

second peach, while the commercial traveller talked to her in a quieter way.

In the opposite chairs the husband and wife sat buried in thought, the wife leaning back in her chair with closed eyes. The car was quieter now, the afternoon sluggishness coming on. The commercial traveller took out a note-book and made memoranda. The baby slept. The hazel-eyed girl read *The Duchess*, skipping whole chapters to get at the parts she liked the best.

The hours sped on; the train went at slower speed; the commercial traveller exchanged his skull-cap for a light gray Derby with a black band around it; and the engine puffed into Broad Street, Philadelphia.

Under cover of the bustle of departure, the husband had a paper in his hand, which he held out to his wife. "I will destroy mine," he said, quietly, "if you will destroy yours."

His wife looked at him, her eyes suffused. Her trembling hand groped in a little bag she carried. She handed her husband a paper corresponding with the one he had. He put the two together, looked down into her eyes, and then the sharp rattle of tearing paper was heard.

His wife looked around for some one. But that one was gone, the commercial traveller carrying her bag and umbrella for her, she holding only the basket of fruit, minus the two peaches. She made a last foray on the baby down near the car door, and then she passed through the doorway. The lady pressed that way, her husband back of her.

"Henny," she called, timidly.

Hazel-eyes looked around, all her teeth showing in a smile. "Why, how did you know my name?" she asked. "Oh, you want to shake hands? Look out for the peaches. I'm taking them home to mother; she's an invalid. Oh, how do you do?"—for the lady managed to present her husband. "Good-by. Oh, there's my gentleman friend!"

A young man had rushed up the car steps. "I thought you'd never get here, Henny," he said.

"Oh, I'm all here," she laughed. "And how's mother?"

The lady was looking after her as she went along beside the young man, who carried her bag and umbrella in one hand and held her elbow with the other.

"Come," said her husband, gently—"come, Annie, let us go to Nannie."

## THE ROYAL DANISH THEATRE.

BY WILLIAM ARCHER.


FROM the top of the Round Tower—ascended by a spiral incline, up which Peter the Great is said to have driven a coach and four—the eye can take in the whole of Copenhagen. A dead-level city, flat as Venice or Amsterdam, surrounded, and to some extent intersected, by canals and lagoons. A city of quaint spires, steep roofs, and jutting gables. Distinctly an old-world city, in spite of the handsome new boulevard and avenues towards the northwest. Almost all the prominent public buildings have an air of antiquity. The churches are all old. Christiansborg Palace, now a gaunt ruin, and Rosenborg Castle, with its fantastic lanterns, are relics of the time when the Kings of Denmark held sway from the Elbe to the North Cape. Even Thorwaldsen's Museum—monument of the Dane who, next to Hans Christian Andersen, has achieved the widest fame—seems to have aged prema-

turely. Only one notable structure is obviously modern—the Royal Danish Theatre, whose dome soars over the sea of roofs in the very centre of the city. Even at this distance it proclaims itself a play-house, possessing that first of architectural merits, an outward and visible fitness for its inward and spiritual function; and it is at least as prominent a feature in the intellectual as in the material physiognomy of the city.

Let us descend the spiral corridor, and make our way through the crooked streets towards the theatre. For so large a town—it contains between two and three hundred thousand people—Copenhagen is surprisingly small-townish. The wheel traffic is scanty and jog-trot; the sidewalks are roughly paved; the people one meets, even in the principal thoroughfares, are decidedly provincial in their dress and carriage; and from the number of elaborate salutations one sees on

every hand, it is obvious that everybody knows everybody else. But though life is homely and leisurely, it is not dull. On the contrary, one is impressed by the vivacity of manner, the intelligence of expression, of the average Copenhagener. The display in the shops gives evidence of a high general level of culture and taste. I know of no city where book-sellers so greatly abound, their windows richly stocked not only with Scandinavian, but with French, German, and English literature. And in every window the book most prominently exhibited is pretty sure to be the popular play of the day at the Royal Theatre; for here the stage and literature go hand in hand.

Arriving in the large irregular space known as the King's New Market, we find ourselves opposite the impressive façade of the theatre, with its triple-arched portico and loggia. Immediately under the group of Apollo and two Muses, which crowns the cornice, a tablet bears the inscription

Folket reiste under  denne Bygning for  
DEN DANSKE SKUEPLADS

THE PEOPLE ERECTED UNDER CHRISTIAN IX. THIS BUILDING FOR THE DANISH STAGE.

On the left-hand panel of the entablature is inscribed the date, 1748, when the theatre, as an institution, was founded. The right-hand panel bears the date, 1874, when the present building was opened. Two bronze statues guard the portico—Ludvig Holberg being seated on the right, Adam Oehlenschläger on the left. They are the tutelary spirits of the Danish stage—the genius of Comedy and the genius of Tragedy.

