

## ALL ABOUT THE STAGE.

## THINGS THAT THE AUDIENCE DOES NOT SEE.

And Others That Are in View, But Are Surrounded by Mystery—Mr. Chidley Explains Some Stage Terms—Anecdotes of the Theatre.

It is said that in every art, the initial step is to name the tools, and upon this branch of the scene painters' art there is much matter of interest.

Every scene as it is set upon the stage constitutes one picture, although composed of several pieces, or at least it is a homogeneous view of them. Those several pieces are so arranged as to also serve the purpose of screens to hide the persons and things on the stage not intended to be visible to the audience. These pieces ordinarily consist of wings, flats, borders, set pieces and backings.

The hanging scenery is manipulated from a gallery called the fly gallery, or, more usually, the "flies." Now it is curious, but true, that outside the theatre, nine people out of ten confuse these two words and call the wings "flies," a popular error which carries its own solution on the face, and is of little consequence.

Quite recently, however, a leading New York journal gave an account of a celebrated actress being taken ill in the flies, a statement which set theatrical people wondering what on earth she could be doing in a place sacred to stage hands only.

It is by the way a little difficult to trace the etymology of "fly" in this connection, but it would seem to be derived from the machinery called by the French a vol, on flight, by which a rapid descent is made apparently from the sky; but really from the gallery, by such characters as the Midsummer Night's Dream when Puck essays to "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes."

The wings are screens, as their French name *Chassis* indicates, and are arranged in pairs on each side of the stage, having intervals of about six feet between each, which are called the entrances.

The mysterious and symbolic-looking letters to be seen in printed plays, L1, R3, etc., refer to these entrances.

There is another popular intellectual confusion with reference to the French stage. People constantly write and talk of "les coulisses" and mean by it and translate it, the wings, whereas the "coulisses" are the grooves or slides for the wings. When a Frenchman speaks of being in the "coulisses" he means, in general terms, "behind the scenes," and specifically, "in the entrances."

The picture which closes the scene at the rear of the stage, "upstage," is either painted on hanging drops or on large canvases framed in the same manner as the wings and called flats. They are generally made in pairs. A few years ago I was asked by the president of a New York amateur dramatic society to paint a flat to roll up. He meant a drop. Inch and a half lumber is not an easy substance to "roll up."

Drops are hanging sheets or curtains of canvas suspended from the rigging loft (called from its construction the "grid-iron") and dropped into view when required by means of ropes fastened by belaying pins to a pin rail in the fly gallery, and passing over sheaves in the gridiron. These lines are called the head lines, and are three in number, called respectively centre, prompt, and opposite prompt. The latter has, however, been condensed into O. P. in theatrical jargon, and to the uninitiated the process of "trimming" a drop by the "grips" i. e. Stage hands, sounds peculiar with such directions being shouted to the flymen as "take up on your O. P.," "lower your prompt," "let down your centre."

It may not be out of place here to mention a curious custom in the theatres of France. There the word "fil," literally a thread, is applied inside the theatre to all ropes whatever. To call it anything else is a crime against stage etiquette which must be atoned for. Woe be to the unlucky wight, who speaks of a "corde." If he be a novice or a stranger, he will get out of the scrape by treating all hands at the nearest wine shop, but if it be a director or a stage manager or some other official who has committed the *lapsus lingue*, it is a horse of a different color. The following morning a procession is formed by the stage mechanics, who, carrying a piece of rope frayed out into an enormous tuft called the "bouquet de fil," visit the delinquent in his office. With great mock gravity the master mechanic presents the bouquet with a solemn explanation of the name and use of the "fil," and the victim has to listen to it until he parts with a couple of gold Napoleons or so. The smart money thus collected goes to an admirably managed benevolent fund for theatrical mechanics.

