



"THE SNOW QUEEN."  
(Tableaux Vivants.)

on canvas - les  
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## Tableaux Vivants.



"THE GAMBLER'S WIFE."



SO much attention has lately been given to tableaux, that it will no doubt be interesting to go through the minutiae which must be properly attended to before anything like success can be attained. We have often seen tableaux completely ruined by an awkward piece of mismanagement, clumsy grouping, or bad lighting, which, but for these defects, would have been very effective.

Of course, nearly everything depends upon the stage manager, who should be an experienced man, and with plenty of good temper and patience, for he has a great deal to put up with. And first a word or two about the stage. Very often one has to be improvised, and in that case it is most essential to have a proper "rake"—that is, a slope down from the back to

the front, of not less than one inch to one foot, in order that the group presented may be better seen from every part of the auditorium. In some cases stages are built, as it were, in three tiers, each about nine inches to one foot above the other; but this is not a satisfactory construction, as, in arranging tableaux, quickness is the very essence of success, and, in running the properties on and off, these tiers get in the way. Stages should be firmly and substantially constructed. There have been cases of collapse, under the united weight of scenery and groups.

SCENERY.—It is contended by some people that scenery is unnecessary, and only takes the eye from the group in front; but such is not really the case; and where artistic scenery is obtainable, relative to the subject of the group, not too strongly

expressed, and prettily arranged, it is most helpful, and, in fact, a *sine qua non*. As regards the properties, the stools and boxes, of which, generally, a good number are required, should be made on purpose, of different heights. These are most helpful in posing groups; but the stage should not be overburdened with them, as they are then only in the way, and make extra work in

a necessity. As to the limelight, the two men who manage this must throw their light from a height of not less than six feet; they should be opposite one another, and room must be arranged for their apparatus and oxygen bottle. It is well to have reliable operators for this work, as they are not always trustworthy; and not to allow them to leave the stage until their



"A SUMMER SHOWER."

removing. It is a great thing, if possible, to have these properties so made that they will suit all the tableaux to be presented.

Perhaps the most important subject is the lighting. It is a disputed point as to whether footlights are advantageous. In the tableaux here illustrated they were always used, as sometimes it was found that the limelight does not reach the feet, and a hard white line is the result. The overhead floats are

work is completed, as should anything go wrong with the limelight the tableaux would be inevitably ruined. On figures draped in white, or statuary, the blue light is perhaps the best, and altogether the most suited to the subject, on account of the softness it gives to the drapery; and, especially in the case of statuary, it has all the appearance and effect of marble. As tableaux are generally shown



"THE SHRINE OF VENUS."

two or three times, the curtain is rung down for a few seconds while another pose is arranged. A different lighting effect may be used in the second and third exhibitions: for instance, in "The Snow Queen" (represented in the frontispiece) in the first representation, the blue light was used; and in the second a red, and this, of course, combined with the light from the floats and footlights, produced a happy effect. This tableau was perhaps the most successful of the whole series, which were all put on at Blackheath recently, and arranged by Mrs. Hart and Mr. W. E. Parker, in aid of various charities in the neighbourhood. Those which we have chosen as subjects for illustration were very successful, and these we will now particularise more minutely.

Special attention was paid to the grouping and lighting. Of course in the case of "The Snow Queen" all the dresses were of a pure white, in keeping with the subject, and a very effective foreground was made with some light diaphanous drapery, the realism being heightened by some glistening powder, known as Jack Frost, thrown over

the dresses of the figures at the last moment to represent hoar-frost. This tableau was encored every time.

"The Gambler's Wife" is taken from the well-known picture. In this tableau the colour is pretty evenly balanced, the costumes were remarkably good, and every detail carefully studied from the original. The scenery, too, was a great success, and altogether was much admired.

In "The Summer Shower" the dresses, if not quite white, nearly approached it, and the mixture of blue and white in the lighting was very appropriate. The tableau represents three young ladies, who have been caught by a shower, taking shelter under a somewhat conventional tree until the sky clears again. This tableau always found favour with the audience.

"The Shrine of Venus" had the advantage of being taken from Mr. Alma Tadema's beautiful picture. It would be superfluous to comment on the composition of it. The dresses, which of course were as near facsimiles of the painting as possible, were well lighted; once with the admixture of the red and white, and again by the blue



"PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL."

and white lights. This tableau, it is needless to say, was very well received.

"Scandal, or Private and Confidential," was a very pretty conception. It was either supposed to represent three bosom friends engaged in reading a proposal, all unconscious of the proximity of the proposer himself, accompanied by some eager listeners, or a group of ladies engaged in discussing the latest bit of scandal, whilst some of those concerned are hearing their own characters extolled, or otherwise. This shared the enthusiastic reception accorded to the former.

"The Tiff" is reproduced from a well-known painting; a friend is acting as a

peacemaker between wife and husband. This tableau saved the stage-manager the trouble of composition by the study from the original. The dresses were in subdued art shades, on which the red light had a charming effect.

"He loves me; he loves me not," was hardly less successful.

In arranging tableaux of this kind, especial care should be taken not to throw contradictory colours on to the groups, such as red light on to yellow. The red light is generally used to represent evening; the blue, moonlight; and the white, sunshine. As the operators cannot communicate with each other whilst

the curtain is up, a complete and exact list of the lights required for each tableau must be supplied to them beforehand, so that no hitch occurs. The gas wants good arrangement, so that the man who attends to it can turn the footlights and floats up exactly at the right moment, or moderate the light as required. The curtain should, as a rule, be up for fifteen to twenty-five seconds, or even more, at the stage-manager's discretion, as he will be at the side watching

much rehearsing as the posing of the figures. Some people are instinctively better able to pose than others, and it is the want of power in this direction that gives the stage-manager so much trouble. As one remarked: "When you ask for the hand or arm to be extended, the effect is very often more like an old Dutch doll than anything else." In this lies the hardest part of the work. Of course, when a tableau is taken from a picture, line



"A TIFF."

the group, and, should any of the members show sign of wavering or moving, he will at once ring down the curtain.

It is necessary to have three or four rehearsals, the last of which should be, if possible, a dress rehearsal, and the stage-manager should use the same properties for the members of the various tableaux that are to be in use when presented to the audience; and it is a good plan to label these, in order that there may be no confusion at the last moment. The properties require quite as

for line, the picture, or a copy of it, should be on the stage, in order that the members may study each individual part; but when, as is more often the case, the manager is responsible for the group, it depends a great deal on his artistic ability as to whether the posing and grouping are good. Very often the moving back of a member will mar or make the success of a tableau. Again, the turn of a wrist, or the inclination of a head, will have the same effect; as, although a tableau is judged in its

entirety, each member should endeavour to hold herself or himself gracefully, so as to contribute to a harmonious whole.

There is one caution to be noted. The soot from the gas in the floats sometimes collects on the ironwork overhead, and, having got red-hot, falls. It was noticed in one of the tableaux that the audience did not consider it a success on account of a young lady, who was supposed to be putting on her shoe, but who was in reality pinching

out a large piece of burning soot, which had fallen on her dress. A fine piece of wire gauze under the float will entirely remedy this. Indeed, floats should never be fixed without it, as otherwise an accident is so liable to happen.

We think we have rehearsed all the details necessary to produce pretty and successful tableaux, and the illustrations above given will be a help to those who wish to represent them.



"HE LOVES ME; HE LOVES ME NOT."