

and sublime, and though they become at times about as visible as flowing water. When the north winds in winter are making upward sweeps over the curving summits of the Alps, the fact is sometimes published with flying banners half a mile long. Those portions of the winds thus embodied can scarce be wholly invisible, even to the darkest imagination. And when we look around over an agitated forest, we may see something of the wind that stirs it, by its effects upon the trees. Yonder it descends in a rush of water-like ripples, and sweeps over the bending trees from hill to hill. Nearer, we see detached plumes and leaves, now speeding by on level currents, now whirled in eddies, or, escaping over the edges of the whirls, carried rapidly aloft on grand, upswelling domes of air, or tossed on flame-like crests, smooth, deep currents, cascades, falls, and swirling eddies, singing around every tree and leaf, and over all the varied topography of the region with telling changes of form, like mountain rivers conforming to the features of their channels.

After tracing the Sierra streams from their fountains to the plains, marking where they bloom white in falls, glide in crystal plumes, surge gray and foam-filled in boulder-choked gorges, and slip through the woods in long, tranquil reaches—after thus

learning their language and forms in detail, we may at length hear them chanting all together in one grand anthem, and comprehend them all in clear inner vision, covering the range like lace. But even this glorious spectacle is far less sublime and not a whit more substantial than what we may behold of these storm-streams of air in the woods.

We all travel the milky way together, trees and men; but it never occurred to me until this storm-day, while swinging in the wind, that trees are travelers, in the ordinary sense. They make many journeys, not very extensive ones, it is true; but our own little comes and goes are only little more than tree-wavings—many of them not so much.

When the storm began to abate, I dismounted and sauntered down through the calming woods. The storm-tones died away, and, turning toward the east, I beheld the countless hosts of the forests hushed and tranquil, towering above one another on the slopes of the hills like a devout audience. The setting sun filled them with amber light, and seemed to say, while they listened, "My peace I give unto you."

As I gazed on the impressive scene, all the so-called ruin of the storm was forgotten, and never before did these noble woods appear so fresh, so joyous, so immortal.

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## A MODERN PLAYWRIGHT.

(EUGÈNE SCRIBE.)

RECLINING on a soft seat, relieved from the fatigue of holding a book and turning its leaves, the attention allured to steadiness by a thousand syrens (lights, music, brilliant costumes, beautiful scenery, splendid hall filled with well-dressed people), which, with roses, pelt away after-dinner torpor; the nerves excited by the influence of the audience, of which one is both part and slave; sharing their mirth and their sorrow, their admiration and their horror; spared intellectual fatigue by all sorts of ingenious devices,—minute descriptions and long narrations suppressed,—the inflections of the actors' voices, the play of their countenances, their expressive gestures, flooding the meager text with a most luminous commentary which leaves no thought, not even those rather hinted than expressed, obscure,—the lazy people who are too indo-

lent to read even a story, find theatrical performances *their* entertainments. Plays are to books what *consommés* and *purées* are to meat and vegetables.

No men ever possessed greater mastery in this delicate, difficult and wonderful art than the celebrated playwright, Eugène Scribe.

Really I cannot call Scribe a playwright. He was a great deal more and a great deal better than that. I know it is the fashion to laugh at him; to denounce him as ignorant of the art of writing, to upbraid him for having left a fortune when he might have left masterpieces; I cannot join this chorus. It is ridiculous to pretend that Scribe could not write. It might as well be said that scene-painters cannot paint because their canvas, placed in daylight side by side with some great fresco, seems mere daubing. Their canvas was not

painted to be seen by daylight, but by a light in which no color is seen with its real shade. It was not painted to be seen in a cabinet, but at a great distance, with a line of foot-lights between it and the spectator. Just so the style suited to the stage is not the style suited to the novel. The dramatist is none the less an expert writer; on the contrary, he reveals his delicate skill by adopting his style to his subject. Moreover, convincing demonstrations of Scribe's superiority to his rivals (who during his lifetime were exalted above him) have been given. Repeated attempts have been made to revive the younger Dumas's and Sardou's plays. "La Dame aux Camélias" and "Le Demi-Monde" of the former are occasionally revived successfully, simply because their subjects come home to the bosoms of everybody in Paris; everybody sees himself in the mirror presented behind the foot-light. "La Dame aux Camélias" has been popular all the world over; but not one other play by its author has been received with favor out of France. A short time since, Sardou's "Famille Benoiton," which ran more than a year upon its first appearance, was revived; it was played to empty benches after the fifth night. No manager has yet dared to revive "Patrie!"; though this is unquestionably Sardou's best play. Now, if the younger Dumas and Sardou were masters of style, their works would retain eternal youth. It is style which gives Pascal's "Lettres Provinciales" immortality, which preserves Bossuet's funeral sermons from the grocer. I am not afraid to say it is style which gives Scribe's works their vitality. Is not Sardou almost as completely master of the stage as he was? Sardou's adroitness does not save his plays from decay. Nearly all of Scribe's pieces are older than those of his rivals. Very well; there is not one of them which does not retain its hold on the public. The younger Dumas has never tried the lyric stage. Sardou's "books" of *opéras comiques* have never won public favor. If the Grand Opéra, or the Opéra Comique, or the Théâtre Lyrique revive one of Scribe's "books," it is sure to fill the house, whether the music be by Meyerbeer, or by Auber, or by Adolphe Adam. If the French Comedy brings out again one of the five-act comedies which he wrote for it (his contract with the Gymnase forbade him to bring out at any other theater works of less than five acts) the house is as full night after night as if the piece had been first played yesterday. Stranger still, the Odéon and the Gymnase have

revived his own vaudevilles, some of them played before 1820; the Odéon has discarded, the Gymnase has retained the old fashioned *couplets*; these vaudevilles are played by the third-rate actors of their companies; they are insufficiently rehearsed; nevertheless Scribe's vaudevilles fill the house. Could a mere playwright work these miracles?

Do I pretend that Scribe is one of those great authors of genius, a Shakspeare, a Molière, who will live in the admiration of the whole world? Assuredly not. Do I think Scribe faultless? No. There are in his works some (not a great many, as his enemies declare) incredible faults,—such as "An old soldier ought to know how to be *silent without murmuring*;"—which Scribe, strange to say, refused to correct when they were pointed out to him. Scribe had his idiosyncrasies. I have always thought this was one of them, and an honorable one. When Scribe completed a work he refused to let anybody touch it, even to remove blemishes, which were evidences that he himself had honestly labored, and at the same time did not pretend to infallibility. When I have considered these defects, it has always seemed to me I could hear Scribe whisper: "Hard as I have worked, I have not attained perfection; and I want young authors to see this for their encouragement." The same man, who during the rehearsals of his pieces, never spared the scissors; who nervously consulted everybody, this same man had a quiet contempt for public opinion when it busied itself with his private life. There was no end to the ridicule poured on him for keeping the splendid furniture of his house always under linen covers; his clocks and candelabra under glass, a linen cloth for a pathway over his hall and staircase carpets. When he built his house, he got an obscure, fifth-rate painter to fresco the walls. The poor artist began with the dining-room. He had the ill luck to introduce a musk-melon into the decoration. Meyerbeer, who dined frequently with Scribe, had the greatest antipathy to a musk-melon. Unless the melon were removed, Scribe could not hope to have him again for a guest. The artist refused to obliterate it. Scribe refused to pay him one cent. The artist brought suit. When it became known that Scribe had employed an unknown artist to decorate his dining-room, that the price agreed on was \$160, and that he had refused to pay even this paltry sum of money, every witling in Paris attacked him. "Philistine"

was the least harsh epithet applied to him. Scribe's conduct was inexcusable; it showed great want of tact in a man dependent on the public for his success. He was then worth \$400,000 (during his life he made in all \$1,250,000 by his pieces), and the royalty on his plays never brought him in less than \$25,000 a year besides. Another idiosyncrasy of Scribe, which did him great disservice, was to make actors pay him royalty on all of his pieces played on benefit nights (which no other author did), and though he always took a box on benefit nights, he would never pay for this box the prices charged for seats taken in advance; he would pay only the price charged at the door. By the way, this was Scribe's invariable practice. He never in his life asked for a free ticket; at the same time he would never pay the price charged; he would give only the price paid upon seats taken at the door. By this ungraciousness he made many enemies.

Scribe was nevertheless generous. His churlishness was produced by the life he had led. He never knew the anguish of feeling that there was no bread to be had, no rent paid, until he had coined pen, ink and paper into drachmas. His income from the outset of his life was \$1,000 a year—a sum of money which in 1811-20 was equal to \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year now. He was surrounded by spendthrifts, who threw away money, and who did not scruple to borrow silver (the only coin in those days) without dreaming of returning it. Scribe was revolted by the shifts to which these thriftless people were driven, by the vicissitudes of their lives, by their frauds. He saw that Fortunatus alone could satisfy all the demands made by such people and not be brought down as low, as degraded, as dependent, as they themselves. He closed his purse, and opened it only advisedly. Scribe not generous? When you show me rich bankers who, during their lives, give away—as Scribe did—\$400,000, I will agree with you that he was a churl.