As the Théâtre Français commemorates its glorious origin in the phrase, "Maison de Molière," so the Danish Theatre might no less justly and no less proudly call itself the House of Holberg. If it cannot be said of Holberg that "he found not but created first the stage," it can, at least, be said that finding the rudiments of a stage, he created the national drama of Denmark. Yet he was not, technically speaking, a Dane. He was born in Bergen, Norway, in 1684, and was eighteen years old before he ever

saw Copenhagen. After a short and intermittent course at the university, he set off on the first of those knowledge-hunting peregrinations which Goldsmith imitated half a century later, and to which, therefore, we indirectly owe *The Traveller*. He spent two years at Oxford. In Paris he was among the crowd of poor students who elbowed each other every morning outside the Mazarin Library, each hoping to slip in first and to secure Bayle's Dictionary for the day. Sailing to Civita Vecchia, his felucca was chased by a Barbary rover, and he stood, "pale, with a drawn sword," mechanically imitating the pious ejaculations of the sailors, and then smiling at his own panic. These wanderings occupied nearly six years in all, and on his final return to Copenhagen he brought with him all the enlightenment of his age wherewith to combat the pedantry and obscurantism which there reigned supreme. His penury was at one time so great that he was compelled to accept aid from a public charity. At last, in 1717, he was offered a Professorship of Metaphysics, the study which he most loathed. The pinch of poverty, however, forced him to accept the post, to become a "teacher of the Meaningless to the Empty-headed," and to preside at disputations *De tribus durationibus et ubietatibus in uno infinitatis puncto*. It was an accusation of plagiarism in a historical work that first provoked him to essay his powers as a satirist. The vein once opened, he worked it diligently; and in 1720 his mock-heroic poem, "Peder Paars," brought the whole world of pedantry about his ears. "Peder Paars" is the first work of European significance in modern Danish literature.

As yet there was no Danish theatre whatever. French and German companies, both operatic and dramatic, had been maintained by the court, and Copenhagen may claim the melancholy distinction of having been the scene of one of the earliest theatrical catastrophes on record—the burning, in 1689, of a temporary opera-house, whereby 180 lives were lost. During the early years of the eighteenth century German and Dutch strollers had visited the town, playing either gross buffooneries or the bombastic and grotesque romances which Holberg afterwards parodied in *Ulysses von Ithacia*. At last, in 1720, the ground

was cleared for a permanent theatre by a *privilegium exclusivum*, granted by King Frederick the Fourth to Étienne Capion, a French actor and tavern-keeper. Capion built a playhouse, and tried to attract the public by performances in French and German, juggling, rope-dancing, and feats of strength. The result was disastrous, and in 1722 a second *privilegium* was grafted on to Capion's, by which he and another French actor, René Montaigu, were permitted to perform comedies "in the Danish tongue." A company was collected, consisting for the most part of students, and the Danish theatre was opened, 23d of September, 1722, with a translation of Molière's *L'Avare*. The next production was Holberg's *Pewterer Politician*, and four of his other comedies followed in rapid succession.

The hope of helping to establish a permanent theatre had spurred him to almost unexampled productiveness. In the three years between the beginning of 1722 and the end of 1724 he wrote more than twenty plays, thus providing the actors with the backbone of their repertory, which, for the rest, consisted of translations from the French. Out of all this labor he reaped not a stiver of profit, nor, for that matter, did the luckless managers. For some time they eked out their meagre receipts by letting the theatre on "off" nights for masquerades; but in 1724, though Holberg defended them in one of his most brilliant comedies, masquerades were forbidden by the police. Both Capion and Montaigu went bankrupt again and again. For a few months the actors carried on the theatre on "sharing terms," and tried to restore their fortunes by playing tragedies and commediettas in French. At last they gave up the battle, and on February 25, 1727, the theatre was closed, after the performance of a little apropos, by Holberg, entitled *The Obsequies of the Danish Comedy*. Here are some fragments of the dialogue between three of the actors, Henrich Wegner, Schumacher, and Mademoiselle Hiort, all appearing in their own persons:

*Schumacher.* Henrich, what shall we play next week?

*Henrich.* Bankruptcy.

*Schumacher.* I don't know that comedy.

*Henrich.* It's not exactly what you would call a comedy, for it's rather tragical in the long-run.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mlle. Hiort.* But what shall I take to, now that the theatre is to close?

*Henrich.* If you have any capital, I advise you to live on the interest; but if you haven't, you must go into service.

*Mlle. Hiort.* Where shall I find employment? Haven't we managed to offend everybody [by means of the satire in Holberg and Molière]—officers, doctors, advocates, pewterers, marquises, barons, barbers?

*Henrich.* Faith, but that's true. I've never dared to get shaved since we played that comedy about Master Gert.

Thus jesting at a sorrow which was doubtless sincere enough, Holberg consigned to the tomb the earliest Danish theatre. It was revived in the following year, with a small subsidy from the King; but a few months later a great fire laid Copenhagen in ashes, and put an end to all amusements. Before the town had recovered from the catastrophe, Christian the Sixth had come to the throne, and a period of stagnant pietism had set in, during which no theatrical enterprise was to be thought of.

Most of Holberg's plays and all his masterpieces were now written, though some of them still lay in his desk unperformed. It is impossible to define in a single phrase the nature of his genius. One is tempted to call him a prose Molière, or a bourgeois Molière, but such formulas are at once inadequate and misleading. The grace, the distinction, the tenderness of Molière he lacked. He found his subjects and his audience not in a great capital and a brilliant court, but in a small commercial town which happened to be the seat of a narrow, unintelligent, and semi-foreign court, and of an obscurantist university. He wrote a language which charms us by its rococo quaintness rather than by delicacy or polish. The only verse form at his command was the horrible Danish Alexandrine, with its steam-piston rhythm, which he had the good taste to use in mock-heroics alone. It is conjectured, on very slight evidence, that in his boyhood he was once in love; it is certain that he was a confirmed bachelor with little taste for female society.\* How different from the much-loving, much-suffering Molière! Yet to enumerate all these limitations is only to enhance one's delight in Holberg's achievement. He performed a smaller

\* "Plays of romantic love," he says in one of his prefaces, "are little suited to this country, though they may not be out of place in England and other nations where people hang themselves for love."

