HENRY IRVING AT HOME.

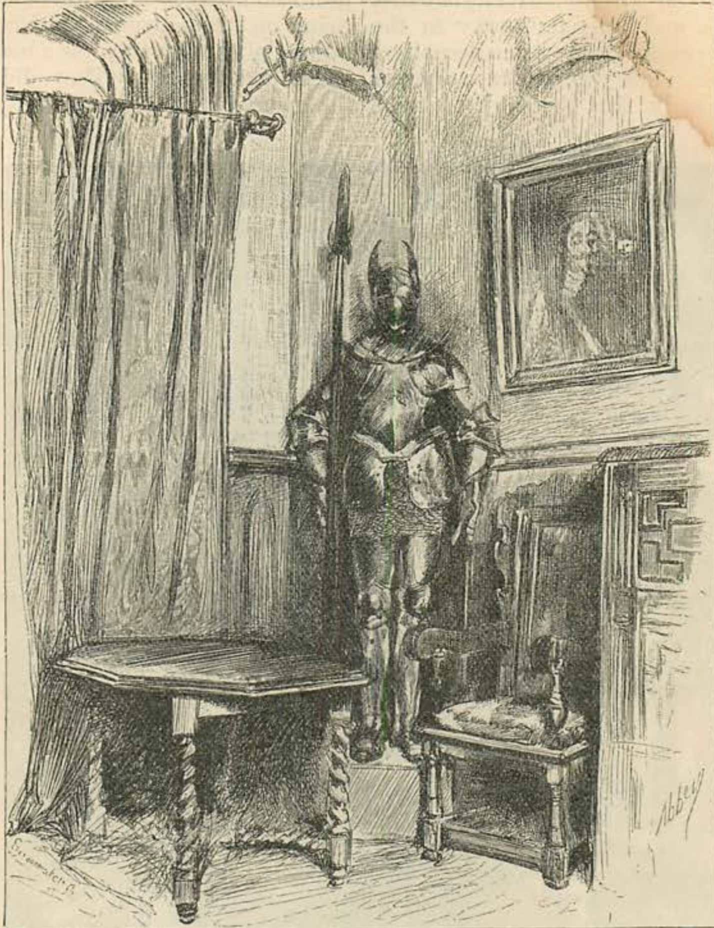
AT the corner of Grafton Street, where the traffic of a famous West End artery ebbs and flows among picture exhibitions and jewelry stores, lives the most popular actor of his time. It is a mysterious-looking house. The basement is occupied by a trunk store. From the first floor to the top are Mr. Henry Irving's chambers. They present from the outside the look of dingy, half-blind windows that suggest no prospect of warmth or cheer. "Fitting abode of the spirit of tragic gloom!" you might well exclaim, standing on the threshold. You shall enter

with me, if you will, to correct your first impressions, and bear testimony to the fact that appearances are often deceptive.

Let me remind you, while we pause on the sidewalk, that the subject of our profession, when he was, in fact, practicing on his audiences, teaching himself how to play upon them as a master plays on an instrument. They did not like the operation at first, especially the pro-

ARMORY OF THE LYCEUM THEATRE.—[SEE PAGE 390.]

sketch is the author of his own success. He had no backing of a professional family. He did not begin as an infant phenomenon. He left the desk of a merchant's office at the age of nineteen, feeling that he had a mission for the stage. For some time the public did not agree with him. This was in the early days of his novitiate, when he was learning his vincial people. There was something strange and new and weird and unfamiliar in the young actor's method. As a rule, audiences do not immediately like art that is strange and new and weird; they prefer the good old stagy, mouthing fashion which used to be mistaken for nature. But as time wore on, they came to recognize the peculiar power of Henry



A CORNER IN THE BEEFSTEAK CLUB ROOM.—[SEE PAGE 391.]

Irving, and he also began to understand the sort of work he could do best. It has been a mutual progress of artistic education, the success of this original artist. The result is a great advancement of dramatic art in England, an elevation of the position of the actor, and a broader recognition of the moral value of the stage as a teacher than has ever before been accorded to it by Society and the Church.