As a rule, marriages in France are unions of money-bags, not of lovers and loved. Well, Scribe not only married for love, but wooed and won under most romantic circumstances. One day he was with his lawyer, when a lady was announced. Though still young, she was a widow. She was in deep mourning. Her husband, a wine merchant, had died early in life, and had left the whole business in her hands. She was inexperienced and was greatly embarrassed,

for she had many notes to meet, and had been unable to collect debts due her husband. She came to ask the lawyer to renew the notes he held for his clients; were he to insist upon their payment at maturity, she would be ruined, and her children (she had two sons) with her. She entered into particulars which proved that, were her creditors patient, she could certainly do honor to her engagements. The lawyer told her his instructions were peremptory—pay, or protest; he had no other alternative. She burst into tears. Her mute despair touched Scribe. He, by signs, bid the lawyer grant her request, motioning that he (Scribe) would pay the notes and give her all the time required. Madame Boillay made Scribe's acquaintance. The favorable first impression she had made on him deepened, and they were married. He educated her two sons, and married them (one to the daughter of his kinsman, Bayard, the dramatic author), giving each of them a handsome fortune. Béranger knew Madame Boillay before her marriage with Scribe. He exclaimed, when he heard of it: "Ah! my dear friend, you are going to lose all your excellent qualities by becoming a fine lady." Poets are soothsayers, but they are not more exempt from false prophesies than their humbler brethren of booths. She had all her life been Charity herself. She made Scribe the best of wives. He was forty-eight years old at this time.

Perhaps Scribe felt the greater sympathy for Madame Boillay because his mother had been somewhat in her circumstances. His father was a draper in Rue St. Denis; the house, the sign—*Au Chat Noir*, with an enormous black cat—are still standing. In this house, where his father did business, Scribe was born, on Christmas Day, 1791. His father died while he was still in the nurse's arms. The whole business fell upon his mother, and in those years!—just think of them!—'92, '93; the Reign of Terror; Paris depopulated; the guillotine always up in Place de la Concorde and Place du Trône; houses closed; people afraid of their shadow; mutton-chops fetching 1,500 f. (\$300) in *assignats* apiece; noble mansions in the Faubourg St. Germain bringing sixty f. (\$12) in gold! It was hard struggling for bread in those years. As soon as better times came, Scribe's mother sold the key and good-will of her husband's business, and moved to Rue St. Roch.

One day Scribe received this letter from an actress, who for years had shone as the

most brilliant star of the Gymnase, and had never been brighter than in Scribe's play, "Avant, Pendant, et Après" ("Before, Meantime, and Afterward"):

"I lack nothing, and I am happy. It has now been fifteen months since I returned to St. Louis Hospital, and I have reason to hope my admittance to the Asylum for Aged Pauper Women, through the influence of Baron Taylor and the Dramatic Artists' Association. My son is a good boy, who does all he can for me. But—but would you believe that a wild notion has got into my head to disturb my peace and quiet—one of those giddy, reckless ideas which were so familiar to me once, and I can't get rid of it? Has the spring put it into my head? Really, I can't say. But when I, a poor, infirm, bed-ridden recluse for so many years, see again the return of the sun,—may be the last return of the sun I shall ever witness,—when I watch the green leaves begin to return once more to the trees, I can't help dreaming that sunbeams beyond this hospital's walls must be warmer and more brilliant, and that boughs have a deeper green outside than inside St. Louis. Well, and so it is I have a yearning—*such* a yearning—to see myself seated once more, as in old times, in a handsome carriage—a handsome, open carriage, mind you!—giving no thought to the morrow—once more as in old times, you see!—and to ride in the country for at least two hours, and—I have not done yet!—then enjoy an excellent dinner! But my dream can't come true unless Providence lends a helping hand—and here's my hand to it! I do not know any Providence better than you. I hope you may have comprehended how such a dream entered my head; may have laughed, and then you would have excused me. I'm crazy as crazy can be, am I not? Therefore, pray grant me all your indulgence."

The following day's post brought Scribe this letter, from the same decayed actress:

"How kind-hearted you must be, to have granted my request! Oh yes, indeed! yes, indeed! I will drink to your health. I will wait, as you suggest, until the weather becomes more settled. Expectation has already many charms, now that I am sure of *my happiness*. I mean what I say, *my happiness*, for it seems to me that it is the greatest happiness I have ever enjoyed. In this you see I shall be happy *avant, pendant et après*—by recollection. May God grant you long life! Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

He was walking in an out-of-the-way obscure street when he saw a woman long past life's noon, come out of a grocer's shop. She wore an old-fashioned bonnet, a faded shawl, a faded and patched dress, coarse and patched shoes. In one hand was a milk-pot, in the other a huge basket. He looked—looked again. Surely, he could not be mistaken. 'Twas she! 'Twas the brilliant, giddy, beautiful, graceful actress who, twenty years before, attracted all Paris to the Gymnase, where she shone *the* star, and who had all the men in town at her feet. She rolled in wealth then; Croesuses disputed which one of them

should gratify her every whim. And now—her faded, threadbare, patched clothes told all; she was abandoned, poverty-stricken, faded as the garments she wore. A common—a lucky ending of Parisian beauties; for they say in Paris, that all of those garish butterflies who now wear cashmeres of India are destined to wear, a little sooner or a little later, the cashmere of willow. The great basket, which female rag-pickers carry on their back and into which they throw their gleanings, is called in Paris the cashmere of willows; because it has been worn on so many shoulders which knew only the cashmere shawl. Scribe entered the grocer's shop which that actress had just left, and emptied his purse. He ordered so much coffee, so much sugar, so many candles, so much oil, so much vinegar,—in fine, everything he could think of, so that for a year afterward she had no need to enter a grocer's shop again. She never knew that she owed it all to Scribe.

Tissot, professor of Latin prose in the Collège de France, and a member of the French Academy, was the greatest "sponger" in Paris—in Paris, the city of "spongers." This was strange, for he had one thousand dollars from his chair and several hundred more from the French Academy; moreover, he was unmarried. He was interesting because he had lived through the whole first Revolution; had been on speaking terms with all, and intimate with many of, the actors of "the sanguinary." It was always asserted that he was the man who had borne on a pike-staff the head of Princess de Lamballe about the streets of Paris. Louis Philippe took pity on him, gave him a pension from the secret service fund, and free lodgings in Luxembourg Palace. When the Revolution of '48 occurred, the provisional government ordered him out of Luxembourg Palace. He said he would not go, and had additional locks put on his door. Finding he meant what he said, one day, while he went to dine in some neighboring restaurant, the authorities made workmen put ladders on the outside of the palace and take out all the windows of poor Tissot's lodgings. The weather was cold and inclement. Tissot was then near, if indeed not past, seventy years old. He slept that night in furnished lodgings, and moved from the palace the next day. Tissot had for years levied contributions on Scribe (they were brother academicians); henceforward he looked to Scribe to pay his rent. Scribe did pay it until the latter died,—if I remember

rightly, ten or fifteen years after he was expelled from Luxembourg Palace.

Merle, the dramatic author and critic, had for years been most intimate with Scribe. The former broke with the latter, and for years attacked Scribe in the most violent and indignant manner. Merle had wasted his income every way, and especially to satisfy his gluttony. When age and disease came, he had been obliged to take refuge in a wretched garret in the outskirts of Paris. Times grew still harder as his death drew near. His wife (Mrs. Dorral) and her son-in-law, Luguët, the actor, were without engagements, for the revolution of February had just occurred, and there were riots almost daily in the streets. Deserted, diseased, dying, poor, visions of brighter days rose to him. There was scarcely one of them in which Scribe was not conspicuous. Merle felt remorse for his attacks, bitterly regretted them, and exclaimed: "How much I should like to press his hand again before I die! But he would never consent to see again the old friend who has so wronged him!" Luguët repeated this speech to Scribe. The latter instantly hastened to Merle's bedside, assured him all the past was forgiven and forgotten, except happy hours spent together, put his arms around the dying man, tenderly kissed him, did his best to rekindle hope in that despairing breast, and as he went out placed a two hundred dollar bank-note on the mantel-piece.

One morning the post brought Scribe this letter. It was post-marked Lyons, and read:

"I am an old silk-weaver, now good for nothing. I have worked hard all my life; but I have not laid by one cent; for I was too fond of going to see your pieces played. I have bought every one of them, and I still own them. I am now too old, too blind to earn my livelihood, and I have no resources unless the author of all those plays takes pity on an old life-long admirer, and out of his abundance gives a few crumbs to support a poor old weaver during the few years he has yet to live."

