

Indeed, I think that "Peter," sleepy "Peter," who only bore the "Nurses" fan and said "Anon, good nurse, anon," is a good deal more alive than "Carbon de Castel-Jaloux." Certain it is that if the first act of M. Rostand's play were stripped of its embellishments, its buffet girls and pickpockets and troopers and lords and ladies, the associations of the Hotel de Bourgogne and the atmosphere of old Paris, there would be very little left of it, and while the playwright's device of placing his fourth act on the battle field is both effective and artistic, the act has very little dramatic merit beyond that device.

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Undoubtedly the conservatives are right in saying that this is a play of embellishments, of accessories. Even the famous nose itself is but an accessory, a trick of make-up, a foil for the romantic and chivalrous soul which it disguised. Yet is not the very fact that this play is so entirely a play, that it calls out all the resources of the modern theatre, makes such demands upon the costumer, the scenic painter, the property man, the gas man, and at the same time exhibits high literary quality the most encouraging feature about it? Does not this fact make it a play of the modern theatre, which engages to satisfy the eye, as well as the ear, Mr. Norman Hapgood to the contrary. A man with Sardou's stage craft, and a poet to boot, what more could we ask? Said Sarcey, "A great poet has been born to us, and what delights me most, is that he is a man of the theatre." It was not a great poem that we were wanting, nor a dramatized great novel, but a play, an acting play, which, however much it may be garbled by "second year" French classes and discussed as to its literary merits, will still remain a thing of the theatre, of the property man, the gas man. Nobody claims that these elaborate embellishments make "Cyrano de Bergerac" a great play, only that they were conceived by a great imagination, that they engage and stimulate feebler imaginations as the author intended they should. In short, they complete the illusion of the theatre. It is a great play because it abounds in picturesque action, because it is dramatic, progressive, from beginning to end, because it is rich in effect and novel, if somewhat strained situations, it is saturated with color and glowing with romantic ardor, because there are lines in it that thrill one like the music of nightingales, most of all because it contains an unselfish and chivalrous passion which immolated itself. That single conception of a love noble enough to forego of a passion which crucified itself, of a proud soul content to live in the happiness of another, that made the play great. The play succeeds because Cyrano de Bergerac failed. After he has been dead three hundred years and his ashes were scattered by the Terrorists through the streets of Paris, this unhappy Gascon again wins fame and fortune for another man, so relentless and implacable a thing is destiny!

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"A poet has been born to us." Yes, after all, the literary excellence of this play is its greatest merit; its chief beauties are literary, and its brightest distinction is that it was written by a poet and contains lines like these:

"There lies Paris, nocturnal and nebulous;
Over the blue shadowed roofs the moonlight
streams;
Below; wrapped in her vaporous veil
Like a mirror mysterious and magical
Trembles the Seine."

Through the lips of this "Cyrano" speaks the soul of Ruy Blas. After so much twittering of epigrams, again we have music; after the chatter of the monkeys, again the note of the nightingale, silent for so many years. So unaccustomed are we to the nightingale's

song that our enthusiasm is not unnatural. In France M. Rostand's balcony scene has even been compared to that in "Romeo and Juliet." One has but to read the two over together to see that such a comparison is absolutely fatal to M. Rostand. Neither as a dramatist or a poet can he be measured by such a standard. His light goes out, as a star before the sun. His elaborate and graceful metaphors, his beautifully, fanciful definition of a kiss, his melodious phrases which sometimes show the dent of the hammer, seem artificial and inadequate after that complete and simple expression of nature, that torrent of poetry and passion in which both are transfigured and transfigure speech. It is not "literary," no effort is visible. Nothing is strained, nothing sought for, nothing over-wrought. The passion is natural and beautiful, mutually experienced by both the lovers. Its expression embodies all the extravagance of youth and love. The interruption which prevents monotony in the scene, the calling of the nurse, is simple and natural, whereas Rostand's device of the entrance of the monk is far-fetched. The scene soars into the very zenith of poetry on a wing light as a lark's. Its fervor is unparalleled in literature. Language has never gone higher. If the English tongue has anywhere left its highwater mark, never again to be reached, it is that scene. We are deaf to much of its beauty because we have heard it quoted from childhood, but the men who heard it read for the first time must have gone out of the Globe theatre drunken, feeling like blind men who had for the first time looked upon the dawn. Moreover, Shakespeare's scene admits nothing improbable, while Rostand's includes three potent impossibilities; the substitution of lovers, "Roxane's" failure to detect the substitution, and the crowning absurdity of the kiss. Again, for pure grace of phantasy, "Cyrano's" remarkable moon extravaganza in detaining "de Guiche," is not to be compared to "Mercutio's" Queen Mab speech.