I may also here refer to the French equivalents of prompt and O. P. which indicates the right and left sides of the stage. In the time of Louis XV. the king's box was on the prompter's side or right hand, and the queen's on the other, and the sides were called king's and queen's sides. During the reign of terror, the directory prescribed even the use of the word king. The actors were in a fix when it occurred to some one in the theatre of the Tuileries, that it stood between the court and the garden. Cote and Cour and Cote Jardin replaced the old names of Roi and Reine and have remained in use to this hour. The necessity for such names needs some explanation. Right and left as you stand on the stage is the reverse as seen from the audience and as in rehearsals the stage manager is usually "in front of the house" or if on the stage is looking that way it would be embarrassing for him to be constantly, mentally transposing the sides. The special words determine the side; the ordinary language would not.

Drops are curtains which are suspended from the rigging loft and serve various offices. In the language of the stage they are affectionately termed the "rags." The most important is the proscenium curtain, usually known as the drop curtain, and in France popularly called *la toile*, or the sheet. This serves to temporarily shut off the stage from the audience during the change of scene. It then occupies so conspicuous a place that it is usually painted to form the main decorative feature of the house, and is usually considered a crucial test of the artist's taste and abilities. Some have been of remarkable beauty.

That at the Haymarket theatre, in London, is said by competent judges to be a work which may challenge comparison with any of the world's great masterpieces. The drop curtain had a curious effect a few years back on a young German servant girl in Berlin who had never been to the theatre. She had a ticket given her by her mistress. She returned home about the time the performance should commence, and her astonished mistress said: "Why, Gretchen, you cannot have been to the theatre." Oh, yes, I have, and it was beautiful, and such sweet music, and such a lovely, large picture on a wall, and I staid there till the picture went up out of sight, and a lot of ladies and gentlemen came forward and began to talk about their private affairs, so it would not have been good manners in me to stay and listen to them!"

The other drops are used as portions of the scenery, and an excellent scene may be constructed of drops only, some of them having spaces cut out of them through which the others are seen—these are known as cut drops and leg-drops. The first form of the best resources of the artist for certain effects, especially of space and atmosphere. The French name their curtains or *rideaux* according to their use, such as the *rideau du fond* or upstage drop, and the *rideau d'avant-scene* or drop curtain. This often has in front of it a large proscenium lambrequin reaching at the sides to the ground. This is called the *Manteau d'Arlequin*, from the former practice of an acrobat coming between it and the curtain to perform a specialty act during the change of scene. Nowadays the stage manager comes that way to make announcements or excuses, as the case may be.

In England, in the last century, there was a space in the drop curtain on which the name of the piece and the next act were displayed to the audience. That was in the "good" old days when you had to pay for a "bill of the play."

Borders are short curtains which mask the overhead machinery and represent such subjects as the sky, ceilings and foliage.

Set pieces include such things as statues, rocks, balustrades, etc.

To state all the technical terms of the theatre would require a voluminous dictionary, and we will compromise the matter with an anecdote.

Artists classify colors into "warm" and "cold" according to certain qualities. On one occasion an artist wanted to use a pot of warm grey he had mixed and called to his paint boy, a novice, "bring me that warm color." Half an hour elapsed and becoming impatient, he called again, "Coming sir" was the reply as the boy brought in a pot boiling hot from the stove.

SYDNEY CHIDLEY.

## RAIN SUPERSTITION.

Various Ways Which Moisture Is Coaxed from the Unwilling Clouds.

In the Caucasian province of Georgia, where a drought has lasted long, marriageable girls are yoked in couples with an ox-yoke on their shoulders, a priest holds the reins, and thus harnessed they wade through rivers, puddles and marshes, praying, screaming, weeping and laughing. In a district of Transylvania, when the ground is parched with drought, some girls strip themselves naked, and, led by an older woman, who is also naked, they steal a harrow and carry it across the field to a brook, where they set it afloat. Next they sit on the harrow and keep a tiny flame burning on each corner of it for an hour. Then they leave the harrow in the water and go home.

A similar rain charm is resorted to in India; naked women draw a plow across the field by night. It is not said that they plunge the plow into a stream or sprinkle it with water. But the charm would hardly be complete without it. Sometimes the charm works through an animal.