Scribe got a friend to make inquiries at Lyons. The correspondent proved to be really a very honest, worthy workman. Scribe paid him an annual pension until the poor fellow died, blessing the generous author who had kept him from the poor-house.

Scribe once lent \$2,000 to a friend. They met frequently, but Scribe never once alluded to the debt, nor ceased to be as cordial and as friendly as ever. This silence lasted fourteen years, and was broken only

by the friend. He entered Scribe's study, and said: "I am not quite as poor as I was, for this money is all I have as yet been able to amass; still I am delighted to have it in my power to pay what I owe you." He laid twenty bank-notes on Scribe's writing-desk. Two days afterward, Scribe sent him by a servant this note:

"I consider myself fortunate to have been able to give you a helping hand at your outset in life. You are now well on the road. Retain these \$2,000, let them be the nest-egg of your fortune, and I pray you let there be no talk about interest between us."

In this note was a certificate of French three per cent. bonds for \$2,000 which Scribe's friend had left for interest on the money borrowed.

A dramatic critic, who often attacked Scribe, asked the latter to lend him \$100, and offered his note, payable twelve months after date. He had no sooner asked than it was given. Scribe had no more courteous, cordial acquaintance all that twelvemonth than this dramatic critic. But no sooner had the note fallen due and remained unpaid, than he shunned Scribe. This lasted a month, and then Scribe ran after and overtook him and said: "Let the \$100 go, don't mention them again. I shall not regret them, unless they are going to cost me a friend; let me lose them with all my heart; keep me from losing him."

The insurrection of June, 1832, had scarcely been quelled, and Paris was still in the throes which accompany and easily follow those fearful convulsions, when a stranger entered Scribe's study. His whole appearance was unprepossessing. He was nervous, restless. His eyes were haggard, uneasy. His green frock-coat was buttoned up to the chin. He begged Scribe's pardon for venturing to call upon a gentleman with whom he was unacquainted, especially as he, who had no claim whatsoever upon him (Scribe), came to ask for money. He was goaded by necessity to discard all scruples; implicated in the insurrection, in danger of imprisonment and prosecution, his only hope of safety was flight across the frontier; the price of a ticket in the diligence was \$12. He besought Scribe to give them to him. Scribe opened his secretary, where several bags of silver were visible (there was neither gold nor paper in France in those days), gave the stranger \$20, spoke kindly to him, gave him judicious advice and bade him

God speed! That gift saved Scribe's life. His visitor (whose story was false from beginning to end) had a blood-stained dagger in his breast-pocket; was the notorious assassin Lacenaire, and confessed afterward that had he met with denial, he would have used his knife. Scribe never knew who his visitor was, had forgotten the incident until three years afterward, when he received this letter dated "Conciergerie, 24 December, 1835." The Conciergerie is one of the prisons in the Palace of Justice. The letter ran:

"You are the only person, I repeat, you are *the only* person to whom I feel I owe gratitude. Had I met several men like you, they would have reconciled me to the human race and the dagger would have fallen from my hands."

Lacenaire, who had been a school-fellow of Jules Janin and of several other eminent contemporaries, was, between arrest and execution, the lion of Paris. His autograph was eagerly sought by the highest people. His letter to Scribe made an immense noise. Paris is the city of beggars in broadcloth and in silk. Baron James de Rothschild used to say that if he were to grant all the applications for money made to him, he would be a beggar in thirty days. No sooner was it known that Scribe was one of those rare men who give money and ask no questions, than every post poured an avalanche of letters on him. He, of course, took no notice of them. He received a second letter from a contemptible fellow who, while pretending to be a literary man, drew most of his revenue from begging letters. He addressed Scribe in the most insolent manner and ended his impertinence with:

"What! you gave money to a Lacenaire whom you did not know, and you refuse money to me, whom you do know!"

The knave's insolence vexed Scribe, and he instantly replied:

"Sir, the very reason why I gave to Lacenaire was because I did not know him; and the very reason why I refuse to give money to you is because I do know you."

Scribe's mother destined him for the bar. He entered an attorney's office to master the intricacies of practice. The barbarous terms and the tedious tautology of the law grated harshly on ears which even then heard the still distant jingle of song; the attorney dismissed him, and branded

him "one who was good for nothing." His mother died before this dismissal. Had she lived he might have persevered in legal studies, for he was tenderly attached to her and would not have given her pain. His guardian had less influence. Scribe deserted the law school to play truant in Montmorency Woods by day and in theaters by night.

Scribe's most intimate friends in St. Barbe College were Casimir and Germain Delavigne, brothers who were destined to attain literary reputation. Casimir Delavigne was for years thought to be the greatest French poet. His nimbus paled in the effulgence which surrounded Lamartine, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset; but his "Louis XI." and "Les Enfants d'Édouard" still keep the stage, and the former has its place on the English, German, Hungarian and Italian stages. Germain Delavigne was Scribe's literary partner in many pieces and especially in opera-books. They began to write plays while they were at college. They wrote a play soon after they quitted St. Barbe. At that day Monsieur Dupin was the most popular vaudeville writer. Scribe and Germain Delavigne took their piece partly to get his advice and partly that his influence might open the doors of the Vaudeville to them. He received them kindly, listened to their piece, made suggestions and introduced them to the manager of the Vaudeville. The second of September, 1811, a piece by Scribe was for the first time played. It was brought out by the manager of the Vaudeville. It was a harlequinade entitled "Les Dervis," and it was damned. Monsieur Dupin said to them: "Never mind those hisses. They never yet killed anybody. Set to work—work hard. You'll soon get accustomed to the foot-lights—sooner than I was and with fewer hisses than were my lot." Scribe and Germain Delavigne—I wont say nothing discouraged, but with stout hearts—set to work again. Again their piece fell. They set to work a third time. Damned. A fourth time. Damned again. Monsieur Dupin said to them:

"May be the Vaudeville is unlucky for you. Try another theater. Suppose we all three try our luck at the Variétés?"

"Agreed."

"Have you thought of any subject?"

"Yes. We have selected 'Le Bachelier de Salamanque' as the subject of our next piece."

"That's charming. Write the piece, then

bring it to me and we will together re-write it."

Proud of the honor of writing with Monsieur Dupin, they took especial pains with "Le Bachelier de Salamanque." It was nevertheless also damned. Monsieur Dupin exclaimed:

"This is really too bad! One of you must be born under an unlucky star. We must throw him overboard."

Germain Delavigne, who has all his life long (for I think he is still alive) been modest and retiring, replied:

"I dare say 'tis I. I withdraw."

Dupin and Scribe having tossed Jonah into the sea, wrote "Barbanera, ou les Bossus" and carried it to the Vaudeville. It was damned with enthusiasm. The hisses had not ceased when Dupin said to Scribe:

"It is *you* who were born under an unlucky star! Adieu!"

Scribe certainly, under these circumstances, was shocked by such a bucket of cold water poured on him. He was not daunted. He soon afterward gave Guénée, a composer, a comedy-opera, "La Rédigote et la Perruque." The public found the frock-coat an ill fit, or the wig ill made.

A few days after the failure of this comedy-opera Scribe met Delestre Poirson, a dramatist, the author of several novels which, in their day, had vogue, but who, may be, is more widely and will be longer known as a successful manager of the Gymnase Théâtre than as a literary man. Scribe said to him:

"I now understand the causes of my failures. I have deserved all of those hisses. I kept in the old ruts of the dramatic highway. I copied the playwrights, but I had neither their skill nor their adroitness. If I am to be successful—and I mean to be successful—I must make in vaudevilles the resolution which Picard made in comedies. As he drove from the stage the Frontin, the Valère, the Sganarelle of the old comedies and introduced in their places his contemporaries, so I mean to expel from the stage the meaningless characters now on it and to put there my contemporaries; the officers of the empire, bankers, lawyers, notaries, public functionaries, shop-keepers, the wives, the children of all these people."

Delestre Poirson replied:

"An excellent idea! Take care you don't forget the National Guards. There is no deeper mine of amusement."

"You are right. Let our next play have them for its subject."

"Agreed."

When this conversation took place Scribe and Delestre Poirson had in rehearsal "L' Auberge, ou les Brigands sans le savoir," their joint production. It was favorably received; but their next piece played under the title, "Une Nuit de Corps Garde" was received with enthusiasm. The second night it was brought out under its original title, "Une Nuit de la Garde Nationale," which had been suppressed lest the part of National Guard, Monsieur Pigeon, might give offense to those militia men. So far from giving offense, the play, this part, Scribe, instantly became popular. Every National Guard made it a point of duty to go to see *his* play. A dry-goods shop was opened soon afterward and took for its sign, "Monsieur Pigeon"; over this legend was a life-sized picture of a National Guard. This shop and sign disappeared from Paris only five or six years since. The lease expired. Rent was increased. No dry-goods man thought he could pay so much money. An iron monger now tenants it. The young men employed in the shop were constantly called "Monsieur Pigeon;" it annoyed them very much, especially as the epithet dimpled with smiles every cheek that heard it, and they were many in the public balls. There used to be a red-headed assistant of this shop who was fond of dancing and a constant frequenter of Valentino and Mabilles. When he appeared you might have heard from a dozen lips:

"*Tiens!* Monsieur Pigeon!" a titter from twice as many lips again, which made his cheeks as high colored as his hair.