task than Molière's with greater thoroughness. His comedies are a very encyclopædia of life in the simple little Denmark of his day. Molière's are, after all, but fragments, "broken lights," as it were, from the vast and complex life of France. A classicist by temperament and training, Holberg would frequently have recourse to conventional intrigues of the classic type, and he used them with a consummate scenic instinct which to this day makes the plays of the Danish professor no less actable than those of the French actor-manager. But his intrigues are perishable stuff—the mere scaffolding from which he painted his great fresco. When we survey his achievement as a whole, the scaffolding fades out of notice, and what we see is an endless procession of delicately observed, vividly drawn characters, steeped in an atmosphere of shrewd, humane, and sympathetic humor. It is true that certain type-figures run through most of his comedies—Jeronimus and Magdelone, the heavy father and mother; Leander and Leonora, the lovers; and Henrik and Pernille, the valet and waiting-woman. But even in these one finds great variety under the identity of name. The Jeronimus of *The Fortunate Shipwreck* is not at all the Jeronimus of *The Christmas Party*; the Henrik of *The Pewterer Politician* is entirely different from the Henrik of *The Masquerade*. It is true, again, that Holberg, like Ben Jonson and the other classicists, would now and then reduce character to a single "humor," as in *The Vacillating Lady*, *The Much-talking Barber*, *The Boastful Soldier*, *The Busy Trifler*. But it is a mistake, I think, to regard this as the prevailing note of his manner. It is certain that in his two master-characters, the drunken boor, Jeppe of the Hill, and Erasmus Montanus, the pedant-martyr of the new learning, he entirely transcends the mere comedy of "humors," and draws living men, solid in three dimensions. This every one admits; and I think the same observation is equally if less obviously true of a dozen other characters; while a hundred more are far from being mere embodied mannerisms, and differ from the greatest character studies only in being more rapidly touched in. Holberg's social philosophy consists of a temperate, sagacious, kindly conservatism. There is nothing of the democrat in his composition. He is no lover

of rank or worshipper of wealth, yet he has more ridicule for the ambitious burgher than indignation against the tyrannous noble. In relation to women, as George Brandes has admirably shown, he was far in advance of his time. In spite of, or perhaps by reason of, the absence of the erotic element in his nature, he anticipated the most modern doctrines as to the equality of the sexes. His morality is rational, not rigorous. He knows that youth will be youth, and is apt to let Leander triumph at the expense of Jeronimus; but Leander's follies are seldom very serious, and never (as in the Restoration comedy) brutal or base. I do not hesitate to call him one of the healthiest writers in all dramatic literature. Prurience and prudery are alike foreign to him, and over all his work there breathes an air of honest gayety—what Danish critics are fond of calling *festivitas*—which is inexpressibly refreshing.

The reign of pietism came to an end in 1746, when Frederick the Fifth ascended the throne. A company was got together in the following year, and opened their performances with Holberg's *Pewterer Politician*; but it was not until December 18, 1748, that the formally constituted Danish comedians gave their first performance in the handsome theatre erected for them on the King's New Market. As his Most Gracious Majesty was to be present, Holberg was not considered courtly enough for the occasion, and a translation of Regnard's *Le Joueur* was therefore performed. Poor Holberg! His genius, as Brandes puts it, had been condemned to twenty years' learned hard labor in the pietistic penitentiary, and he now regained his freedom only to find that his hand had lost its cunning, and that even his earlier masterpieces were regarded by a powerful section of the lettered public as vulgar and old-fashioned! They were far too good acting plays ever to be entirely driven from the stage; they remained, and remain to this day, the corner-stone of the repertory; but there have been several periods when critical sentimentalism or superfiness or romanticism would fain have rejected them. As ill luck would have it, the poet's last years coincided with one of these periods of reaction. He was treated with cold respect by the leaders of critical fashion, and "found his only admirers," says a contemporary, all unconscious of the eulogy

implied in his words, "among the populace who had served as his models." His death, in 1754, passed almost unnoticed, while a not too reputable actress who died nine days later was honored with a public funeral.

It is true that the romantic circumstances of Caroline Thielo's death had helped to raise popular sympathy to fever-heat. Though not yet twenty, she was already the idol of the playhouse, and it was reported that she had been murdered at the instigation of the Russian ambassador, from whom she had succeeded in worming some Masonic secrets. The excitement caused by her death, however, was only one symptom of the keen public interest in the theatre, which had sprung into existence since 1748, and has subsisted in full force even to the present day. Nowhere else, not even in Paris, is the theatre more truly a national institution than it is in Copenhagen. At first, indeed, the actors were regarded as bohemians, and the students of the university, from whom the company has all along been mainly recruited, were held to lose caste in going on the stage. But this prejudice did not at any time prevent the outside public from interesting itself vividly in the affairs of the theatre, both artistic and personal, and during the present century the social stigma has entirely vanished.

