

POPPING THE QUESTION ON THE STAGE.

From the London Saturday Review. There is a question which is assumed by ingenious youth to be so universal that, in fact, one-half of the human race is supposed to ask it of the other half. The boy who contemplates his future at all takes for granted that he will some day ask some woman to marry him, and all girls suppose the time will come when they must answer Yes or No. The question, then, being at once inevitable and of so momentous a nature, and so much moreover hanging on the way of putting it, and the whole subject, too, being shrouded in mystery—for, to the eternal honor of the sex who are questioned, a cloud rests on the manner and method of their questioners, and a delicate reticence forbids the illumination which experience might throw on this point—it is not wonder that youth especially should find the subject interesting, even when treated by fancy and in the abstract, and should welcome that reading or dramatic representation through which alone can be derived hints, and the more definite and masterly instruction of example, as to the mode in which the ordeal should be gone through with when the critical moment in their own personal history arrives. Nor does this natural spirit of inquiry make its satisfaction. Fiction indeed has made it at once a duty and a delight to acquire young persons of either sex in the way of acquitting themselves with credit in what is conventionally assumed to be the most difficult, embarrassing, and even crucial moment of existence; suggesting infinite alternatives, and adapting itself to every humor, so that no one need be driven, for want of example or precedent, to play a part for which nature has not fitted him.

"M. Thomas Diafoirus," who comes upon the scene charged with a fine speech for everybody concerned. He first mistakes intended, to whom he is introduced for the first time, for her stepmother, and commences: "Madame, c'est avec justice que le ciel vous a concédé le nom de belle-mère"; but being set right in this particular by his father, no way abashed by the contretemps, he addresses himself at once to the delivery of an offer of his heart and hand. We know people likely enough to recommend themselves in something like this strain, but, if so, the ladies say nothing about it:—

Mademoiselle, le plus ne moins que la statue de Menon rendoit en son harmonieux langage, venoit à ses épaules des rayons du soleil, tout de même me sens-je aujour d'un doux transport à l'apparition de son visage. Et comme les naïvetés romantiques que de leur nomme Helio trop tourna sans cesse vers cet astre du jour, aussi mon cœur d'ores-en-avant tournera-t-il toujours vers son visage resplendissant et vos yeux adorables, ainsi que vers son poële antique. Soudain, mademoiselle, que j'apprends aujour d'hui à l'aide de vos charmes l'origine de ce cœur, qui se respire, et ambitionne autre gloire que d'être tout à vous, mademoiselle, votre tres-humble, tres-obéissant, et tres-fidèle serviteur et mari.

The audience is quite ready to agree with "Toinette" that learning puts one in the way of saying very fine things. We have said that the technical declaration is shirked by the dramatist, with one exception. We need hardly say that the exception is Shakespeare. We might almost say that Shakespeare comes next to Mr. Trollope in the number and variety of his forms of proposal, and the visible zest and enjoyment with which he throws himself into the work. There are more offers of marriage in his plays than in all the witty comedies of a later age put together. It is this turn for match-making which has brought down upon him the censures of George Sand, who, in adapting *Comme il vous plait* to French society, felt her moral sense wounded and found much correction necessary to fit it for her refined countrymen. She complains that Shakespeare, by a strange and seemingly incomprehensible contrast, has set the divinest grace by the side of the most frightful cynicism. "Not only did he give the *douce* Audrey to the *grivois* Touchstone, but Celia is mismatched with the detestable Oliver." Shakespeare has, indeed, a way of coming very promptly to the point, and accomplishes very quick reformations with a wedding in prospect. He will even strike off a marriage in parenthesis. Thus the Duke to Isabel:—

And tells me 'tis a thing impossible I should love thee but as property. Anne.—No, he tells you so. Fenton.—No, heaven so help me, in my time to come! I will resolve after all not to have you; well, I won't have you, Mirabell—I'm resolved—I think you may go. Ha, ha, ha! what would you give that you could help loving me!—or, like murder, it comes off behind the scenes; or it is arranged, as the newspapers say, by the lady's papa. Thus Boniface offers his daughter and her two thousand pounds to Gibbet. "And what think you, then, of my daughter Cherry for a wife?"—the highwayman, as great a master of policy and of his feelings as his antagonist, betters in such contracts, replying: "Look, my dear, if my Cherry is the good-looking I adore; but it is a maxim that man and wife should never have it in their power to hang one another, for, if they should, heaven have mercy on them both."

