

Lancaster Intelligencer. FRIDAY EVENING JAN. 26, 1883.

The prevailing Hosanna. St. Louis Globe-Democrat. In the Atlantic for February, that accomplished Shakespearean scholar and critic Richard Grant White, furnishes an admirable interpretation of Rosalind, as the author intended her to be played and points out how the actresses who undertake the part fail to grasp the meaning of the character, or even to satisfy the demand of truth and propriety in the simple matter of dress.

Those who appreciate this most excellent of all comedies—and it is difficult to imagine any sinner and intelligent lover of Shakespeare who does not appreciate "As You Like It"—must be struck at once with the accuracy of Mr. White's observation that the stage Rosalinds of our time uniformly cheapen and spoil the part, and thus destroy the artistic integrity of the whole play, by false habits of costume, in no other familiar character does so much depend upon dress, since it is employed for the double purpose of specifying and concealing the personality of the wearer, and yet, as Mr. White points out, this very essential fact goes unmentioned, and both Shakespeare and common sense are defied in a way that would be ludicrous if it were not so pitiable. No man or boy in the England of Shakespeare's time, and yet, as Mr. White points out, within the narrow seas, to quote Mr. White's words, was ever apparelled as are these whimsical Gaietyes of the modern stage, who instead of aiming to hide their identity from the sunset-posting Orlando of the period, really seem bent upon putting disease on the question, and using their thin muslin as a means of advertising their feminine charms of limb and outline after the fashion of ballet dancers.

Not only is the central secret of the comedy that "given away" before a word is spoken, as it were, but the commonest requirements of historical fidelity are violated and outraged. The doublet that our stage Rosalinds wear is not a doublet at all, but an awkward sort of a fund uniform, and as such, entirely unmeaning. For hose, they encase their suggestive limbs in long silk stockings, as a rule, thus emphasizing their sex, when, in fact, the hose of Shakespeare's time covered the legs to the hip, and were styled out in a way that forbade discovery of the wearer's sex. Nor were silk stockings in vogue in England at that date; and if they had been it is not likely that they would have been worn among the brass and underbrush of the forest of Arden. Still more anachronistic, not to say outlandish, is the lace of the average Rosalind, the lace of which, Mr. White remarks, would have been hoisted at by the street wench of those days. Then, they invariably carry in their hands a queer little bag, too utterly unmeaning like, and entirely out of harmony with the rest of the play, which, as a rule, is a common short sword, worn at the thigh like any other sword; and they refuse to soil their complexion with the "sweat of amber" that denoted forest essences.

An accurate description of Rosalind as she appeared to Shakespeare's imagination is the wanting, to be sure, the great dramatic effect is provokingly reticent about the personal appearance of all his women. He hints more in the case of Rosalind, Rosalind than in the case of the others, except Imogen, however, and it is possible to conceive a tolerably distinct ideal of her. She was notably tall, Mr. White contends, fair as complexion, with dark, lustrous hair, and blue-black or olive-green eyes, and an unruffled levelity of temper, tempered by rare firmness of movement. Through her eyes, however, it may be safely inferred that in a purely physical aspect he considers Mrs. Langtry the most satisfactory of all stage Rosalinds, and this only because we can easily understand, to make her intellectual and artistic defects, the more pronounced and irritating. That a woman so well equipped to appear as an ideal Rosalind should be so poorly fitted for the actual and material part of the lady, seems little short of an affront, particularly when we are asked to overlook artistic defects in consideration of the very advantages of face and form which should render artistic success hence the more easy and plain. The Rosalind of stage, however, was beautiful, undoubtedly, but she was very much more than that. Her charms were not confined to her physical structure, and it is reasonable to assume that she would have exhibited her limbs after the manner of these days, as she was to have won all the Orlando's of the world, certainly she could have, in such garb, have carried out the deceptions that so completely fooled not Orlando alone, but her own father, and that showed old son doing a still, we shall very likely continue to have the same sort of a Rosalind, behaving now like a real man, and now take a real woman.

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