

FROM TIGHTS TO TITLES, BY ALAN DALE.

"Soubrette Row" in England's Titled Aristocracy and What It Has Done for the Drama.

I WAS planning a very pretty and pathetic sermon for this cheery November morning. It was to have quite an educational twang about it, and I am quite sure that you would have enjoyed its pungency immensely. I was going to inveigh against this season's terrific tendency to ventilate conjugal difficulties in the public prints. I was going to say sly things that would forever have endeared me to those adjectival clergymen who persist in looking upon the stage as a menace to morality. My idea was to ask my artist to draw a picture of the real state of things—the actress in all her fine feathers and furbelows, dallying with her "pass" before a jury of peers, and then directly opposite a picture of the ideal condition—this same actress sitting in her parlor surrounded by seventeen children, most of them teething, and making crochet by the

blents forth: "Clanority, dear, if you don't think it will hurt me, I believe I could fancy a poached egg. Would you mind asking the waiter for one? I'm very tired about speaking to waiters myself."

the milk and honey of home affairs. We are bound to cast an eye behind the scenes (which gives us a great deal more work to do), and to withhold our laurel wreaths until we know precisely where we are playing.

of her future greatness, caused us to burst with hilarious plaudits as we sat and watched that glad and joyous girl career through a farce comedy with Donnelly and Girard and Amy Ames. The future was

ture shop from Trafalgar Square to Ludgate Hill. She had a face that the penny-dreadful writer would describe as "dinner-ously beautiful." And the Earl of Orkney came a-wooling like the froggy in the clip-

Three Sprightly Song and Dance Artists Who Have Really Elevated the Stage.

form. "Elevation" that is tangible and visible. Even some of the merry, who were accustomed to regard May Yohle, Belle Bilton and Connie Gilchrist as the most conspicuous peeps in their churches to Lady Francis Hope, the Countess of Clancarty and Lady Orkney. It is all very well, in your American independence, to suggest—just for the sake of argument—that a title means nothing. It means a great deal. You know it does, now, don't you? Confess that you do. Admit that you revel in stories that deal with the union of the stage and the aristocracy. You would sooner spend an hour perusing a description of Lady Francis Hope's cottage by the sea, than in conning an essay by Henry Arthur Jones on "The Renaissance of the English Drama."



COUNTRESS OF CLANCARTY

LADY FRANCIS HOPE

COUNTRESS OF ORKNEY



BELLE BILTON (COUNTRESS OF CLANCARTY)



MAY YOHL

(LADY FRANCIS HOPE)



CONNIE GILCHRIST (COUNTRESS OF ORKNEY)

yard to sew around their poetic, juvenile undergarments.

Put my song away, mither. I cannot sing it to-night. This is no time for fiery tirades or bitter denunciation. My fury against the stage has suddenly succumbed. I have come to the conclusion that it is, after all, a lovely and a self-elevating institution, and I want to call to the attention of the public—including all the enemies of the footlights—a certain calm and refreshing item of news that was recently flashed across the Atlantic right into our astonished centre. It came like a zephyr of April, and I presume that its healing influence has already been felt by a thousand tired souls.

"Curiously enough," says this novelty item in its simple, unalloyed English, "the visitors' list of the Savoy Hotel, London, now includes Lord and Lady Francis Hope (May Yohle), the Earl and Countess of Orkney (Connie Gilchrist), and the Earl and Countess of Clancarty (Belle Bilton, the musical performer). All three mesalliances have turned out singularly well. Lady Hope, after four years of married life, is looking forward serenely to motherhood. Should there be a son, then the succession to the Newcastle dukedom would be assured, through the pretty American, once a soubrette."

Talk of your "Simple Stories for Young Girls" your Maria Edgeworth, your Grace Agillar, of "Noise Influence" fame; your Louise Alcott, and your Miss Mulock. These ladies are all cast into the shade by the pure and pleasing story of domesticity—and domesticity tinged with footlights—that this paragraph sends right up to your mental eye.

Think of that breakfast table at the Savoy, all ye enemies of the stage, and let each utter a loud, pretentious "Mea culpa!" For it is not at all difficult—it is even benignly easy—to picture a stately piece of mahogany, built for six, around which are seated the three ex-footlight favorites, Lady Hope, the Countess of Clancarty and the Countess of Orkney, with their devoted waddling donors, Lord Hope, the Earl of Clancarty and the Earl of Orkney. The ladies, all so young and fair, and fresh in morning leeks, and no diamonds. (Titled ladies don't wear diamonds until 6 p. m.) The gentlemen, suave, gallant and exceedingly glad that they were born.

