

HEDDA GABLER

(By Professor Coleman Phillipson.)

"Hedda Gabler," which has just been produced by the Repertory Theatre, is different from others of Ibsen's works in that it is not a problem play or a symbolic play, but a character study.

A Composite Figure.

The fact is that Hedda, as she was developed in Ibsen's imagination, is a composite figure; Ibsen had in mind, first, the case of a German lady who poisoned herself through boredom and through straying into a false position; secondly, the story of a famous composer's wife who revenged herself for fancied neglect by burning the manuscript of a symphony he had just finished; thirdly, the report of a well-known lady who, in order to show her power over her husband, who had recently conquered intemperance, led him in an unconscionable manner to fall back into his evil habits.

Let me say at once that the performance, though very creditable indeed for our amateur players appeared strikingly inadequate to one who has carefully studied the text and has seen two of the greatest and most experienced European actresses in the name-part. Mrs. Neill's disposition is too gentle, charming, and youthful to give even an approximately just portrayal of such a monstrous woman as Hedda is.

Character of Hedda

Not even an inadequate representation could fail to reveal the vile character of Hedda. To many observers, without previous knowledge of the play, some of the repellent traits in Hedda were obscured or glossed over. She is called by her maiden name to emphasise that she is "her father's daughter rather than her husband's wife." (Fancy that!) If so, Heaven preserve us from the Gabler family. Hedda married Tesman for position, and as soon as she finds that her expectations are not likely to be realised she treats him as so much dirt. She yearns for lackeys and superficial display, which she mistakes for refinement of living. Hers is an entirely mercenary soul; she would barter her body and soul for vulgar show if she had courage enough to face scandal.

Her snobbery, commonness of mind, self-centredness are as conspicuous as her jealousy, envy, cruelty, and brutality. She delights in the sordid stories of self-indulgence, debauchery, and salacious adventures; and she confuses wild licence with liberty. She is capricious, cold-hearted, perverse, and treacherous; she cannot bear to see others happier and possessing more influence than herself. She threatened to burn a schoolmate's hair because it was prettier than her own; she burns the precious and sacred manuscript of a friend, because it was produced with the aid of a woman of whom she is jealous; in urging the author to kill himself "beautifully" she is animated by a satanic envy, and by a hankering after those sinister sensations which are comparable (as Professor Heller, of Washington, aptly observes) "to the decadent whims of a Faustina or a Messalina."

She is perhaps a fine-looking animal; if so, that is her sole title to distinction. She has not the good attributes of character and disposition which many beasts possess. She is without domestic or social ability, and without moral sense or real human worth; her talents, such as they are, can only bring about wretchedness and disaster; she plays with human lives as with her pistols.

One Redeeming Feature

The only redeeming feature in Hedda—if I may thus apply the expression—is that she had courage enough to kill herself, and to escape from her evil soul and liberate the people around her from her pernicious presence. Her death by her own hands was the least horrifying and least regretted suicide in the history of havoc-working and criminal womankind. It was, however, a suicide due not to remorse, but partly to a refusal to become the slave of such a middle-aged blackguard as Brack, partly to utter boredom with her life, partly to a sense of general discomfort, and partly—what is an outrage on human nature and true womanhood—to her disgust at the thought of becoming a mother.

Function of Art

Even if the events in the play had actually occurred, even if a Hedda or a Brack or a Lovborg has actually existed, is it the function of art to reproduce them with all the sordid details and repulsive paraphernalia? The purpose of art, according to the great artists, world teachers, and all healthy, clean-minded people, is to refine and elevate, to illuminate, to reveal the beautiful, to exalt, to refresh, and above all to delight—I repeat, to refresh and to delight.

Is this purpose served by a picture of sordid vice, malice, crime, debauchery, theft, blackmail, desertion, attempted seduction, adultery, and brothel brawls? There is not one flash of wit, not one ray of humor, not one utterance of wisdom, to relieve the oppressive dreariness, gloom, and wretchedness of the picture, or modify the nauseating ugliness of its central situation. By all means hold the mirror up to Nature; but a malodorous and infectious dunghill does not constitute Nature. Tragedy depicts terrible characters and awe-inspiring happenings; but tragedy in the hands of a poet with vision, as distinguished from a sensation-monger with a camera, exalts while it terrifies, it purges and illuminates while it shatters, it elevates the spirit to a clear, salutary, and reinvigorating atmosphere. Let us all—players and spectators—realize the difference between the task of the pathologist and alienist and that of the artist between the province of the dissecting-theatre and that of the public theatre established for the people's delight.

