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WRITING AN OPERA.

W. S. GILBERT TELLS HOW HE PRODUCES COMIC LIBRETTOS.

A Work in Which the Poet and the Composer Must Work Hand in Hand—Mr. Gilbert's Laborious Methods—How He Gets His Ideas For Popular Plots.

I asked W. S. Gilbert what he considered the chief traits necessary to enable one to become a successful playwright.

"Well," he replied thoughtfully, "that opens up a very large subject. They differ vastly. In my own line I should sum them up as follows: In the first place, the power of catching the public taste; then a thorough knowledge of stagecraft and a gift for stage management, the capacity to invent a plot, the power to create characters, an eye for dramatic situation and scenic effect, and finally the faculty to write readily dialogue, lyrics and musical numbers."

"I believe, Mr. Gilbert," I said, "that you have little or no ear for music. Don't you find this interferes with your rhythmic numbers?"

"It is quite true that I have no ear for music, but I have a very sensitive ear for rhythm; it is precisely the difference between time and tune. I am very fond of music, but I don't know a discord when I hear one. On the other hand, the slightest error in time, which would probably escape a musician, would jar most grievously on my ear. My fondness for music chiefly lies in hearing pieces which are connected in my mind with associations. I would rather hear an unknown soprano singing a song I knew than Patti singing one I did not know."

"Where do your plots come from, Mr. Gilbert?"

"Plots? Good gracious! where do they come from? I don't know. A chance remark in conversation, a little accidental incident, a trifling object, may suggest a train of thought which develops into a startling plot. Of course I am talking of original plots. I don't call adapting a play or translating a play writing one. Taking my own plots, for instance, the 'Mikado' was suggested by a Japanese sword which hangs in my study, 'The Yeomen of the Guard' by even a more unlikely incident. I had 20 minutes one day to wait at Exbridge station for a train, and I saw the advertisement of the Tower Furnishing Company, representing a number of beef eaters—why, goodness only knows, it gave me an idea, and I wrote the play originally as one of modern life in the Tower of London. Then it suddenly occurred to me to throw the time of it back to that of Queen Elizabeth. Having got one's plot, the next step is to fit in the characters. And the chief point in doing so is to invent original characters."

"I write out the play as a story, just as carefully as though it were to be published in that form. I then try to divide it into acts. I think two acts the right number for comic opera. At least my experience—and that is 30 years old—teaches me so. Sometimes, of course, the original story does not fall readily into two acts, and so requires modification. Well, I put it by for a fortnight or more, and then rewrite the whole thing without referring to the first copy. I find that I have omitted some good things that were in the first edition and have introduced some other good things that were not in it. I compare the two, put them both aside and write it out again. Sometimes I do this a dozen times; indeed the general public has no idea of the trouble it takes to produce a play that seems to run so smoothly and so naturally."

"One must work up to a good curtain. I believe very strongly in this, although I never take up any controversies, but simply go my own way on my own lines. The last impression is always the strongest, and the audience will often pardon a feeble, wearisome act for one dramatic climax at its conclusion. I can generally judge now what will have a good effect. Sometimes, but very rarely, it is spoiled by the interpreters. They always do their best, but occasionally they fail to realize my intention. The fact is that for comic opera many artists, especially tenors and sopranos, are necessarily actors who are singers rather than actors, and it is not to be expected that care, fully written comedy dialogue will receive full justice at their hands."

"Well, to go on with the writing of the play, I next sketch out quite roughly the dialogue and then fill in the musical numbers as I feel inclined. I do not attempt to write them in order, but just to get the humor takes me—once here, one there, a sad one when I feel depressed, a bright one when I am in a happy mood. When, at last all those of the first act are done, it is sent to the composer to be set to music, with a copy of the rough sketch of the dialogue to show him how the different songs hang together. I generally like reading it over to the composer, so as to give him my idea of the rhythm, which, as a matter of course, he varies at his pleasure."

"There must be perfect good fellowship between the writer and composer, as there is much give and take to be managed. Meters have to be changed by the writer, or tunes altered by the composer, to fit in with some idea, some intention, of the other partner. For instance, the writer may have put a theme in one meter, and the composer has a theme in his head which will just suit the theme, but will not fit the scanion, and so the lyrics must be altered. Each must try to make the other's part as easy as possible. There must be no jealousy, no bad feeling between the two. They must be on the best of terms, otherwise there will be no success."—Cor. St. James Gazette.

Chinese Scandal Merchants.

In China there is a profession for ladies, strange because openly and handsomely remunerated in the current coin of the realm. It is carried on by elderly ladies, who go from house to house of rich people, and offering their services to amuse the lady of the house. This offer accepted, they sit down and tell her the latest scandal and the newest stories on our side and are rewarded at the rate of half a crown an hour, besides a handsome present—sometimes some portion of their gossip may prove particularly acceptable.—London Tit-Bits.

English Parliament 600 Years Old.

The English parliament will be 600 years old next November. The first really representative parliament to meet in England assembled in November, 1295, under Edward I.

