

The people who are able and willing to pay a dollar and a half for a seat at a theater are the readers of George Eliot, Hardy, Howells, and James, not of Wilkie Collins, Miss Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, and Ouida. They demand that the characters, the dialogue, and the incidents of plays shall appear to be real. They would be willing, even anxious, to see their own passions, feelings, hopes, desires represented in others, but they have little or no interest in events the chronicles of which should belong to the police-reports. We are all daily living dramas and comedies not lacking in intensity or humor; yet how very few of us come into contact with murders, assassinations, abductions, hair-breadth escapes from fire and water, or are acquainted with rooms provided with half-a-dozen doors behind each of which a comedian may be hidden!

No other people is so fond of the study of character as the American. This is most strongly proved by the success here of star-plays which are tolerated solely because each possesses one or two parts which the public recognizes to be true. In this desire to see, not events but character influencing actions, the dramatist and the manager have a sure foundation to build on. Let the one write and the other produce a play with a fair story in which all the characters shall be recognizable as true and natural types, and one theater at least will not have to complain of poor patronage. Such a play will probably be devoid of what managers and actors term "strong situations" and at the end of each act the curtain will not descend upon large groups carefully posed and firmly fixed into attitudes, as if they were the personages in fairy stories touched by the enchanter's wand. It should be mentioned that Mr. Daly is the most original of our stage managers in devising "business" (action and movement upon the scene) and that all his later productions have tended strongly in the direction of naturalness; but he deals exclusively with light comedy, and the more serious side of our daily life remains to be treated.

The American stage is to-day almost in the same condition that the English was about twenty years ago when nearly every theater was given up to either melodrama or broad farce. Then came Tom Robertson's opportunity,—an opportunity he had been waiting for in poverty and anguish. "Society," "School," "Caste," "Ours," were surprises because they seemed unconventional, depicting life and character as his audiences knew them. The work was not always true, witness the impossible Froissart-quoting *Marquise* in "Caste" and the examination scene in "School"; but the plays were so much truer than anything ever seen before that they won immediate acceptance. The influence of Robertson's style was promptly felt. The modern theater, which had been neglected by the more intelligent classes, was again attended, and the Court, the St. James's, and even the Haymarket theater, produced his plays or as close imitations of them as were procurable.

It is singular that while our stage stands about where England's did when the Robertsonian drama arose, a type of play is being introduced into London, which has here had a long life and with which we are thoroughly surfeited. The French drama of unchastity which began with "Camille" and was continued through "Frou-Frou," "Fernande," "Seraphine," "La Princesse Georges," etc. etc., has been exhibited

here in every phase. In London it is almost new, because the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain has till recently prevented its production. That official has of late somewhat relaxed his restrictions; and only because of its novelty can the success of a play like "Impulse" be accounted for, it being an adaptation of one of the weakest specimens of its class.

Nothing urged herein must be construed as intimating that the appreciation of the works of the few great dramatists will decrease. On the contrary, their characters were drawn with such close observation and such marvelous intuition that they will be interesting so long as "the proper study of mankind is man." Nor is it probable that melodrama will die. It will most likely disappear for a while from our best theaters till the time when either a new generation of play-goers grows up, to whom the methods of to-day will not be stale, or till new writers arise who will give us plays as much superior to the "Lights o' London" and "The Two Orphans" as they were to "Jack Sheppard" and "The Child-Stealer."

The only way to attract to new plays the audiences who now go to see only Salvini, Irving, Booth, Barrett, Modjeska and Bernhardt is to offer the drama of actuality—the drama that will conform to modes of life and thought and to present taste in literature and art. Managers who profess to be unable to find good plays of the old type could lose little in trying an experiment with the new. I firmly believe they would fill their depleted treasuries and render a lasting service not only to dramatic art but to audiences who would then have at their command the power Burns yearned for—

"To see oursel' as ithers see us."

*Julian Magnus.*

#### Fire Prevention.

It is reported on good authority that the people of the United States pay out every year one hundred and thirty millions of dollars, without any return whatever. Of this sum twenty millions is for supporting fire departments, thirty millions for sustaining fire insurance companies, and eighty millions for conflagrations. As a people we are said to enjoy looking at a good fire, and as a nation we have more of this particular style of show than any other people living.

There seems now to be a growing feeling among the people that something must be done to prevent this waste of life and property. The departments we must have; but we must have more. The evidence of this feeling is found in the invention and ready sale of new appliances for extinguishing fires, and in the formation of village fire-prevention associations.

