The Indian of the Stage

MITCHELL LEWIS who takes the Role of TALYWANA in the "Squaw Man"

As he appears in real life and as an Indian Brave

"THE Stage Indian," said Mark Twain some years ago, "was an original aborigine belonging to an ancient and extinct tribe that never existed."

One can imagine the humorist's memory running back, as he said it, to poke fun among the old playbills of half a century since, when "Poor Lo" trod the boards with a freedom that a few playgoers of today still recall.

Stripped of his boasted realism, the stage savage of our own day is not so new as he thinks he is. To be sure, he makes the old bow-and-tomahawk brave look silly and romantic, but the latter was dearly beloved in his day and generations, and his name was legion.

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They were funny enough, those redskins of the older theatre, who could one and all trace a clear, fair lineage to the pages of James Fenimoore Cooper, and Edwin Forrest himself, when he first played "Metamora, the Last of Wampanoags," the most tragic and popular of romantic stage sachems, played him in a mustache and goatee. The later daguerreotypes, however, seem to show that Forrest was at last brought to realize the propriety of giving his chieftain at least a clean shave. But with all its romantic extravagance, Metamora was considered by some one of the actor's greatest parts and that in spite of the fact that he disliked it, and seemed to be singularly prone to run into mishaps whenever he played it.

Joseph Jefferson in his autobiography, described a characteristic contretemps that befell the irritable Forrest one night toward the end of the piece.

"Things had gone wrong throughout the evening and Mr. Forrest was in the last stage of exasperation. A funeral pile of burning fagots was brought on at which some paleface was to be sacrificed. The two Indians in charge of this mysterios-looking article, set it down so unsteadily that a large sponge saturated with flaming alcohol tumbled off and rolled down the stage, leaving a track of fire in its wake. 'Put it out,' said Forrest, 'Put it out.' Whereupon the two Indians went down on their knees and began to blow alternately in a see-saw way, singeing each other's eyebrows at every puff. The audience could not stand this comical picture and began to break forth in laughter. 'Let the theatre burn,' roared Forrest.

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"At last one tall Indian, supposed to be second in command, majestically waved off the two who were blowing and stamped his foot with force and dignity upon the flaming sponge, at which a perfect fountain of burning alcohol spouted up his leather legs. He caught fire, tried to put himself out, rubbing and jumping about frantically, and at last danced off the stage in the most comical agony. Forrest made a furious exit, the curtain was dropped and the public in perfect good nature dispersed. I mingled with the crowd as it went forth," concludes Mr. Jefferson, "and I never saw the faces of an audience at the end of a five-act comedy wreathed in such smiles."

But, as Laurence Hutton points out in his "Curiosities of the American Stage," "Metamora" was far from the first of its kind. Curiously enough the first Indian play in America seems to have been an operatic spectacle entitled "Tammany," written by Anne Kemble, a sister of John Kemble, and Mrs. Siddons. The piece was dedicated to and produced under the auspices of the Tammany society of New York at the John Street theatre, toward the end of the eighteenth century, but even Columbus and St. Tammany in person, disporting themselves among stiff canvas trees and wigwams, that were the most realistic settings the American stage has at yet seen, failed to make the piece a success.

A long line of "Pocahontases" led by "The Indian Princess," trailed behind the footlights of the old days. The subject was immensely popular and the best actors of the day cheerfully stained their faces and arms, put on battered feather bonnets and stalked about in blankets, as stern Powhatans, while Indian maidens in dainty buckskins saved innumerable sturdy John Smiths. Charlotte Cushman, who was at that time given to playing male parts, appeared many times as Rolfe in Robert Dale Owen's version of the popular theme.

The success of "Metamora," for which Forrest is said to have paid the author, John Augustus Stone, $500, started a war dance of Oroloosas, Outalassies, Pawnee Chiefs, Hiawathas and Wissahickons, until at last a reaction set in and toward the middle of the century James Rees, himself a dramatist, author of "Charlotte Temple" and "Washington at Valley Forge," wrote that the Indian drama "had of late become a perfect nuisance." Mr. Hutton remarks that "a full list of the Indian plays more or less successful, known in other days and now quite forgotten, would be one of the curiosities of American dramatic literature."