This sombre door, the first on the left as we enter Grafton Street from Bond Street, leads to his chambers. Two flights of stairs—not bright, as a Paris staircase, not with the sunlight upon the carpet, as in New York, but dark with the gloom of a London atmosphere—and we enter his general room. With the hum of the West End buzzing at the windows, the colored glass of which shuts out what little sunlight falls there, the apartment is characteristic of a great artist and a great city. The mantel-piece recalls those of old English mansions. It is practically an oak cabinet, with a silver shield as the centre-piece. On the opposite side of the room is a well-stocked book-case, surmounted by a raven that carries one's thoughts to Poe and his gloomy story. On tables here and there are materials for letter-writing, and evidence of much correspondence, though one of the actor's greatest social sins is said to be the tardiness with which he answers letters. The truth is, the other necessary claims on his time do not enable him to act always upon the late Duke of Wellington's well-known principle of immediately replying to every letter that is addressed to him. A greater philosopher than his Grace said

many letters answered themselves if you let them alone, and I should not wonder if Irving finds much truth in the axiom. Bric-à-brac, historic relics, theatrical properties, articles of virtu, lie about in admired disorder. Here is Edmund Kean's sword, the one he wore in Hamlet, which was presented to Irving on the first night of his Richard III. by that excellent and much-respected artist Mr. Chippendale, who had acted with Edmund Kean, and was his personal friend. In a glass case near this precious treasure is a ring that belonged to David Garrick—an exquisite setting of a miniature of Shakspeare. This was given to Irving by the Baroness Burdett Coutts, of whose stanch friendship he is very proud—a woman whose broad-minded and noble views of life and its duties ought to have lifted her beyond criticism. In a cabinet near one of the windows are a cross which Edmund Kean wore in Richard III., and Charles Kean's prompt-book of *Louis XI.* Close by is a marble bust of Young, with a faded wreath upon its brow; a portrait of Rossi as Nero; a photograph of Charles Dickens, the one by Gurney, of New York, which the great author himself thought an excellent portrait; an engraving of Maclise's play scene in *Hamlet;* medallions of Émile Devrient and John Herchell; and a sketch of a favorite Scotch terrier, which during the last year or two is his most constant companion at home and at the theatre. The adjoining room continues the collection of the actor's art treasures, not the mere connoisseur's museum of articles of virtu, but things which have a personal value and a special history associated with the art their owner loves.

It is a frank smile that greets us as the artist enters and extends his long thin hand. It is a trite saying that there is much character in the hand. I know no one whose hand is so suggestive of nervous energy and artistic capacity as Irving's. And how thoroughly in keeping it is with the long expressive face, the notably æsthetic figure!

"You want to talk shop," he says, striding about the room, with his hands in the pockets of his loose gray coat. "Well, with all my heart, if you think it useful and interesting."

"I do."

"May I select the subject?"

"Yes."

"Then I would like to go back to one we touched upon at your own suggestion some months ago."

"An actor on his audiences?"

"Yes. The subject is a good one; it interests me, and in that brief anonymous newspaper sketch of a year ago you did little more than indicate the points we discussed. Let us see if we can not revive and complete it."

"Agreed. I will 'interview' you, then, as we say in America?"

"By all means," replied my host, handing me a cigar, and settling himself down in an easy-chair by the fire. "I am ready."

"Well, then, as I think I have said before when on this subject, there has always appeared to me something phenomenal in the mutual understanding that exists between you and your audiences; it argues an active sympathy and confidence on both sides."

"That is exactly what I think exists. In presence of my audience I feel as safe and contented as when sitting down with an old friend."

"I have seen Lord Beaconsfield, when he was Mr. Disraeli, rise in the House of Commons, and begin a speech in a vein and manner evidently considered beforehand, which proving at the moment out of harmony with the feelings of the House, he has entirely altered from his original idea to suit the immediate mood and temper of his audience. Now, sympathetic as you are with *your* audience, have you, under their influence in the development of a new character, ever altered your first idea during the course of the representation?"

"You open up an interesting train of thought," he answered. "Except once, I have never altered my original idea under the circumstances you suggest: that was in *Vanderdecken*, and I changed the last scene. I can always tell when the audience is with me. It was not with me in *Vanderdecken;* neither was it on the first night of *Hamlet*, which is, perhaps, curious, considering my subsequent success. On the first night I felt that the audience did not go with me until the first meeting with Ophelia, when they changed toward me entirely. But as night succeeded night, my Hamlet grew in their estimation. I could feel it all the time, and now I *know* that they like it—that they are with me heart and soul. I will tell you a curious thing about my

Hamlet audience. It is the most interesting audience I play to. For any other piece, there is a difficulty in getting the people seated by half past eight. For *Hamlet*, the house is full and quiet, and waiting for the curtain to go up, by half past seven. On the first night the curtain dropped at a quarter to one."