Scribe's career dates from "Une Nuit de la Garde Nationale." All of his pieces were successful. All of the dramatists—Dupin at their head—were eager to become his partners. The Vaudeville and the Variétés could not have too many of his pieces. Scribe made a revolution, not only on the stage, but in the theaters' treasury. When Scribe began to write for the stage, managers bought plays from authors, giving rarely more than a mere mess of pottage for the whole copyright. Authors starved. Managers grew rich. This deplorable system is still in vigor in the world of French publishers. French authors (there are exceptions, rich authors, who are out of the power of publishers) commonly sell the whole copyright of their books, receiving cash when the manuscript is accepted. The younger

Dumas sold the manuscript of "La Dame aux Camélias" for sixty dollars. Poor Mürger got only twenty dollars for "La Vie de Bohème." More than twenty editions of it have been published; it is still in demand. Until 1855 or '56 the majority of authors got nothing from the publishers of their plays. There was only one publisher who issued plays. He gave nothing to unknown dramatists. They were glad to give him their manuscript, partly to enjoy the pleasure all authors, and especially all young authors, find in seeing their works in print, and partly because printed plays were brought out on the provincial stages, and yielded some money to the author. This, however, was not much. The younger Dumas said, a few years after "La Dame aux Camélias" had been brought out, that he had never received more than twenty-five dollars in any one year from the provincial theaters which had played it. How changed all these things are! Now few authors will consent to have their pieces printed. They sell manuscript copies to provincial managers, and have sometimes organized companies to carry the play from provincial theater to provincial theater, that they (the authors) may pocket the lion's share—to which, of a truth, they are justly entitled. When Scribe began his career, dramatists got never more than six dollars for the copyright of a play; few more than five; the majority received three dollars and sixty cents. In 1817 Scribe organized the Dramatic Authors' Association, a powerful league of dramatists against managers, which obliges the latter to pay a given per centum for copyright on the gross receipts. Like all human devices it has, with its great advantages, serious disadvantages. It provides that a given per centum shall be paid when one author is on the play-bill, and a less per centum when there are two authors on the play-bill. The consequences are that no author will write less than a five-act piece, or, if he does, he will insist that no pieces but his own be played. This Messrs. Meilhac and Halévy always do; they have written pieces in one, and in two, acts; but when the latter are brought out, the whole bill is filled with pieces by these authors. Nobody writes those short pieces in one act which were the great school of dramatists, where they learned their difficult art. Managers readily accepted these short pieces, easily learned, still more easily put on the stage, and whose failure was a matter of no sort of consequence, except to the author, and even his bruises soon disappeared.

When obscurity's imperfect and hazardous work costs as much money, as many rehearsals, and as much other preparation as fame's skilled, sure work, managers wont hesitate to prefer the latter; and as fame is ever preceded by long obscurity, it has become a great deal harder than ever for the former to pierce the clouds which hide its brightness. The Dramatic Artists' Association has in this way militated against dramatic art. It has increased the obstacles in the struggling dramatist's path; it has made the successful dramatist more prosperous.

The malicious say that Scribe made a revolution in the pit, as well as in the treasury and on the stage. He organized applause as it had never before been organized. He had, about 1818, an intimate friend named Fournier. They lodged together for some years. Fournier was busy only during office hours; when released from his ministry he was at a loss to kill time. Scribe threw open the theaters to him, and made him a man of importance by giving him fifty or sixty theater tickets whenever the former brought out a new play. Fournier's friends were eager applauders, for he kept eye on them, and they wanted to come to the theater again on the same easy terms of admittance. The public readily chimed in with them, for they were not looked upon with the suspicion which always muffles the applause of the hireling enthusiasts. This was no new thing. It is human nature. Every Johnson has his Boswell; every Webster, his Peter Harvey.

In 1820, Delestre Poirson and Cerfbeer built and opened a theater, which was destined to have great influence on the destinies of the French drama. It was to be the home of true modern comedy; to bring and keep in vogue plays above the slight vaudevilles of the Variétés and Vaudeville, and free from the conventional tone and characters of the French comedy. The new theater was at first called the Théâtre de Madame, in honor of Duchess de Berry, who took it under her patronage and made it the most fashionable theater of Paris. The revolution of 1830 made it impossible for the theater to retain this unpopular name. The theater became the Gymnase. Delestre Poirson no sooner assumed management of this theater than he determined, not only to attach Scribe to it, but to secure the monopoly of his talents for the Gymnase. His plan was ingenious. He persuaded Scribe to enter into contract to give the Gymnase twelve plays annually for twelve years, and



during this period of time to give no play to any theater in Paris; furthermore, never in the course of his life to allow any secondary theater (such as the Vaudeville, the Variétés) to bring out one of his pieces; liberty was reserved Scribe to give the Gymnase no new piece (if he so pleased) after the expiration of these twelve years. Scribe was to receive for the faithful execution of this contract his copyright on every play brought out at the Gymnase, and from and after the end of twelve years he was to receive a life annuity of \$1,200. Scribe fulfilled his contract as faithfully as he fulfilled all of his engagements; he usually gave more than twelve pieces a year, and once gave eighteen plays to the Gymnase in the course of a twelvemonth. Scribe liked this mode of remuneration (he received these \$1,200 a year until the day of his death), and when the managers of the Opéra Comique, after the great success of his comedy-opera, "La Neige," offered him a life annuity of \$1,200 for the privilege of playing all of the pieces anterior to this work, he at once accepted the proposal. The Dramatic Authors' Association begged Scribe to annul this agreement, which, they asserted, militated against dramatic authors' interests. Scribe instantly tore it up; although he, better than anybody else, knew the protest was dictated solely by jealousy. Rossini enjoyed a similar annuity from the Grand Opéra, and Auber received the same life annuity from the Grand Opéra, and from the Opéra Comique.

Scribe gave to the Gymnase more than a hundred and fifty pieces, between 1820 and 1837, when, from some cause or another, he ceased to write for this theater, and brought no play on there for eleven years. Scribe had no sooner begun to write for the Gymnase than he asked his old friend Germain Delavigne to join him. You know how they had parted. They had none the less continued to be warm friends. When Scribe agreed to write "Une Nuit de la Garde Nationale" with Delestre Poirson, he stipulated that Germain Delavigne should complete the triumvirate. When Scribe asked him to join them, he replied: "No, I have given up the stage. I have neither your perseverance, nor your stout heart. Go on without me." When Scribe renewed his request he had acquired an authority which made the success of any play by him certain; so Germain Delavigne gladly accepted Scribe's offer, and they wrote applauded plays together. Here let me

mention that Scribe rendered the greatest assistance to Casimir Delavigne in putting "Louis XI." and "Les Enfants d'Édouard" on the stage. Perhaps it is not too much to say that if they still hold their old places in dramatic literature they owe it to Scribe.

Scribe has been censured with great acrimony for this literary co-partnership. His most malignant censors are people with whom he refused to work. Their venom was equaled by the insolent attacks he met in the French Academy. The day of his reception one Academician said, so that Scribe should hear:

"We want no stock-brokers here."

Stock-brokers are numerous, but united as one corporation, just as Scribe and his literary partners were. Another Academician said:

"That fellow ought not to have a chair; give him a bench, that he may seat all of his partners with him."