A repertory which consisted mainly of the works of Holberg, Molière, Regnard, and the minor French comedy-writers begot a race of great character-actors. The leading members of the company formed in 1748, under Holberg's own eye, were Londemann, Clementin, and Hortulan—a brilliant trio. Holberg is said to have corrected Clementin's conception of Vielgeschrey in *The Busy Tripler* by bidding him study a living original whom he named; and the anecdote is characteristic, for this practice of "going to nature" has always been and still is the chief strength of the Danish school of acting. For four years the company confined itself entirely to comedy. In the course of their fifth season they made a timid attempt at tragedy, with Deschamps's *Cato*; but it was not until 1757 that the production of Voltaire's *Zaire* brought "the pathetic and sublime" into fashion. As a consequence, the stage fell a prey for nearly twenty years to hollow and bombastic declama-

tion, which reached its height in the first original Danish tragedy, Nordahl Brun's *Zarine*, produced in 1772. Brun, like Holberg, was a Norwegian by birth, and it was another Norwegian who in the following year pricked the bombastic bladder with a keen point of satire. Johan Wessel's burlesque tragedy of *Love without Stockings* is one of the classics of Danish literature. Dealing with the luckless loves of a tailor and his sweetheart, it reproduces with absolute faithfulness all the conventions of French tragedy—the unities of time and place, the soliloquies (in *Zarine* there were no fewer than eighteen soliloquies), the Alexandrines, with alternate masculine and feminine rhymes; in short, the whole outward form of pseudo-classicism. Wessel's travesty, though received with inextinguishable laughter, did not at once drive the stilted Gallicisms from the stage, but it weakened their hold upon popular favor.\* Another breath of fresh air was brought to the stage by the lyrical dramas of Johannes Ewald, in one of which, *The Fishers*, occurs the stirring national song, "King Christian stood by the lofty mast," well known in Longfellow's translation. But French bombast died out slowly, and was succeeded by a still worse literary epidemic in the shape of German sentimentality. Kotzebue's *Misanthropy and Repentance* (better known as *The Stranger*) was produced in 1790, and was the forerunner of no fewer than seventy-two other plays from the same pen. The reign of Kotzebue is perhaps the darkest hour in the history of the Danish stage. It gave place to the dawn of Scandinavian Romanticism early in the present century.

The material fortunes of the theatre had meanwhile undergone many vicissitudes. From 1750 to 1770 it belonged to the town of Copenhagen, receiving, however, a small and uncertain subsidy from the King, which was held to justify all sorts of court interference. The Danish players were constantly compelled to give house-room to Italian opera companies,

\* English influence did something to strengthen the good traditions of comedy and character-acting. Steele's *Conscious Lovers*, produced in 1761, was the first English play which found its way to the Danish stage, and it was followed by several of the Colmans', Cumberland's, Holcroft's, and Morton's comedies. *The School for Scandal* was very successfully produced in 1784; *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1785; *The Rivals* not until 1799. All three still hold their place in the repertory.

and to see themselves utterly neglected by the King and the nobility, who idolized the foreign interlopers. The court, too, imported and patronized more than one company of French actors, while at one time the stage was overrun with rope-dancers, jugglers, acrobats, and what we now know as "variety entertainments." Even with the strictest economy in salaries and other expenses—five hundred dollars a year was considered ample payment for a leading actor—the theatre managed in twenty years to run deeply into debt. In 1770 the King paid off the greater part of the encumbrances, and the Danish stage became in name as well as in fact a court institution. So it remained until 1849, when it passed into the hands of the nation.

"It was in the year 1805," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "that the young and unknown poet Adam Oehlenschläger, wearing out a winter in Germany under the worst pangs of nostalgia, found in the university library at Halle a copy of the Icelandic of Snorre Sturleson's *Heimskringla* [the sagas of the Kings of Norway]. The event was as full of import to Scandinavian literature as Luther's famous discovery of the Bible was to German liberty." Oehlenschläger at once began to work the rich vein of dramatic material upon which he had thus stumbled. *Earl Hakon*, his first and perhaps his best tragedy, was produced in 1808, and *Palnatoke*, *Axel and Valborg*, *Stærkodder*, and half a score of other dramas followed in rapid succession. Oehlenschläger was a great poet and a prolific dramatist, but his dramas are of an age, not for all time. They are tragic romances, full of fluent rhetoric and lyric pathos, rather than great tragedies, properly so called. They are written for the most part in somewhat flaccid blank verse, varied by occasional passages in the simple and charming ballad measure of the Danish *Kæmpeviser*. But with all their faults they are works of heroic imagination, appealing irresistibly to youthful sentiment and enthusiasm. Scandinavian antiquity, mythic and historical, which to the eighteenth century had seemed merely barbarous, was now found to be inspiring, fascinating, and infinitely picturesque. Oehlenschläger's dramatic romances were no less epoch-making for Danish litera-

ture than the *Waverley Novels* for our own; they revealed a new world of imagination. The Norwegian dramatists Björnson and Ibsen have reproduced the spirit of the sagas far more faithfully than Oehlenschläger. Their tragedies are tersely, and one may almost say realistically, Scandinavian; his are rhetorically and romantically Teutonic. But Oehlenschläger will always claim respect as a delightful poet—his *Aladdin* is a masterpiece—and as the pioneer of a new era. His statue has every right to its place beside Holberg's at the entrance to the Danish Theatre.

The new romantic tragedy naturally required a new school of actors to represent it. Throughout what may be called the Voltaire period and the Kotzebue period the traditions of character-acting established under Holberg had been kept alive by two generations of fine comedians. Schwarz, an actor who combined great mimetic talent with keen intelligence, had done much during the last quarter of the eighteenth century to refine and elevate the stage, and to heighten the sense of artistic propriety among his comrades. Gjelstrup, who was no less remarkable as a painter than as an actor, played two of Holberg's master-characters, Jeppe and Studenstrup, to absolute perfection; and Frydendahl, Knudsen, and Lindgreen carried the great traditions from the last into the present century. Knudsen, like many other Danish actors, was also an excellent singer; and when the English bombarded Copenhagen in 1801, he collected more than \$100,000 for the Patriotic Fund by travelling through Denmark and Norway singing patriotic songs. But character-actors, however accomplished, could not cope with the warrior-heroes of Oehlenschläger. "Wanted, a tragedian," was the cry of the management; and at last they advertised for one in the newspapers. Strange to say, the advertisement "met the eye" of the right man. A country doctor named Ryge, thirty-three years of age, presented himself for trial; and when the trial was over, one of the committee remarked, "If you are foolish enough to want to go on the stage, I am sure the public will be wise enough to receive you with acclamation." The prophecy was justified. With his gigantic figure and voluminous voice, Ryge seemed born to embody the heroes of Northern legend.