"In what part do you feel most at home with your audience, and most certain of them?"

"Well, in Hamlet," he replied, thoughtfully.

"Has that been your greatest pecuniary success?"

"Yes."

"What were the two unprecedented runs of *Hamlet*?"

"The first was two hundred nights; the second, one hundred and seven; and in the country I have often played it ten times out of a twelve nights' engagement. But as we have got into this line of thought about audiences, it should be remembered that, with the exception of a benefit performance on one occasion years ago, I had never played Hamlet before that first night at the Lyceum. Indeed, so far as regards what is called the classic and legitimate drama, my successes, such as they were, had been made outside it, really in eccentric comedy. As a rule, actors who have appeared for the first time in London in such parts as Richard III., Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello have played them previously for years in the country; and here comes a point about my audiences. They knew this, and I am sure they estimated the performance accordingly, giving me their special sympathy and good wishes. I believe in the justice of audiences. They are sincere and hearty in their approval of what they like, and have the greatest hand in making an actor's reputation. Journalistic power can not be overvalued; it is enormous; but in regard to actors it is a remarkable fact that their permanent reputations, the final and lasting verdict of their merits, are made chiefly by their audiences. Sometimes the true record comes after the players are dead, and it is sometimes written by men who possibly never saw them. Edmund Kean's may be called a posthumous reputation. If you read the newspapers of the time, you will find that during his acting days he was considerably cut up and mauled. Garrick's impersonations were not much written about in his day. As to Burbage, Betterton, and other famous actors of their time whose names are familiar to us, when they lived there were practically no newspapers to chronicle their work."

"You believe, then, that merit eventually makes its mark in spite of professional criticism, and that, like Masonic rituals, the story of success, its form and pressure, may go down orally to posterity?"

"I believe that what audiences really like, they stand by. I believe they hand down the actor's name to future generations. They are the judge and jury who find the verdict and pronounce sentence. I will give you an example in keeping with the rapid age in which we live. I am quite certain that within twelve hours of the production of a new play of any importance, all London knows whether the piece is a success or a failure, no matter whether the journals have criticised it or not. Each person in the audience is the centre of a little community, and the word is passed on from one to the other."

"What is your feeling in regard to first-night audiences, apart from the regular play-going public? I should imagine that the sensitive nature of a true artist must be considerably jarred by the knowledge that a first-night audience is peculiarly fastidious and sophisticated."

"I confess I am happier in presence of what you call the regular play-going public. I am apt to become depressed on a first night. Some of my friends and fellow-artists are stimulated and excited by a sense of opposition. I fear it lowers me. I know that while there is a good hearty crowd who have come to be pleased, there are some who have *not* come to be pleased. God help us if we were in the hands of the few who, from personal or other motives, come to the theatre in the hope of seeing a failure, and who pour out their malice and spite in anonymous letters!"

"Detraction and malicious opposition are among the penalties of success. To be on a higher platform than your fellows is to be a mark for envy and slander," I answered, dropping, I fear, into platitude, which my host cut short with a shrug of the shoulders and a rapid stride across the room. "Have you seen Booth's Hamlet?"

"No; but I have the highest respect for Mr. Booth. I played with him when he was in England the first time; and, singularly enough, the first letter I ever wrote to a newspaper was one in which I exposed the imposition of some person who

was going about the provinces and giving himself out as Booth's brother. I am glad of Booth's success here. It is a good thing, apart from the advantage to art, in the way it strengthens the real friendliness that now exists between England and America. I think it is a pity that critics deem it necessary always to make comparisons to the detriment of one actor or the other in regard to some particular part. Two painters may illustrate the same subject from different points of view, and both may in their way be equally excellent. So with two actors playing Hamlet, or Othello, or Richelieu, or any other character. It is surely a narrow intellect that can not see the good in various representations, without confining itself to this or the other artist's reading. But, to go back to our audiences, look at this."

He handed to me a book, handsomely bound and with broad margins, through which ran a ripple of old-faced type, evidently the work of an author and a handicraftsman who loved the memories both of Caxton and his immediate successors. It was entitled *Notes on Louis XI.; with some Short Extracts from Commines' Memoirs*, and was dated "London, 1878—printed for the author."