Scribe's most indignant detractors in the French Academy were much more indebted to literary partnership than he himself. Blot in Villemain's works the contributions of Addison, Chatham, Burke and the Fathers, what would remain? Are not all the authorities the historian ransacks his partners? Are no traces of Tacitus and Juvenal to be found in Gibbon's pages? Surely, if there ever was an original author, Shakspeare is the man. Nevertheless all his plays are built on some story read in the "Palace of Pleasure" or some chronicle. Here I touch on the very essential elements of dramatic writing which make partnership more excusable (if, indeed, excuse be necessary) in this branch of literature than in any other. No man has yet lived who had ideas, plot, power to put ideas on legs, gift of the language suited to the stage. Now all of these possessions are conditions precedent to dramatic success. Byron, Scott had, Tennyson has, ideas unnumbered; but not one other condition precedent to dramatic success. Mrs. Centlivre had no ideas, but she had all the other gifts of the dramatist. Read Scott's correspondence with Terry, and imagine that Sir Walter, instead of falling into the hands of that mere playwright (and a bungler at that), had found a Scribe for a partner! What noble additions our dramatic literature would have possessed! Would anybody have carped at the partnership to which we owe immortal plays? These (call them secondary gifts, if the qualification soothes conscience) cannot be

acquired by labor. The playwright must be born playwright, just as necessarily as the Ethiopian must be born black. George Sand is a remarkable instance of the truth of this remark. She was passionately fond of the theater, and of everything and everybody connected with it. She always had actors or actresses with her. When she was in Paris she spent every night at the theater. While at Nohant there was a play in which she bore a part, always after dinner. She wrote plays innumerable for this private theater. She was extremely ambitious to shine as a dramatist. Nevertheless, she could not build a plot; she could not put an idea on its legs; she could not speak the language of the stage. August Maquet is another striking example of the truth of that remark. He witnessed play after play, from inception to fall of curtain. He saw a singularly gifted dramatist, the elder Dumas, write plays founded on ideas which he (Maquet) suggested; he was with Dumas when the latter dramatized novels which they together had written; he attended rehearsal after rehearsal and became familiar with the arduous labors by which a play gradually becomes suited to the fierce glare of the foot-lights, and this intimacy lasted some twenty or twenty-five years; nevertheless, to this day Maquet does not know even whether to make his personages enter from back, or from right, or from left (a matter of great importance; everything connected with a play's performance is a matter of great importance), and not one of the plays he alone has written has been successful. He, like many another author, is, without his partner, as zero without a numeral. This literary partnership is by no means peculiar to France. In all of Bulwer-Lytton's plays there were three partners; one who furnished ideas and plot, one who put the ideas on legs, one gifted with language. In the "Lady of Lyons," ideas and plot were supplied by the "Bellows-mender," a French play; Macready put the ideas on legs; Bulwer supplied the language. In "Richelieu," ideas and plot were supplied by Alfred de Vigny's novel, "Cinq Mars." Macready put the ideas on legs; Bulwer supplied the language. A discussion has recently been opened upon the reasons which deterred Dickens from attempting to win success on the stage. Had he made the attempt he must have leaned on somebody's arm; for dramatic sense he had none. His works, even as novels, are singularly faulty in construction, in plot.

It is notorious that Fechter fitted "No Thoroughfare" for the stage; and yet, despite all of Fechter's acquaintance with the theater (which he demonstrated by the manner in which he placed "Le Tartuffe" and "Hamlet" on the stage), this piece is most unsatisfactory when seen by foot-lights; for Dickens had no dramatic sense whatsoever. The whole tendency of his mind to caricature, to the grotesque, was the intellectual turn most diametrically opposed to the dramatist's talents. Literary partnership was known in England before our day:

"I remember when I finished 'The Tender Husband,' I told him [Addison] there was nothing I so ardently wished as that we might, some time or other, publish a work written by us both. \* \* \* When the play above mentioned was last acted, there were so many applauded strokes in it which I had from the same hand, that I thought very meanly of myself that I have never publicly acknowledged them." (Steele, "Spectator," No. 555.)

You see that Scribe did not introduce literary partnership to dramatic literature, and that the practice is not as blamable as some purists of art would have us believe. Moreover, it is a mistake to look upon Scribe as merely a member, a very active member, of a literary partnership. Scribe's very best pieces of every sort—his best vaudevilles, his best grand operas, his best comedy-operas, his best comedies, the works by him which are revived time and again, which have for thirty years delighted generation after generation of play-goers, which are still as free from signs of age as they were the night they were first played—Scribe's very best pieces of every sort are the pieces in which he had no partner. Again, at least one-third of all the plays in which he had a share were written by himself alone. Stress is laid on these two points to show the immense and varied talents of Scribe, his rare dramatic gifts (he had ideas, plot, power to put ideas on legs, possession of the language suited to the stage—gifts which are so rare that, as I have said above, no other modern writer has had them all), and the immense height he is above the mere playwright. Discard from his works all pieces written in partnership; there would still remain a collection of plays such as few other dramatists have left. Look at them when you hear jibbers sneer: "Scribe might have left works: he left only gold." Ask for his gold in five-and-twenty years. You will not find one louis d'or of it. Ask for his works in a hundred years.

The New Zealander himself will be applauding his comedies and Samoans will be delighted by his operas. Posterity will say: Scribe left no gold, he left only works.

Literary partnership with Scribe was no such mere tradesmen's division of labor as it often is. He treated his partners after the subtler fashion of the trees, which drink in juices from cloud, air, ground,—and transform them into fruit through so many processes that their originals are forgotten. Every play which bears Scribe's name was, in its definite form, written by Scribe from beginning to end. He never, under any circumstances, would consent that his name should appear as author of a piece unless he had written it. At the monthly dinner of the standing committee of the Dramatic Authors' Association, some twenty or twenty-five years ago, a young vaudeville writer vehemently attacked Scribe, saying, among other things:

"He has, it is true, brought out three hundred pieces under his name; but I should like to know how many of them he himself has written. Is it not notorious that his share in them is absolutely insignificant; his name is his largest contribution; he is popular; his name gives success, just as the label which bears the name of a celebrated vineyard gives vogue to poor wine; he has been astute enough to admit none but adroit, experienced authors in partnership, and he engrosses all their gifts, all their fame, and the best part of their money, while he contributes next to nothing—the brand Scribe & Co."

Mons. Carmouche was present, and instantly replied:

"You are mistaken every way. I have written twelve or fifteen vaudevilles with Scribe, and I pledge you my word of honor there is not in all of those pieces one syllable by me."

There were at the dinner two or three other dramatists who had written plays with Scribe. They confirmed Mons. Carmouche's declaration.

One day Dupin brought Scribe a new piece. The latter read it and thought it detestable; still there was the germ of a good play in it. It interested him, and he worked rapidly. It was in two acts. He made it a one-act piece, added a character, changed the other characters entirely, without saying anything to Dupin, and put it in rehearsal. In three weeks it was ready for performance. The evening it was to be brought out he invited Dupin

to dinner. As they took seats at table, he said:

"Let us lose no time, my dear fellow, for I want you to go with me to the Gymnase. I have a ground-floor box, the front seats of which have been taken, so that, screened by those spectators, we shall be unseen."

Dupin exclaimed:

"Oh! is 'Michel et Christine' by you?"

"Yes."

"All alone?"

"No; there are two of us."

"Who is the other?"

"My dear fellow, let us lose no time. It is already late; the play begins early."

Dinner was merrily dispatched. They reached the Gymnase in time. The curtain soon rose. At the close of the third scene, Dupin said to Scribe:

"My dear fellow, what a charming play you have written. 'Pon my word, you have put on the stage no better characters than that soldier and that bar-maid. How fascinating they are!"

As the play went on, Dupin's delight continued to increase, and he warmly expressed it to Scribe, who archly smiled, and at last said:

"Surely you now know who wrote the piece with me?"

"I have not the remotest idea. But, I beg of you, silence. I don't want to lose one word of the piece. It is charming!"

Scribe smiled. Presently Dupin turned to him and asked:

"Do you remember the piece I carried you three weeks since? Now it seems to me this scene is somewhat like the second act of the piece I left with you. Have you read it? Do you agree with me?"

Scribe answered:

"Oh! if you think there is the least plagiarism, we will rewrite that scene."

"Heaven forbid! Men continually hit upon the same ideas. The collisions of life are constantly striking similar sparks from different flints. But you have not yet told me the name of your partner."

"Sh—! the curtain is about to fall. We shall hear his name."

Presently the curtain came down amid applause which shook the theater to its foundations. The curtain rose. The stage manager came forward to announce the authors. Dupin bent forward in eager attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the piece we have had the honor to play before you is by Messrs. Scribe and—Dupin."

The next instant Dupin held Scribe in his arms and embraced him. Scribe exclaimed:

"Unnatural father! does not recognize even his own flesh and blood!"

Dupin rejoined:

"I should like to know who could recognize his children when they are changed in the nurse's arms!"

This was Scribe's partnership; he made the piece his own.

The rubs of play-writing are to transform narration into action, to make the characters shun talk and act, and—you have seen a billiard-player so strike his ball as to drive it forward and make it spin back to the place it left? Well, the dramatist must do the same thing with his action. During half the plot it must go forward in such a manner as to make the spectators know it can never come back; this effect the dramatist attains by heaping many and innumerable obstacles in the way of its return. During the rest of the play, the action comes back to the point of departure, despite every obstacle in its path. Analyze any play, you will find this to be the art. Shakspeare's plays are built by a different method. They constantly carry the spectator forward till the catastrophe is reached. The mysteries were still popular in Shakspeare's day, and their rude art (they were merely *tableaux vivants*) was all the dramatic art known. Hence there is in Shakspeare's plays no plot, technically speaking. Hence they are less popular than pieces by a mere playwright who is master of his trade.

