

## WE AND OUR NEIGHBORRS

Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, the spirit and the flesh, are in New York again. The Bernhardt lost her carefully nurtured self-control and told a reporter what she really thought of the greater woman and actress. Here is what she said to a Dramatic Mirror reporter:

"Have you seen Signora Duse?"

"Yes, I saw her in London. I watched her performance of La Dame aux Camelias and Fedora. She was admirable in the first play, but the latter was completely beyond her grasp.

"It is so utterly ridiculous," continued Madame Bernhardt with a gesture of impatience, "for the critics to compare me to la Duse. [Bernhardt always calls her "la" Duse.] There is not the slightest similarity in our work. She is a clever comedienne and could be justly compared with Rejane, but it is positively stupid to compare her with me. She has no power and no poetry. She could not play Cleopatra nor any of the tragic and poetic roles which are in my repertoire. It was the German critics who began to draw comparisons and they did it simply to annoy me whom they hate because I have always refused to go to Germany.

"I noticed, by-the-by, that la Duse announced that on landing here that she dislikes America. Why does she come, then? To make money? That is surely a strange reason for an artiste to give. I could make money if I went to Berlin, but I dislike the Germans, and so I don't go there. I would never play in a country I disliked—even to make money."

The Mirror says in another article that it is "utterly ridiculous" for critics to compare Bernhardt to Duse, "but not in the way Bernhardt means. It would be foolish to compare an artificial flower with an American beauty rose, or a stage moon with Luna herself, or a bottle of Patchouli with a bunch of violets."

The point at issue between these two women is the answer to an old dispute. The question is "what is the object of literature, of art, of life"—the answer is beauty. And there is only one thing that is really beautiful and that is character. Color, form, music are more or less beautiful as they are able to express clearly their creator's character. Bernhardt is a defiantly fascinating woman, endowed with perception, grace, industry and a melodious voice which Time does not crack. She has everything but one thing and she knows it. Duse has everything that Bernhardt has and a lofty spirit beside, and Bernhardt knows that too, and she hates her. "Bernhardt is neither a tragedienne nor a poetic actress in the strict sense of the term. She has acted Phedre and La Passant, it is true, but her fame has been won chiefly in the tailor-made melodramas cut out for her by Sardou." An American audience gazes on Sarah Bernhardt as it does on a tiger from African jungles, with admiration and fascination and with relief that between it and the tiger there are bars that neither can break. The French people have unique facility and comprehension of the superficial needs of beauty. The spirit has very little elbow-room in that country. To him who has steeped himself in French novels of the century, Sarah Bernhardt is the ultimate expression of art. To him who loves Chaucer and Shakspere, she becomes more and more wearisome. Duse's lofty ideals have penetrated criticism. Her mission on this earth may be a short one but it is all worthy. "Duse's

power is greater than Bernhardt's for it is the power of truth while Bernhardt's is the power of theatricalism."

The pleasure of seeing the greatest French, German or Italian actors in this country is lessened because most of us do not understand them. Dramatic genius is apparently confined to the United States, England, France, Germany and Italy. Therefore an actor of international reputation has only to learn his repertory in three languages besides his own. After he knows how to say "To be or not to be" in his native tongue with the accompanying movements of eye, hand and foot, it is easy enough to learn to say it in three other languages—the movements, gestures, magnetism and whatever are the same. Better to say "Ow ut tam spot" as Jansuschek did than to shriek something which the greater part of the audience is trying to look up in a key or libretto. When the audience reads a book all magnetism or genius or whatever it is that fires the heart and chills the spinal cord is ineffectual. Salvini, Duse and Bernhardt have taken many thousands of dollars out of this country and England—a tribute to their genius not to their sense of fairness. Two countries as large as England and America should insist on German, French and Italian actors speaking their pieces in English. Impassioned, theatrical English is hard to understand under the best conditions.

The strain becomes unbearable when the actors on the stage speak a foreign tongue. Genius is autocratic wherever it live. There is one influence that it never rejects and that is money. Bernhardt says she never commits a part—that she only reads it over until she thoroughly senses it, that the memorizing itself is nothing. Then why does she not learn her parts in English? Her audiences, even in New York, have fallen off. The reason is that New York people have seen her and heard her and their curiosity is satisfied. If she will not speak their speech they will not pay to listen to her. The mountain never went to Mahomet yet, however great the prophet. Perhaps a hundred people who listen to Bernhardt understand her. The rest are strangers in the city who have never seen her, critics or theatre-intoxicated people whom nothing can keep away. If the French actresses be annoyed by the comparative size of the Italian's audiences let her learn her roles in English—and donna Duse will have to learn the languages of nations too. The intelligent use of dollars can force compliance from a genius which to those who have tried it seems a greater test of energy than the accomplishment of any modern engineering feat.

