



O all lovers of pantomime, be they young or old, the event of the evening and the sure producer of the biggest "Oh!" is the transformation scene. Your theatrical manager, who is a

very wise man in his generation, knows this, and he ingeniously suggests its expected beauties by printing its title in very large type on the programme. Much rests on a transformation title. It is invariably suggestive of all that is most beautiful, unsolvable, and never before seen by mortal eyes—"Cupid's Birthday Party," "The Fairies' Trysting Place," and "The Palace of Pearls of the Coral Queen," are all calculated to set mature minds wondering as to whatever it is going

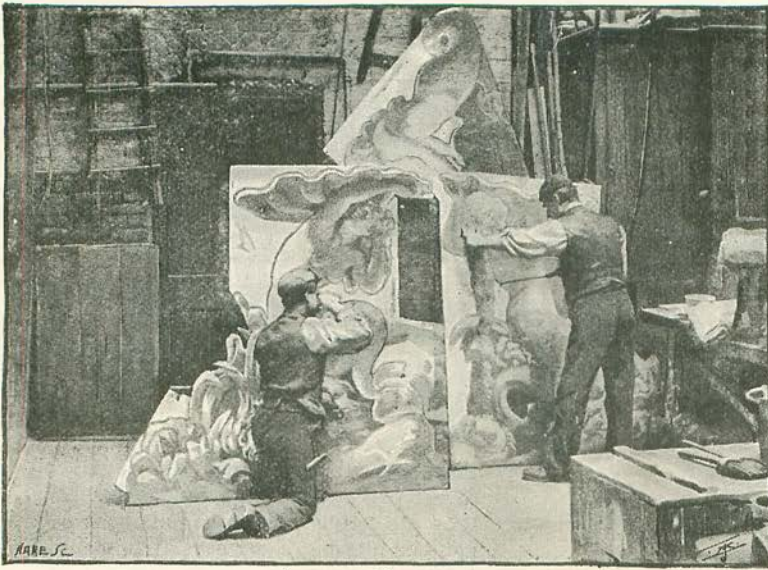
to be, and the youngsters' eyes open to their fullest extent when told by paterfamilias that they are going to see Cupid and his companions playing "overbacks" and the fairies fishing in silver streams for sticklebacks!

How are these scenic dreams produced, and, when ready for production, how are these wonderful "changes" brought about? We will divulge the great secret of pantomime.

First a subject is chosen—call it what you will, but fairies and their near relations must be included; their homes where they dwell—be they inside a rosebud or within the shelter of the white bell of a lily of the valley—must haunt the mind of the



MODEL BY MR. H. EMDEN.



"PROFILING" A MERMAID.

artist who is about to prepare the surprise for Boxing Night. A number of rough sketches are made, and these proving as satisfactory as they are suggestive of an ultimate brilliant and bewildering effect, your artist settles down to build up a model to half-inch scale. This will frequently take a fortnight or three weeks to make, and very pretty things they are. Anything elaborate, such as rock-work, is carefully modelled out in plaster, whilst occasionally the figures are for the time being cut out in cardboard, so that a better notion may be formed as to how the ladies who pose in the great scene on Boxing Night will look in the completed picture. The one reproduced in these pages will give a very good idea of what this is. It is a model by Mr. W. S. Emden, one of our principal scenic artists, who has been promoting pleasure with his painting for the past twenty-eight years, and who will be responsible for the transformation scene in Mr. Oscar Barrett's revival of pantomime at the Lyceum, with that sweet young damsel with the daintiest foot in fairyland—"Cinderella."

The model completed, the carpenter and property master have to be considered. Each separate piece is traced off in outline in order that the knight of the chisel may make a wooden framework for the canvas. He it is who "profiles" the mermaids and their golden-haired sisters who will fill up the corners of the stage and, with the lime-light thrown on their glistening forms, look for all

the world as though they have just come straight from the ocean on a temporary Christmas visit. Alas! for the wicked deception of this world! We are well aware that a certain young man, named Tommy, fell in love with one of these damsels only last Boxing Day. It is our painful duty to inform him that his sweetheart was made of wood and canvas, and—*painted!*

The property master—the

gentleman who makes those terribly big craniums for the two-headed giant—builds up his share in the work from the plaster model.