Scribe not only excelled in making his characters act and in skillful build of plot, but he never rested satisfied until he had made each piece he brought out as near perfection in these particulars as possible. During rehearsals he was all attention; not the most transient play of feature on supernumeraries' or firemen's faces escaped him. He would try to divine its meaning; if it escaped him, he would ask it in such a way it was never refused. His invariable reply to suggestions of omission was, "Cut! cut! Words blotted are never hissed." Nobody better understood the meaning of the exclamations by which stage people commonly express their ideas. Actors themselves are rarely able to clothe their thoughts in words. Here is a singular example:

When Ernest Legouvé brought out "Louise de Lignerolles," he gave the leading part to Mlle. Mars. In the third act Louise surprises her husband in improper company.

A most violent scene ensues between them, which ends by a reconciliation which is all the tenderer from the preceding violence. Louise exclaims, "I fear nothing; all is forgotten; we are still in our honeymoon." At this word Mlle. Mars stopped abruptly, and in her accustomed grating, harsh, imperious voice (for all the more her stage voice was melodious music, was her ordinary voice disagreeable), she exclaimed:

"I shall not use any such expression."

"Pray why not, madam?" Legouvé asked.

"Because it is detestable."

"I really cannot agree with you. Consider the scene. Louise expresses all her confidence in the repentance and assurances of her husband; all the recent painful incidents of their married life have been banished from her mind; their wedded career is to begin again, from the honeymoon."

"Still, I shall not use any such expression. You must give me another."

"What?"

"Why, nothing is easier. I want to say—Tra la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!"

Legouvé was puzzled enough to find what she was driving at. He could get nothing else from her. At last he said to himself, "She shows me, by that elementary music with four similar notes, the rhythm and harmony she wants in the phrase that she may adequately express her delight and love." He wrote: "I forget all—I know nothing. Life begins; you for the first time say, 'I love thee!'" When he read it to Mlle. Mars, she exclaimed, "That's just what I wanted!"

It was wonderful to see how rapidly Scribe, in a like manner, understood advice, though it was given in the most unintelligible manner.

Just as Scribe was docile to the suggestions of others, so he exacted equal docility to his own wishes, especially from actors. At rehearsals he was a rigid disciplinarian. He had no confidence in "inspiration." He insisted that actors should work; should know exactly what they were going to do; the very gesture, look, tone, they would use; in fine, that they should be masters of their art, and by the same method which had given him mastership in his art—honest, hard work. One day Scribe was induced to give a brilliant part in a new comedy to a young actor, who was thought to be of great promise. But when older actors told him the traditions of the stage, he turned on them with anger and indignation. "Do

you think I am going to be a slave to your conventionalities? Do you imagine me a supple-jack, whose strings are to be pulled by old fools in their graves?"

When he was asked:

"But at least be good enough to tell us where you will stand?"

"I myself have not the least idea. I shall rely upon the inspiration of the moment. It will point out to me the best place. There I shall stand. Do you suppose for one single instant that, when Hamlet goes to speak to Polonius, that he knows beforehand whether he will stand at Polonius's right or left hand? When Macbeth enters to meet the witches, what matters it whether he enters this side or that side, whether he stands here or there, whether he leaves yonder or where I stand? My genius will guide me, not your musty, mechanical rules."

Scribe was patient for a fortnight. He then asked the young actor to put aside the manuscript and to rehearse as his comrades were doing, that he might criticise the manner in which he (the young actor) conceived his part. The young actor replied:

"Sir, I accept criticisms from nobody. I listen to no man's suggestions. I play according to my own inspiration"—whereupon Scribe withdrew the part from him.

Nothing annoyed Scribe more than the ignorance of actors. It was with the utmost difficulty that he could make them read the whole play in which they were to appear. They would read their part—nothing more. Incredible anecdotes are told of the ignorance of French actors. Imagine that Washington Irving has assembled around him, at Tarrytown, Edwin Forrest, Fenimore Cooper, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Washington Allston, W. C. Bryant. Imagine that one morning, about an hour after breakfast, Forrest enters the drawing-room, holding in his hand a scrap of waste paper. He is all enthusiasm, as he says:

"What talents there are on earth, and which disappear without attracting attention! Here I have just accidentally found a leaf from a book, which evidently fell still-born from the press, for it is wretchedly printed, and has been sold as waste paper. Yet it contains these lines, which really are quite good poetry. There is something vigorous in these verses. The scene is this. It seems to be laid in Scotland. The character is named McBeth. You smile? Is that the name of the author? Or has the piece signally failed? Laugh on, laugh on! But just listen to these lines." And imagine

Forrest declaiming as despised, unknown verses, the lines beginning,

"Is this a dagger that I see before me?"

and hearing, as soon as the guests are able to restrain their laughter, that the lines are from one of Shakspeare's most famous plays! This is just what happened to Lafontaine, the celebrated actor. George Sand had assembled around her at Nohant just as brilliant a company as I have imagined gathered around Washington Irving. Lafontaine entered the drawing-room under the circumstances mentioned, holding a leaf which contained Camille's famous imprecations in Corneille's "Horace," and held language almost identical with that which I have put into Forrest's mouth!

While Rachel was rehearsing Madame de Girardin's "Cleopatra," the former positively refused to appear in the part unless the authoress would agree to give the lover some name other than Antony, "which," said the actress, "is too horribly vulgar." Rachel was obstinate in her refusal until she was shown that Madame de Girardin had no choice.

Scribe thought for some time that Rachel was an actress after his heart. Nobody knew better than Rachel the importance of study and the value of long, patient rehearsals, which enable an actor to play a part as he conceives it, to place it before the public with all those inflections of the voice, play of physiognomy, gestures, attitudes, movements, pauses, which enchant an audience; they see nothing in an actor but his execution. Rachel was a slow worker. She was absolutely dependent upon others to comprehend, to conceive her parts. It was necessary with her to begin with the most striking "hit" of the piece, and to show how it was to be made. Once taught, she would make the hit in a manner which far surpassed her teacher's ideal. Give her nickel, she returned you gold. Strange as this may seem, it is a very common phenomenon in art. We all know how poor old Cartlitch taught Maggie Mitchell to make some of her best "hits," which he himself could never execute, for Cartlitch's voice was thick and of narrow compass, and he was cold, heavy, ungainly. We constantly see music teachers, and especially singing masters, who cannot decently execute a single piece, who yet teach pupils to play or sing most brilliantly. Rachel never left anything to inspiration. When she was to play her most familiar part, Phèdre for instance, she

always went over the part in the morning of the evening she was to appear, with her old master, Samson, and if she failed in any passage she would go over it again and again until she was mistress of it. She would get Samson to come to her dressing-room in the theater to recall some intonations, which she feared might escape, and sometimes would even get him to stand in the wings that he might, just before she went on the stage, repeat these intonations to her. Rachel's costumes, even the Grecian and Roman dress which she wore with such grace and majesty, were always arranged in those harmonious folds, which were so justly admired, by her dressing maid and kept in position by pins and stitches, so that nothing could disarrange them. Rachel never left anything to accident.

How was it that Scribe should have written nothing for Mlle. Rachel before 1849? Surely the dramatist who had written "Robert le Diable," "Les Huguenots," "Masaniello," "La Juive," could readily have built some tragedy suited to Rachel's somber genius. Scribe's modesty prevented him. He was a singularly modest man. When the Théâtre Scribe was inaugurated at Turin, he was begged to honor the ceremony with his presence. He declined from sheer modesty. He would never have written for Rachel had not the French Comedy asked him. It was not until 1848 that the request was preferred. Scribe hesitated to accept the invitation. He replied: "I dare not. It seems to me almost impious to put prose, and especially my prose, in that mouth accustomed to speak nothing but Racine's and Corneille's lines." It was Monsieur Ernest Legouvé who overcame Scribe's scruples. He said to Scribe:

"You forget Talma played 'The Stranger.' Mlle. Rachel has grace, irony, admirable diction, as well as the sterner gifts of tragedy. Put in a different frame, lay at a distant day all the gifts of Mlle. Rachel. The public will think she has undergone a metamorphosis; 'twill be but a change of costume."

Scribe replied: "Very well, would you seek the subject of a piece and write it with me?" Monsieur Legouvé consented. He read in memoirs of the last century that one evening Adrienne Lecouvreur, while playing Phèdre, went up to the stage-box where her rival, Duchess de Bouillon, was seated, and riveting her eyes on the Duchess, fiercely repeated the terrible lines of her part (now familiar even to play-goers who have never seen "Phèdre").