But such neatness and readiness, such perception of the situation, as is here displayed, is no part of the conventional stage proposal. It is the booby, the country bumpkin, the fop, the blunderer who makes his offer on the boards. Everybody is familiar with "Lord Dundreary's" offer, and his philippic preparation for either fortune. The post-prandial tury was equally well acquainted with "Wilful's" method of recommending himself.—"A match or no match, cousin with the hard name, if you have a mind to be married, say the word and send for the piper. Say the word and I'll dot; Wilful will dot; that's my crest;—and also with Steele's "Humphrey Gabbins" notion of making himself agreeable to his cousin "Bridget," or "Fartenissa," as she prefers to call herself, keeping her Christian name as the greatest secret she has.—"Look ye, cousin, the old folks resolving to marry you, I thought it would be proper to see how I liked you, as not caring to marry a pig in a poke." Goldsmith, too, is ingenious in predicaments founded on the tyranny of parents in the disposing of their children. Thus "Leontie," in the *Good-Natured Man*, having brought home as his sister (who had been away with her aunt this ten years) the lady he is engaged to is required by his father to make love to his ward, "Miss Richland," who loses half her fortune if she marries without her guardian's consent, which of course she intends to do. She gets an inkling of the situation the moment before her reluctant lover arrives to pay his court, and resolves upon the most implicit acquiescence. First he stammers, blunders, and throws all upon his father. "My father, madam, has some intentions—of explaining an affair—which—himself—can best explain." In vain is he urged on by old "Croaker" with "Call up a look, you dog." He flounders into a dead silence, which the senior hastens to attribute to the violence of his passion. Miss "Richland" ends a great address in the genuine eloquence of sincerity. "Madam," says the father, "he has forgot to speak any other language—the silence is become his mother-tongue." "And it must be confessed, sir," the lady blandly replies, "it speaks very powerfully in his favor." "Leontie," finding his modesty so attractive, now tries what impudence will do, and loudly expresses his adoration:—

Miss Richland—If I could flatter myself you thought as you speak, sir. Leontie—Don't you sincerity, madam! By your dear self I swear. Ask the brave if they desire glory; ask cowards if they covet safety.— Croaker—Well, we were much questioned about it. Leontie—Ask the sick if they talk for health; ask misers if they love money.— Croaker—Ask a fool if he is a fool; ask a knave: What's come over the boy? What signifies asking when there is not a soul to give you an answer? If you would ask to his purpose, ask this lady's consent to make you happy. Miss Richland—Why, indeed, sir, his uncommon ardor almost compels me to comply.

The young widow has a peculiar place in the drama, especially in the French, because for her alone it comes *à fait* to receive addresses direct; she alone is absolutely at her own disposal. But all love-making to widows on the stage is supposed to be directed to her purse. The lady is the dupe, and the audience the confidant, of a succession of mercenary suitors. But a certain formula of proposal has been always considered indispensable, even where parents manage everything, and this form affords an opportunity for comedy not to be passed by. Take the public offer of his hand made by

And I will marry you, I will marry you. Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn. Sister, by this light whereby I see thy beauty (Thy beauty that doth make me love thee well) Thou must be married to no man but me. For I am he am born to tame you, Kate. Parents arranged marriages in Shakespeare's days with probably a higher idea of their rights than has since prevailed, but he would not have us suppose parents prerogative to be everything, and the lady's wishes nothing. Indeed, all along it has been the part of the drama to relax the stern cords of parental authority, and plead the rights of the affections—with Shakespeare the legitimate rights. The three hundred pounds a year which recommend Slender to Master Page are to be no indemnification with the poet's audience for the dulness which could not plead its own cause:—

Shallow—She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hadst a father. Slender—I had a father, Mistress Anne; my uncle can tell you good jests of him. Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress Anne just how my father sold two greese out of a pen; good uncle. Shallow—Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you. Slender—Ay, that I do, as well as any woman in household. Shallow—He will maintain you like a gentleman. He will make you a hundred and fifty pound a year. Anne—Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

Our space, not our store of examples, fails us, though, as we have said, it is not in the drama that the real field of illustration and suggestion lies. That must be explored at some future opportunity. —Hops are being brought in such large quantities to the Kilbourn, Wis., market, that the growers are compelled to sell at rates that do not pay for the labor of raising.

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR ARMY TRANSPORTATION IN TEXAS. HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS, CHIEF QUARTERMASER'S OFFICE, AUSTIN, TEXAS, Sept. 15, 1870. Sealed Proposals, in triplicate, will be received at this office until 11 A. M., on THURSDAY, the 1st day of October, 1870, for TRANSPORTATION OF ARMY SUPPLIES from the 1st day of January, 1871, to the 31st day of December, 1871, on the following routes, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—

PROPOSALS. PROPOSALS FOR REVENUE STAMPS. PROPOSALS will be received until TUESDAY, the 1st day of November next, at 12 o'clock at noon, for furnishing complete Revenue stamps, of the following classes, denominations and sizes in present use, and as hereinafter specified, viz:—