"That book," said my host, "was sent to me by a person I had then never seen nor heard of. It came to me anonymously. I wished to have a second copy of it, and sent to the printer with the purpose of obtaining it. He replied by telling me the work was not for sale, and referring me to the author, whose address he sent to me. I made the application as requested; another copy was forwarded, and with it a kindly intimation that if ever I should be near the house of the writer, 'we should be glad to see you.' I called in due course, and found the author one of a most agreeable family. 'You will wonder,' they said at parting, 'why we wrote and compiled this book. It was simply for this reason: a public critic in a leading journal had said, as nothing was really known of the character, manners, and habits of Louis XI., an actor might take whatever liberties he pleased with the subject. We prepared this little volume to put on record a refutation of the statement, a protest against it, and a tribute to your impersonation of the character.' Here is another present that I received soon afterward—one of the most beautiful works of its kind I ever remember to have seen."

It was an artistic casket, in which was enshrined what looked like a missal bound in carved ivory and gold. It proved, however, to be a beautifully bound book of poetic and other memorials of Charles the First, printed and illustrated by hand, with exquisite head and tail pieces in water-colors, portraits, coats of arms, and vignettes, by Buckman, Castaing, Terrel, Slie, and Phillips. The work was "imprinted for the author at London, 30th January, 1879," and the title ran: "To the Honor of Henry Irving: to cherish the Memory of Charles the First: these Thoughts, Gold of the Dead, are here devoted." As a work of art, the book is a treasure. The portraits of the Charleses and several of their generals are in the highest style of water-color painting, with gold borders; and the initial letters and other embellishments are studies of the most finished and delicate character.

"Now these," said their owner, returning the volumes to the book-shelves over which the raven stretched its wings, "are only two out of scores of proofs that audiences are intellectually active, and that they find many ways of fixing their opinions. These incidents of personal action are evidences of the spirit of the whole. One night, in *Hamlet*, something was thrown upon the stage. It struck a lamp, and fell into the orchestra. It could not be found for some time. An inquiry was made about it by some person in the front, an aged woman, who was much concerned that I had not received it—so I was informed at the box-office. A sad-looking woman, evidently very poor, called the next day, and being informed that the trinket was found, expressed herself greatly pleased. 'I often come to the gallery of the theatre,' she said, 'and I wanted Mr. Irving to have this family heirloom. I wanted him alone in this world to possess it.' This is the trinket, which I wear on my watch chain. The theatre was evidently a solace to that poor soul. She had probably some sorrow in her life; and there may have been a kind of comfort in Hamlet, or me perhaps, possessing this little cross."

As he spoke, the actor's lithe fingers were busy at his watch chain, and he seemed to be questioning the secret romance of the trinket thrown to him from the gallery.

"I don't know why else she let it fall upon the stage; but strange impulses

sometimes take hold of people sitting at a play, especially in tragedy."

The trinket about which he speculated so much is an old-fashioned gold cross. On two sides is engraved, "Faith, Hope, and Charity"; on the front, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"; and on the reverse, "I scorn to fear or change."

"They said at the box-office," went on the actor, musing, "that she was a poor mother who had lost her son"; and then, rousing himself, he returned brightly to the subject of our conversation. "One example," he said, "of the generous sympathy of audiences serves to point the moral of what I mean; and in every case the motive is the same, to show an earnest appreciation, and to encourage and give pleasure to the actor. At Sheffield one night, in the grouse season, a man in the gallery threw a brace of birds upon the stage, with a rough note of thanks and compliments; and one of the pit audience sent me round a knife which he had made himself. You see, the people who do these things have nothing to gain; they are under no extraneous influence; they judge for themselves; and they are representative of that great Public Opinion which makes or mars, and which in the end is always right. When they are against you, it is hard at the time to be convinced that you are wrong; *but you are.* Take my case. I made my first success at the St. James's. We were to have opened with *Hunted Down.* We did not. I was cast for Doricourt in *The Belle's Stratagem*—a part which I had never played before, and which I thought did not suit me. I felt that this was the opinion of the audience soon after the play began. The house appeared to be indifferent, and I believed that failure was conclusively stamped upon my work, when suddenly, on my exit after the mad scene, I was startled by a burst of applause, and so great was the enthusiasm of the audience that I was compelled to re-appear on the scene—a somewhat unusual thing, as you know, except on the operatic stage."