"His words," wrote Bournonville, "rang likesword strokes on shields of copper; they sank into the soul like runes on a memorial stone. . . . I seem still to hear him in *Earl Hakon* apostrophizing the gods in the sacrificial grove:

'My Eling have I offered up;  
and lo!  
My foes in myriads shall follow him.'

The curtain fell, and my hair stood on end at the thought of the sea of blood that was to flow." It must not be supposed, however, that Dr. Ryge was a mere raunter. On the contrary, he was an actor of high intelligence and versatility. He was great not only in Oehlenschläger's *Hakon, Jarl*, and *Palnatoke*, but in Holberg's sententious *Pewterer Politician* and grotesque *Ulysses von Ithacia*; not only in *Macbeth* and *Lear*, but in *Moses* in *The School for Scandal*. The triumph of Danish romanticism naturally paved the way for the importation of Shakespeare. *Hamlet* was produced in 1813, *King Lear* in 1816, *Macbeth* in 1817. Schiller and Goethe took a more or less prominent place in the repertory; the Danish playwrights Heiberg and Hertz wrote many popular plays on the romantic model; and Oehlenschläger continued to produce a new tragedy every now and then until within a year or two of his death in 1850. When Ryge died in 1842, his mantle fell upon Nielsen, whose wife, too, was a tragic actress of a high order. Thus the first half of the present century may fairly be called the romantic or blank-verse period of the Danish stage.

During the second quarter of the century, however, two other influences made themselves felt—the influence of Scribe and the influence of Heiberg. Scribe's *Valérie* was produced in 1824, and ninety-eight other products of his restless manufactory followed in rapid succession.



MEDALLION PORTRAIT OF LUDVIG HOLBERG IN THE BERGEN MUSEUM.

From the Jubilee Number of Ludvig Holberg.

Even Kotzebue had not been so popular. Heiberg, again, created a new and national dramatic form. The French vaudeville owed, if not its origin, at least its prevalence on the boulevard stage, to the monopoly which confined the regular drama to the privileged theatres. The "couplets" with which it was interspersed were apt to be as few and as short as possible, and were generally gabbled through as a tedious matter of form, by actors without voice or musical taste. Heiberg, a man of no genius, but of alert and vivacious talent, seized upon this chance development of the French drama and converted it into something new and strange. The Danish vaudeville, as invented by him and continued by Hertz and Hostrup, is a broad and leisurely study of humorous character, interspersed with gracefully written songs



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and concerted pieces which call for a good deal of musical accomplishment in their execution. The vaudeville is the opposite of a "well-made play." Its plot is generally farcical, and rapidity of action is systematically sacrificed to the careful reproduction of character and manners. The vaudeville is now regarded with scant tolerance by the reigning school of Danish criticism; but, for my part, I am inclined to accept it as a natural and charming outgrowth of the Holberg tradition. It is founded on direct and delicate observation; it treats intrigue as a mere conventional framework for the presentation of character; and it offers, under a mask of gayety, a homely and healthy philosophy of life. Certain it is that, but for the Holberg school of acting, the Heiberg vaudeville would never have existed. From *King Solomon and Jørgen Hatmaker* onwards, the Danish vaudevilles are all written for, and depend for their effect upon, a large company of finished character-actors. For nearly fifty years Heiberg's wife was the leading actress of the theatre, and for her he wrote many of his most effective characters. At her side stood the elder and the younger Rosenkilde; Michael Wiehe, prince of romantic lovers; Fru Södring, an "old woman" of genius; Mantzius and Hultmann, who made their chief reputation in the de-

lightful fantasies of Hostrup; and the incomparable Phister, certainly one of the most accomplished comedians that ever lived. This great generation has but lately vanished from the stage. I have myself seen Phister, the younger Rosenkilde, Fru Södring, and Hultmann; Fru Heiberg and Michael Wiehe live in the enthusiastic memories of all middle-aged play-goers.

When Denmark, in 1849, became a constitutional monarchy, the theatre was placed under the control of the Ministry of Public Worship, and ultimately, of course, of the Parliament. Heiberg was appointed Director, and great things were expected of his rule. But Heiberg, now getting on in years, was a ninimy-pinimy, cut-and-dried conservative æsthetician, and the ten years of his directorate were, in a literary sense, barren. His principal achievement was to quarrel with Hoedt, a great Hamlet, and the pioneer of the realistic school of acting, whom he drove from the stage in disgust. The period of literary sterility extended right through the sixties. The old plays were admirably performed, but no new plays of any note were produced. The first stirrings of new life came from Norway. Björnson's *Newly Married Couple* was produced in 1865, his *Mary Stuart* in 1867; Ibsen's *League of Youth* in 1870,



and his *Pretenders* in 1871. Since then each new play of Björnson and Ibsen has given a fresh stimulus to dramatic life in Scandinavia. During the seventies a slight romantic revival took place in Denmark, the chief product of which was Molbech's exquisite idyllic comedy *Ambrosius*. The commencement of the

was built partly by the state, partly by the town of Copenhagen, while private citizens contributed liberally to its decoration. It is a vast and roomy building, in the internal arrangements of which comfort and safety have been preferred to display. The vestibule is severely simple; the corridors, all except the prome-



THE POULSEN BROTHERS.

