

his home to receive the peculiar sort of family scorn and ostracism reserved for those members of a pious household who renounce the exact faith of their childhood. The scorn of his mother and father, the sacrifices they had made that they might have a minister in the family, were bitter punishment for a man who had but obeyed the dictates of his conscience and accepted truth as he saw it. He was comforted by the woman who arrives at the right time in stories and in life to comfort the broken-hearted man and to offer herself a sacrifice for heroic conduct. She was a country school teacher and had been teaching for two years when the story ends. She had saved two years' salary, and as David is penniless she proposes to get married anyway and go north with him to some college where he expects to study physical science and afterward to teach it.

This is all right from the ancient novelist's point of view, who could have added "and they lived happily ever afterward." But we know better than that. We have seen poor married students trying to get through college on nothing a year, and they never lived happily. A woman of gentle birth and breeding, like Gabriella, can not be comfortable without certain things the price of which is beyond the means of a student who is putting himself through college. One of the early preachers in the Congregational church of this city was determined to acquire a college education, which is still too highly valued by those who can not afford one. The student, who afterwards became a preacher, bought a sack of corn meal and lived on meal, boiled and fried, during his college days. He reported that he was happy and that his education tasted the better for the plainness of his diet. But his report was not made until long after the taste of that meal had been forgotten. He never ate it in any form when I knew him. Such economy would have been impossible to a married man.

#### Tragedy.

Comedians are sad off the stage because they can not play tragedy. A quarter of a centimeter too little on the nose, upward slanting eyes or some such slight variation prevents a man from acting Hamlet, Othello or Lancelotto da Rimini. A snub-nosed Hamlet or a jovial-eyed Lancelotto is an impossibility. Even Coquelin regrets that the unconcealable rotundity of his figure and his upward slanting features prevent him from assuming the heroic tragic roles.

Most actors who can amuse think it beneath them, and fancy themselves in the tragic, classic roles creating profound sensations. But the art of grief is exceedingly difficult. The fine line which separates agony from rant is so impalpable that most actors trample on it and produce absurd effects.

I think Mr. Otis Skinner would make a most acceptable comedian. He has a fine voice, he is graceful and has the undefined electric quality of getting on good terms with the audience immediately. But Francesca da Rimini is a bombastically tragic play; we do not now thus receive misfortune's blows. Thoroughly artificial situations color the acting, and Francesca da Rimini is made up of stage dialogue and forced situations. Imagine, for instance, a marriage in a cathedral before a cardinal of the Catholic church between dignitaries such as Lancelotto and Francesca were. Then the impossibility of the

scene which takes place immediately after the ceremony is apparent. The higher dignitaries are slaves of convention. A wedding is the most conventional and rigid of all ceremonies, even on the frontier, among the least conventional of all people. In the first place the greatest warrior of his period and place would not have shown his heart to bystanders as Lancelotto does in the play when he first sees Francesca. Secondly, the scene in the cathedral before a gaping multitude when the new husband accuses his brother of treason, is a denial of history and of probability. The old Italians were a most ceremonious nobility, and the members of Italian society are still the most conventional and custom-bound in the world.

The sorrows of the hunch-backed soldier are stage sorrows. We do not sympathize with him. The lovers are stage lovers, we do not care for them. All the outworn tragedy business, all the signs that actors for a hundred years have used to indicate extreme grief and chagrin, Mr. Skinner uses in Francesca da Rimini. So many famous actors have played the part that a modern is professionally bound to accept the traditions and play the part accordingly. Considering these traditions and the artificiality of the play, Mr. Skinner's acting and reading is entirely satisfactory to lovers of tragedy. I should like to see him in a modern subtle play constructed on a background of probability.

In real life we avoid funerals and occasions of palpable demonstration of the woes of mortal life, unless friendship or kinship makes our presence essential or convenient. Why, then, should we go to the theatre to see three men and one woman stabbed, a hunchback reviled and constantly reminded of his deformity by a detestable little fool in motley, and a husband betrayed? It is cheaper to read the divorce and murder dispatches in the morning paper. The warden of the New York prison that confines Czolgosz has received a thousand requests for passes to the execution of the assassin. There is therefore quite a large proportion of the citizens of this country who enjoy executions, and managers who put on plays where in the last act all of the principal characters are put to death in sight of the audience, are justified of their selection.

Mr. Skinner has a large and very elaborately costumed company. The scenery is gorgeous and the artists who painted the scenes put depth and distance into their pictures. It was hard to believe that their sunsets, gardens, hills and skies were only a few feet from the footlights. If it were not for the scenery and the costumes the murders and suicide might be unpleasantly suggestive of death and decay, even in the unreal light of the stage.

#### OMAHA LETTER.

Omaha, Nebr.,  
October 17, 1901.

My Dear Eleanor:

You doubtless have performed your little round of housewifely duties ere this unholy hour, and perhaps are performing them yet once again in domestic dreams. I fancy the shades are drawn to the proper length, the milk-jar set out and the sponge set to rise at the proper temperature, and no single duty left undone disturbs your well-earned rest. Good little wife! dear, homely, honest joys! Truly yours is the better part.

A late supper—where the time-honored rabbit figured as the piece de resistance, obscured by several manly

cigarettes, has sent me home with a slightly clouded brain and very wakeful eyes. Scraps of song still hum about me, fragments of aimless conversation still linger, and the whole has engendered a sort of dissatisfaction with myself and my friends for which nobody and nothing can be held responsible, unless, indeed, I am mean enough to blame the rabbit which was, if the truth be told, a bit too stringy. We discussed a most everything twixt heaven and earth, in a misty, unfinished style where with the rabbit we deceived ourselves into the flattering belief that we were uncommonly deep and clever. On sober second thoughts here in my sanctum, free of the blue smoke, I am convinced that even our cleverness was shallow and that the depth wasn't there at all.