Here is the painting-room. It is a perfect *olla podrida* of pots of colour—you can count a couple of hundred of them. Tables—formed by boards on trestles—are placed close at the back of the artists, on which are "stage" palettes. These are great wooden



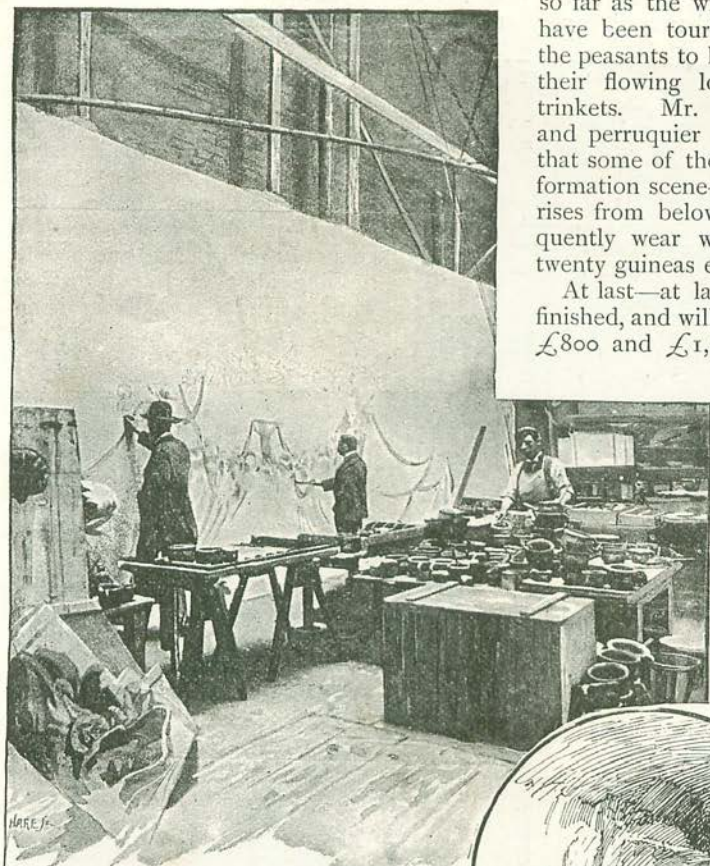
MR. W. S. EMDEN.

so far as the wigs are concerned, merchants have been touring Germany and persuading the peasants to let them apply the scissors to their flowing locks in exchange for a few trinkets. Mr. Clarkson, who is costumier and peruquier to the Queen, will tell you that some of the principal figures in a transformation scene—and certainly the fairy who rises from below on a golden ball—will frequently wear wigs costing from fifteen to twenty guineas each.

At last—at last the picture of fairyland is finished, and will have cost anything between £800 and £1,000. It is now set on the

stage, its many movements rehearsed again and again, the fairies and Cupids arranged a hundred times—and the managerial mind is in a state of whirl and worry as to how it will all work out at the “first performance.”

The “behind the scenes” arrangements at Drury Lane are unique



PAINTING “THE TRANS.”

arrangements containing twenty or thirty different compartments for colour. And the scenic artists paint away on the canvas—previously prepared to receive the colour—which is stretched on immense wooden frames, which vary from 24ft. to 30ft. in height, and some 50ft. to 60ft. in length. Here they paint away for weeks—flowers and fairies, Cupids and birds of brilliant plumage make their appearance by degrees, until perhaps at the end of five or six weeks “the trans.,” so far as the artist is concerned, is ready.

Young girls are now called in to decorate the canvas—sewing on glittering beads, tinsel and foil, and garlands of flowers, all of which will add to its beauty.

Your wig-maker and costumier must be consulted—the angels in the big picture have to be provided with wings. The dresses are made so that they will exactly match the combination of colour; whilst,

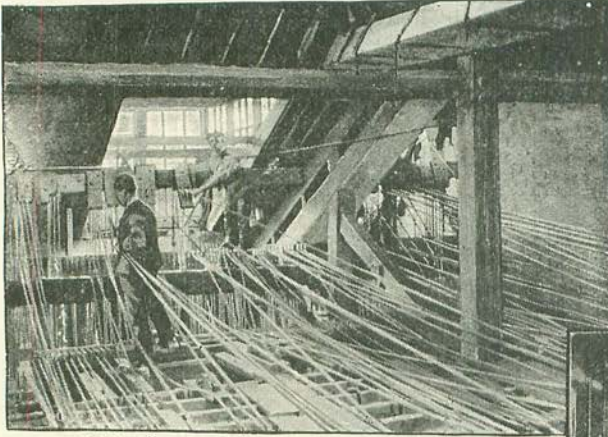


SEWING ON BEADS.

in their way, and a perfect puzzle to the uninitiated. There are ten thousand ropes

so the clouds disappear, the stars begin to twinkle, and you get the first peep into fairy-land. Flowers come and go, Cupids drop from the sky, birds fly about everywhere and perch upon the blossoms, fairies ascend noiselessly. How is it all accomplished?

