the very qualities that contributed to his success as the scholarly, philosophic Prince militate against his assumption of the rude and impetuous Scottish theme. That he is too true an artist to do violence to the text one sees at a glance. He knows the tradition of the part and would adhere to it. In physical make-up he is all but perfect, a fascinating point of the uncouth, uncorrected Scottish chiefman of the eleventh century. But the effort to accommodate himself to a part so wholly at variance with his personality costs him his spontaneity. Laying aside the gifts with which he is accustomed to conquer his public, he fights the battle like a man with one hand tied behind his back, the result being a certain tameness or flatness in the performance, which is painful in comparison with the vigour and virility of the Macduff of the cast, a part spiritedly embodied by Mr. Robert Taber. This latest Macbeth, in a word, is a gratification to the eye that is a disappointment to the understanding. Although not definitely acknowledged as a factor in dramatic art, the limitations of personality are practically recognised in what are known as "lines of brilliancy." Every actor has his line—a sort of part in which he admittedly excels; and, presumably, it is not his intelligence which confines him to this groove, but his physiological gift of giving expression to his ideas. Nevertheless, the way in which these authors must have sat down to write, working back from the balloon to the robbery of the "Great Ruby," from a jeweller's shop in Bond-street by the "diamond gang." Nevertheless, they are not ideas of a very tractable kind, for, although the robbery constitutes an integral part of the first act, the authors have not succeeded in working in their balloon sensation without a considerable sacrifice of plausibility. Like the famous "pate de moucho" of Sordun, this robbery passes through a series of adventures until it finds itself innocently