"And in America," I said, "where scene calls are quite usual, and quite destructive of the illusion of the play, I think."

"Just so, and you are right; and, by-the-way, I like our modern method of taking a call after an act on the scene itself. But to proceed. I next played *Hunted Down,* and they liked me in that; and when they do like, audiences are no niggards of their confessions of pleasure. My next engagement was at the Queen's Theatre, where I was successful. Then I went to the Gayety, where I played Chevenex. I followed at Drury Lane in *Formosa,* and nobody noticed me at all. The audiences literally paid no attention to me. They didn't like me; they treated me with simple indifference. They were not unkind—audiences never are except when one does some ridiculous thing—and they are only cold when they are not satisfied; but on the whole they are generous, just, and true."

"Do you think you always understand the silence of an audience? I mean in this way: on a first night, for example, I have sometimes gone round to speak to an actor, and have been met with the remark, 'How cold the audience is!' as if excessive quietness was indicative of displeasure, the idea being that when an audience is really pleased, it always stamps its feet and claps its hands. I have seen an artist making his or her greatest success with an audience that manifested its delight by suppressing every attempt at applause."

"I know exactly what you mean," he answered. "I recall a case in point. There was such an absence of applause on the first night of *The Two Roses,* while I was on the stage, that I could not believe my friends when they congratulated me on my success. But with experience one gets to understand the idiosyncrasies and habits of audiences. You spoke of the silence of some audiences. The most wonderful quiet and silence I have ever experienced as an actor, a stillness that is profound, has been in those two great theatres, the one that was burned down at Glasgow, and the Standard, in London, during the court scene of *The Bells.*"

Irving's is a singularly impressive face. He is one of those men who would arrest your attention and excite inquiry wherever you might meet him. The other day, at the house of Mr. William Winter, on Staten Island, New York, I saw a portrait of Edwin Booth which reminded me much of Irving. Great actors have a physiognomy of their own, to be sure, but the face of Booth in the picture had something in the eyes and expression of the mouth so much like Irving that at first sight it might have been taken for the English actor's portrait. I heard some gossip in New York about the two artists, which was unjust to Irving. It suggest-

ed rivalry, and jealousy of Booth on his part. "Here is a programme showing *Hamlet* underlined for the Lyceum during October and November! That is the first note of the Englishman's opposition." The truth is, *Hamlet* was underlined for the usual Lyceum morning performances before Mr. Booth's opening part was announced. When the Princess's manifesto came out, Irving at once withdrew the announcement of *Hamlet*, leaving the field clear and open to the stranger, in whose success Irving has shown real and practical pleasure. He was one of the first leading artists of London to call upon and congratulate him. He made Mr. Booth a characteristic present of an interesting picture illustrating the play of *Richelieu*, and shortly afterward arranged for his appearance at the Lyceum to alternate with himself the two leading parts in *Othello*.

Genius is rarely without a sense of humor. Mr. Irving has a broad appreciation of fun, though his own humor is subtle and deep down. This is never better shown than in his Richard III. and Louis XI. It now and then appears in his conversations; and when he has an anecdote to tell, he seems to develop the finer and more delicate motives of the action of the narrative, as if he were dramatizing it, as he went along. We dropped our main subject of audiences presently to talk of other things. He related to me a couple of stories of a "dresser" who was his servant in days gone by. The poor man is dead now, and these incidents of his life will not hurt his memory.

"One night," said Irving, "when I had been playing a new part, the old man said, while dressing me, 'This is your masterpiece, sir!' How do you think he had arrived at this opinion? He had seen nothing of the piece, but he noticed that I perspired more than usual. The poor fellow was given over to drink at last; so I told him we must part if he did not mend his ways. 'I wonder,' I said to him, 'that, for the sake of your wife and children, you do not reform; besides, you look so ridiculous.' Indeed, I never saw a sillier man when he was tipsy; and his very name would set children laughing—it was Doody. Well, in response to my appeal, with maudlin vanity and with tears in his eyes, he answered, 'They make so much of me!' It reminded me of Dean Ramsay's story of his drunken parishioner. The parson, you remember, admonished the whiskey-drinking Scot, concluding his lecture by offering his own conduct as an example. 'I can go into the village and come home again without getting drunk.' 'Ah, minister, but I'm sae popular!' was the fuddling parishioner's apologetic reply."