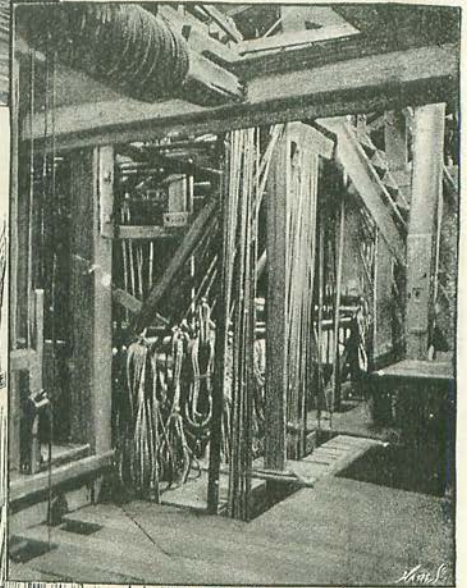
We hurry away behind the scenes—it all seems a perfect chaos of noise, bustle, and people running about. But it is all with a purpose. Every man



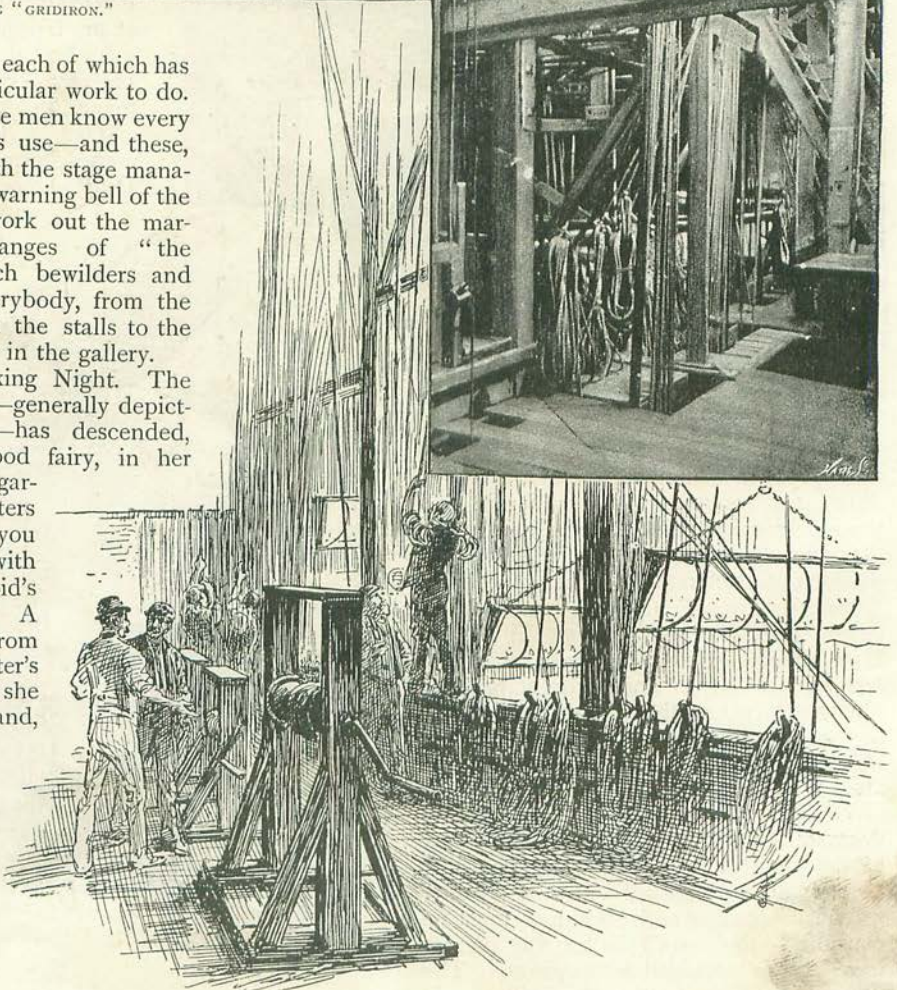
ON THE "GRIDIRON."

and pulleys, each of which has its own particular work to do. But the stage men know every cord and its use—and these, together with the stage manager and the warning bell of the prompter, work out the marvellous changes of "the trans." which bewilders and delights everybody, from the little one in the stalls to the butcher boy in the gallery.

It is Boxing Night. The front cloth—generally depicting clouds—has descended, and the good fairy, in her clinging garments, enters and invites you to come with her to "Cupid's Bower." A ting-ting from the prompter's bell, and as she waves her wand,



"UPPER FLIES."



IN THE "FLIES."  
(At Drury Lane Theatre.)

knows the ropes, so to speak. Certain ropes will let down a piece of sky. At the moment that piece of sky is due to make its appearance, the prompter from his corner

ing to his place as though nothing had happened. He was only twenty or thirty feet above the level of the stage, and with absolutely nothing to protect him!

To most juvenile minds, the greatest wonder is caused when a bevy of fairies come up through the floor as though by magic, without a sound or murmur, whilst the youngsters can scarcely contain themselves when some beautiful being positively flies through the boards without note of warning.

The pictures here reproduced will convey a very good notion as to how this is managed.

ON THE STAGE—ABOVE.