No, M. Rostand is a great poet, but he is only a man—a man of the Nineteenth century.

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The character of "Cyrano de Bergerac" as presented by Rostand will probably endure as one of the type-characters of literature. It voices one of the commonest tragedies of life. It has taken hold of the affections of the people. It speaks the great apology for failure—and who has not failed?

"I will be your mind; you shall be my beauty."

That line is the history of so many lives; of the overworked music teacher who exults in the triumphs of Careno; of the underpaid journalist who is made happy by each achievement of Kipling's art, of the plain matinee girl who derives a personal pleasure from Julia Marlowe's beauty, of the lonely man who is happy in happiness of lovers, of the ugly, clever school girl who is the humble handmaiden of the prettiest girl in the class, of so many generous and noble and unselfish enthusiasms.

"I will be your mind; you shall be my beauty."

Rostand said it for the first time, but it has been lived before—Ah, it has been lived before! And henceforth this Cyrano de Bergerac will stand for these pent-up souls and thwarted passions; for the prima donne born without voices, the mothers who die childless, the lovers who never speak, the painters who are color blind, the cross-eyed aphrodites, and heaven knows the world is full of these victims of nature's unkindness.

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[Next week, if the patience of The Courier and its readers holds out, I will attempt to say something of Richard Mansfield's impersonation of the character, "Cyrano de Bergerac." W. C.]

CLUBS.

[LOUISA L. RICKETTS.]

Following are the officers of the General Federation of Women's clubs:

President—Mrs. Rebecca D. Lowe
Atlanta, Ga.

Vice President—Mrs. Sarah S. Platt,
Denver, Colo.

Recording Secretary—Mrs. Emma A.
Fox, Detroit, Mich.

Corresponding Secretary—Mrs. George
W. Kendrick, Philadelphia, Pa.

Treasurer, Mrs. Phillip N. Moore, St.
Louis, Mo.

Auditor—Mrs. C. P. Barnes, Louis
ville, Ky.

State Chairman—Mrs. Louisa L. Rick-
etts, Lincoln, Nebr.

Officers of the State Federation of
Women's clubs;

President—Mrs. S. C. Langworthy,
Seward.

Vice President—Mrs. Anna L. Apper-
son, Tecumseh.

Recording Secretary—Mrs. F. H. Sack-
ott, Weeping Water.

Corresponding Secretary—Mrs. D. G.
McKillip, Seward.

Treasurer—Mrs. H. F. Doane, Crete,
Librarian—Mrs. G. M. Lambertson,
Lincoln.

The Lincoln Sorosis met on Tuesday with Mrs. Sawyer. The president of the Nebraska Federation of Women's clubs, Mrs. Langworthy of Seward, was a guest and her presence and short address contributed very much to the interest of the meeting.

Mrs. Sawyer, as one of the founders of Sorosis, has a very deep interest in its welfare and growth. She considers that the object of club life is not so much for the gathering of knowledge as for discipline in thinking and reporting the results of thought. To think clearly and to some purpose and to be able to express ideas with the same clearness is one of the most important effects of the intellectual and friendly association of clubs.