A notable person in appearance, I said just now. Let me sketch the famous actor as we leave his rooms together. A tall, spare figure in a dark overcoat and grayish trousers, black neckerchief carelessly tied, a tall hat, rather broad at the brim. His hair is black and bushy, with a wave in it on the verge of a curl, and suggestions of gray at the temples and over the ears. It is a pale, somewhat ascetic face, with bushy eyebrows, dark dreamy eyes, a nose that indicates gentleness rather than strength, a thin upper lip, a mouth opposed to all ideas of sensuousness, but nervous and sensitive, a strong jaw and chin, and a head inclined to droop a little, as is often the case with men of a studious habit. There is great individuality in the whole figure, and in the face a rare mobility which photography fails to catch in all the efforts I have yet seen of English artists. Though the popular idea is rather to associate tragedy with the face and manner of Irving, there is nothing sunnier than his smile. It lights up all his countenance, and reveals his soul in his eyes; but it is like the sunshine that bursts for a moment from a cloud, and disappears to leave the landscape again in shadows, flecked here and there with fleeting reminiscences of the sun.

The management of the Lyceum Theatre has a moral and classic atmosphere of its own. A change came over the house with the success of *The Bells*. *Charles I.* consummated it. You enter the theatre with feelings entirely different from those which take possession of you at any other house. It is as if the management inspired you with a special sense of its responsibility to Art, and your own obligations to support its earnest endeavors. Mr. Irving has intensified all this by a careful personal attention to every detail belonging to the conduct of his theatre. He has stamped his own individuality upon it. His influence is seen and felt on all hands. He has given the color of his ambition to his officers and servants. His object is to perfect the art of dramatic

representation, and elevate the profession to which he belongs. There is no commercial consideration at work when he is mounting a play, though his experience is that neither expense nor pains are lost on the public.

When Mr. Irving's art is discussed, when his Hamlet or his Mathias, his Shylock or his Dei Franchis, is discussed, he should be regarded from a broader stand-point than that of the mere actor. He is entitled to be looked at as not only the central figure of the play, but as the motive power of the whole entertainment—the master who has set the story and grouped it, the controlling genius of the moving picture, the source of the inspiration of the painter, the musician, the costumer, and the machinist, whose combined efforts go to the realization of the actor-manager's conception and plans. It is acknowledged on all hands that Mr. Irving has done more for dramatic art all round than any actor of our time, and it is open to serious question whether any artist of any time has done as much. Not alone on the stage, but in front of it, at the very entrance of his theatre, is the dignified influence of his management felt. Every department has for its head a man of experience and tact, and every person about the place, from the humblest messenger to the highest officer and actor, seems to carry about with him a certain pride of association with the management.

Mr. Irving's dressing-room at the theatre is a thorough business-like apartment, with at the same time evidences of the taste which obtains at his chambers. It is as unpretentious and yet in its way as remarkable as the man. See him sitting there at the dressing-table, where he is model to himself, where he converts himself into the character he is sustaining. His own face is his canvas, his own person, for the time being, the lay figure which he adorns. It is a large square table in the corner of the room. In the centre is a small old-fashioned mirror, which is practically the easel upon which he works; for therein is reflected the face which has to depict the passion and fear of Mathias, the cupidity of Richard, the martyrdom of Charles, the grim viciousness of Dubosc, the implacable justice of the avenging Dei Franchi, and the touching melancholy of Hamlet. As a mere matter of "make-up," his realizations of the historical pictures of Charles the First and Philip of Spain are the highest kind of art. They belong to Vandyck and Velasquez, not only in their imitation of the great masters, but in the sort of inspiration for character and color which moved those famous painters. See him sitting, I say, the actor-artist at his easel. The right of his mirror may be called his palette; it is an assortment of colors, paint-pots, powders, and brushes; but in his hand, instead of the maul-stick, is the familiar hare's-foot—the actor's "best friend" from the earliest days of rouge and burned cork. To the left of the mirror lie letters opened and unopened, missives just brought by the post, a jewel-box, and various "properties" in the way of chains, lockets, or buckles that belong to the part he is playing. He is talking to his stage-manager, Mr. Loveday, or to his acting manager, Mr. Bram Stoker, or to some intimate friend, as he continues his work. You can hear the action of the drama that is going on—a distant cheer, the clash of swords, a merry laugh, or a passing chorus. The "call-boy" of the theatre looks in at intervals to report the progress of the piece up to the point where it is necessary the leading artist should appear upon the stage. Then, as if he is simply going to see a friend who is waiting for him, Irving leaves his dressing-room, and you are alone. There is no "pulling himself together," or "bracing up," or putting on "tragic airs" as he goes. It is a pleasant "Good-night," or "I shall see you again," that takes him out of his dressing-room, and you can tell when he is before the audience by the loud cheers that come rushing up the staircases from the stage. While he is away, you look around the room. You find that the few pictures which decorate the walls are theatrical portraits. Here is an etching of Garrick's head; there a water-color of Ellen Terry; here a study of Macready in Virginius; there an engraving of Kean. Interspersed among these things are framed play-bills of a past age and interesting autograph letters. Near the dressing-table is a tall looking-glass, in front of it an easy-chair, over which are lying a collection of new draperies and costumes recently submitted for the actor-manager's approval. The room is warm with the gas that illuminates it; the atmosphere delightful to the fancy that finds a special fascination behind the foot-lights.