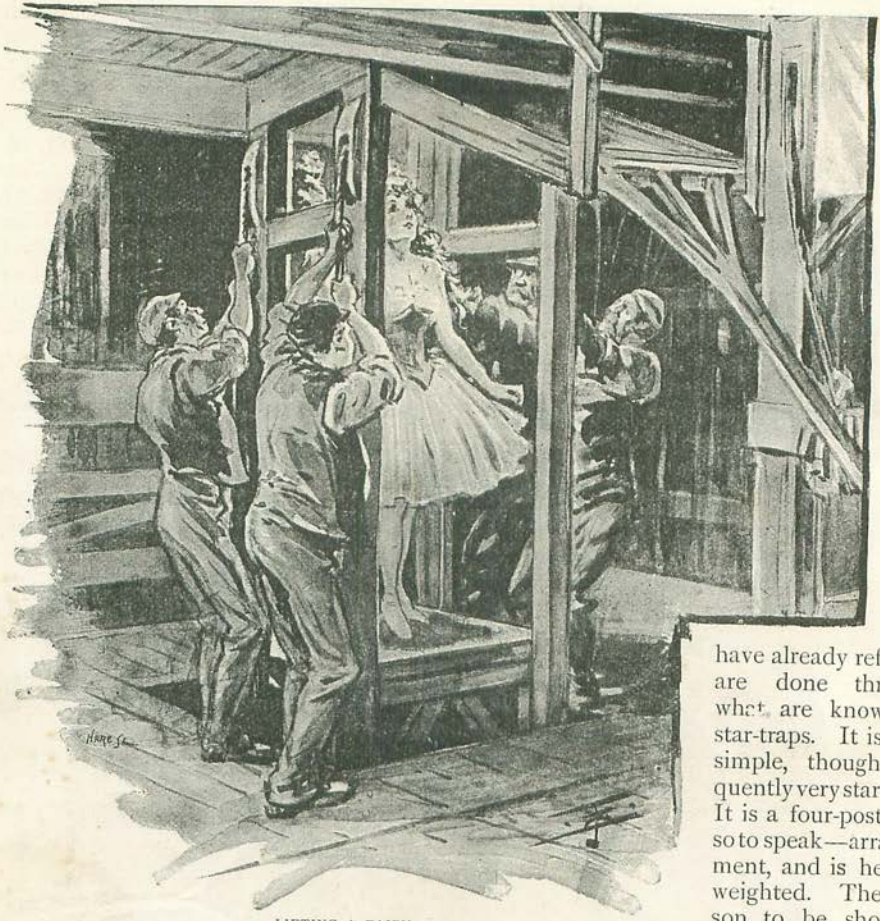


ON THE "BRIDGE"—BELOW.

presses the button which rings a bell above or below the stage, as needed, or right up in the gridiron—so called on account of the number of ropes stretched across from side to side of the stage—and your man knows that it is a signal to let the sky drop, or the flowers descend, or the glittering golden rain shower down. How it is all brought about without a piece of canvas getting out of order is a mystery. Sometimes, however, this is the case, and then you see one of the fly men crawl along the gas batons with the dexterity of a monkey—and be it distinctly understood that this is intended as a compliment—and put the rebellious bit of canvas right, return-

It happened that when this article was being prepared a ballet was in course of presentation at the Empire Theatre in which this magical appearance was done, and the sketches were drawn whilst all was in action.

Not only fairies, but the big banquets set out on tables, which appear and disappear, are done on this principle. Some moments before the cluster of pretty people is required the fairies are busily arranging themselves—under the direction of the stage manager—beneath the stage, on what is known as a bridge. This is a substantial length of board connected with weights, pulleys and cords, which, at the proper moment, is raised to a level with the stage by means of a windlass. Down the



LIFTING A FAIRY.

stairs the fairies come tripping and take up their position on the bridge. Some will lie down, others recline against supports to help them to remain without moving, whilst others who are to pose in a sitting position are provided with comfortable seats and strapped on for safety.

All at once the bell sounds—it comes from the prompter's box. The trap, which provides the opening above, silently slides away, the men in their shirt sleeves at the windlass clap their hands to the handles, and noiselessly the bridge with its beautiful burden ascends, and we hear a burst of applause.

The "sudden" appearances to which we

quartet of stage hands take their allotted corners at the ropes, and at the word "Go!" suddenly release the cord and "up" goes the fairy. It is not often the case, however, that fairies are subjected to this means of a sudden

rise in life—the star-trap being more frequently used for the appearance of spangled and fiery-eyed demons and sprites, or the irrepressible disciple of Joey Grimaldi, who after being so "lifted" only regains his feet to thrust his hands in his capacious pockets, screw his highly coloured mouth into position, and shout out at the top of his voice: "Here we are again! A Muddy Christmas and a Sloppy New Year!"