To be a stage Indian in those days required no study or exertion. All you had to do was to stain your face, put on the regulation togs, learn to make a war whoop by patting your mouth with your hand as you yelled, and peer stealthily under your palm from around trees and rocks. For the rest you talked sublime, primitive sentiments, in extra good and usually poetic English, and stood about in tragic statuesque attitudes with your blanket falling gracefully over one arm and your hand hooked carelessly into your belt near your tomahawk. This was the accepted noble savage of the early Indian drama. Bad Indians crept around with knives and extra streaks of red paint on their noses, talking a gibberish that sounded aboriginally devilish.

The Pocahontas idea hung on bravely. You could always be sure some gentle, fawn-like Indian maiden would be on hand to stop all bullets, knives or tomahawks aimed at the hero—usually at the expense of her life. And the curtain was fond of going down on her aged chieftain father, sitting in front of a lonely wigwam and eyeing the landscape with primitive North American gloom.

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Most of these theatrical redskins carried bows and arrows, which often made them ridiculous trouble. It is on record that during a performance of "Metamora" when a line of young braves in Indian file crossed the stage at a swift trot, the leader tripped on his bow and the others piled over him like dominoes until two or three spilled over the footlights into the orchestra. This kind of thing was what particularly enraged Mr. Forrest.

After a while, however, people found a new entertainment in the frontier drama, with its more realistic rough-and-tumble hunters and backwoodsmen. One doesn't have to be so very old to remember "The Kentuckian" or Frank Mayor's "Davy Crockett." But even these romantic scouts were forgotten, when Buffalo Bill, in the border plays that preceded the wild west show, put real cowboys and real Indians into his piece. Audiences began to demand the genuine, if somewhat soiled, article, and to laugh at the old heroic braves. These border plays were usually built around a rousing night attack by a band of Indians on a body of United States troops. Buffalo Bill's real Indians never spoke a syllable beyond their native war whoop. When an Indian character had to say something the part was played by a white actor. But these pieces conveyed a yelling, dusty, up-to-date realism that made the Metamoras look stiff and pictorial.

Then along came John Brougham with one of the funniest burlesques ever written in English. His "Original Aboriginal, Erratic, Operatic, Semi-Civilized, and Demi-Savage Extravaganza of Pocahontas" has left echoes of laughter and a trail of good stories that reach down to the present day. Its extravagant travesty gives one an idea of what the older Indian drama must have been like. The piece was presented for the first time at the Lyceum theatre on Christmas eve under the management of the elder Wallack.

The whole thing is a fast and furious fusillade of atrocious puns and conceits. The scene is laid in Raleigh avenue, Virginia, which thoroughfare is nothing more or less than an aimless path through the primeval forest—as one of the characters remarks:

An avenue.
The strangest that I ever knew.

Mr. Hutton cites similar lines.

Captain John Smith sings of the royal Indian court:

"I visited his majesty's abode,
A portly savage, plump and pigeon-toed,
Like Metamora, both in feet and feature,
I never met-a-mor amusing creature."

Mr. Brougham played "Pow-Hat-an-I, King of the Tuscaroras, a Crochety Monarch; in fact a Semi-Brave," with a dense hedge of feathers towering above his brow and a club as thick as a lamppost. He benignly thanks his people at the end of the opening song, to the air of "Hoky-poky-winky-wum."

"Well roared, indeed, by jolly Tuscaroras;
Most Loyal corps, your king encores your chorus."

Later he cried:

"Sergeant at arms, say, what alarms the crowd;
Loud noise annoys us; why is it allowed?"

Some one inquires of the monarch whether in the word "lie" he uses the vowel "i" or "y." To which he replies:

"Y, sir, or I, sir, search the vowels through,
And find the one most consonant to you."

The chieftain apostrophizes to tobacco:

"While other joys one sense alone can measure,
This to all senses gives ecstatic pleasure,
You feel the radiance of the glowing bowl,
Hear the soft murmurs of the kindling coal,
Smell the sweet fragrance of the honey dew,
Taste its strong pungency the palate through,
See the blue cloudlets circling to the dome,
Imprisoned skies up-floating to their home—
I like a dudeen myself!"