To procure rain the Peruvians used to set a black sheep in a field, pour chicha over it and give it nothing to eat till rain fell. In a district of Sumatra all the women of the village, scantily clad, go to the river, wade into it and splash each other with the water. A black cat is thrown into the water and made to swim about for a while, then allowed to escape to the bank, pursued by the splashing of the women. In these cases the color of the animal is part of the charm; being black it will darken the sky with rain clouds. So the Bechuanas burn the stomach of an ox at evening because they say, "the black smoke will gather the clouds and cause the rain to come." The Timorese sacrifice a black pig for rain, a white or red one for sunshine. The Garos offer a black goat on the top of a very high mountain in time of drought.

Sometimes people try to coerce the rain-god into giving rain. In China a huge dragon made of paper or wood, representing the rain-god, is carried about in procession; but if no rain follows, it is cursed and torn in pieces. In the like circumstances the Feloupes of Senegambia throw down their fetiches and drag them about the fields, cursing them till rain falls. Some Indians of the Orinoco worshipped toads and kept them in vessels in order to obtain from them rain or sunshine as might be required; when their prayers were not answered they beat the toads. Killing a frog is a European rain charm. When the spirits withhold rain or sunshine, the Comanches whip a slave; if the gods prove obstinate, the victim is almost flayed alive. Here the human being may represent the god, like the leleclad Dodola.—*Golden Bough*.

## Why a Girl Can't Throw a Stone.

The difference between a girl's throwing and a boy's is substantially this: The boy crooks his elbow and reaches back with the upper part of his arm about at right angles with his body and the forearm at 45 degrees. The direct act of throwing is accomplished by bringing the arm back with a sort of snap, working every joint from shoulder to wrist. The girl throws with her whole arm rigid, the boy with his whole arm relaxed. Why this marked and unmistakable difference exists may be explained by the fact that the clavicle or collar-bone in the female anatomy is some inches longer and set some degrees lower down than in the masculine frame. The long, crooked, awkward bone interferes with the full and free use of the arm. This is the reason why a girl cannot throw a stone.

Take time by the forelock, and Puttner's Emulsion by the spoonful, and your cough will vanish and your rosy cheeks return.

## GEORGE ELIOT.

Her Methods of Work, and how She Willed Her Manuscripts.

A collection of manuscripts recently added to the priceless literary treasures in the archives of the British Museum, is possessed of an unusual element of interest to the general public. The collection comprises the original writings of all the works of the great novelist, George Eliot, and were by her bequeathed, in a rather unusual manner, to the museum.

George Eliot was the wife of George Henry Lewes, and during his life the distinguished authoress made it a practice to bind up each complete manuscript after its return from the publisher, and to write an affectionate dedication to her husband upon the flyleaf. Then it was given into his keeping. The good condition of all the manuscripts is good evidence that the compositors had been enjoined to exercise great care and cleanliness in handling the copy, for the sheets are scarcely soiled to any noticeable extent.

George Henry Lewes died in 1878. His wife had shortly before completed her last novel, *Thophrastus Such*, but it was not published until May of the following year. There is a suggestion of sadness that crept over the life of the bereaved wife, in the solemn blankness of the white page on this manuscript, which in her other manuscripts was filled with some touching tribute of love. The widow, upon her husband's death, gathered together all the manuscripts, and soon afterward she gave them to her stepson, Charles L. Lewis, with the stipulation that upon his death they should become the property of the nation and be placed in the British Museum.

What Mr. Cross tells in his biography of George Eliot is interesting to here recall:

"She told me that in all she considered her best writing there was a 'not herself,' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which the spirit, as it were, was acting. Particularly she dwelt on this in regard to the scene in 'Middlemarch' between Dorothea and Rosamond, saying that, although she always knew they had sooner or later, to come together, she kept the idea resolutely out of her mind until Dorothea was in Rosamond's drawing room. Then, abandoning herself to the inspiration of the moment, she wrote the whole scene exactly as it stands, without alteration or erasure, in an intense state of excitement and agitation, feeling herself entirely possessed by the feelings of the two women."