From a photograph by Hansen and Weller, Copenhagen.

eighties saw the rise of a realistic school of Danish playwrights, influenced partly by the Norwegians, partly by the French dramatists. Edward Brandes (a brother of the distinguished critic), Einar Christiansen, and Otto Benzon are the leaders of this school, and around them stands a group of minor writers all doing alert and thoughtful work for the stage.

Altered and remodelled from time to time, the theatre of 1748 remained the home of the Danish comedy for more than a century and a quarter. I well remember the comfortable old-fashioned house, with its lustre of oil lamps, which used to rise majestically into the ceiling when the act commenced, and descend again with the descending curtain. I remember having the seat pointed out to me in which Thorwaldsen was found sitting, dead, on the evening of March 24, 1844. The new theatre, opened in 1874,

nade at the back of the dress circle, are wide, bare, and a trifle grim. The said promenade, however, is gayly decorated, and opens into a handsome foyer not unlike that of the Théâtre Français, but larger, in which stand busts of Holberg, Ewald, Wessel, Oehlenschläger, Heiberg, Hertz, and one or two famous actors. At least half the audience pours out in the entr'actes into the promenade and foyer. From the point of view of London or Paris, it is distinctly a provincial public, homely in appearance and manners, and a little bit dowdy in attire, evening dress being a rare exception. But in point of animation and eager intelligence it yields to no audience as yet known to me. One is particularly struck by the numerical ascendancy of young people, and especially of young ladies. Enter the foyer at any moment, and you may count at least half a dozen groups of three or four



EMIL POULSEN AS SHYLOCK.  
From a photograph by Hohlenberg, Copenhagen.

girls (I use the term in an elastic sense) unattended by any male. This prevailing youthfulness is partly explicable, of course, by the fact that the older people prefer to remain in their seats; but it is largely due to the *abonnement* system, which makes the theatre above everything a family institution. Almost the whole auditorium, except the floor (*parquet* and *parterre*), is let in *abonnement* every evening except Sunday. Authors and actors now and then deplore, like Mr. W. S. Gilbert, the influence of "the young lady in the dress circle." They allege that she preponderates to such a degree as to give an unmistakably feminine tone to the laughter of the audience. This is true enough; but if the Anglo-

Saxon "young lady in the dress circle" were half as appreciative and enlightened, theatrically speaking, as her Danish sister, I think we should have small reason to complain.

The auditorium is cheerful and comfortable, not luxurious. The floors are uncarpeted, the swing-seats cane-bottomed. There are places for about 1600 people, at prices ranging from a dollar and a quarter to twenty-five cents. At ordinary rates the theatre holds something like \$1000. In the first *parquet* two seats at each end of each row are set apart for the use of the authors, artists, and musicians who are on the free list, and members of the *Rigsdag*, or Parliament, have seats *ex officio* in this part of the house. The royal box is next to the stage on the grand tier, and is very frequently occupied. I have seen the King and Queen of Denmark at the play four nights in one week. Over the *proscenium* is the inscription "*Ei blot til Lyst*" (Not for pleasure alone), which for nearly a century held a similar position in the old theatre. The drop scene is a singularly beautiful one, representing a number of winged geniuses drawing back a heavy red curtain and revealing a view of the Acropolis at Athens.

I need scarcely say that the theatre is in decadence. Who ever heard of a theatre that was *not* in decadence? I have little doubt that when Shakespeare was at the height of his genius, the critics in the "yard" of the Globe Theatre would shake their heads mournfully over the decline of the English drama. In Copenhagen no less than in Paris the theatre is understood to be going to the dogs, though to the eye of the outside observer it seems to be flourishing exceedingly. Under the able guidance of Chamberlain Fallesen and his two lieutenants, Herr Bloch and Herr Krohn, a company of admirable actors is playing a rich and varied repertory, and making the theatre one of the leading intellectual forces in the life of the nation. What more can be required of a national theatre? It is true that the system under which it is conducted, as well as the

policy of the existing management, is open to criticisms of detail; but there is a wide difference between admitting that an institution is not perfect, and declaring it decrepit and moribund.

The drama proper—to go straight to the main defect of the system—is to some extent hampered by having to run in

atre devoted to drama alone might be made equally efficient at much less cost, if not at a profit. The system, however, has its compensations. In the first place a representative opera repertory, ranging from Wagner to Offenbach, is very charmingly performed (of course in Danish). The present prima donna, Fröken



SCENE FROM HOLBERG'S "ERASMUS MONTANUS."