Some one finally wanted to know what constituted a sense of humor or what a sense of humor presupposed or involved on the part of the possessor, and there we were introduced to our Waterloo. No one was able to satisfy the anxious inquirer, and so I am constrained to pass it on to your clear, decisive intellect. Can't you help us?

These brooding Indian summer days are full of a mysterious sadness to me. They force in upon me all the things I meant to be and do, which I have never been or done. The air seems just a soft winding-sheet for hundreds of dead hopes. In the spring when the pulses leap as the sap began to stir, we were very gay and joyous, my heart and I. We said: "We have planted many tender seeds of beautiful things, and as the soft rains fall and the sun's warmth grows, they will take root, and we will watch and love them into full, strong life; and when the summer comes they will break into bloom and beauty; they will perfume all our way with their sweetness. But we must have forgotten, we must some way have neglected them; for the heat of summer scorched the tendrils and the leaves and there grew no flowers. Now in the golden harvest-time we found only rustling, shivering stalks to garner.

Oh! tender, tiny seeds! What did we fail to do? How did we neglect you, that now when the winter draws nigh, my heart and I sit among barren fields?

There is no joy to me in the beauty of this time in Nature. Like the last hectic flush of the consumptive, it hints too plainly of inevitable decay. Think of God's poor, who must withdraw from His green fields and blue skies, to the corn-husks of humanity! I never thought I was overly charitable or disposed to assume the inevitable woes of my kind, but some way the thought of all the poor, the unfortunate, the suffering obtrudes upon my peace of mind just as soon as the tree stretch naked, supplicating arms to the cold blue sky. Of course, if you are disposed to be unpleasant you can suggest that it is a very easy sort of charity to sit in a cozy, steam-heated room, in a new tailor-made gown, and scribble with a lead pencil to catch the tears; over the world's poor. But you will not do that, bless your sincere friendship, and, beside, I have done a little more, in my poor way, and I have fallen back baffled more by the poverty of soul I have encountered than by the empty coal bins. Some way, some how, you can occasionally have one of these filled; but where and how shall one ever find covering and warmth for the shivering, naked immortal part of these terrible poor?

You did not ask me to write a society letter, did you? I have forgotten. If you did, you will probably return this, even if unaccompanied by postage.

We are becoming quite an asylum for everything and everybody that nobody else wants or will have. Our latest refugee is a certain Mrs. Patterson, no relative of Billy Patterson's, so far as I know,—but she just came sweetly to abide with us and incidentally to fling

paper wads at her cruel tobacco-dealing father-in-law who seeks to separate her through the divorce courts from his son. Now there may be some good reason why Mrs. Patterson chooses us as her confidante,—if so, I do not know it,—but she's a God-send to us on days the papers aren't busy. She is blonde and plump, affects black, an outward and visible sign of gnawing grief, perhaps—wears big, fluffy boas and big hats and large spotted veils. She sings and is the most interviewed woman in town. She wishes to make the cruel tobacco gentleman draw his check for a sufficient amount to salve her lacerated affections. Her grievance is that the above mentioned father-in-law alienated her husband's affections,—they went up in smoke, I suppose! If I could illustrate that joke you might laugh next week, or the week after that. That witicism isn't broad—in fact, it is what you might call subtle.

If you and Jack ever fall out over the lean and the fat, don't eat your heart out, or eat the fat, if you do not like it; just come straight to our generous, motherly arms. We will give you a corner room front in the best apartment house, which shall be yours just as long as you can afford to pay for it. We will condole with you privately and air publicly every incident of your career, past, present and yet to come. We will examine your rings for the hall-mark and the belts of your gowns for your tailor's name, then we will interview him as to the amount of stuffing requisite to your figure—all this for the generous, unselfish purpose of announcing to the breakfast tables of the great metropolitan dailies that you are altogether quite as big a fool as you look. By all means avoid the damaging notoriety of Sioux Falls! Come to Omaha!

I have recently read Elia W. Peattie's "Beleaguered Forest." It seems to me some critics have been disposed to yield her rather reluctant praise. Praise somewhat apologized for, forced on account of the "idyllic setting of the story." I may be no judge, but, such as I am, she dominated and owned me away in the wee sma' hours of one still night. I heard her pines rustle at their prayers for mercy. I breathed the strong, sweet wind of the lonely north. I had some better thoughts, a few higher aspirations and a great added admiration for Mrs. Peattie when I closed the book and sought my pillow that night. It hinted at least of great possibilities—if her best is not there, you are convinced when she gives her best, it will be very, very good. Must our eyes be holden because we have eaten luncheon with her many a time and oft at Balduff's? That may not sound applicable, but if you had heard a woman criticize the book as I did one day, you would be obliged to draw the inference that it was ridiculous to suppose Mrs. Peattie could write an intelligent book because she, the woman, had frequently dined with her in the days of yore at the cafe! Much of that woman's society would be paralyzing, I am free to admit.

The midnight oil is about exhausted. If the gods are not mad with you, you may be able to decipher this—perhaps it would be better for my reputation if you could not! In case it proves too much, feed the flames of the kitchen range and I will forgive you. As always,

PENELOPE.

"No," said the ingenue. "I don't like canoes."

"Why not?" asked the college student.  
"Because," responded she, blushing "you have to sit tandem all the time."

Hewitt—I owe my success in life to my wife.

Jewett—I'll bet you've paid dearly for it.—Town Topics.