A reflective writer, with the power to

vividly recall a past age and contrast it with the present, might find ample inspiration in the rooms to which Mr. Irving presently invites us. It is Saturday night. On this last day in every acting week it is his habit to sup at the theatre, and in spite of his two performances he finds strength enough to entertain a few guests, sometimes a snug party of three, sometimes a lively company of eight or ten. We descend a carpeted staircase, cross the stage upon the remains of the snow scene of the *Corsican Brothers*, ascend a winding stair, pass through an armory packed with such a variety of weapons as to suggest the Tower of London, and are then ushered into a spacious wainscoted apartment, with a full set of polished ancient armor in each corner of it, an antique fireplace with the example of an old master over the mantel, a high-backed settee in an alcove opposite the blind windows, the sills of which are decorated with ancient bottles and jugs, and in the centre of the room an old oak dining-table, furnished for supper with white cloth, cut glass, and silver, among which shine the familiar beet root and tomato.

"This was the old Beefsteak Club room," says our host; "beyond there is the kitchen; the members dined here. The apartments were lumber-rooms until lately."

Classic lumber-rooms truly! In the history of the clubs no association is more famous than the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks. The late William Jerdan was the first to attempt anything like a concise sketch of the club, and he wrote his reminiscences thereof for me and *The Gentleman's Magazine* a dozen years ago, in the popular modern days of that periodical. Jerdan gave me an account of the club in the days when he visited it. "The President," he said—"an absolute despot during his reign—sat at the head of the table adorned with ribbon and badge, and with the insignia of a silver gridiron on his breast; his head, when he was oracular, was crowned with a feathery hat said to have been worn by Garrick in some gay part on the stage. He looked every inch a king. At the table on this occasion were seated the Bishop, Samuel Arnold, the patriotic originator of English opera, and strenuous encourager of native musical talent. He wore a mitre, said to have belonged to Cardinal Gregorio; but be that as it might, it became him well as he set it on his head to pronounce the grace before meat, which he intoned as reverently as if he had been in presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury instead of a bevy of Steakers. Near him was John Richards, the Recorder, whose office in passing sentence on culprits was discharged with piquancy and effect. Captain Morris, the Laureate, occupied a distinguished seat; so also did Dick Wilson, the Secretary, a bit of a butt to the jokers, who were wont to extort from him some account of a Continental trip, where he prided himself on having ordered a 'boulevard' for his dinner, and *un paysan* (for *faisan*) to be roasted; and last of all I can recall to mind, at the bottom of the plenteous board sat the all-important 'Boots,' the youngest member of the august assembly. These associated as a sort of staff with a score of other gentlemen, all men of the world, men of intellect and intelligence, well educated, and of celebrity in various lines of life—noblemen, lawyers, physicians and surgeons, authors, artists, newspaper editors, actors —it is hardly possible to conceive any combination of various talent to be more efficient for the object sought than the Beefsteaks. The accommodation for their meetings was built, expressly for that end, behind the scenes of the Lyceum Theatre, by Mr. J. Walker Arnold; and, among other features, was a room with no daylight to intrude, and this was the dining-room, with the old gridiron on the ceiling, over the centre of the table. The cookery on which the good cheer of the company depended was carried on in what may be called the kitchen, in full view of the chairman, and served through the opposite wall, namely, a huge gridiron with bars as wide apart as the "chess" of small windows, handed hot and hot to the expectant hungerers. There were choice salads (mostly of beet root), porter, and port. The plates were never overloaded, but small cuts sufficed till almost satiated appetite perhaps called for one more from the third cut in the rump itself, which his Grace of Norfolk, after many slices, prized as the grand essence of bullock!"