The moment an alarm of fire is sent out in our cities the police appear in force and form a cordon about the fire to prevent the people from interfering with the firemen. This is quite proper and must always be done. At the same time it has done a vast deal of harm. It has rendered the mass of people indifferent to the art of putting out fires; it has made women and children and the majority of men unreasonably timid, and actually created a senseless dread of fire that on the slightest provocation is liable to turn to panic. If people were familiar with fires, if they understood

how long it takes for a fire to spread in one kind of building, and just how fast it travels in another, if they knew even the rudiments of the fireman's art, and above all, if they knew the value of time at a fire, there would be fewer fires and less danger of a panic. The fireman is not above all men cool and brave. He simply knows how fire behaves, and knowing this, he feels secure and keeps his wits about him in scenes that seem to the public, standing behind the policemen, full of terror. Moreover, the average citizen, thus shut out from all share in fire prevention, loses courage and at the sight of the merest blaze, instead of attempting to put it out and instead of lustily calling fire and urging other people to help him, runs away to turn in an alarm. In ninety cases out of a hundred if he had kept his wits about him he might have put the fire out. The fire-extinguisher may be near, but he has never learned to use it. There may be hand-grenades in reach, but his terror is so great that he wastes them. There may be water and even a hand-pump near, but he cannot use them.

This new sentiment in regard to fire prevention seems to offer three points of general interest. It has led to the invention of new methods of putting out fires; it has led to a partial return to the old volunteer fire departments by the formation of a new form of voluntary association for mutual protection, and, lastly and perhaps the most important of all, it is educational and seems likely to do much to remove the danger of panics.

First, of the associations. These new fire-prevention societies are formed of men and women, boys and girls, every one possessed of sufficient intelligence to carry a pail of water or call for help on discovering a fire. Each member on joining the association agrees to pay one dollar a year towards the expenses of the association and to lend a helping hand at any fire in reach, as far as his or her services are needed. The officers of the association serve without pay and consist of a president, secretary, and treasurer. These, with four or more members, form the board of directors. There are also two fire officers known as the foreman and assistant foreman, who have charge of the working members at a fire. There may also be a committee on insurance and a committee to report on the causes of fires. This is all that is required in the way of an organization. There need not be many meetings of the association, and these may be held in a private house or in a hall hired for the purpose, so that there are no expenses except for the actual work of extinguishing fires.

The equipment of such an association consists of fifty or more small hand-pumps and water-pails. These are distributed to such members as agree to keep them in easy reach and to take them to any fire within half a mile of their homes. There is also at some central station, preferably in a private stable, a supply wagon. This wagon is to stand ready at all times for duty, and arrangements are made for securing a horse for it at a moment's notice. In the wagon are five or more hand-pumps, hose in lengths for coupling together, poles for elevating the hose, a variety of nozzles, ladders, axes and other fire tools, rubber blankets for covering furniture, etc. There will also be several barrels or large milk-cans constantly filled with water in the wagon, and at various points in the town there will also be rain-water casks kept constantly full for the use of the association.

It will be seen that such an organization would be of little use at a conflagration. It is not intended to be so used, but merely to prevent conflagrations by the use of a little water at the very beginning. The association is educational and it accomplishes its ends by means of a novel and happy device for winning earnest workers at the very start of a fire. There is a system of rewards to all who discover a fire and all who first help to put it out. These prizes are given to any one, young or old, whether members of the association or not: for the person giving the first five calls of "fire" for a burning building, twenty-five cents; for the first stream, one dollar and fifty cents; for the next four, one dollar each. First assistant to first stream, with water, one dollar; next four, fifty cents each. First pump, with twenty-five feet of hose connected to arrive, twenty-five cents, first fifteen-foot ladder, twenty-five cents; first fifteen-foot pole or other fire tools, twenty-five cents each. For the first response with pump or bucket of water without using it, fifty cents each, and also to the next five persons bringing either pump or bucket. For grass, forest or other fires not in buildings a prize of seventy-five cents for the first person who extinguishes the fire by any means, and fifty cents each to the first five who arrive with pumps and buckets, and twenty-five cents each for the first five buckets without pumps. Owners, tenants, or employees are excluded from prizes, as it is supposed that their own interest will be sufficient incentive to exertion. Moreover, those who make any honest effort to put out a fire, whether they actually work or not, receive a prize. For instance, a child who discovered a fire and ran with a pump and bucket till she met a man who could use the pump, received a prize as well as the man. A boy who killed a grass fire with his hat received a reward. The first persons who assist in any way at a fire are rewarded by the association regardless of the means used, so that fifteen persons may win a prize of some kind at a single fire.

These associations are called home fire-protective associations. The first one was formed in November, 1882, in the town of Wakefield, Massachusetts, and has been in operation ever since. The reports of this pioneer association show that in 1883 there were nineteen fires in that town, and of these thirteen were put out or brought under control by the small hand-pumps and other appliances of the association. Three fires were put out by the regular fire department and three fires got beyond control, and the buildings were destroyed. The expenses of the association for the year were about one-half of one per cent. of the cost of the regular fire department of the town. In 1884 there were twenty-six fires in the town. All but three were put out by the hand-pumps of the association, and at every fire the prizes were taken by persons not belonging to the regular fire department. In other words, the fire-engines were the last to arrive every time.