He went to Scribe and told him the subject he had found. Scribe threw his arms around Monsieur Legouvé, kissed both cheeks and exclaimed: "A hundred performances of \$1,200 each!" They at once wrote the play, now so well known over the whole civilized world, "Adrienne Lecouvreur." They had just finished it when the Revolution of February, 1848, occurred (by which Scribe lost \$300,000). A new manager was placed in the French Comedy. He was full of those sounding, empty phrases with which a certain class of Frenchmen delight themselves. He refused to allow "Adrienne Lecouvreur" to be played. The Republic wanted high art. France had enough of Scribe's legerdemain. Scribe's dramatic hocus-pocus was unworthy of Rachel. Another Revolution occurred. This manager disappeared; and when quieter times came "Adrienne Lecouvreur" was played.

Successful as Rachel was in that piece (she had success of costumes, success of beauty, and success of impersonation), she appeared in only one other play by Scribe. Had she lived, she probably would never have been offered another part by him. He deeply felt the failure of "La Czarine," and attributed it to her. He was at least partly right. Rachel was no fighter. She had no confidence in herself. She had no confidence in anybody, and yet, by a strange (but easily explained) anomaly, she was disturbed by the least hostile criticism, even by people beneath contempt. At rehearsal, she often was thrown into a panic. The night she first appeared in New York, she was so disturbed by the rustling of the leaves as the audience followed her, book in hand, that she came within an ace of falling into hysterics. The least incident put her out. Hence the care with which even her costume was secured against all disarrangement. Even at the height of her reputation, and when everybody who went to hear her was an enthusiastic applauder, she never could play unless all the hireling applauders were in their usual places in the pit. In vain the manager and actors told her that hundreds were nightly turned from the doors for want of seats; she insisted upon the presence of those mercenary applauders. How different she was from her great rival, Ristori! Ristori always insisted that there should be none of these hirelings in the theater when she played. She said: "I am not only irritated by their horrible, little, mechanical noise, but they hide the public from me. I

cannot follow the public feeling. Now, it is the public I want to see. It is the public with whom I would wrestle. If the public be hostile, all the better, the fight will be warmer. If the public hiss me, all the worse. I shall probably have merited those hisses. But then, on the other hand, if I win their applause, I shall be able to say to myself: "That bravo is honestly and entirely mine."

Nothing disconcerted Ristori, and she was full of pluck. She fought for author, for play, for self, all the more ardently if the audience was hostile, till the curtain fell. The second performance of a piece in Paris is quite as dangerous, if not more dangerous, than the first. If the audience of the first night be composed of critics, rivals, friends and fashionable people, and be most sensitive, the theater is filled the second night with people who have bought their seats (the majority of tickets issued the first night are free tickets), who want the worth of their money, who come to be amused, and are ready for any sort of "fun." They are fashionable people, who have, nevertheless, no interest in the dramatic world sufficient to secure seats the first night. They are frivolous and merciless. This incident occurred during the second performance of "Medea" in Paris. In the second act, Medea (Madame Ristori), after the scene with Jason, fell upon a seat, frantic with anger and grief. Her two children make their appearance, they are terrified, and, still at a distance, call their mother. As they entered, the eldest child trod on the heel of the youngest and tore off half his sandal. The youngest came hobbling forward, dragging behind him the torn moiety of his sandal. Had the audience seen him, there would have been an end of Medea for that night. Laughter would have driven away tears. That sight would have seemed ludicrous anywhere; it is irresistibly ludicrous in Paris, for that is just the way the funny fellow of "Le Courier de Lyon"\* makes his appearance. Had Rachel been Medea, she would have gone into hysterics. Ristori heard and saw the accident. Instantly she changed the settled pantomime; it required her to sit and let her children come up to her; instead of doing so, she rose, ran to them, snatched up the youngest child, put it in her arms, threw her mantle on its feet, returned to her seat with the child on her

breast, sat with the child in her lap, quietly broke both sandals and threw them under the seat. Nobody saw the accident or suspected what she had done. She did all these things without retarding the progress of the scene, without omitting one word of her part, without betraying the least agitation, or embarrassment, without ceasing those tears, those sobs which filled the audience with terror and pity. While Rachel depended on her dressing-maid for the arrangement of her costume, Ristori would take a large cloth, throw it over her shoulders and drape it during the play as suited best with her present passion, now letting it trail behind her with queenly sweep, then wrapping it around her like the cloak of a nun, or rolling it around her head like the veil which hides a broken heart and tear-scalded eyes. How admirably Guizot portrayed the characteristics of both actresses, when he said: "One is the *beau ideal* aristocratic tragic actress; the other is the *beau ideal* democratic actress." Nature oftentimes jeers man's vanity; the *beau ideal* aristocratic tragic actress was born in the kennel.

Again, Rachel excused her lukewarm success in Scribe's and other modern plays, by the peculiarities of her talents. They were great; but they were limited. Her voice had irresistible notes; its compass was narrow. She said: "Impassioned gesticulation is something beyond my reach. I can execute everything that is expressed by physiognomy, by attitude, by a sober, measured gesture; I can go no further; where great, energetic pantomime begins, my talents end."

It is greatly to be regretted that Scribe did not begin earlier to write for Rachel. We all have seen Victorien Sardou write such plays as "Patrie!" and "La Haine" (a very able and vigorous play which failed for personal reasons). What might we not have hoped from Scribe, who was so immeasurably Sardou's superior in every respect? Just consider Scribe's lyric dramas. Meyerbeer and Auber owe no small part of their success to the "books" which Scribe gave them. "Le Pardon de Ploërmel" is striking evidence of this truth. As a musical composition, it is inferior to none of Meyerbeer's works. It cannot keep possession of the stage. "Robert le Diable," "Les Huguenots," and even "Le Prophète" (despite the austere tone which reigns in it), never tire the public. At the Boston Museum, "La Juive" has been played as a

\* This play scarcely quits the playbills, especially if there be any manager menaced with bankruptcy. It draws when nothing else will.

drama, and it had a very long run. Nothing would be easier than to put "Robert le Diable" and "Les Huguenots" on the dramatic stage. When "La Dame Blanche," "Fra Diavolo," "Le Châlet," "L'Ambassadrice," "Le Domino Noir," "Les Diamants de la Couronne," "Haidée," are played, people go as much to see the piece as to hear the music. People go to hear "Le Pardon de Ploërmel" despite the "book," which is uninteresting and tiresome. Rossini certainly never reckoned "Le Comte Ory" among his masterpieces, yet it is always heard with pleasure, while the absurd "books" of "Moïse" and "Guillaume Tell" greatly abate the pleasure the scores give. Scribe has rivals, has superiors in comedy; in "books" he has never had an equal. It is not easy to write a "book." Nothing connected with the stage is easy. I have sometimes wondered if it be not a great deal harder to write a "book" than to write a play. The "book" writer must make the subject and scenes of the work suit with the peculiar talents and turn of mind of the composer, and the strength or weakness, the good qualities and deficiencies of singers. All rhythms, all forms of verse, cannot be used indifferently; their choice is determined by the peculiarities of the composer and of the singers. Again, parts must be so distributed as to make the chorus an active, interesting, impassioned personage, all unimpersonal as it is. Then the plot must be so clear—not as a play is clear; the method is entirely different—that, were music and singers silent, still it would be understood from the mere pantomime. We all know that the sharpest ears catch only snatches of the best sung opera; hence it is all important that the eyes be able to keep the mind informed of the plot of the piece, whose melody alone reaches it through the ears. While clear to the eyes, the plot must be dramatic. How difficult it is to satisfy both of these exigencies may be understood when it is considered that a dramatic plot is fatal to a ballet. This is an axiom familiar to everybody who takes interest in the stage: a ballet with a dramatic plot will not "run." And yet a ballet must necessarily be intelligible to the eyes, for it is all pantomime. Again, it is absolutely necessary that the "book" of an opera give the scene-painter and costumer opportunity to change the landscape or the edifice (if both, all the better) and the costumes with each act. The eyes must be incessantly interested and pleased. They are the "book"-maker's

judges. Scribe fulfilled all these conditions as no other author has done. If space did not fail me, I should like to take one of Scribe's grand operas and one of his comedy operas, and, by analysis of them and by comparison with other operas, put in strong light his rare and wonderful talents.

Another very interesting study is to be found in Scribe's novels. He had subjects which he could not put on the stage; so he used them for novels. Why were they suited to novels and unsuited to the stage? The study is attractive, and throws great light on the exigencies of the theater. Two young authors thought Scribe mistaken, and put one of his novels on the stage. When they asked permission to use it, he told them it did not fit the foot-lights. They insisted. He yielded with a significant smile. Their piece failed. It is the fashion in France to decry Scribe's novels even more than his plays. I think them charming, though blotted by sensuality.

Scribe comparatively failed as a ballet-writer. He was so intensely dramatic, he saw everything only in its dramatic point of view that he made his ballets too dramatic.