Other times, other manners. The rooms are still there. The gridiron is gone from the ceiling, but the one through which sliced bullock used to be handed "hot and hot" to the nobility of blood and intellect remains. It and the kitchen (now furnished with a fine modern cooking range)

are shut off from the dining-room, and neither porter nor port ever weighs down the spirits of Mr. Irving's guests. He often regales a few friends here after the play. The *menu* on these occasions would contrast as strangely with that of the old days as the guests and the subjects of their conversation and mirth. It is classic ground on which we tread, and the ghosts that rise before us are those of Sheridan, Perry, Lord Erskine, Cam Hobhouse, and their boon companions. Should the notabilities among Irving's friends be mentioned, the list would be a fair challenge to the old Beefsteaks. I do not propose to deal with these giants of yesterday and to-day, but to contrast with Jerdan's picture a recent supper of guests gathered together on an invitation of only a few hours previously. On the left side of Irving sat one of his most intimate friends, a famous London comedian; on the right, a well-known American tragedian, who had not yet played in London; opposite, at the other side of the circular-ended table, sat a theatrical manager from Dublin, and another of the same profession from the English midlands; the other chairs were occupied by a famous traveller, an American gentleman connected with literature and life-insurance, a young gentleman belonging to English political and fashionable society, the editor of a Liverpool journal, a provincial playwright, and a north-country philanthropist. The repast began with oysters, and ran through a few *entrées* and a steak, finishing with a rare old Stilton cheese. There were various salads, very dry sherry and Champagne, a rich Burgundy, and, after all, sodas and brandies and cigars. The talk was "shop" from first to last—discussions of the artistic treatment of certain characters by actors of the day and of a previous age, anecdotes of the stage, the position of the drama, its purpose and mission. Every guest contributed his quota to the general talk, the host himself giving way to the humor of the hour, and chatting of his career, his position, his hopes, his prospects, his ambition, in the frankest way. Neither the space at my disposal nor the custom of the place will permit of a revelation of this social dialogue; for the founder of the feast has revived, with the restored Beefsteak rooms, the motto from Horace's "Epistles" (paraphrased by the old club Bishop), which is still inscribed on the dining-room wall:

"Let no one bear beyond this threshold hence,
Words uttered here in friendly confidence."

BY THE WINTER'S MOON.

IT would seem as if life were a tolerably easy thing to live, certain things being taken for granted, as the possession of good name and family and fortune, of beauty and grace and courage, and the love of women, and all men's good-will, of youth to boot, that last gift of the gods. And yet Penrose did not find it so.

Perhaps he had had too much good luck, and the sameness palled on him. Perhaps the one little touch was wanting to set the amorphous particles into shape as the perfect crystal of happiness. At any rate, he was far from being a contented man; longed for other things, a larger way of life, adventure of some sort, a voyage to the north pole, the loss of all his money—something to break the endless chain of days.

It may be that if Barbara Seavern had been more gentle with him, that wanting touch would have been given to his crystal. But as Barbara had heard before he ever came to Beachline some foolish speech concerning his fortune and its power to bring him all he wanted, she had no inclination to treat him with any gentleness she could avoid. And as, of course, she never told him of hearing such a speech, he never had the chance to deny having made it—the last sort of thing he would have said, by-the-way, valuing his fortune, as he did, only as an impediment to all enterprise. "For you see," he said once, in his engaging way, to Mrs. Seavern, who not having quite the reserve of her daughter, had alluded to the matter of his accumulated inheritance, "it is very unfortunate for me. I never shall do anything unless I throw it all to the dogs, and then go after it. If I were only cast upon my own resources, I might discover what is on the dark side of the moon. But as it is, with everything made easy, one indolent day begets another. It is so comfortable here, why should I go to the moon?" And Mrs. Seavern told Barbara that young Penrose