MARBLE ARCH

BRITAIN'S SAFETY VALVE

Loitering London Entertained

(By Dr. H. Huxton.)

Marble Arch—or May Borech as the bus conductors call it—is the Sydney Domain, Yarra Bank, and Botanic Park rolled into one, and with an almost continuous performance.

On those rare, warm evenings when the sun lingers and daylight saving forbids it to set before 8 o'clock, when the theatre galleries are full and the picture houses make no appeal and it is too easy to go home, there is no more fascinating spot in London for the social student than the human hive swarming and buzzing round half a score of speakers just inside the Arch gateway of Hyde Park.

HUMOR AND PATIENCE.

And so the crowd listens with good humor and patience as a rule, enjoying a free hour's entertainment and then wandering home. A Frenchman once listened for hours to the speeches, horror growing more tragic on his face.

"What ever will happen after this? Surely these people will go off and start a revolution?"

"No," replied his British companion. "They'll go off and have tea."

Let us look first at the crowd and then at the speakers. There are probably five or six thousand people grouped round about 10 speaking desks. They make one long, thick column more than 100 yards in length. The crowd round any one platform merges solidly into that on each side. On the fringe loiter the casually curious, drifting from group to group. A new speaker rises up his little step-ladder in a vacant plot, mounts it, puts up his signboard, and begins—with not a soul listening to him—"Ladies and gentlemen."

GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

But it does not end there, for to every interjector there is an equal and opposite anti-interjector in the crowd, and a crowd may easily be broken up into half a dozen group discussions. In my student days a friend and I used to start one of these wrangles and then slip away, leaving our unknown seconds and supporters to continue the debate while we organized another group elsewhere.

The speakers are a varied lot, varied alike in their theme and their ability to handle an audience. In the old days they chiefly spoke on economic themes, but now the field has been flooded by religious controversies. Stroll down the line and here is what you find:— A young, well-dressed layman with "Advocates of Scripture" on his placard, juggling Isaiah, Revelations, and dates. A Socialist with a Scotch accent, dissociating Socialist theory from illusions about equality, and having trouble with a minion of the Property Defence League on one hand and a foreign Communist on the other. A plump opponent of prohibition, telling stories about an elephant invading a brewery. A Salvation Army stand with excellent community singing by its group, disturbing the Protestant Alliance on one side and the London Secularist Society on the other. A loud-voiced secularist invites God—if there be a God—to prove His existence by striking him dead, and a Betsaver remarks that he self-respecting God would bother His head about "such a would-be His head about 'such a worm as you.'"

WEAVING THEIR SPELLS.

And so on. Parsons, laymen, athletes, anarchists, Catholics, and Communists, they all try to weave their spells, but succeed only in entertaining loitering London. And at the end of the row a priceless Cockney, "wots sold thousands er bunnies but never seen one 'opping in the field," tells in the speech of Cockland how he had a vision. Invited the Salvation Army band and the editors of the leading London dailies to join him in a great mission service, went round the countryside in a "carrivan from market place to market place" selling tracts.

Rheer love of humor and humanity bubbles out of him, and I long to hear the story out, but cannot. Still, I know what will happen. About 10 o'clock the crowd will drift along to him. Then, after having been told from the different platforms that there is no justice, no truth, no equality, no freedom, no mercy, no hope, no decency in politicians, no authenticity in the Bible, no power in the Pope, no God in heaven, the whole crowd will take the note from this little Cockney saint and sing in massive unison, "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past."

WOMEN ADVANCE

Britain Grants Franchise

HONORED BY KING

(By Dr. H. Huxton.)

LONDON, June 2. The British woman has "arrived," or at least is fast arriving. The first week in June saw two portentous illustrations of the fact. The King's birthday honors list was remarkable for the large proportion of women's names.

On the same day a House of Commons Committee decided, with scarce a dissentient voice, to recommend to the King that the vote be given to all women who they reach the age of 21 years. The discussion which led to this decision was almost entirely free from any reference to "woman's place" or to mental inferiority; in fact, the representatives of the three parties fell over each other in their desire to throw discounts at the late-franchisees, and it was left to a silly Sunday illustrated paper to make the insane remark that henceforth young handsome male candidates would be in great demand.