In all the earlier writings black ink was used; in the three later manuscripts violet was substituted. In "Middlemarch," which was written principally with black ink, are seven pages in one place written with violet ink. This would seem to indicate that the authoress would write that number of pages, perhaps more, at one sitting. She was particular about her chapter headings, and many of them were not written in until the book was almost ready for the press. Others, which were written in the manuscript, were altered once, or even two or three times, in some instances.

## MEN GROWING SCARCE.

Facts That Call Into Question the Practices of Civilization.

Statistics show that the male population of the civilized world is falling further and further behind the female.

According to the last British census, the excess of women and girls over men and boys in Great Britain is about 900,000, an increase in ten years of nearly 200,000. The German census of last December places the number of females about 600,000 above that of the males in the kingdom of Prussia, or nearly three times the excess twenty years ago. There are 1,000,000 more females than males in the whole German empire. In Sweden and Norway the "weaker sex" are in the majority by 250,000, in Austria-Hungary by 600,000, in Denmark by 60,000, and in every European country they outnumber the males.

In the United States, Canada, and Australia the males are in the majority, though not largely so, the estimated excess of males in this country being only 1,100,000 or 1,200,000. It is plain that, but for immigration, which furnishes a much greater number of men than women, the latter would soon be in the majority here. There is a large preponderance now of females in New England and in some other sections of the United States, and if immigration were to materially decrease, undoubtedly the surplus of males would soon disappear in the whole country.

In less civilized countries, where women are lightly esteemed, it is otherwise, India having about 6,000,000 more men than women, while the males largely preponderate in China. The obvious deduction is that the higher civilization is most favorable to the increase of the female sex, and this suggests the interesting question whether civilization is doing the best thing in the world in producing this result.

A fact of hardly less interest brought out by the British census is the marked decline in the marriage rate, which has been almost steadily tending downward for nearly two decades. Meantime, there has been an even more decided decline in the birth rate, so that not only is marriage decreasing, but marriages are becoming less prolific on the average. There is the same tendency in this country, prevailing chiefly among the better classes. An excess of females in a country is certain to have an unfavorable influence on the marriage rate, and the moral consequences of such a state of affairs can easily be conceived.—*Omaha Bee*.

## How Vessels go Through the Suez Canal.

The average time of transit by day is 24 hours; by night with electric lights it is 19 hours, and has been done in 15 hours. In order to navigate by night a vessel must light the way by carrying an electric projector at her bow as close to the water as possible, and pay the closest attention to the orders from the passing stations or gares. Three white lights shown vertically indicate "slow down;" then the display of two white lights is the order to stop and haul into the gare. The steamer presently hauls in, makes fast, puts out all lights and lies snug in her berth alongside the desert, while the oncoming vessel, looking like a locomotive at night, passes by. One white light from the gare and the lines are let go and the journey continued until Suez is reached.—*Scribner's*.

What steam is to the engine, Hood's Sarsaparilla is to the body, producing bodily power and furnishing mental force.

## THE ETON WHIPPING-BLOCK.

A Lively Head-Master and How he Flogged the Boys.

The recovery of the old Eton whipping-block will create much interest in certain circles. It is a relic of past time, still bearing carved upon it many names highly honored in the world of scholarship. It dates from 1773, and it was taken from Eton just ninety years afterwards by one of the king's scholars, in order to preserve it from destruction. Till recently it had lain hidden in the house of an Etonian enthusiast in Glamorganshire, and has now at last been restored by its jealous custodians to the authorities of Eton college, on the understanding, no doubt, that it shall be placed in a suitable repository and carefully watched over in future. Eton was in early days distinguished for its severity, and Thomas Tusser, the author of "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry," bewailed it in such pathetic verses that they frightened away young John Evelyn from that famous seat of learning in the reign of Charles I. The discipline afterwards became milder, but was revived in all its pristine vigor by Dr. Keate, who was head-master from 1809 to 1834.