It may easily be conceived that Scribe was passionately fond of the theater and of everything that touched it. He spent every night (while in town) at some theater, and was more attentive to the play than any college boy could be. He studied it, analyzed its perfections, remedied its deficiencies, strove to discover how it might be improved. He sometimes was present at the performance of his own plays which he had forgotten, and he delighted to see how he had built them. He was constantly appealed to by dramatists to help them out of embarrassment. The authors of "La Favorite" could not put the "book" on its legs; Scribe literally re-wrote the piece, and with characteristic generosity refused to have his name appear on the bills or to receive one cent of copyright. The dramatists who wrote "Les Mémoires du Diable" could not for the life of them end the piece. At last they asked Scribe to help them. He read the play, smiled when he reached the end, and said: "Ring the bell!" The authors huzzaed. When they read it to the actors their enthusiasm scarcely knew bounds. The piece ran a hundred nights consecutively, and has time and again been revived. That catastrophe is really a stroke of genius. Read the play, remember the embarrassment of the authors,



and judge for yourself. The author of "La Revolte au Séral" could neither make it stand, nor end it. They appealed to Scribe and he fitted it for the stage. Sixty or eighty other plays or "books" might be mentioned which Scribe in many instances entirely re-wrote without receiving honor or money; for he was a most obliging man, always ready to do a favor. He had, too, such talents for dramatic composition that it had no insuperable difficulties for him. He thought of nothing but the stage. He was always on the watch for subjects of plays, for characters, for phrases, for scenes. So he was silent in company, but all ears and eyes. Subjects of plays, and indeed of all works, are suggested by objects apparently the furthest from them. Douglas Jerrold saw schoolboys playing; "Just think, those happy, careless fellows may be doomed to some termagant for life," he said, and "Mrs. Caudle's Lectures" were found. Ludovic Halévy was at a friend's wedding. The priest ended the usual address to bride and groom: "So be ye united on earth until ye be united in heaven to be no more separated." He was all attention; "'united in heaven to be no more separated,'—why, she is a widow!"—he had but to write "Madame et Monsieur Cardinal." After Webster had made his great speech in the Senate in which occurs the poetical allusion to "God Save the Queen," an intimate friend, a brother Senator, asked:

"Webster, where in the world did you get that idea? Give me its history, wont you?"

Webster archly smiled as he replied:

"It was all extempore. It came to me on the spur of the moment."

"Oh, Webster! Don't tell me that—*me*, one of the *dramatis personæ*, here in the green-room of politics!"

Webster smiled again and answered:

"To tell you the truth: I was at Halifax some years since. I was walking on the sea-beach at sunset. As the sun went down behind the landward horizon, the evening gun was fired, the flag was struck and the band played 'God Save the Queen.' These circumstances as twilight came stealing over the waters made a deep impression on me. At first, for some time, my mind was but pensive; the thought that animated it floated formless and void upon it. The thought long haunted me. At last, by oft brooding, it took shape—the shape you saw to-day. I kept it by me to use when occasion came. In this debate the occasion

offered itself and I gave the thought to you."

The mind is man's master, not his slave, and reveals its wonders only at its own hours, in its own moods. The wise watch them.

Scribe, like all great workers, was an early riser. At five o'clock in winter, at four o'clock all the rest of the year, he was at his writing desk. He quitted it only at ten, when he laid down his pen. Then he went to the theater to superintend his own rehearsals, if he had a new piece forthcoming, or to talk with managers, actors or dramatists. Presently he visited, or he drove to Bois de Boulogne; after dinner he was again at the theater. He was punctuality itself in all of his engagements, be the subject visit or play. Managers and actors used to say: "The word of Scribe & Co. is as good as their bond." As soon as the lilacs bloomed he quitted Paris. His country residence to 1852 was at Meudon, which in those days was still country. Now his park is covered with villas, and the beautiful view of the river and the great plain beyond, which extends to Bois de Boulogne, exists no longer. Houses shut out the sight of the river; villages cover the plain. He bought a considerable estate near La Ferté-sous-Jouarre (a town which exports its famous burr-stones to every mill in the world), and when he sold his novel "Piquillo Alliaga" to "La Siècle," to be published in its *feuilleton*, he bought a forest with the \$12,000 given him for the novel, called the forest, Bois de Piquillo, and added it to his estate, Château de Séricourt. A public foot-path separated the forest from the rest of the estate. It was worth \$40. Séricourt village was \$800 in debt; Scribe gave \$800 for the path. He became elected a member of the village municipal council, put the village finances in excellent order, established a reserve fund, built school-houses, and organized benevolent societies. At his death there was not a pauper in the village. This country-seat was his hobby. He annually spent a good deal of money to improve it. He made three brooks in it, one he called la Rivière de Robert le Diable; the second la Rivière des Huguenots; the third, la Rivière de la Juive. An avenue he called after "La Sirène," another after "Le Prophète," and so on until each avenue, lane, lawn, bosky, bore the name of one of his pieces. Over his road-gate was a golden pen with this motto beneath: *Inde Fortuna et Libertas*—which he had long adopted for coat-of-arms and legend.

The last years of Scribe's life were disturbed by the systematic hostility of the majority of the newspapers, and of the younger literary men. Virulent efforts were made, and too often successfully, to drive his plays from the stage. He was accused of keeping young dramatists from rising. Actors rather shrank from accepting parts in his pieces, for most personal attacks were made on them wherever they appeared in Scribe's new plays. Again, a new school of dramatic literature was established, with Émile Augier, the younger Dumas, and Victorien Sardou for its masters. Their works *seemed* to have more body in them. Crinoline was worn on the stage as well as in society. I do not pretend that with Scribe, as with other magicians, "Waverley" was not followed, in time, by "Castle Dangerous." It is the law of life. I have, however, just read Scribe's last pieces, and I have found in them the same charms which make their predecessors so attractive; not one of the old spells had lost its power. Scribe had but to consider the place he held at the Grand Opéra and at the Opéra Comique, and the sale of his printed plays,

to disregard the noise and the numerous gnats, but gnats still, that annoyed his evening. By the way, it is interesting to note the prices fetched by his manuscripts at different periods of his career. "L'Auberge" was sold in 1812 for \$20, payable in books! "Le Comte Ory" brought, in 1816, \$80. "Valérie" commanded \$600 in 1822. He got \$900 for "Bertrand et Raton" in 1833. His price, ever afterward, was \$1,000 for a five-act piece. One of his last plays, "Les Doigts de Fée," was sold to Michel Lévy for this sum of money. The bill of sale was not written. The comedy was not as successful as had been expected. The morning after the first performance, Michel Lévy called on Scribe to pay the agreed price, and to get the manuscript. He put the money on Scribe's desk. Scribe pushed it away, saying: "No, I thought I had sold you a successful piece; I was mistaken. The bargain is at an end. Besides, you have not signed the bill of sale." Michel Lévy answered: "But hands were struck, and I insist that the bargain shall be executed. Here is the money. Give me the manuscript."

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### THE APPARITION OF JO MURCH.

It is no exaggeration to say that Jotham Murch was the worst boy in Old Man Potter's school. It was a town school, and the school committee of the selectmen were often at their wits' end to provide ways and means for the government of the unruly sons of fishermen,—boys who had no paternal discipline at home, as their fathers were usually at sea nine months in the year. There was Bob Weeks, for example, whose mother was such a termagant that her husband used to say that fishing on the Grand Banks was "comfortabler than stayin' to home." But even Mrs. Weeks could not wholly beat the spirit of mischief out of Bob, who put red pepper on the school stove, nailed down the lid of the master's desk, interposed with his fists whenever Old Man Potter attempted to ferule a particularly small boy, smoked a tobacco pipe under his desk, and did many other perverse and mischievous things. Then there was Bill Bridges, who set fire to the school-house; and Sam Snowman who stole the master's thermometer, and whose mother restored it with the tearful remark that she

didn't see "what possessed Sam to run off with that air pesky monument." It is not necessary that I should tell of Joe Triford, who made squirt-guns of the hollow metal pen-handles which were in vogue in those days, and who was a mysterious squirter of ink for four days before he was found out and handsomely "ropesended" on his bare legs by the enraged master. Most of these boys, and others like them, had been to sea at least one voyage, or had had one season's experience in fishing off St. George's, Chaleur Bay, or on the Grand Banks. It is said that the merchant marine and the United States navy draw, or used to draw, their best men from the ranks of these hardy New England fishermen. Perhaps so. But in my youth, at least, no more rough, quarrelsome and thoroughly heathenish young fellows ever infested a Christian community than were the majority of the fishermen's sons around Penobscot Bay.

Still, I will say that Jotham Murch was the worst boy in the master's school of Fairport. He was a fighter. He "sarsed" the big boys and then kept out of their way;