Duse refuses to be interviewed and the report is circulating that she hates America. She herself says she only hates Chicago and will not play there. This pleases cities like Washington and New York—every city, in short, that she will play in. For they all hate Chicago as the allied nations hated Napoleon and for the same reason Duse is not diplomatic or she would be more tender to the reporters. The most insignificant of newspapers can start a report whose end will not be as its beginning. Let the people of America once get the impression that Duse hates them and the country and they will show her by empty seats their value of her message to them. The Berlin episode where she counted the people in the boxes and demanded pay for them

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shows that she, like Paderewski, loves art for its own sake. People are interested in the Italian and the newspapers are going to gossip about her. She might better see the reporter when he calls and let him describe in the next issue of the paper what he said to her and how she looked while he was saying it, rather than goad him to an imaginary conversation. Probably the reporter is no Landor and the "conversation" will have errors enough to make her rant and make her wish she had been able to look at the question somewhat differently.

Newspapers and the people who make their poor living out of them as well as many who read them are undoubtedly a nuisance. A newspaper is assorted gossip. Gossip to be interesting must be about people—it is well if it be harmless—Some of the people living in Nebraska towns have not learned that their speech, their dress, their social customs have nothing sacred about them to prevent a newspaper if it see fit, making remarks about them. I say the people of the smaller towns because the inhabitants of Omaha and Lincoln take such medicine gracefully and without making faces at the doctor. Metropolitan life has taught them the importance of the individual. People of means and influence who happen to live in a small place get into the habit of regarding themselves with more of pride than the circumstances warrant. Budha has sat cross-legged on a pedestal with his eyes turned inward for centuries. His priests consider it a mortal impertinence for any one passing in front of the statue not to prostrate himself. Of course sometimes an ignorant foreigner coming into the neighborhood of the little god not only does not kneel but makes some flippant remark about his attitude, his evident regard for himself or his powerlessness to make wet weather out of dry. When such things occur if the stranger has no consul near or any other means of protection he disappears into a bag. But this rarely happens because it is not safe. More often the traveller is warned that he has committed the unpardonable sin and ordered to leave the country. Sometimes the stranger leaves and sometimes he stays just to see what will happen. When a newspaper office in this country is warned not to mention any name that its owner and his neighbors for years have considered sacred the newspaper will continue to print

what floats in at the windows and to watch what happens. A university education disposes to original investigation and experiments with a careful noting of results.

'The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard,' by A. Conan Doyle is a collection of the adventures of a French officer in the army of the first Napoleon. The stories have been published in the syndicate newspapers, so that many readers of the "great dailies" of the country are already familiar with them. The brigadier is a gentleman much like D'Artagnan in "The Three Guardsmen"—unreflecting, stupid, brave, with unlimited confidence in his sword and his ability to wield it. His confidence brings him through dangers that would have overborne a reflective mind. He is in peril of his life twelve times in as many pages but he draws his sword, runs it through a man or two—he is a magnificent swordsman, jumps on his horse, and is off. The Brigadier tells his tales with a touching confidence that his audience believe in him, as a great brave Captain, telling his stories with absolute veracity. Munchausen related the incidents of his life with the same confidence in himself and his audience. His unarmed condition secures credulity. Ingenuousness, naivete succeed here, as in other cases, where argument and force fail. The exploits is a book in Mr. Doyle's best vein. Munchausen has had a long life. The Brigadier has as good a horoscope. (H. W. Brown & Co.)

Concerning the little demonstration that the students made at the Funke opera house two weeks ago attention has been directed to the unusual good feeling existing between the university people and the trades-people of Lincoln. One of the principal benefits of living in a new country and a new place is the freedom from tradition. One of the most unfortunate expedients is to introduce the outgrown customs of old nations,—habits contracted under entirely different conditions and useless now and a bar to progress in the places where time has passed over them only to settle them more firmly in place. In Oxford and Cambridge the students are "gentlemen's sons." Manufacturers and brewers sons go to college in England but their social condition is a frapped by their father's business. The fathers of the students of the state university of Nebraska are farmers, mechanics, merchants, hotel keepers, railroad men,