Keate once flogged eighty boys in one night, who had shown symptoms of mutiny, having been brought to him out of their beds in two's and three's, so that they had no opportunity of combining or taking counsel together. He once, so runs the story, flogged the whole body of candidates for confirmation, the paper with their names on it being mistaken by him for the flogging bill. He would listen to no protests or remonstrances, but went conscientiously through the whole lot. At the same time, it was said that he was easily propitiated, and Mr. Gladstone once owed a very narrow escape from the block to one of those fine distinctions which are characteristic of him. He had omitted, as preceptor, from the list of boys who had mixed lessons the name of a friend. Before commanding him to unbuckle, Keate was foolish enough to give his reasons, and charged him with a breach of trust. Young Gladstone instantly replied that he was not guilty of a breach of trust, because the office had been forced upon him. Keate was satisfied with the answer, and thus lost the opportunity of being able to boast that he had flogged one of the most famous men in Europe. Hawtrey succeeded Keate, and Goodford Hawtrey. Goodford was remarkable for his humor. After flogging Sir Frederick Johnstone just before he came to breakfast with him, he greeted his victim, then a youth about to leave, with "Well, Johnstone, here we are again!" He was once, it is said, good natured enough to attend in the flogging room at half-past ten one Sunday evening at the end of term, to meet the convenience of boys who wished to get away early on Monday morning.

## How a Log is Kept.

How many landmen know how a log book is written up? It seems just as complicated as double-entry bookkeeping when one does not know, but after a little careful attention and study it is as easy to keep a log book as to eat hot gingerbread. There is a list of letters arranged, and they look like so much Greek to the uneducated. The letter b for instance stands for blue sky, whether there be a clear or hazy atmosphere; c indicates cloudy or detached opening clouds; d denotes drizzling rain; a small f, fog; a capital f, thick fog; g, gloomy, dark weather; h, hail; i, lightning; and m, misty or hazy so as to interfere with the view.

The letter o represents overcast or when the whole sky is covered with an impenetrable cloud. Passing showers are noted by the letter p, and q indicates the weather to be equally. Continuous rain is indicated by an r, snow by an s, and thunder by a t. An ugly, threatening appearance in the weather calls for the letter u, and visibility of distant objects, whether the sky be cloudy or not, is represented by the letter v. A small w is wet dew. A full point or dot under any letter denotes an extraordinary degree.

As an example of how the letters are used take q p d l t. This reads very hard squalls and showers of drizzle, accompanied by lightning with very heavy thunder. Numerals denote the force of the wind. A cipher indicates calm, 1 light air, 2 light breeze, 3 gentle breeze, 4 moderate breeze, 5 fresh breeze, 6 strong breeze, 7 moderate breeze, 8 fresh gale, 9 strong gale, 10 whole gale, 11 storm and 12 hurricane. This system of abbreviation is generally adhered to on all merchant vessels.

## Every Day Is Sunday.

The Greeks observe Monday, the Persians Tuesday, the Assyrians Wednesday, the Egyptians Thursday, the Turks Friday, the Jews Saturday, and the Christians Sunday, thus there is a perpetual Sabbath being celebrated on earth. It was during the French revolution of 1789 that a weekly Sabbath was totally abolished. The National convention which declared France a republic determined, at the instance of Gebot, Archbishop of Paris, to abandon christianity and to substitute instead the worship of liberty, equality and reason; churches were quickly despoiled and civic feasts substituted for religious festivals. The convention also enacted that time, instead of being reckoned from the birth of Christ, should thereafter count from the birthday of the French Revolution, the year to begin anew from that date, September 22, 1792. That the christian Sabbath might not be observed, the months were to consist of thirty days each, a day of rest being granted only at the close of each decade (every ten days). Under the directory established by the new constitution in 1795, the laws of Robespierre were repealed, the churches were reopened, and Sunday took its rightful place in the calendar.

Wife—"I found a woman's letter in your overcoat pocket this morning." John—"It can't be. I—I—" Wife—"It was the letter I gave you last Monday to mail on your way to the store."

Fond Mamma—"Why, what have you in your apron?" Little Daughter (breathlessly)—"Oh, mamma! Such good luck! Doty Dimple's cat had six kittens, and her mamma would not let her keep but one, so she gave me the other five."

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