Reading of these new triumphs one's mind slipped back a decade. It was my good fortune to see a lot of behind the scenes activity in the militant phase of the suffrage campaign and to watch the plans made for a raid in furniture vans on the Houses of Parliament.

My last memory of London in 1914 was Mrs. Pankhurst's spectacular attempt to invade Buckingham Palace in order to present a petition in person to the King. When I saw her slip out of the last of a long line of taxis in The Mall, rush to the gates of the palace, and there be gathered up, kicking and screaming, in the arms of a burly policeman, I could not resist the feeling that it was all very futile and pathetic. And one's college contemporaries, neglecting their studies and researches in order to practice arson, smash windows, chain themselves to Downing street railings, and defy forcible feeding, all seemed bound on a hopeless crusade.

WOMEN IN ALL WALKS

Today all that is changed. The Pankhursts and their tactics are forgotten; women are on the electoral rolls, in the House, and even in the Ministry; "Maggie" Bosfield is winning golden opinions as a debater and administrator, and Mrs. Barbara Wootton, one of Cambridge's most brilliant young economists, only 25 years old, sits on the Royal Commission on the National Debt.

In the universities the number of women teachers grow steadily; on the roads women cyclists no longer cause caustic comment by their speed and skill; and in at least one London pulpit a woman preacher draws a large discriminating congregation.

I set out to study the change. There was a conference of Labor women in London, so I went to look at it. More than 1,000 women had come as delegates from every part of the country. I was told that in some districts there were six women wanting to come where only one delegate was allowed, and so the unlucky five came at their own expense as onlookers.

Many of them were obviously working women or housewives. Most of them were well, I should guess in the early thirties or even younger. And keen, terribly keen, but with no trace of that hysteria which scarred the faces of their predecessors of the militant suffrage days. The debates were sane, substantial, and short; but whether the subject was unemployment, foreign affairs, or birth control, the discussion was frank and well informed.

The credit for much of the successful organization of Labor women stands to an Australian, Dr. Marton Phillips, who after writing a book on the colonial autocrat, Governor Macquarie, became an efficient autocrat herself in the task of arousing British working women to the responsibilities and possibilities of the extended franchise of 1918.

One of her lieutenants was an old college friend of mine, whom I sought out to answer my questions.

WAR KILLED SUFFRAGE

"Well," said I, "your suffrage labors seem to have borne good fruit."

"It wasn't the suffrage agitation at all," was the reply. "The war killed the suffrage movement, but the war showed Britain that it could not do without its women, and it showed the women that the country could not do without them. So we got the vote, or at least some of us did."

"And what a mess you made of your power in the 1918 election!" I jibed, recalling the "Hang the Kaiser!" "Make Germany Pay!" "Homes Fit for Heroes!" slogans of that campaign.

"No; it wasn't the women who made the mess that time," came the retort. "The women were still politically asleep then; they were too glad to have the war over and to have their men back to bother about voting that time. They didn't awake for a while. It was the men who gave that election verdict."

INTELLIGENT PROPAGANDA

Striking while discontent was hot, the labor women organizers went out into the towns and villages of the industrial and mining north, and preached their gospel of salvation. I heard of incessant propaganda among the housewives; of week-end "summer schools" for miners' wives held in one of the most beautiful parts of the lake district, where simple study of economic issues alternated with tramps demonstrations or over falls; of mass women in the towns, where nearly every woman in the village turned out and marched, four abreast, to an open space where workwomen spoke from every platform and the whole crowd sang "When Will They Save the People?"

This ceaseless activity on Labor's part is driving Liberal and Conservative to increased effort, and so the political education of woman proceeds apace. At the same time the platforms of the two parties are being remodelled to find room for essentially social and domestic planks. The Snowden Budget meant cheaper tea and sugar, and therefore appealed to every housewife. There will be many such appeals in the years ahead.

Comparisons are inevitable, and I find myself asking why Australian women are politically asleep alongside their British sisters. Is it because English women had to fight so hard for their political rights, while Australians got the almost without asking? Or are we so comparatively comfortable that our women have never been goaded to interest and action?

Are our politics too machine-like, and are we not so well in luckiness? Or are we really in essence an old-fashioned Victorian community still, with mid-nineteenth century ideas about the place of woman? I confess I can't find a satisfactory answer. I can't find a satisfactory answer. I can't find a satisfactory answer.

REMEDIAL JUSTICE

Thoughts of Jury Foreman

(By Victor E. Cramer, Dip. Ed.)