The success of the Wakefield association has led to the formation of others in neighboring towns, and there seems no reason why they might not be started in every large town and village. They are not designed to supersede the fire departments, but to reduce the expense of such departments by reducing the number of fires. Their value is not alone in putting out small fires, but in their moral and educational aspect. It teaches peo-

ple to study fires and fire prevention, to keep cool and to see the value of the first efforts. A fire increases four times in a given time. If it is a foot square at one minute, it will be four feet square the next minute and sixteen feet square the next minute, and so on. If people go to a fire when it first begins they soon learn how easily it is put out, how little water it takes if rightly applied to stop it from spreading. All this tends to allay the unreasoning fear so many people display at a fire. No fire in an ordinary building will spread so fast that the inmates cannot escape in one direction or another. It is the running away from the first blaze that makes more than half the loss of life at fires. Anything that teaches people to go to the fire, to fight and not to run away, will be a public benefit, and this these associations accomplish by making every man, woman and child a helper at the critical moment when the fire is small. They inculcate courage and watchfulness, and show that in all emergencies coolness and self-possession are the only roads to safety. Best of all, they teach the incalculable value of time at every fire.

It seems to be a law in invention that a new tool, machine, or method of work appears about the time, or very soon after, the first announcement of a general desire that such a thing or method should be found. In this field of fire prevention four inventions have appeared within the past few years. One has been very widely adopted, one other has been used in one class of buildings, and should be used in more; and of the two others, one is quite new, and the other, while a very old idea, seems to have met with a new application.

The first of these is the common fire-extinguisher. It clearly met a want, and has had a very large sale. It is useful, and should be provided with the supply wagon of the home fire protective associations, but it has these objections. It is too heavy, and if neglected will sometimes get out of order. Besides this, its use implies a certain amount of knowledge. It might be said that every one should know how to use one, but unfortunately people generally do not know how. Some machines give no indication how they are to be used, and if the directions are marked upon them the excitement of a fire is not inducive to a calm study of the directions. It is a good fire tool in the hands of the trained fireman. If used by the home associations it should be placed in the care of strong men familiar with its use. It is doubtful if a fire-extinguisher would be of any use in the hand of a child, and yet children have won prizes at fires in Wakefield for effectively assisting at putting out the fire.

The next invention in point of time is the automatic sprinkler. Upwards of thirty different types of this important fire-extinguisher are said to be in use, and one form or another has been very widely adopted in mills and factories throughout the country. The idea is extremely simple. A water-tank on the roof of the mill is connected with a system of pipes extending along the ceilings of the different rooms. At intervals of a few feet is a hose nozzle kept closed by a plug of fusible metal. On the starting of a fire near one of these nozzles, the rising temperature melts the plug, and a shower of water is released on the fire, putting it out without human supervision or aid. These automatic sprinklers have already saved property and

proved their usefulness, and it is a matter of surprise that they have not been more generally adopted in churches and theaters, stores and shops, as well as factories.

The new home fire associations adopt among their first appliances small portable hand-pumps to be placed in a pail of water, and operated by one hand while the hose is held in the other. The chief value of a simple hand-pump lies in its cheapness and lightness. It can be carried and used by a child, and is not liable to get out of order. Its very simplicity inspires confidence, and a child using one to fight a small fire quickly learns coolness of head and steadiness of hand. If in the excitement of the moment the first stream is misdirected, he soon steadies his aim, and seeing how effective a small, well-directed stream may be, he gains confidence and does good work. A mere dash or film of water on wood just in advance of flame prevents its spread, and this too inspires confidence. A pail of water dashed all at once may fail to put out a fire, where a quart or two, properly applied with a pump, may prevent a great disaster. Besides this, these hand-pumps can be fitted with hose, and by the aid of a pole the hose can be raised to a burning roof or window, and the little machine do good where an extinguisher would be useless.

A more recent invention, and a most convenient and portable, is the hand-grenade, now well known. This consists of a glass bottle filled with water charged with certain chemicals. The design is to use the bottle like a grenade or hand-shell. It is to be thrown upon the fire and broken, when the contents escape upon the flames. The influence of the water is of itself comparatively slight, as the bottle only holds one pint. The suppression of the fire, it is claimed, is obtained by the development of a gas by the heating of the water by the fire, the flames being stifled by the exclusion of the oxygen of the air. These hand-grenades have proved of value in a large number of incipient fires, and have undoubtedly saved a great deal of property. In certain situations, as where the flame comes in direct contact with the bottle, they are automatic fire-extinguishers, the heat breaking the bottle and releasing the gas. The advantages of these grenades appear to lie in their convenience, in the fact that they are always ready and cannot freeze, and that it requires no special skill to use them. The only objection to their use is in the fact that in the excitement of a fire they may be wasted by misdirected aim in throwing them at the fire, and the fact that in the majority of fires in dwellings the flame is in the wall, or in some corner where it cannot be reached by the grenade. However, their advantages are great. Another recent invention is intended to combine the advantages of the hand-pump and the grenade. This is a brass bucket with a tight cover, and fitted with a hand-pump, so that pail and pump are always together and in a convenient position for use. The bucket is to be filled with a liquid similar to that used in the grenades, and operating on the same principle. There are, besides these more important inventions, a number of minor tools and appliances for increasing the efficiency of the pumps, extinguishers, and grenades which will be found useful in home fire protective associations.

*Charles Barnard.*