Use For the Cotton Stalk.

Edward Atkinson says that the time will come when the fiber in the cotton stalk will be utilized, and there are important elements for tanning and dyeing in the root.

VERMONT'S WAR GOVERNOR.

Holbrook, the Adviser and Friend of Lincoln, and His Rebellion Record.

There's Governor Holbrook buried up in Vermont's snows six months of the year, but I would give more for his opinion than those of all the politicians in Washington. These are the words of praise Abraham Lincoln once bestowed upon the famous war governor of Vermont.

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AN INCOMPLETE HOUSE.

We run wild over the furnishings of a house; its furniture, carpets, hangings, pictures and music, all always forget or neglect the most important requisite—Something there should be always on the shelf to provide against sudden, casual or attacks of pain. Such come like a thief in the night, a sprain, strain, sudden back ache, toothache or neuralgic attack. There is nothing easier to get than a bottle of St. Jacob's Oil, and nothing surer to cure quickly any form of pain. The house is incomplete without it. Complete it with a good supply.

Clairvoyance in Boston.

Clairvoyance is the midsummer madness in Boston. This view is not admitted. A Boston woman says that in hot weather the next thing to taking off the flesh and sitting in one's bones is to have dealings with the occult. What ever phase may be put upon it, in a large circle of people in Boston whose doings are regarded as of consequence, each has his or her clairvoyant, and women exchange and recommend mediums as they do books or patterns. It is needless to say that although this new diversion is not discussed publicly the very highest view is taken of it. Under the shadow of Harvard and Professor James it has a scientific aspect.

A woman who would describe herself as earnest says that in her opinion the medium gets into communication with her higher self—not the medium who most likely lives up back stairs in a disheveled Mother Hubbard and does not necessarily have a higher self. This communion with the visitor's subconsciousness transcends all mind reading. These mediums are consulted in the gravest matters of business and affairs. In one case a rich man had died, and his will could not be found. A clairvoyant was consulted, who said he had gone into his grave with the will in his coat-pocket. The body was exhumed, and sure enough the man had his will with him.—New York Evening Sun.

A Speculation on Death.

When the typhoid fever epidemic was at its height, when cases were being reported daily and many deaths from the disease, one local flower firm decided to make a speculation on death. It was figured out that there would be an unusual number of deaths and that this would cause a demand for an unusual number of floral pieces. In the manufacture of floral pieces moss is an absolute necessity, and the peculiar kind that is used comes from Oregon and Washington. The firm in question thought to make a speculation by ordering a quantity of this moss early and running a corner in it. The moss has arrived and has been placed in storage. But out of all the cases of typhoid fever the deaths have numbered less than 25, and there is one firm that has moss enough on hand for several years.—San Francisco Examiner.

Remark of a Cruel Man.

There is a report prevalent in Kansas that Ottawa university is to receive an endowment of \$50,000 from a wealthy lady in that state in 15 years. Every friend of the university was happy over the report until one old curmudgeon of a man suggested that that was plenty of time for any woman to change her mind.—New York Times.

Louder Than Dynamite.

"Did you advise Fowler to cultivate his voice?"

"Yes."

"Oh, mercy! What for?"

"A rain producing machine."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

An Eager and Stipping Wind.

A continuous down pour of rain, incessant weather, generally in winter and spring, are unfavorable to all classes of invalids. But warmth and activity infused into the circulation counteracts these influences and interpose a defense against them. Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, most thorough and effective of stomachics and tonics, not only enriches the blood, but accelerates its circulation. For a chill, or preliminary symptoms of rheumatism and kidney complaint, particularly prevalent at the seasons, it is the best possible remedy. It is also invaluable for dyspepsia, liver complaint, constipation and nervousness. Never set out on a winter or spring journey without it. Elderly persons and the delicate and convalescent are greatly aided by it.

Unnecessary Risks.

The wise man runs no unnecessary risks. There are few greater risks than allowing a cold to fasten itself upon the system. Whether it attacks the throat, the lungs, the stomach or the muscular system, if given even a slight chance, it is sure to strengthen; its hold can then be shaken off only with great difficulty.

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"In view of the benefit I have had from Hood's Sarsaparilla, I wish to give the following testimonial. I have several times been badly

Poisoned with Creeping Ivy.

As the old school of medicine simply tried to remove the symptoms instead of the source of them, much of the poison was left in my system, to appear in an itching humour on my body with very violent eruptions in warm weather. At all times there were more or less of it. It was in my blood, up to a year ago last winter, when

Large Sores Broke Out

on my body. I then purchased a bottle of Hood's Sarsaparilla, and after using that and a half of another bottle, the sores and humours disappeared. I attended the Christian Endeavor Convention in Montreal and also visited the World's Fair in the hottest weather of the summer. Was on the go all the time, but

Had No Recurrence

of the burning and itching sensation which had tormented every part of my summer's outing. If I ever recede, therefore, to be enthusiastic in my praises of Hood's Sarsaparilla.—SAMUEL S. SHAW, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Apalachicola, Fla., S. Y.

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