

## OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

**"The Second in Command"**

A play without a villain, composed of fifteen agreeable, well-disposed people is a relief. The villain, with his wicked disappearing ha-ha, is a bore. Quite often the actor who impersonates him is a ruddy boy who has white-washed his face and drawn black marks for wrinkles and the deception is incomplete. For model he has taken Mephistopheles in the drama of Faust, and every time the villain youngster leaves the room he laughs ha-ha, and in a very short time, say after his second or third exit, the blood refuses to curdle at the sound and the innocent villain has no other means of expressing his wicked and cruel intentions.

All the cast of "The Second in Command" are outside of the penitentiary for good and sufficient reasons. They have no designs on either society, the heroine, or innocence in any shape whatever. All are men and women we should be proud to know, and yet there is no lack of interest in the plot or its denouement.

At the first entrance of Colonel Anstruther, the first in command, he has certain signs, albeit they are superficial, of being the villain of the evening and of the play. He has a black mustache, he is very well set up, his clothes fit him to perfection as a villain's clothes always fit, he swaggers, but so does the cocky young subaltern Barker; and he lights a cigar and throws the match ruthlessly on the floor after the manner of villains handling matches.

But in spite of all signs and all of the meaningless villain "business" which Anstruther adopts on his entrance, he is a good sort and would not deprive a man of his honor, his dollars, or his sweetheart. He does not gamble, lie or steal; on the contrary he is a brave, high-minded man who hesitates when it is necessary to tell his friend that he is rich and able to draw his check for 3,000 pounds to loan a young lieutenant who is hopelessly in debt. He has the fatal gift of beauty and of good luck. The girl whom he falls in love with at first sight is already in love with his portrait which has been exhibited at the Royal Academy. In addition to being born rich he grows up to an impressive figure and manner and the war office promotes him over the heads of braver and abler men who do not chance to look their bravery and ability.

The girl is as blind and beefy as most young girls are who fall hysterically in love with a man because he has a good tailor who has done his best for a good figure. She does not care for a heart of gold, for fidelity, devotion, heroism, unselfishness, before she is married, when they become the essentials. Colonel Anstruther has in addition to his good looks and good fortune the manner of indifference to woman, the manner which fascinates her more than compliments, presents, or any of the many forms in which masculine devotion expresses itself.

Poor Kit was handicapped by being in love with an egotistic young girl, too young, too selfish and too much spoiled to appreciate the manifestations of a noble character. He judged her by himself, and when she told him she would marry him, it did not occur to him that she was marrying to get a home. But he proposed for the third time just after the dowager Lady Harborough had informed her that she was tired of taking care of her and Muriel thought she must marry somebody.

Later the rich Colonel Anstruther appears, and Muriel has no hesitation in throwing over her poor, dotting lover and accepting the rich one, especially as her poor stick of a brother has told her he was in debt and about to be

disgraced and that if she could manage a marriage with Anstruther a rich brother-in-law would be very convenient.

While her fiancé is showing her the ring and exulting over its beauty, with no apparent compunction she tells him that she loves another. The broken-hearted lover goes out, the rich suitor comes in and is accepted, hysterically but without expression of sympathy for the "Second in Command." Miss Conquest is a cold blonde who keeps an unmoved countenance in emergencies. The character of Muriel Mannerling is not particularly admirable as it comes fresh from the hands of the playwright. Miss Conquest's somewhat cold temperament has left the character unrelieved by the touch of humanity that is required to make an audience forgive slights to so very modern and effective a hero as Major Bingham (John Drew).

The part is ungrateful. Muriel Mannerling is entirely absorbed in herself and her own emotions and schemes to get a desirable brother-in-law for her brother and a home for herself. Major Bingham is the modest, good-natured man, a universal favorite with his own sex, who is so accustomed to sacrificing his own pleasure and convenience for other people that no one notices it. They say if the spheres ever stopped making heavenly music we could hear it when they began again. But because they have from the beginning made heavenly harmony we have never heard it. Mr. John Drew makes the most of the part. He even works into it sweetness distilled from his own personality, a sweetness and humor unimagined by the dramatic author. So that what he loses by Miss Conquest's temperament is more than made up by the sweetness and humor bestowed upon the role of Major Bingham by John Drew.