The very mishaps of the piece seemed to turn themselves into lucky chances. Mr. Jefferson used to love to tell a famous tale of success snatched from defeat in an incident that happened during the first weeks of the piece.

Miss Hodson, the original Pocahontas, suddenly departed one night, bag and baggage, without so much as a whisper of notification. "No word of this proceeding reached the theatre until a few minutes before the curtain was to rise on the performance. Of course for some minutes there was a deadlock. No one could suggest the faintest remedy, and Brougham was nonplused. At last he went in front of the curtain and explained the situation. He confessed he was at his wits' end—a long distance for him to travel—and really did not know what to do unless the audience felt disposed to accept the burlesque of Pocahontas with the gentle savage omitted. He said there was an old theatrical anecdote setting forth that on one occasion the character of Hamlet had been so wretchedly acted that on its next presentation that part had been omitted by particular request. "Now," said Brougham, "if 'Hamlet' can be acted without the hero, why may not 'Pocahontas' be played without the heroine? You all know that 'Pocahontas' is a much finer play than 'Hamlet'; if you do not I do, for I wrote it myself. Will you permit us to make the experiment?"

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The cries of "Certainly go on," were so encouraging that Brougham retired amid applause, and the curtain was rung up. The burlesque proceeded admirably until the music was played for the entrance of the absent squaw. The audience wondered what Brougham could possibly do. He was acting the father, Pow-Hat-An, and was on the stake awaiting the approach of his daughter. He immediately addressed the audience somewhat in the following words:

"Ladies and Gentlemen—That is the sweet strain which is supposed to bring Pocahontas on the stage. You are aware that she is at present in Baltimore, and the law of the land will not permit a Christian, much less a savage, to be in two places at once. You can yourselves vouch for the alibi; but if she were here she would say," and here assuming the look and tones of the absentee Brougham spoke her part first, then assumed his own character and so kept up the dialogue. The audience, convulsed with laughter at the admirable imitation, acknowledged by their applause that Brougham had outdone himself through the wit with which he had mastered the difficulty.

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Nowadays when the Indian finds his way into plays in the guise of "atmosphere" no effort is spared to make him as genuine as can be. Mitchell Lewis spends 50 minutes on his make-up as Tahywana in "The Squaw Man." Any one who has watched Mr. Lewis as he carefully molds each high Indian cheekbone from a big lump of brown putty slapped firmly on the cheek, neatly sculpturing his nose from the same material, delicately blending the edges into the flesh, and finally working the whole thing down to a rich brown tint, will understand the modern search for realistic detail. Tabywana's face is so heavy an affair that it takes a palette knife and 10 minutes' work to dispose of him after the performance.

"But the result pays," says Mr. Lewis, "because this finished detail is exactly what audiences are sure to look for these days. Why, when I first tried this makeup, I even used to draw my eyes into just the right slanting narrowness by pasting bits of gauze back of the temples. I went further and experimented with false lips. It was extremely uncomfortable, however, and I found the effect hardly paid for the trouble. Nothing is too much to do for makeup, but there is also nothing in which you can so easily do too much.

"When I studied my Indian for 'The Squaw Man,' I was given a bundle of photographs from the Uintah reservation. I picked out one that struck me as practicable and copied it pretty closely. I recently received a letter from a man who said he had been for 11 years interpreter to Chief Long Horn. He had just seen the piece and intimated that he had been rather uncannily struck by my resemblance to one of Long Horn's old warriors named Spotted Tail, who, while he lived, had been my correspondent's particular friend. Of course I was not surprised on turning over the picture to find the name of Spotted Tail on my special model.

"The same principles come true when you come to lines. In the days of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me,' a picturesque gibberish that sounded like Indian talk was more than enough to meet all requirements. Not so today. This is the first time an Indian character has ever been put on the stage speaking his native language. I am not likely to forget the endless hours I spent digging Indian words out of Baco White, my instructor, who is no more communicative than the rest of his race, nor the time it took me to spell them out phonetically and memorize them afterward. You get many of your cherished notions of Indians upset when you come to study them first hand.