Punishment should not be merely punitive. It should contain within itself the seeds of regeneration. A trained psychologist should be appointed to make a careful study of prisoners, both individually and collectively. He should have the power to recommend courses of treatment suitable for each individual case.

SIX weeks on the jury, with nothing to do but to think (seriously) concerning the cases at the court, and the problems arising out of them.

The legal aspect of these problems did not trouble me much, as I know little of law. But, having some acquaintance with economics, psychology, moral and mental philosophy, and physical matters, it was only natural that I should turn my attention to the human rather than the legal aspect of the cases at the court.

STUDYING THE PRISONERS

I endeavored to fathom in my mind the issues which led to the presence of the unfortunate prisoners in the court on their various charges. I tried to work out how each of these individuals could best be brought back to a normal human state once more. In other words, I endeavored to gain a conception of the remedy for their condition, rather than to see what punishment should be inflicted upon them.

DEFECT IN THE LAW.

The law as it at present stands imposes penalties for offenses, but has no remedial provisions. His Honor, however, has certain discretionary powers which may or may not be of remedial value. There is in law no plan for remedying the moral defects of prisoners.

Supposing one man robs another £100. Under ordinary circumstances when found guilty, he is sentenced to term of imprisonment. He herds with other prisoners, and at the end of a period is released a hardener, embittered and perhaps desperate man, ready to take vengeance upon society for placing in his unenviable position, while the he has robbed is probably still minus £100.

It appears to me that one aspect of justice would be nearer perfection if, as part of the sentence, the prisoner were compelled to render services which would pay the victim for the amount lost. If thief knew that he could not get out of prison until he had made full restitution to the actual person robbed, and the harder he worked the sooner it would be repaid, it would be a stimulus to him in order to do this, however, a man must be placed in a position where he can repay. He must be taught a useful trade to enable him in the first place to make restitution, and in the second place to earn a living when released. He must not be a charge upon the State, for a bad economic.

A goal ought to be a kind of psychological clinic, in which a man receives treatment for his moral defects, just as ordinary hospitals treat people for their physical ailments.

CASE OF KLEPTOMANIA

There was a case of a woman who was guilty of petty thieving, and had a long list of prior convictions. A special case was set up as a defence. It was really a case where the moral nature had been worn down to such an extent that the subject was almost irremediable, but not sufficiently so to be declared insane.

To keep that unfortunate woman in goal for the term of her sentence is a waste of good money for her keep. When she comes out she will be unable to resist the same temptation, and will be almost immediately sent back.

The remedy for such a condition is to get at the causes which have produced that moral disease, and those causes were admitted in the woman's own statement; admitted for the first time at the best criminal session, although she had been sentenced many times before for the same class of offence. If she were placed under treatment with a view to remedying the treatment which lay behind her moral perversity which lay behind her lapses, and then placed under bond to live in the country and not to come to the cities for some years, her thieving propensities, and the obsessions which are their cause, would wear themselves out.

SEXUAL PROBLEM

The problem of remedial justice is probably the most baffling. Unfortunately once a person makes a moral lapse his resistance is broken down, the tendency created, and it is easier to offend again. This applies to all wrong-doing, but especially to sexual perversity.

What form of remedial measures should be taken to punish the individual, to correct, prevent the recurrence of crime, and at the same time transform him into a decent citizen. He may be morally perverted when released, when he went inside, but his sentimentality when he goes, a danger to society, and he is sent to a public house. If a man is sent to a public house with a fever or some disease upon him he is not released from the hospital until he is restored. He is not discharged half-way through the disease. Yet in a criminal hospital he is discharged with original perverted impulses untouched. The whole problem is really a psychological one. Each case should be put on its individual merits. Such a program would need to have a wide knowledge of human nature, a great insight into character, and a deep understanding of the human heart. He would have to work within the limits of providing a system, but the expense of providing a psychologist in connection with a prison system would be amply repaid.

CONSIDERED ECONOMICALLY

Economically, prisons should be thought of as self-supporting. Both inside the prison and with a view to providing them with a trade for use after their release. It is a trade for thought, controlled by his labor, to make restitution to the wronged party. While much effort should be concentrated on that aspect of justice which involves the reparation of the individual. Law should be preventive, and justice should be remedial, not merely punitive. The remedial aspect is not the work of the court which imposes the sentence, but should be allotted to an independent body functioning apart from the law-making machinery. The discipline might be of punishment. The discipline might be of punishment. The discipline might be of punishment.