Erasmus: Emil Poulsen. Peter the Precentor: Schram.

harness with opera and ballet. This involves the maintenance of three companies, and the sacrifice of two or three evenings a week to music; while the deep proscenium and large orchestra space necessary for opera place the actors in comedy and drama at a great disadvantage. It is the opera, too, which constitutes the chief item of expense, and causes the theatre to cost the state from \$8000 to \$18,000 a year. A smaller the-

Dons, is a dramatic singer of great capacity; and Herr Simonsen, the leading barytone, possesses a noble voice and an admirable method. Furthermore, the close juxtaposition of the three arts of acting, singing, and dancing renders "all-round" accomplishment very common in the company. Almost all the actors can sing, and many of the singers can act. Herr Schram, one of the most original comedians I ever saw, began his



OLAF POULSEN AS JUDGE KRANS IN HOSTRUP'S  
"ADVENTURE ON A WALKING TOUR."

career as a bass singer, and was, until age enfeebled his voice, an incomparable Leporello and Mephistopheles. Herr Emil Poulsen, the leading actor of the dramatic company, and Herr Jerndorff, an excellent actor of the second rank, have appeared with great success in important operatic parts. Herr Olaf Poulsen, the principal comedian, is a most accomplished singer of chansonnettes, and there is scarcely one member of the company who has not sufficient musical education to render correctly and gracefully the light music of the Danish vaudevilles. The ballet, too, is not only a delightful and thoroughly national art-form, but serves as an excellent school for the dramatic stage. Fru Eckardt and Fru Hennings, the leading actresses of the day, both came from the ballet; so did Fru Heiberg. Indeed the ballet, as developed by Bournonville, has played such a large part in the history of the Danish theatre as to claim a paragraph to itself.

August Bournonville was a Frenchman born in Denmark, or, if you prefer it, a Dane of French parentage. His father was a pupil of Noverre, the great reformer of dramatic dancing, and from his earliest years the boy learned, as it were, to think in dance forms. Galeotti had converted the *ballet d'action* in Denmark from a mere court amusement into a popular art. Bournonville, with a high ideal

of the dignity of this art, combined perfect technical accomplishment and a strong dramatic faculty. It was his great ambition to vindicate the claim of his beloved profession to a place among the liberal arts. He was all his life contending against the prejudice which regarded a male dancer as an effeminate mountebank, a female dancer as a mere plaything of aristocratic vice. He believed almost as firmly as Milton or Ruskin that noble art must grow out of a noble life, and he certainly succeeded in making the Danish ballet school eminently respectable. This moral preoccupation was perhaps not altogether advantageous to his art. Some critics complain that there is more grace than passion in his ballets, and that actresses who have passed through his school are apt to sacrifice truth of expression to mere elegance. Be this as it may, the Danish ballet, as Bournonville fashioned it, is certainly a delightful entertainment. He composed more than fifty ballets, great and small, of which some ten or a dozen hold the stage: *Valdemar*, *Napoli*, *The Bridal in Hardanger*, *Far from Denmark*, *The Toreador*, *a Folk-Tale*, and others. Of these I have seen two: *Valdemar*, a four-act historic drama in ballet form, in which Vilhelm Wiehe, then the leading tragedian of the theatre, played the part of Axel; and *The Bridal in Hardanger*, a charming Norwegian idyl in two acts. Nowhere else have I seen dancing at once so refined and so dramatic; the effects aimed at in the great Italian ballets are coarse, spectacular, and brainless in comparison. Since Bournonville's death, however, only one new ballet of any importance has been produced, and it remains to be seen whether this delightful but somewhat unprogressive art-form will hold its own. Large as is the repertory left behind him by Bournonville, it is not likely that a full ballet company can be maintained year after year for no purpose but to repeat his compositions over and over again. I am told, too, that many of his ballets are practically lost, because no one can decipher the symbols by which he represented the steps and figures.

What, now, of the dramatic company as at present constituted? It is efficient in almost all branches of art, superlative in some. Tragic declamation is its weakest point, character-acting its strongest—

that is to say, the spirit of Holberg triumphs for the moment over the spirit of Oehlenschläger. It is true that Fru Eckardt, whose strength lies mainly in the great ladies of modern comedy, has recently given a very impressive rendering of Oehlenschläger's Queen Margarete in the tragedy of that name; but among the male artists there is no heroic actor of commanding power, no Mounet-Sully, and still less a Salvini. In character-acting, on the other hand, the brothers Emil and Olaf Poulsen are simply incomparable; I use the word in its literal sense. They are the true inheritors of the great tradition. I have never seen actors who approached them in the art of sinking their own individuality in that of their personage. They are not only masters of make-up, they seem to reincarnate themselves in each new character, altering voice, manner, temperament, everything. As may be gathered from their portraits, Emil, the elder, is the more intellectual, reflective artist of the two; Olaf is the more original, irrepressible genius. Emil would have been distinguished in any walk of life; Olaf, though he has some talent as a painter, is in reality born for the stage, and for it alone. The brothers made their first appearance on the same evening, April 16, 1867—Emil as Erasmus Montanus, the student who returns to his native village brimming over with his new knowledge, and throws the whole parish into consternation by impiously asserting that the world is round; Olaf in the character of Jacob Berg, the younger brother of the doughty Erasmus. Emil scored his first triumph as a character-actor in the part of the wily Bishop Nicholas in Ibsen's tragedy *The Pretenders*. Then came his beautiful embodiment of Molbech's Ambrosius, his Helmer in Ibsen's *Doll's House*, his Hamlet, Shylock, Tartuffe, Arnolphe in *L'École des Femmes*, King Erik Glipping in the opera of *King and Constable*, Molbech's Dante, Editor Ramseth in Gunnar Heiberg's *King Midas*, and a host of other characters. Many people to whom I have shown portraits of Emil Poulsen in five or six different characters have found it difficult to believe that the photographs did not represent five or six different actors as well. Olaf Poulsen's physique is, if possible, more plastic than his brother's. In the various Henriks of Holberg's

comedies he employs no make-up at all, yet differentiates them admirably. The shock-headed, grinning journeyman of the *Pewterer Politician* is a totally different personage from the alert and sprightly valet of *The Masquerade* or *Abracadabra*; the only point they have in common is the *festivitas*, the irresistible buoyancy of humor, which informs all this heaven-born comedian's creations. In parts in which he can call in the aid of make-up, he works miracles of metamorphosis. I shall never forget the blank stupidity of his Judge Krans



OLAF POULSEN AS HENRIK IN HOLBERG'S  
"PEWTERER POLITICIAN."