"I believe the Indian on the stage is more effective when used with white people for purposes of contrast, but even then you can't do him up in the easy, war-paint-and-feather get-up of the old days. There was a time when Ristori dared to play Lady Macbeth in hoop-skirts, but the public has grown to be less romantic and decidedly more sensitive to genuine detail."

A FLOWER FOR A GRAVE

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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RUMMAGING in an old library, a small volume dropped from the shelf, and on its cover shone one word in golden letters:

INFELICIA.

Below it the name Menken.

The book was published by the Lippincott's in 1869.

The frontispiece shows the head of a handsome, boyish-looking woman in the prime of youth.

Under the picture is the full name, Adah Issacs Menken.

Reading over the wild, wailing, yet artistic lines with which each page is filled, I was really impressed with the pathos of human life and human genius.

While unaccompanied by high ideals or fixed principles, or strong faith, Adah Issacs Menken was wonderfully gifted in many ways.

She possessed varied talents, and physical beauty of a peculiar and unusual type, together with great personal magnetism.

She first flashed on the public eye in a sensational theatrical feature, where she played the role of Mazeppa, attired in fleshings and strapped to a horse.

Afterward she wrote her curious and powerful little book of verse, filled with strange cries of her own wild, unhappy heart, and she was at once recognized by the literary world of England and given a royal reception for a time.

Charles Dickens and all his contemporaries idolized her, and it has been said that she was the model for Swinburne's well known poem "Faustine."

That Swinburne, then in the heyday of ardent youth, was one of her faithful satellites for a brief hour, is undisputed.

Here are some extracts from the little book which is all that remains of Adah Issacs Menken today to remind the world that she lived:

"Yes, yes, dear love, I am dead; dead to you, dead to the world, dead forever. It was one young night in May.

"The stars were strangled, and the moon was blind with the flying clouds of a black despair.

"My stark and naked soul unfolded its wings to the dimness of death. A death that left this dumb living body as its endless mark.

"But death left an old light in my eyes and old music for my tongue, to deceive the crawling worms that would seek my flesh.

"But the purple wine I quaff sends no thrill of love and song along my veins; thy kisses are doubtless sweet, that throb out, an eternal passion for me; but I feel neither pleasure, passion nor pain.

"So I am certainly dead; dead in this velvet and lace, dead in these jewels of light, dead in the music, dead in the dance.

"Why did I die? Oh, love, I waited, years and years agone.

"Once the blaze of a far off edge of love crept up over my horizon.

"But a midnight swooped down to bridegroom the day.

"And so I died; died alone in the young May night; died with my fingers grasping the white throat of many a prayer.

"How did I die?

"No man has wrenched the shroud from his stiffened corpse to say ye murdered me! No woman has died with enough of Christ in her soul to tear the bandages from her glassy eyes and say, ye crucified me!

"Resurgam! Resurgam!

"Where shall I lead my flocks today? Is there no Horeb for me beyond this desert? Is there no time for me to pray I bare to you my white bosom; I draw from it the dagger whose blade is keener than any ye can hold.

"The hands I most loved whetted it and struck with fatal precision, for he knew where the heart lay.

"No one else can ever know.

"In the beginning God, the great schoolmaster, wrote upon the white leaves of our souls the text of life in his own autograph.

"Upon all souls it was written alike.

"How soiled and stained with the blood of the innocent some of the books are.

"Surely yet some will look fairer than others.

"The weak and the struggling.

"The desolate and oppressed.

"The defenders of women.

"The mothers of new born children.

"The loving wives of cruel husbands.

"On the souls of these his autograph will be handed up to the judgment seat pure and unsoiled!"

The whole cry of the little book is the old cry "Too Late."

Because Adah Issacs Menken had loved unwisely, been deceived—disappointed, had sinned and wandered from the path of her early ideals she believed life held nothing but a repetition of these misfortunes for her, and so she made that belief come true.

"I stand a wreck on error's shore;
A spectre not within the door;
A houseless shadow evermore,
An exile lingering here."

What a blessing to this unhappy and gifted woman the "New Thought" philosophy of today would have been; the philosophy which recognizes no such words as "Too Late" and which tells the "wrecks on error's shore" that they are divine souls, and points them to the heights where they may find themselves reborn.

