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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE.

"The man that I admire—he is quite impossible!" She laughed, "he must be infinitely clever, infinitely unselfish, infinitely energetic, infinitely capable, cool, resolute, brave—and a gentleman!"

one woman who filled his dreams, night and day; the magnet of his thoughts—he loved her! Ah, that he could show it worthily, earn her gratitude still further as he had begun to do by praise in the face of the critics. To praise her now was to join in the ruck—no credit in her blue eyes! no, nor in his own grey ones! Ah, that he could show himself a man, and perform some deed of heroic effort for her!

AT THE PERFORMANCE.

Shakespeare says that "Life's a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage." "All the world's a stage," he adds, "and men and women are but players," etc. The glittering generalities are only partly true. The life play, if a play, is Chinese, not modern. It is long drawn out—vague, purposeless, unwise. It has no beginning, no middle, no end, no art. It has incidents, escapades, formless bits of incident, sometimes it has plots—but plots and villains are growing uncommon in our well ordered communities. "There may, too, be a play within a play," said Burnett, as he entered the lobby and nodded to one or two newspaper men he knew. "For example?" "Well?" answered the manager, impatiently. "Burnett—you are a good friend to us these days. You seem to find some new charm in Miss Armitage every day."

there are several dozen plays in progress every night at your theater, while the fictitious one is going through its three or four acts. I saw last night while the curtain was up and the lights were down, that Mrs. Lightfoot and her escort (a handsome young chap, did not see Mr. Lightfoot grinning down at them with a decidedly satanic leer from the balcony. When the ent's acts arrived and the lights went up, they caught sight of his severely bald head. As he distinctly left home that day for Boston—we have the true incident of comedy, the note of which is always surprise—as Mr. Lightfoot, for some reason, hates his wife's handsome young cavalier, and has forbidden him the house. The first act was already over and was out of the theater; for the second act, Mr. Lightfoot came down and greeted them frostily, and Madame went suddenly home with her husband. The third act occurred, you see, at the "banquet" home of the Lightfoots—a stormy scene, I believe, tears, recriminations, reconciliation—finale!

"Ugh," growled the manager. "It makes me tired to think of any more plays—one's enough!" Burnett turned absent-mindedly toward a row of Miss Eleanor Armitage's photographs in a gilded frame. A blissful thing, indeed, to love an actress—and as one runs to read the poster's features of one's beloved in every shop and bar room! To see one's sweetheart staring from every fence and street corner—and how infinitely galling to see her—the "imitable she"—dressed with a moustache, by some infamous street gamin, or treated in some barbarous fashion by some local wit! A sensitive "star" will, at the time of an engagement, keep severely within doors (how many do so!) The star's lover will best remain in his sensitive soul!

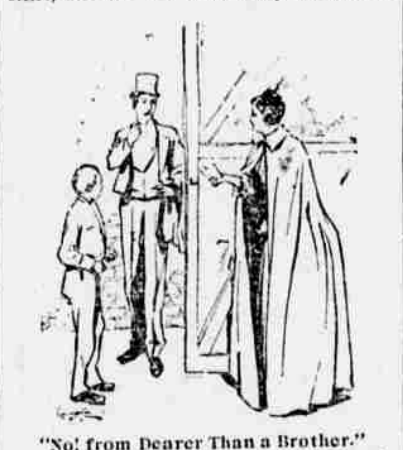
Harold Burnett, who had the run of the theaters, for he was the prince of critics, the maker or mariner of theatrical fame, nodded to the doorman, and strolled listlessly in a seat, given him by the usher, in front. He heard the orchestra play with a feverish sense of anticipation. He saw the curtain rise. He saw Miss Armitage enter with that loping, graceful step of hers, and say to Nannine, in a stilled voice:

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I met them at the opera. (To DeVarville) So, you are here, eh?" Then he was in another dream world—and his heart gnawed itself with jealousy of the Paris-rural Armand, the ardent "French true lover." Gen-erally, pray pity the wretched lover of an actress! How much his nerves are called on to endure!

THE FIRST ENTR' ACTE.

As the curtain descended at the end of the first act he found himself behind the scenes. Miss Eleanor Armitage hurried off the stage (an elegant set drawing-room scene, where now, for the twentieth time, she had) so admirably fainted in



"No, from Dearest Than a Brother."

the dance with Armand (Mr. Wickersham). She was dressed in one of Worth's most charming creations—a white costume du bal—her diamonds, though chiefly paste, gave none the less brilliancy to her appearance. As she stepped into the wings, her maid quickly adjusted about her shoulders a light cloak, which, of some dark material, enveloped her to her feet, and changed her from a laughing courtesan to a nun. At the same moment Burnett made his bow, and a call boy delivered a telegram into her hand. It was marked "Rush." She opened it quickly. Burnett was rather a fine-looking fellow, tall, athletic, an ex-college oarsman. His face was intelligent and kindly—at the same time full of deep ston. He looked especially well in his bow, and a call boy delivered a telegram into her hand. It was marked "Rush." She opened it quickly. Burnett was rather a fine-looking fellow, tall, athletic, an ex-college oarsman. His face was intelligent and kindly—at the same time full of deep ston. He looked especially well in his bow, and a call boy delivered a telegram into her hand. It was marked "Rush." She opened it quickly.

He looked into her eyes. There was a girlish eagerness, an exquisite flavor in what she said and did, which gave her, to him, an irresistible charm. Her hostess at a tea that afternoon had quoted a famous actress who had said, "I felt that I must go on the stage; so I threw my reason to the winds, my modesty to the dogs, all the law and gospel to those that needed them, and plunged!" After the laughter had subsided at this speech Eleanor Armitage had said simply (during a little pause), "I threw away nothing. I—rather—do not think me a prude—I began to study my Bible."

He with their spires like jewels set in the Green Mountain valleys, turned aside thoughtfully as he heard the remark. It was but another rivet in his love chain! All his intimate knowledge of New York, all his acquaintance with the stage and the people on it—so far, for he was under 30—he had held to his high ideals of womanhood. A favorite sister had died, and lay buried up there in the little cemetery beneath the shadow of the old Vermont mountains. Ah, that sweet, gentle spirit of purity, loyalty and honor—it clung close to Harold Burnett still, in the crowded city wherever he went. It kept him from folly.

He was glad, as he believed that Eleanor Armitage was worthy of his sainted sister. The telegram tonight jarred on this sensitive impression a little. Her manner, too, puzzled him. "From your brother?" he asked, as he glanced quickly at him. "No, not from my brother—from one dearer than a brother."

His eyes betrayed eager inquiry, and there was a note of half-amused vexation, as she said hurriedly to the messenger, "Call me a cab instantly, at the stage door." "I thought, your brother not being here—"

"He does not always come to the theater." "When he does not come, will you not allow me to take his place?" He spoke very seriously. She laughed merrily. "You are amusing, my friend. In you there is such a combination of innocence and—indelicacy. Au revoir; I am going to make a call. Can I do it in ten minutes?" "You can do anything," he laughed.

Burnett lit a cigar, and stood a moment looking after her carriage. "What an odd caprice," he thought. "She received a dispatch from a man, and it evidently pleased her tremendously. (Puff from his cigar.) She jumps into her carriage, as if in answer to it, and is off, and, I declare, it's all rather queer." Then he laughingly quoted Chimmie Fadden's fine remark, "Everything goes with Miss Fanny does—see? Dat's right!" So, with him, he said to himself, "Everything Miss Armitage did must be right."

A moment later he found himself involuntarily walking at a nervously swift pace in the direction her carriage had taken. [To Be Continued.]



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