FRU BETTY HENNINGAS AS CLAIRE IN "THE IRON-MASTER" (LE MAÎTRE DE FORGES).

From a photograph by Hehlenberg, Copenhagen.

in Hostrup's *Adventure on a Walking Tour*, or the twinkling Pickwickian joviality of his Herr Zierlich in Heiberg's *April-fools*. The two brothers are delightful as the Prince and his henchman Kaspar in *Once upon a Time* (a fairytale comedy by the great lyric poet Holger Drachmann, founded on Andersen's *Swineherd*), and as the benevolent Abbot and the Demon-Cook in Christiansen's brilliant poetic comedy *Brother Ruus*. Among their very best parts, I am as-

sured, are Hjalmar Ekdal and his broken-down old father in Ibsen's *Wild Duck*—characters which only actors of the rarest intelligence could attempt with any hope of success. I regret few things so much as the chance which debarred me from witnessing this performance.

In *The Wild Duck*, too, Fru Hennings made one of her greatest successes, creating the beautiful character of Hedvig with exquisitely pathetic simplicity. Fru Hennings, like all the leading artists of the Danish school, is exceedingly versatile. She passes with ease from the fourteen-year-old Hedvig to the octogenarian grandmother in Esmann's original little study *In the Almshouse*. She plays Agnes in *L'École des Femmes* as delicately as Reichenberg, and with far more naïveté; she plays Cyprienne in *Divorçons* with the vivacity of Chaumont; and she plays many characters of the class which at the Français would be assigned to Bartet. The very difficult character of Nora Helmer in Ibsen's *Doll's House* is, hitherto, her most famous creation. In the lighter scenes of the first act she is unapproachably perfect. Her play of feeling is so vivid and so subtle as to produce what I am tempted to describe as an iridescent effect, dazzling but captivating. In the later acts it would be possible to conceive a more tragic Nora than Fru Hennings, but scarcely a more human or a more accomplished one. The Princess in *Once upon a Time* is another of this delightful artist's most successful parts, and she has also been highly popular as Claire in *Le Maître de Forges*.

The leading "old woman" of the company is Fru Phister, wife of the great comedian. In her, as in her husband, the Holberg tradition is incarnate. When he played Henrik, the valet, she played Pernille, the waiting-woman; and she still, at an advanced age, plays such parts as the wife of the Pewterer Politician with consummate finesse and amiable, almost touching, humor. One of the youngest members of the company, on the other hand, is Fru Bloch, an actress of delicate talent and subtle charm, of whom

great things may be expected. Her performance of the school-girl, Trina Rar, in *The April-fools*, is one of the most delightful things of its kind I have ever seen. I may say, indeed, that I never saw any play so perfectly acted in every part as this vaudeville of Heiberg's. Fru Phister as the old school-mistress, Fru Hilmer as a gossiping old maid, Zangenberg and the beautiful Fru Emma Nielsen as Siegfried and Constance, Fru Bloch as Trina Rar, Poul Nielsen as her school-boy lover, Schram as the German adventurer, and Olaf Poulsen as Herr Zierlich, were all above criticism. It is only at a theatre where the drama is cultivated as an art, not exploited as an article of commerce, that such perfection of ensemble is possible.

I have barely mentioned, or not at all, some of the most interesting artists of the company. Chamberlain Fallesen has avoided the error into which M. Perrin fell at the Français, of overworking the older generation, and giving the younger generation no chance to develop their talents. The younger generation in Copenhagen, headed by Fru Bloch, Poul Nielsen, and Fru Emma Nielsen, is rapidly preparing itself for the tasks, in the shape of realistic drama, which the immediate future will probably assign to it. If only the Royal Theatre keeps abreast of the literary movement; if only the Danish actors maintain the good traditions of "plain living and high thinking," faithful character study, and loyal co-operation in the cause of art—there is no doubt that the House of Holberg will continue to hold for many a long year its foremost



FRU BLOCH AS TRINA RAR IN HEIBERG'S VAUDEVILLE "THE APRIL-FOOLS."

place among the national institutions of Denmark. If such a theatre be not worth far more than a yearly \$10,000, or even \$20,000, to the nation it helps to educate, my ideas of the value of money are strangely at fault.

OLD SHIPPING MERCHANTS OF NEW YORK.

BY GEORGE W. SHELDON.

THE New York shipping merchants spoken of in this article are the men who owned, wholly or in part, the old packet and clipper ships of the transatlantic service. They left no successors. Where is the American house that exports to-day? The business is in the hands of foreigners, and is done so differently that were the doers of it fifty years ago to make their appearance on 'Change, they could not understand what is going on. It would sorely puzzle them to see their posterity applying to brokers for

the kind of information which they themselves once had a monopoly of, and giving brokers orders for wheat, corn, tobacco, tea, indigo, and so forth, which they themselves were in the habit of giving directly to the owners of such goods. The old merchants were shippers, that is to say, owners or part owners of the cargoes which they despatched to foreign ports, taking the risks of transportation, and receiving the profits or sustaining the losses; but now the leading articles in the Liverpool, Havre, Hamburg, and