Pause, ye foes of the dramatic world, and listen! For ye can surely hear the deep, contralto tones of the ex-May Yohle-tones that were once used in a stentorian, heartistic effort to win dollars and cents—saying to Lord Francis: "Darling husband, please bitter me a piece of toast. I am fond of toast with my tea."

And the Countess of Clancarty—she who used to pose as a very undraped Venus in the English provinces, and sing decollete songs for the edification of the prudent

While the third voice in this almost pastoral domestic drama, coming from the ex-skirt dancer's lips (years ago nobody believed she had anything but limbs), chirrup sweetly: "Good me lord, I prithe hand me a kippered herring. Thanks, very much, my love. It is so good of you to cater to little wifflie's breakfast wants."

I say again Avanti! to all who have credited the stage with producing nothing but women unfitted to fill the position of wife and mother. It grieves me very much to think that I must trot over three thousand liquid miles in order to find these shining lights of felicitous domesticity. But example means a great deal. The American stage leans upon that of England—even though the managers who insist upon producing English plays tell you that American playwrights are the greatest on earth. It is good for the American public to look upon my picture of triple extract conjugal bliss, in view of the deranged marital conditions that have prevailed theatrically in this country since the present season began.

An unfreckled career seems to be necessary for dramatic success. Miss Julia Arthur's managers appeared to recognize this when they sent out avant-couriers for the production of "A Lady of Quality" with the legend, "She comes unspotted before the public." Of course, it is rather deplorable, when you come to think of it. You and I, cosmopolitans of oesompolits, are perfectly satisfied to see an artist doing her best to interpret the themes of her playwright, and to forget whether she has or hasn't a husband; whether she has been divorced, or hasn't been divorced; whether she is a mommer, or whether she isn't a mommer.

The great and ungrillible public has willed it otherwise. They are walled in by conventional restrictions, and they declare that the ladies destined to amuse them must be simularly walled in. "She may be very nice," says materfamilias, "but she has had three husbands, and I'll never take Polly and Molly and Sukey and Ann to see such a creature." And Aunt Maria Jane goes seventeen times to see Mrs. Kendall in "The Ironmaster" because it has been announced that with her Willie she leads a most exemplary married life, and has five olive branches to elench that face beyond the peradventure of a doubt.

It comes to pass therefore, that you and I, cosmopolitans of oesompolits, are obliged to make our tincture of art diluted with

Mrs. Potter Chattered Volubly About Elevating the Stage.

ing them. Consequently, I feel I am doing the correct and estimable thing to-day when I call the attention of the public to those three skittish young things who have succeeded—as every self-respecting American girl pines to succeed—in marrying titles, and not only in marrying them, but in living happily with them ever after. The picture at the Savoy Hotel should be sketched, and then framed over the hearth. It would pay a kodak artist to journey Londonward, with no other object in view than to portray that hyper-feast of the six noble people.

Yes, they are elevating the stage. Can you doubt it? It is they that must make the projectors of an independent theatre feel sick and sorry in their shoes. Independent theatre, forsooth! Why, the stage is dependent upon a thousand trifles with which the playwright and the actor's art has nothing whatsoever to do.

Mrs. Potter chattered volubly about "elevating the stage," and proceeded to undertake the task by shocking the conventional. In an interview in the London Echo, the other day, she remarked, complacently: "I am afraid I can very fairly be accused of being 'individual,' but my public has liked my unconventionality." What public? Those of India, China and Japan, where there are no censors and no gorgeous codes of domestic morality such as prevail in England and America. Mrs. Potter made the mistake of trying to elevate the stage all by herself, and it is a task that no woman can successfully undertake. She believed that simple endeavor and incessant hard work would insure popularity. Her untrammelled enthusiasm led her to believe that the stage was something other than what it really

is—a game that can occasionally be compared to "bluff"—and she failed. Mrs. Potter has failed, for she has misunderstood the texture of the modern audience, and the idiosyncrasies of the general public. I am not digressing. I couldn't digress if I wanted to do it—and I don't want to do it. Before me arises insistently that exquisite breakfast table picture at the London Savoy, with the real human figures of Lord and Lady Francis Hope, the Earl and Countess of Clancarty, and the Earl and Countess of Orkney.

And Lady Clancarty! Who that ever heard her wanton ditties and beheld her perchance padded symmetry of her muscular limbs would ever have credited her with the powers of elevation? It would have been just as simple to imagine Maggie Cline as a duchess, or Marie Lloyd as a serene something-or-other. Belle Bilton-Clancarty will live in the history of peerage books, while your mere common or garden Bernhards or Duses will go down to posterity in dramatic compilations, put together by tired critics anxious to earn an honest penny by the juices of their pen.