Just why certain men and women of the stage are favorites and others who do their parts faultlessly are not, it is hard to say. John Drew, Sol Smith Russell, May Irwin, and of course Joseph Jefferson have a large personal following. Audiences who have never seen such an actor off the stage love him for something inherent in himself which the actor himself reveals.

John Drew strikes the key note of most Americans. We are tuned to him and he can send a faultless message to any part of an American audience. It is the same with May Irwin. She has the priceless temperament that keys the audience to responsive harmony. Dramatic authors whose heroes and heroines are played by these actors and actresses of temperament are in luck. The play is almost sure of popularity, for the temperament and the good understanding it creates have won the day before the curtain falls on the first scene.

It may be that this quality is an extra amount of human-ness. When John Drew or May Irwin or Joe Jefferson are playing their parts on the stage we do not measure their performances coldly or critically. Each one of these talented members of a great profession has ingratiated himself with each individual of the audience. The soft side of a thousand hearts is turned to them and John Drew's and May Irwin's imperfect human figures are of no consequence. Their faults of vocalization or shortcomings of one kind and another are overbalanced by the good understanding and flattering intimacy they have established with us. Du Maurier understood this. "Trilby" is a book in which its author takes his reader into his confidence. Hawthorne and Thackeray did likewise. But the method can not be coldly resolved upon. Richard Mansfield, Modjeska, Sir Henry Irving,

Duse could not be confidential, confident, cordial with an audience if they should so determine. Temperament is a birth gift and can only be partially and unsatisfactorily cultivated.

Mr. Drew's support is of unusual strength and evenness. The part of the Hon. Hildebrand Carstairs, played by F. Newton Lindo, was remarkably well sustained. A clever comedy part, played as Mr. Lindo plays Carstairs, without resorting to buffoonery or clownishness of any degree requires nice discrimination. Mr. Lindo accomplishes it with a delicacy and finish worthy of an older actor. Miss Ida Vernon as Lady Harborough was beyond criticism. She is a worthy descendant of the McLachlans of the Hebrides.

We are also indebted to Mr. Drew and his company for demonstrations in the pronunciation of certain words like subaltern and others strictly in use by the English and novelists of the Indo-European army romance. It is quite useless to look in the dictionary for the pronunciation of these words, for the English—particularly the English of the army—pay little if any attention to dictionary pronunciations. The only way to find out how certain words are pronounced is to take lessons in "English" from some retired English army officer or some of the lucky people who have been allowed to hear and learn his peculiar pronunciation, or to associate in a direct or indirect way with some one who has learned "English." One with access to nothing but the dictionary would never learn that subaltern is pronounced with the accent on the first syllable. That revered but obsolete book states that subaltern is accented on the second syllable.

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**A Pistol Permit**

Mrs. Hetty Green applied to the police department of New York city for permission to carry a pistol and Captain Steven O'Brien, of the Leonard street station, granted it. Captain O'Brien's report on the application stated that Mrs. Green declares that she is in the habit of carrying about with her large sums of money, stocks, bonds, jewelry, etc., and that it is her intention to apply for a pistol permit in all of the large cities which she visits. Mrs. Green is an independent, fearless old lady, but this pistol permit is an invitation to robbers. They were unaware, until her own declaration enlightened them, that she carried a large enough share of her wealth around with her to tempt a first-class thug. It may be that Mrs. Green can draw her gun quickly enough to outwit the designs of the profession, the members of which are as enterprising and as successful as any thieves in the world. Mrs. Green's application is in the way of a dare to this class and there may be one or two who will not take it. At any rate the publicity given her application lessens her chances of slipping along unnoticed by these gentry.

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**What is a Gentleman**

One of the richest ladies in New York city says that unless a man is a college graduate he need not come around. If a boy is a gentleman anyway it does not make him (permanently) less of a gentleman to go to college. But if a disinterested resident in this or any other college community were asked to name its best bred members it is certain that the college men would not be named. Personal cleanliness, unobtrusive, inconspicuous conduct in public, respect for the rights of other people are a few of the primary qualities of a gentleman.

The filthy condition of the university class-room floors, covered with tobacco spit, is an indication of the low civilization of the occupants of the rooms. The noisy conduct of the students in public places shows that they have no code of sufficient application to stand the strain of a victory at baseball or football.

A boy who goes to work begins at once to study the humanities. This is

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