Let us hope that this storm-tossed mariner found her harbor of peace when she passed on; that she may yet come back to earth, wise with the wisdom gained in suffering, to sing the greater songs which were stored in her turbulent soul.

A little flower for your grave, sorrowful sister poet.

"Resurgam! Resurgam!"

Graft in European Papers.

English newspapers particularly have the habit of associating everything American with "graft" and of defending not only Great Britain, but all Europe against similar imputations. The Italian Press association, however, seems to have trouble of this kind on its hands, judging from the following cablegram from Rome:

"A special meeting of the Italian Press association was held here to consider charges brought by the Belgian journal Patriote against an Italian journal and a certain deputy, in which it was said that they had accepted large bribes from the Congo administration to deny charges of cruelty to natives.

"The Patriote so clearly indicated the Tribuna as the Italian journal concerned that the director of the newspaper, Senator Roux, was summoned to appear before the press association. Instead of doing so, he resigned from the association, accompanying his resignation with a flippant article in the Tribuna.

"That paper is also charged with receiving bribes from government officials to conceal scandals in the public works. A searching inquiry will be made, and in the meantime the Tribuna's position here is severely shaken."

The attention of the British press is respectfully drawn to the above, and we think it will be quite in order if the London newspapers, or a few of them, at least, would refrain from throwing stones until they have investigated their own glass houses. Municipal grafters were recently convicted and sent to jail in the West Ham division of London, and it is not at all improbable that other departments, if investigated, might yield similar disclosures. This claim of immaculate purity of motive on the part of English newspapers is best described in the Cockney slang term, "Piffle!"

Two Hundred Towns.

There are two hundred towns in Great Britain with over 2,000 inhabitants and no newspaper. Many of them are a good distance from a large town possessing a newspaper. So do you wonder that the people over there are slow, narrowminded and ambitionless? Where would the United States be if this country had the same disvantages?

WHY ALL THIS TROUBLE?

By Max Nordau

THE politics-economical organization of society must come to a new and just arrangement because reason and the ideas of mankind demand it. One single fundamental principle must govern society, and this principle must be either individualism, that is, egotism, or the solidarity, the cohesive fellowship of mankind, that is altruism.

At the present day neither fellowship nor egotism are ruling alone, but a combination of both, which is as unreasonable as it is inconsistent. Possession is organized on a personal basis and egotism reaches in the laws governing inheritance the utmost limits to which it can attain, by not only seizing by stealth and violence everything it can lay hands on, but by clinging to the plunder forever, and excluding the rest of mankind from ever sharing in its benefits.

The man of property will not allow the man without property to call that principle to his aid to which the former owes his wealth. Fortunes are accumulated in the name of individualism, but they are defended in the name of human solidarity. The rich man enjoys his disproportionate share of life's blessings of which he has made himself master by unblushing egotism, but when the poor man helps himself to them with some of the rich man's egotism and selfishness he is arrested.

In the form of usury and speculation the unscrupulous furtherance of self-interest is permissible, but it is strictly forbidden when it takes the form of robbery and theft. The same principle applied in the former case is a merit, in the other a crime.

Human reason revolts at such ideas. If egotism is to be preached, let it be consistent and assert its right in all cases. If it is right for the rich man to luxuriate in a life of leisure because he has been able to get possession of landed estates or to take advantage of the labor of others, then it must also be conceded to be right for the poor man to strike him dead and take possession of his property as the spoils of victory, if he has the courage and strength to carry through such an undertaking. This is logical.

It is true that logic would soon bring society to destruction and our civilization to the dogs and men would become like beasts, of prey wandering alone through the land and tearing each other to pieces. But anyone who is not pleased with this abstract aim of our social development, egotism, has no other alternative before him but to accept the other sole principle—fellowship.

The motto will no longer be "Every one for himself," but "One for all and all for each." Society will then assume the responsibility of supporting and educating the youth of the country until they can earn their own livelihood, of supporting those too old and feeble to support themselves, of coming to the aid of infirmity, without allowing hunger and distress to exist except as the punishment of voluntary idleness.