To show exactly the progress attained in speaking and thinking no plan could be better than the symposium arranged by Mrs. Sawyer at the last meeting.

Each member of the club spoke for four minutes or twelve questions. The interest was keen and the discussions revealed great difference of opinion as to the object, functions, duties and the future of clubs.

THE QUESTIONS.

1. What is the strongest argument in favor of women's club?

2. What is, or should be, the *Summum bonum* of a club?

3. What is the duty of members of small clubs to large clubs?

4. Wherein is the greatest strength of the club movement?

5. Does it show inefficiency or inadequacy?

6. Does it make women more companionable to men? Would mixed clubs be preferable?

7. Is it helpfully or injuriously encroaching on social usages?

8. What should be its attitude on public questions? (e. g. labor disturbances which affect women who are wage earners.)

9. To what extent should it foster particular schemes? (as the "Free Traveling Library.")

10. Has it reached a climax in numbers or usefulness?

11. What is the greatest danger which threatens the club movement?

12. Do you consider the next five years a "critical period?"

THE ANSWERS.

1. A demand for discipline to fit women for duties and larger opportunities of life. The strongest argument for them is that clubs "are" in such num-

bers and extent. Clubs answer the demand for sociability, bring women together and extend their horizon and sympathies. They mark a stage in development, they are a preparation for a time of greater influence. They give to a social gathering an intellectual aspect and purpose.

2. The club should give to each woman what she needs most, should broaden and strengthen hearts and heads. The greatest good of clubs is sociability, helpfulness, the object differs with each club. It should broaden the outlook, enable women to analyze her own purposes in life.

Members of small clubs owe service to the large club as the individual owes a service to the community, not a legal or compulsory obligation, but one of willing service to the whole. Attitude determined by local conditions. Large clubs ought not to need help from members of smaller clubs. Reciprocity the keynote of club life.

4. The greatest strength of the club is in its influence on women, physically, intellectually, economically and through her on the home and the next generation, in organization, co-operation, ability to work together, in ministering to need, in woman's loyalty to club movement, in woman released and thrust into a larger world.

5. It does show the inefficiency and inadequacy of infancy, which shows that maturity and accomplishment are before it.

6. As it quickens the sympathies, enlarges the understanding and increases knowledge of vital topics it fits women to be more companionable to men. If congeniality exist club experience augments it, not the purpose of clubs to increase conjugal happiness, they neither interfere with, nor increase congeniality between husband and wife, it increases congeniality because both thought and feeling are broadened, if not more companionable it is the woman's fault, so far companionableness is not increased by clubs, other things being equal the good club woman is more companionable by reason of her club. Mixed clubs have a place, but the time is not ripe for the substitution of mixed clubs. They should coexist. Mixed clubs would be preferable. They are not feasible. There should be more mixed clubs, but as additions, not as substitutes. The club idea is complete in mixed clubs. These should be added as rapidly as possible. Each has its own and independent place, men should not be refused the benefit of clubs.

7. Clubs are helpful in breaking down artificial distinctions and conventionalities.

8. No attitude based on distinction of sex, all influence based on superior preparation and qualification, it should be conservative, strength and influence it possesses should be utilized, power evolved for a purpose and should be utilized, it should be an influence rather than an attitude, should create sentiment, should realize power to make life more tolerable, not antagonise, should be decidedly for women in its power to create sentiment for amelioration of wrongs, should exert a direct influence wisely administered, club to teach individuals to act as individuals not for concerted action on any question, always stand for "justice," demand that equal pay must be preceded by equal service, no action unless sure of success as failure is more disastrous to cause of women than inaction.

9. Every scheme whose only aim centers in the betterment of home and its inmates, much tact necessary, circumstances decide, helpful to all which are helpful to club ideas.

10. Unanimously no in usefulness, the majority no in numbers, some thought when those dropped off who had been allured by pleasure and novelty the