Burke will discuss Lady Clancarty. Perhaps one of these days somebody will say to me, "Write me a thousand eulogistic words on Sarah Bernhardt for the obituary column." Which do you prefer, my aspiring debutante, Burke or Alan Dale?

The Countess of Orkney was known to all London as Connie Gilchrist, the skirt dancer. Lovely, sinuous and Christmas-cardy was Connie, and the fanatics in London used to hate her because she lured the gilded youth of the English metropolis to the playhouses and was a vogue all by herself. Her photographs adorned every pic-

ture shop from Trafalgar Square to Ludgate Hill. She had a face that the penny-dreadful writer would describe as "dinner-ously beautiful." And the Earl of Orkney came a-wooling like the froggy in the clip-

ture shop from Trafalgar Square to Ludgate Hill. She had a face that the penny-dreadful writer would describe as "dinner-ously beautiful." And the Earl of Orkney came a-wooling like the froggy in the clip-

Here Is "Elevation" That Is Tangible and Visible.

These titled beauties never palvered around the idea of elevation. There was no jargon about being "wedded to art," no high-falutin essays on the mission of the drama, and the future of the actress. They left all that sort of thing for others who have not drawn prizes in life's lottery. They acted while those others were talking. They elevated while their sisters were merely discussing the ways and means for so doing.

It is a lovely and fertile subject. It is fraught with significance. Only the envious and the members of the Professional Woman's League will dare to disagree with me. In the weekly debates held by that eminent sect of advanced old ladies, who were matined at the Fifth Avenue the other day, there is never any talk of elevating the stage as it should be elevated. But if Mrs. A. M. Palmer and Mrs. Queenie Vassar Lynch, and Miss Laura Burt, and Mrs. Marguerite St. John Wood, and Miss Mary Shaw, and Miss Cora Tanner would only take it into their amiable heads to show young girls how to elevate the stage with honor to themselves and respectable comfort to the public, the League would fill a "long felt want."

To live happily ever after with a title and your garments is surely one of the sweetest rewards of a touring actress. To dash through the thoroughfares of a big city with a brougham, a couple of spanking horses, and a lawfully wedded husband who is not a plain mister is certainly a luminous manner of portraying the benign and graceful influence of the stage. It is "elevation" in its most emphatic

We are not a serious people. Perhaps the time will come when we shall look upon the drama as an electric platform from which eternal truths—or lies—must be dinned into our ears, at a cost of \$1.50 per team of ears. Many people are trying to hurry on that time. Sometimes I would that it were here, myself. But we are far from serious yet. We regard the stage as a sort of delectable entertainment—something that will sing a tummy-tum in our bread-and-butter-weary ears—and we gaze upon actors and actresses impertinently. Their pasts and their presents are ours, and we are interested in their future, and quite disposed to prophesy their hereafter. We make a complete list of our favorite leading lady's husbands, even though this often entails arduous work and abstruse research.

We declare that we will never again countenance the sunny young husband who has beaten his wife, and then "defied public opinion" by going to the vaudeville stage. We look askance at our sweet little ingenuities and calcium ladies, and say in the charity of our hypocrisy, "She's no better than she ought to be. I read all about her the other day," and then we go home and say to our daughters, "No, my dear, you shall never, never go upon the stage. It is not the kind of life you ought to lead. Women should, first of all, and last of all, learn how to be useful wives and mothers."

So, let me end this with a final glance at Lady Hope and the Countesses of Orkney and Clancarty, eating their breakfasts and elevating the stage. That breakfast table should become historic. If it were a dinner or a supper table, I should not hold it up, because diners and suppers are frequently perverted from their original idea of mere nourishment purveying offices. Breakfast is a healthy, robust and normal meal. Nobody could be saucy or impudent at breakfast. It is the one meal that has survived the degenerate influences of the century. People can't revel in the early morn. The most convivial spirits are lulled into opaque dullness at the initial repast of the day.

There is no flaw in the purity of the picture that I have dished up to you this morning. I can hear no voice dissenting from the poetic truths I have culled from it. The elevators of the stage have something to think about for a few hours—ponder over in their moments of meditation.

And if my enemies accuse me of being satirical, and do not really believe a solitary word I have written—well, I am quite accustomed to being misunderstood, and this latest insult will not sink deeply into my nature. I maintain that the stage is on the road to elevation.

ALAN DALE.