Great catastrophes are looming up on the field of political economy, and it will not be possible to ignore them much longer. As long as the masses were religious they could be consoled for their wretchedness on earth by promises of unlimited bliss in the next world, but today they are becoming more enlightened.

The poor count their numbers and those of the rich, and realize that they are constantly growing more numerous and stronger than the latter. They examine the sources of wealth and find that speculating, plundering and inheriting have no more rational justification than robbery and theft, and yet the latter are prosecuted by the laws. The increasing disinheritance of the masses by their deprivation of land and by the increasing accumulation of property into the hands of a few will make the economic wrongs more and more intolerable.

The moment that the millions acquire, in addition to their hunger, a knowledge of the remote causes of which it is due, they will remove and overthrow all obstacles which stand between them and the right of satisfying their appetite. Hunger is one of the few elementary forces that neither threats nor persuasion can permanently control.

LOVELESS MARRIAGES ARE IMMORAL--By Prof. Emil Reich

IN society nowadays marriages are not entered into on account of love, but to obtain rank and wealth. Wealth and rank are thus maintained, but their owners decay. This is in obedience to the self-regulating and restricting tendencies of every living organism, hence of humanity at large.

The suppression of love, the enlargement of egotism, which are the prevailing tendencies of upper strata of society, would lead to the speedy decay of the race if they became universal. The impulse for self-preservation in mankind thus leads to the inevitable decay of families founded on loveless and selfish unions. The rapid decay of aristocratic houses universally conceded has hardly any othe cause than this.

In addition to marriages of this kind contracted by degenerates there are also those entered into by sound normal beings, capable of love, who yet have married without love from a lack of understanding, from heedlessness or from a cowardly dread of the dangers of the struggle for existence in the midst of a society organized and governed by sheer egotism.

It is remarkable that such marriages, contracted in direct opposition to nature and reason, are called marriages of reason. The sin they have thus committed against that fundamental law, sexual selection, is avenged upon them sooner or later, and the later the more severely.

The impulse to love cannot be eradicated from their hearts and is continually seeking an outlet through the unyielding walls of legal and social conventionalism, with incessant and most painful exertions. It may happen that such an individual never meets one with whom it has an affinity throughout its entire life career—in this case the marriage remains undisturbed and the relations between man and wife united from prudential motives formally correct. But their existence is unfinished and unsatisfactory; they always have the tormenting sensation of a sorrowful unrest and expectation; they are always hoping for something yet to come that will awaken them from the stupor of their empty lives. Their whole being is felt to be incomplete and they long for the unsung portion, which they never find even in the most brilliant gratifications of their vanity or self-interest, because love alone could supply it.

The lives of such persons as well as of the degenerates miss the consecration of the ideal, but, more subjectively unhappy than the latter, they have a continual consciousness of what is lacking. They are not blind but seeing men, deprived of light.

This is the case if destiny does not bring them into contact with some being with whom they have an affinity. But if they meet with one the catastrophe is inevitable.

The conflict between the conjugal duties and the elementary striving for union with the individual for whom they feel an affinity is constant and wearing; the substance, the love-rebels against the forms of the married state in which it is confined. Either the substance is crushed or the form is destroyed.

A third solution is also possible, and as it is the most ignoble, it is the most frequently employed—the sides of the form which are visible to all eyes remain undisturbed, but in the rear a narrow crack is made through which the substance can find its way out. To express it more practically, the loving party in the loveless marriage either dissolves the marriage by force or struggles with and subdues his love by the sacrifice of his life's happiness, or else deceives his wife and breaks his conjugal vows in secret.

Common natures seize at once upon this last means of escape, but natures of true nobility have to struggle through and bear with the tragedy of rebellion against the prejudices of society and the fatal contest between passion and duty with all their bitter intensity.

If society were founded upon the laws governing the species, such loveless marriages would be impossible and such catastrophes inconceivable.

The loveless marriage is in its deeply immoral relation fraught with the most fatal results for the future of society. It compels those who enter it to lie to themselves involved sooner or later in a conflict between forsworn vows and indestructible love, and gives them only two alternatives—vulgar intrigue or ruin. Instead of its being a source for humanity to renew its youth, it is the means of slow suicide.

At the present rate of increase the population of the United States in 1913 will be 100,000,000.